



Institute for Lifecourse and Society



Dear President, National Project

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

October 2018



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This project was open to young people from across the Republic of Ireland aged between 13 and 15 years and not eligible to vote in this year's Presidential Election. The young people were invited to write a letter or poem outlining what it is like for them as a young person to live in Ireland today, their dreams for a future Ireland and how they would like the President to represent them over the next term of office.

This project is supported by NUI Galway, TUSLA, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, G.R.E.T.B, Galway Roscommon Education Training Board, Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee, Roscommon Children and Young People's Service Committee, Sligo, Mayo and Leitrim Education Training Board, Roscommon Partnership, Lions Club Roscommon II & Foróige.

About the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at the National University of Ireland Galway. It was founded in 2007, through support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland and the Health Services Executive (HSE), with a base in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the mission of the Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC has an extensive network of relationships and research collaborations internationally and is widely recognised for its core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development.

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Foreword

The Aim of the National Youth Strategy 2015 -2020 is to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Dear President is a call to hear these voices and to protect and support the 800,000 young people in Ireland.

One third of the population of Ireland is under the age of 25 years, a great majority of these will not have a vote until they turn 18 years old. Everyone of them wants to grow and live in an Ireland where they will be happy and prosper. They all want to lead active and healthy lives. They want to achieve full potential in all areas of growing up. They want to be in a society where they feel safe and protected from harm. They want economic security and the opportunities that this will bring. They also want to be connected, respected and contributing in their world. All of these are the interconnected and mutually reinforcing outcome areas from the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People.

I am only Mayor of Galway City for 1 year, it is mainly a ceremonial position in the lifetime of a City Council Local Authority Election. My City has changed so much since the last presidential election, it has come through an economic crisis, 23% of its population has been born outside the state, polish is now its second most spoken language and has been voted the friendliest city in the world and the best craic to visit. It is a young city full of young people full of dreams and ideas, who want to be happy and enjoy life. Who want to be proud of where they are from and where they are going no matter who they are.

This collection of letters to all the candidates in the presidential election outlines their dreams and concerns. Our proclamation says that all children are created equal. A President represents everyone equal, young and old.

I thank everyone for their contributions and the opportunity that it gives to have the voices of bright, bold, ambitious, fun, proud young Irish Citizens heard. When we pass the torch to the next generation they will be ready.

Níall Mc Nelis

Mayor of the City of Galway.

Message from Mr Cillian Murphy, Actor and Patron of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre



As patron of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, I congratulate all the young people who have submitted letters and poems to this the Dear President publication. In recent decades we have been fortunate in having excellent past presidents who have listened to the voice of youth, I urge you the candidates and incoming President to to read these letters with care they from the young people who do not have a vote but certainly do have a voice

Read on

List of Contributors

Julianna	Aitken	Dean	Kenny
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Emma	Baird	Aidan	Lake
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Katie	Blain	Ciara	Maxwell
Sarah	Bowman	Ian	Mc Donagh
Oisín	Browne	Helena	Mc Donagh
Keesha	Byrne	Edel	Mc Govern
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Chantelle	Clarke	Jonathan	McDonagh
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Kate	Coffey	Ailbhe	McHale
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Tia	Cronin	Síoda	Monaghan
Katie	Cronin	Maeve	Montgomery
Kirstin	Cronin	Lauren	Mooney
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Katelyn	Deasy	Cian	Ó Conghaile
Dylan	Duggan	Liam	Ó Conghaile
Hannah	Dunne	Helen	O'Brien
Ashling	Dunphy	Peter	O'Brien
Emma	Finnegan	Rhona	O'Dea
Chantal	Flaherty	Blanca	O'Donovan
Jasmine	Fleming	Aoife	O'Moore
Amanda	Gallagher	Saoirse	O'Regan
Saoirse	Gallagher	Niamh	Petrie
Kalem	Garrett	Amy	Prendergast
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B.C. Gill		Tara	Regan
Alice	Gilvarry	Charlie	Roberts Safo
Sami	Hammar	Emmanuel	Ankoma
Kassidy	Hoey	Yasmine	Salif
Charlotte	Hulme	Ann	Sibi
Taylor	Keady	Aleksejs	Snitko
Rhiannon	Keady	Aine	Usher
Kaylagh	Keenan	Mary	Wilson Reilly
Teegan	Kelly	Noreen	Woods
Sarah	Kendellen		

A Uachtaráin, a chara,

Tá mé ceithre bhliana dhéag d'aois. Tá mé i mo chonáí i nGaillimh. Is breá liom a bheith amuigh ag seoltóireacht agus ag imirt spóirt freisin. Tá fadhbh mór againn in Éireann, go mór mór rudaí leis an HSE, na n-ospidéal; mar shampla an cás ón bhliain seo leis an 'cervical check'. Tá an galar an-dáinséarach do chuile dhuine agus rudaí móra leis an cervical check scam. Tá an cás seo ró-thabhachtach gan tagairt a dhéanamh air. Faraor, tá na céadta máthair, iníon, mamó, aintíní, colcheathrachaí agus níos mó mná eile cailte agus ní fheicfidh muid arís iad. Beidh mé i mo dhuine fásta igceann cúpla bliain agus ba bhreá liom muinín a bheith agam i mo thír féin le mo shláinte agus sláinte na ndaoine mórthimpeall orm. Níl mise ná aon chailín eile sa domhain ag iarraidh fail bháis cosúil leis na leithéide sin. Le do thoil, coinnigh súil mhór ar rudaí mar sin.

Le meas,

Dear President,

I'm a 16-year-old living in Dublin, getting ready to start fifth year. One of my biggest challenges in school has always been languages. I have been learning Irish since I started primary school, yet I still cannot hold a conversation with one of my peers. Ask me how to conjugate the irregular verbs and I can do it with little to no struggle, but if you ask me to converse with someone or to translate a paragraph, then I'm going to encounter a few problems.

In schools so much time and effort is spent on learning the ins and the outs of grammar and verbs and what ending we use for each tense. This is also all generally learned through repetition which gets very boring very quickly, thus unfortunately causing a lack of interest and excitement in learning to speak our national language. So much of Irish that we're taught in school is taught through repetition, for example we learn off stories, letters and example answers for poems and short stories to use in exams and we do that, but how many of us actually know what we're writing, because I for one don't.

For myself and many of my peers learning Irish is a chore. It shouldn't be, we should be proud and honoured to have such a beautiful language to call our own.

In my opinion Irish schools should be more focused on teaching the conversation aspect of the language and how to use it in our everyday lives.

I believe that the President endorses our language and has the power to change how it is seen by those living in Ireland, so with your influence I'm hoping you could potentially change how Irish is taught in schools and seen by students to make it a more positive and rewarding experience for all involved.

Go raibh mile maith agat,

A Uachtarán,

Tá mé dhá bhliain déag d'aois. Tá cónaí orm i nGaillimh. Tá mé sa chéad bhliain. Is brea liom bheith amuigh ar an bhfarraige ag seoltóireacht nó ag cadhcáil agus fuair mé teastas dara leibhéal sa chadhcáil an lá cheanna.

An fáth go bhfuil mé ag scríobh chugat inniú ná ba mhaith liom dhá bhféadfá tuilleamh áit a chur ar fail le haghaidh foscadh do bháid timpeall an chósta. Go mór mór sa ngeimhridh nuair a bhíonn an aimsir go dona ar fad. Tá mé a scríobh seo agus an stoirm mhór Ali taobh amuigh. Bhí muid thíos ag an gcé ag sheiceáil ar na báid agus bhí siad ar fad ag imeacht ó phosta go piléar agus iad i gcontúirt.

Mura miste leat ba mhaith liom da gcuirfeá deis foscadh beag ag beagnach ag gach cé.

Do chara,

Dear President

I'm 14 years old and from Dublin. I'm going into 2nd year. My favourite hobby is playing basketball my favourite basketball player is Steph Curry. I also listen to a lot of music, my favourite musician is Eminem. I also enjoy playing rugby and I really like to help people too. If I ever had a wish it would be to meet Steph Curry in real life to have a chat and ask him for advice in basketball.

I've been living in Ireland for around seven years and it's been good to be here. I lived in Tipperary for three years where I learned to play hurling which I really enjoyed. But when I moved to Dublin I found my true interest and it was basketball. I honestly think that there are a lot of opportunities for young people in Ireland. Athletes in Ireland have fair chances of becoming famously-known and I myself would like to play in the NBA. If a young person wants to become a musician I couldn't see why not because if Niall Horan or Hozier made why not them? I honestly think that everyone should be equal, LGBT or not you're still human.

Living in Ireland has many pluses but we all know there are always minuses such as gangs attacking kids or adults that haven't said or done anything to anyone. I don't see why should people should be threatened by a bunch of teens and bullying is another thing that sits around, why should someone get bullied for the clothes they wear, why should they get bullied because of their looks, voice, background or clothes? As a result people lock up in their heads and don't share their problems.

Living in Ireland has given me a second chance and I'd like to use it to either become an engineer or aim for the stars and shoot hoops for the NBA. For other people they think they can do whatever to whoever. It depends who you ask, some people plan ahead but others just ignore, which shows they don't plan anything except for trouble.

I hope in the future that if you're black or white, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender that everyone will be treated with respect. I'd like the President to represent young people as the next generation, to treat us all equal, physically and mentally-able or not, intelligent or not. I'd like us all represented as one equal like a team. If one falls we all fall if one stands we all stand.

United we stand divided we fall.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

As a young person living in rural Ireland, I can disclose life in our local area is quite tedious. The lack of local facilities and social outlets in small towns in Ireland is appalling. My hope for future Ireland would be that small areas similar to my local town are booming with the life and energy of the young in various clubs and organizations using excellent facilities. During your new term in office I would hope you encourage a new lease of life to be injected into rural Ireland increasing non-commute jobs for parents, and encouraging young people to promote and stay in the hometown.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am a young person in Ireland today,
And as the future president,
I'm writing to you to say.

When I think of Ireland I think of home,
As I hope you also will,
As you sit down and think of the future,
I hope for us it's in goodwill.

I hope you realise how important,
Your position really is,
How every choice you make,
Is a choice the future generation will live.

So please remember that,
A choice made today,
Is for the people of tomorrow.

So every choice you make,
Whatever it may be,
Should be made for,
Young people's guarantee.

Dear President,

I can confidently say that I am proud to be a citizen of the Emerald Isle named Ireland. When my parents decided to move, one of the main factors they considered was my education and my future. They believed that Ireland was the perfect choice and I can't say that they were wrong.

All aspects of my life are wonderfully looked after here. There is a health care system which is of high quality, an exceptional education system and many recreational facilities available. Living in Ireland I have never felt limited in what I can achieve. I have always been encouraged to work harder and aim bigger.

The government has also taken many great initiatives that attempt to make Ireland an even better place than it already is. The Tidy Towns and Green Flags programmes that everyone is encouraged to participate in primary and secondary school have increased my love for this country and have allowed me to develop various new ideas about the world. I am filled with joy every time I walk through the clean, lush vegetation that fills this nation.

I have chances to express my views and ideas on topics and initiate changes about things that I disagree with through organisations such as Comhairle na nÓg, without being discriminated against or ignored due to my age.

I believe that the Irish education system is one of the best in Europe. Irish children are encouraged to go to school daily and education is viewed as a right, not a want. Ireland also provides free education in good schools with a high standard of education.

Alas, nothing is ever perfect. While the present education system is extraordinary, there are still many improvements that I think can be made to improve it. I hope that in the future there will be more focus placed on the use of technology in schools (e.g. the use of iPads instead of books, more use of online resources instead of direct reading from the book) as our world is primarily run by computers and machines nowadays.

In my school, I have only had the opportunity to study Computers in first year. While that one year was extremely useful, it was hardly enough time to become proficient at doing anything other than the bare minimum needed. I understand that in the February 2018 Action Plan for Education there has been plans to implement Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject in 40 schools and to progress a new Maths curriculum for primary schools to include elements of coding. I hope that in the future that this number can go up from 40 schools to 700 schools.

Although I recognise the importance of addressing more major issues in the country such as housing and unemployment, I feel as if child-specific issues are often ignored or overlooked. I hope that over your term of office you will continue to improve Ireland's education system as it such a vital part of a child's life.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I hope you're settling well in your new home. I'm from Dublin and I am 15 years old. I have just completed my Junior Cert and I am looking forward to going into 5th year and getting my results. In my spare time I do CrossFit and weightlifting with my Mam. I strongly believe that young people in Ireland like myself are very under-represented, I believe we deserve to have a say on decisions involving our country. I believe this because we are the next generation and choices made now will affect us in the future, it would only be fair to allow us to have a voice.

I have recently attended the 'Leadership for Life' conference in association with Foróige and I have learnt so much! For a week I was surrounded by young people from all over Ireland and we were all very aware on the little opportunities we have to affect our future and the future of this country. The topic of lowering the voting age to 16 and older was also brought up and there were many opinions for and against it. I thought it was very interesting. Young people are the future leaders, ministers and workers, and with no exposure to the environment of nationwide decisions how will we ever acquire the skill set to be successful or knowledge to make right choices. I hope that in the future this issue will be discussed and young people's opinions will be brought into it.

I have had an overall positive experience living as a young person in Ireland, I like the area that I live in and I really enjoy being active in my local youth group Foróige. I've gotten to take part in a lot of events within the country, including this book, because of it. I think young people don't have an overall presence in our country, our achievements and the work we do for the community is rarely talked about, and if young people are talked about in the media its mostly in a negative way. I would love to see young people more represented in the future in a positive and encouraging way.

I look forward to your term in office and I am excited to see how you will represent young people and expand the future of Ireland. Thank you for reading my letter.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I'm writing this letter as I sit at the kitchen table trying to put my thoughts into words upon this page. I'm a 17 year old girl. I'm not quite sure if one would consider me a normal teenager as I tend to have a grá for politics and all that comes with it, I would consider myself to be quiet empathetic and self-aware. By empathetic perhaps one could say overly empathetic towards those around me.

As a young woman in 2018 I find it extremely difficult to walk up O'Connell Street in Dublin without getting mildly frustrated and upset due to the ever growing plague of poverty that has hit our land, our Ireland.

Young families, men, women and children huddled up in doorways with sleeping bags over their bodies. To us it may be a doorway to them it is their home. I mentioned above that I get frustrated when I see this sight and the reason I get frustrated is because there is really nothing I can do about it.

I've marched numerous times, on one occasion I slept outside Leinster house and yet nothing changes. If anything the situation is getting worse and it upsets me because there is nothing I can do to change how Ireland treats her most vulnerable.

I have no vote nor say on matters such as homelessness. I'm powerless.

I should be able to have trust in a political figure such as you, the President of our Ireland. We are all human beings. We breathe the same air, bleed the same blood and share the same earth. Regardless of who we are we deserve equal opportunities. President I challenge you to walk around Dublin, walk around Ireland get to know those in difficult situations and use your position to advocate and be a voice for the voiceless. Go to the doorways and if it gives you the feeling in the pit of your stomach then I hope you will follow through with actions. We need prevention, policy and immediate planning because tomorrow it could be too late.

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Dear President,

I am female and aged 15. I live in Co. Donegal. It is a small town located on the coast. I just did my Junior Certificate and am now enjoying my summer holidays. I like football and swimming. I would love more equality in sports in general for girls but I will write about that later. My dream for the future is to be an interior designer. I like the idea of upgrading interiors, I used to play a game when I was younger which involved redesigning rooms and improving them.

It can be difficult to fit in, there are a lot of different groups at school but they are all separate. Most young people want to fit in so as not to be judged, this often means wearing clothes and listening to music that is popular or trendy. It is difficult to be different as we would all be afraid we would not fit in.

Where I live is welcoming, it is a nice place. There is a lot of freedom here and I feel safe as I know everyone who lives locally. I think cities can be dangerous. We live amongst animals and see them everywhere, the air is fresh and clean. There are lots of beaches close by which are lovely to walk on. They are very peaceful and lovely to walk and listen to the sound of the waves. There are some clubs here, e.g. football and a youth club. I would like to see more e. g. more drama, music etc. There is a library and cafés to go to. It is not great here for clothes shopping, we do a lot online unless you can travel to a larger town.

There are 22 people in my class. I go to school locally and we have a lot of teams and go on trips, we have book clubs and maths clubs. A lot of young people go to college after school but that usually always means moving away from home to the bigger towns and cities.

I play Gaelic football locally. The boys get more spectators than we do. When football matches are on TV it is only really important women's football matches that are on. I believe women could be really much better footballers but do not get enough recognition because of their gender.

Everyone has mobile phones at school even though we aren't allowed. They are used to take photos of their peers without their knowledge and post them online. This can be very distressing for the victim. I believe schools should enforce the ban on smartphones at school. Social media has its benefits, e.g. it's a way for young people to express themselves but bullying on social media is a lot easier than in 'real life' and this puts pressure on us as young people.

I see myself moving away as there are more opportunities in cities.

I would like more laws for underage drinking and drugs because young people feel they need to be intoxicated to enjoy their night. Bullying is the other issue that I would like the President to address. I see bullying taking place and cannot imagine what that must feel like.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

We are here from Co. Galway to talk about our issues as Brazilians living here in Ireland. As Brazilians (children, adults) we don't have that many options here in Ireland. We struggle to find suitable jobs and accommodation. Many Brazilians have been living in Ireland for many years, such as our families.

To be honest we are afraid to write this letter but we want to tell you how things are. We cannot use our real names. I am Victoria and my family has been in the same apartment for 14 years. As a teen I need my privacy but in my house we have 9 family members and only 2 bedrooms. I am Anna and up 'til recently my bed was in the sitting room, I had no privacy as we have 4 family members and there is only one bedroom. We both live in overcrowded houses. It is not easy to find a house and when you are a Brazilian too. Our parents often work in low paid jobs in cleaning and construction and sometimes they don't get paid even for weeks at a time.

If you come from an undocumented family and want to go to college it can be impossible for undocumented young people finishing school. We do not have the same jobs and end up having the same bad experiences as our parents. Our dreams are to be financially stable, to have a decent place to live, and spend time with our family and friends.

At the moment our parents have to work long hours and we don't get to see them. We want to go to college and have a good job other than cleaning.

To help these dreams come true:

1. Help undocumented families who have been here a long time get their citizenship as they work hard and want to contribute
2. Help families to get suitable jobs and accommodation.

A Uachtarán,

Tá mé 14 bliain d'aois. Tá mé i mo chonaí i mBeal an Daingin (Gaillimhe). Is brea liom a bheidh amuigh ag seoltóireacht agus ag imirt spóirt freisin. Tá fadhbh mór againn in Éireann, go mór mór rudaí leis an HSE, na oispeadail agus r.l.. Freisin na rudaí coisiuil leis an 'cervical check'. Tá an galar an-dainséarach do chuile dhuine agus rudaí móra leis an cervical check scam. It's too much of a risk to slip from your fingers like that. Mar anois tána ceta máthair, iníon, mamó, aintíní, colcheatharacháí is níos mó mná atá cáillte, cáillte agus ní fheicidh muid aríost iad. Tá mise ag fás suas i tám atá mé in ann an stáit a thrust. Níl mise na aon cailín eile sa domhain ag iarraidh fail bháis mar na leithéide sin. Le do thoil coinnigh súil mhór is crínne ar rudaí mar sin.

Leas meas,

Dear President,

I hope you are well.

I am a 17-year-old girl from Co. Mayo. I am an active member of the Mayo branch of Comhairle na nÓg, a youth council where young people like myself have the opportunity to allow their voices to be heard. Today I wish to talk to you about exactly that.

As a young person living in Ireland today I am lucky enough to be granted with this doorway where I can voice my opinions and encourage other members of the youth to do the same. I have seen great progress in the last number of years with the development of youth empowerment, even in my small community. Organisations such as Foróige, Comhairle na nÓg, No Name Club, Scouting Ireland, and many more are having such an incredible impact on the lives of young people.

Take my story as an example. My journey with Foróige began two years ago, after going through a low point in my life. Since joining Foróige in my local town I've met the most amazing friends and best support system I could ever ask for. Becoming a member of the club, meeting new people, and building myself back up has brought such great things to my life. Going to Foróige and taking part in Foróige workshops, events, etc., has enabled me to grow and develop my confidence, communication, motivation, trustworthiness and responsibility. It has also encouraged me to use these skills constructively to empower others. Last year I was co-opted onto Mayo Comhairle na nÓg, Mayo's youth council, an opportunity which has allowed me to voice my opinions and meet other people with the same purpose and intent that I have discovered in myself.

I am so passionate about these organisations and my hope is that we continue to promote youth empowerment through these organisations throughout Ireland. In the future I wish to see many more clubs and organisations set up in each small town around Ireland. It is so important that each individual has the chance to be heard and represented, from the smallest town to the largest city, and across the country.

Thank you for your time,

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Every country needs a figure, someone to look up to and depend on to make our country something worth being proud of, and I really hope you can help us achieve that. I am 16 years old and I live in a very small village in County Kerry. Being where I'm from, you would imagine I would not have much experience or knowledge of politics on a full scale, but even in small villages there is an immense load of debates and disagreements that I know comes with the job of President.

Being a teenager a lot of my influence is on social media and as you know some presidents in other countries are using social media as a platform to spread their ideas to the younger generation which I think is a very good idea, but at the same time there are some politicians who use their platform to preach about things such as anti-gun control etc., which in my opinion is an excuse to manipulate young minds into thinking that one way of thinking is the only way when as you are aware, there are multiple sides to everything. I am aware Ireland already has gun control but there are other cases of important topics such as abortion in Ireland that need to be discussed and as President I think it's your job to educate younger people who are unable to vote about such topics in an neutral state, giving both sides of the story to allow people to make up their own decision rather than preaching one idea without giving the other side a chance to be heard.

How the new generation is taught about difficult topics is one of the most important things in ensuring Ireland's future as a peaceful and democratic country and I think more needs to be taught in school. Currently teachers are not allowed to talk about any difficult topics such as abortion and gay marriage and personally I think it's time that changed. Giving students from 12 to 18 the opportunity and the right to be educated about our laws and referendums in Ireland is something I think is imperative for helping students to grow up. Teenagers' opinions are often not taken into account because they can't vote but, if you gave many an opportunity to be heard, whether that is in class or in a debate, they could teach you things that may surprise you.

People who live in rural areas get a significantly less amount of opportunities than people living in urban areas, obviously however, opportunities are still accessible to rural people but it requires more effort and more travel. I would like to see more opportunities given to the young people in small villages and towns so everyone gets the same opportunities so they are equally as able to prepare for their endeavours in the future.

You, President, are the figurehead for everyone living in this country; foreign, young and old. The way I see it is that you have a very important job and it would be an immense shame to let your voice go to waste. So as a young person in Ireland I implore you to start speaking out and strive to educate the ignorant. I believe every young person, whether rural or urban, deserve the same type of opportunities, experiences and knowledge because at the end of the day we are all going out into the same world to try and make it a better place.

Yours sincerely,

A Uachtarán,

Tá mé 14 bliain d'aois. Tá mé i mo bhaill do gásóga mara i dtír Fhia, Leitir móir. Tá an-suim agam sa bhfarraige agus is brea liom seoltóireacht. Mar gheall ar sin ba mhaith liom béim mór a chuir ar eachtraí spóirt a mbíonn ag scoileanna i gConamara. Slán anois. Tá súil agam go bhfuil tú ag baint an-sult as do phost nua mar Uachtarán na hÉireann.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

I hope you are well and settling into your new role as President. I am sixteen years old and live in a rural village in County Westmeath. I am in Fifth Year and my favourite subject is art. I play Gaelic Football with my local club and really enjoy training weekly with my friends. I am very passionate about my club and the sense of "belonging to a community" that it brings.

I feel very privileged to have a good experience of living here in Ireland. I have a great family, school and community. However, I feel there are many issues that need to be addressed so that Ireland can provide a safe, happy place for everyone to live in.

I hope that during your presidency, Ireland will become a place where there is:

- a "Cead Mile Failte" for all - natives, tourists and refugees;
- where "a bed for the night" is your bed and in your own home;
- where agreement is reached in governing Northern Ireland and peace prevails;
- where accommodation is affordable and available to all families and students;
- where "No means No" and the "Ask for Angela" campaign becomes more a support than a need;
- where Ireland leads the way on environmental issues and stops the invasion of single use plastic;
- where a pay cheque reflects the work not the gender of the worker;
- where regardless of gender or disability the sport being played is supported by funding to maximise its potential;
- where the Gaelic language is treasured and embraced and is the people's choice and "teanga";
- where young people have an opportunity to have their voice heard and be an influence in the political decisions shaping this country.

I wish you every success and hope that you share the same vision of a future Ireland as I do.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

I'm 16 years old and I'm from Castlebar, Co. Mayo. I am writing to you today in relation to what it's like to be a teenager in Ireland.

First of all, teenagers get a bad reputation due to the actions of a small minority of people. This should not be the case. Everyone is different, everyone is unique, some people are pleasant, some are not but just because a certain few act in a bad way, doesn't mean that every other teenager should get the same reputation

Moving on from the negative, there are more and more opportunities for teenagers in Ireland. For example, I am part of a wonderful organisation called Mayo Comhairle na nÓg. Comhairle na nÓg are youth councils. There are 31 across the country of Ireland. They are amazing organisations that get young people involved in the community and make a difference. They give a voice to the young people. There are so many things teenagers can do in this day and age. I would love to see Ireland as a country that everyone wants to come to.

In my opinion, people in rural communities find it harder to adapt to the modern world. I would like to see that change to where people are open to many different changes. For example, it is legal for a same sex couple in Ireland to get married but yet there is still a large amount of people that don't agree with this. I feel that in larger communities that this is not the case and that people are more open to change.

I would also like to see gender stereotypes change. In Ireland, if you're a boy, you are expected to play Gaelic, Rugby or some sort of Sport. If you're a girl, you're expected to do something more feminine. It should be acceptable if a boy wants to go shopping or do acting and dancing. They don't need to stick to what everyone else is doing. It is the same for girls; they should be able to play all sports or go for any career they want even those that are generally associated with men

President, you have the power to make a change for the young people of Ireland. I feel that a younger person from every county in the Republic of Ireland should be represented in government in some sort of way. We are the future of Ireland and that's why I feel we should have a say in how the country is run.

Thank you for reading and I hope you found this insight helpful in understanding what it's like being a teenager in Ireland.

Kind Regards,

Dear President,

I am a 17-year-old living in Co. Roscommon. I am proud to be a citizen of Ireland and I love living here. I live in a country without war, without widespread poverty, and very little discrimination. I have the opportunity to do whatever I want with my life and I am extremely thankful for this every day.

I think Ireland is a great place for young people to grow up. There is a valuable education system which is very accessible to everyone nationally. Young people are treated with respect and there are numerous youth organisations that help give young people a voice and help them achieve their potential. I believe, in Ireland as a whole, we are in a better place today than we ever have been before.

However, I am concerned that Ireland is becoming too commercialised and that traditional values are being lost; that “liberal” thinking has become an ideal to change the architecture of our constitution to reflect a “modern?” Ireland. I think a part of our society is allowing itself to be consumed by the views of minorities at the expense of free speech of the majority, being politically correct has become more important than making a point.

I am very concerned with the quality of the supply of food in Ireland. Most of the food on our shelves is from monocultures and much of it not even from Ireland. I want to eat good food that I can trust is not tainted by GMOs and has not been sitting in a warehouse for weeks. The Origin Green initiative is a good start but it needs to be much stronger; community supported agriculture and similar systems must be the farming of the future if we want to prevent an obese nation eating only salt and sugar.

One key area that I believe needs to be addressed is the growing divide between the east and west. Currently there are two choices for young people who want to live in Ireland:

1. To be locked out of an ever increasingly stressed housing market, in a city that hosts half the country’s population, only to travel for hours to work with no time for a personal life.
2. Or, to be left collecting social welfare in a rural town with ghost estates, depopulation, emigration, poor retail spending, very little new industry and very few career opportunities.

This is the reality for young people at the start of their adult lives, and it makes starting this new stage in their life all the more difficult.

I am part of a youth group called the BMW (Border, Midlands, West) Youth Coalition dedicated to addressing this division. Addressing this will have benefits for the whole country i.e. population dispersal will ease the housing situation in Dublin while filling the endless ghost estates across the rest of the country.

I am surprised sometimes at how similar I am to my peers, Young people can feel isolated sometimes but the truth is while we are all different, we can relate to each other, we are more of a community than we realise.

Teenagers came about as a result of a changing world. In the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S. teenagers set the trends and brought about new change pushing for what they believed in and I can say still that teenagers are still pushing, we are still setting the trends and advocating for what we believe is important. We are more than the future we are the now.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 15 years old and I live in County Kilkenny. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about a topic which is a great concern for me personally. However, I feel that many other people in my age group take this topic less seriously which is a great worry. The issue in question is global climate change.

Global climate change is one of the biggest problems facing our species and planet Earth as a whole. Yet humanity, the primary cause of the problem and the only species which has the information and intelligence to make any positive, meaningful impact on the well-being of the environment, are failing to do so.

Ireland's fossil fuels are primarily being used on agriculture (29.2%), energy (21%), and transport (21%). Farms can be made more efficient with the use of dairy Economic Breeding Index, beef genomics or improvements in animal health. Ireland should also consider developing the fishing industry as an alternate source of protein instead of the current reliance on farming. Less food can be wasted through the use of composting.

Energy has a multitude of solutions including the increased use of LED light bulbs, wind and wave power instead of fossil fuels or using geothermal energy to heat homes. Unfortunately, solar power is impractical for widespread use in Ireland due to the lack of sunlight and the unpredictable nature of our weather. Ireland needs to transition from non-renewable sources to renewable sources of energy.

Transport also has many possible routes to take for improvement. Electric and hybrid engines must receive widespread use. One way to encourage drivers to use hybrid or electric engines is to decrease the tax on recharging and building more charging stations throughout the country. Public transport such as buses could also make use of electric engines.

The quantity of plastic currently being used in Ireland every day is absurd. There now exists peeled fruit packed in plastic boxes. Most vegetables are packed in plastic and the majority of bottles are made of plastic. Scientists have estimated that, by 2050, there will be, weight for weight, more plastic than fish in the world's oceans. This would have an enormous impact on the marine ecosystem, and affect the water cycle, possibly resulting in plastic contaminating drinking water.

The most vital change which must be made for the sake of our planet is to educate people, both young and old, about the issue and what they can do to help. Climate change can only be prevented if humanity works as a unit to stop it. This is why global climate change education should become a primary and secondary school subject. The next generation need to be educated about one of its biggest threats so it can deal with the issue the previous generations have left it adequately.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you will take some of these suggestions into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I hope all is well in Áras an Uachtaráin. I am 16 years old. I have just finished my Junior Cert and I am going into Transition Year this year. I have an older brother and two younger sisters, I live in a small rural area called in Cavan. I have a big interest in Gaelic Football and I play with my local club. I have a love for music and I play the tin whistle, flute, banjo and guitar. I am also a member of my local Foróige club.

Like many other people in our country I have a love for our national language Gaelige. I would love to be able to speak our language more frequently however, I feel there isn't a lot of opportunities for us to do so unless you attend the Gaeltacht during the summer. As a country our aim would be to make our Irish language more popular and for a greater amount of our population to know how to speak more of it. An ideal time for young people to learn the majority of our language would be during our Junior Cert years in school. However, only a small aspect of the curriculum allows us to do so as we have to learn off essays for our exams. From what I know about the new Gaelige curriculum for the new Junior Cycle coming in there is no longer an optional oral exam. I feel this is a bad idea as it could also put many Gaeltachts out of business as many of them focus on the oral aspect. I also enjoyed the oral part of our Gaelige class as we could show what we have learned.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter I know you're a very busy person with a busy agenda. I have full faith that you will do great things for our country during your term in office.

Go n-éirí an t-ádh leat!

Slán go fóill,

Dear President,

I hope you are well. I'm 15 years old and I live in Dublin. I feel as though there isn't enough representation for young people in the country today. Young people today voice their opinions whenever possible however, I feel as though they are overlooked or ignored by the older generations and I think that it is important that people begin to listen to what we as the future of the country have to say.

I have recently attended the Foróige Leadership for Life programme and can say that it was one of the best experiences of my life. I got to meet and make friends with so many young people from around the country and learned so much about leadership. It has made me think about the things that I think need to be changed in Ireland. I am thankful for all the amazing experiences I have been given through Foróige and think there should be more exposure for it in the country.

While I have had a mainly positive experience as a young person in Ireland, I know people who haven't. I believe that there is a drug problem in Ireland, specifically in Dublin. I have seen young people who have had easy access to drugs and due to that they have hurt people in their lives. I think that there should be more done to help these people and to make drugs less accessible to not only young people but all people in Ireland.

I look forward for the next seven years and what your presidency brings to Ireland. I hope you begin to represent the young people of the country positively. Thank you for reading this letter

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Youth involvement.

The only way to a brighter future

Involving the generation who your decisions will affect later on in life

Opening up programmes, inspiring to become more involved.

Is a necessity.

We need to listen,

To the generation most in touch with the world events

Due to gifts like social media

Or the history we have learned from

That 18 is no longer the minimum for voices of reason

That they can stem from any age, at any point in life.

Many often believe you are far away, too out of reach.

But the youth must be heard, even through these simple

Dear President

We present to you a request for the youth to have a larger part in politics.

That age is not guaranteed to lead to wisdom.

Thanks,

Dear President,

I hope that you are doing well. I know that you are extremely busy with your duties, however, I am writing this letter in regards to an issue that really needs to be tackled in Ireland today; a very important topic in Irish society today: drinking. You may have heard people many a time complaining about alcohol abuse and its dangers, however, I feel the need to display the dilemma to you one more time, from a young person's perspective.

Drinking. Yes, the disease that has plagued us for ... only God knows how long. You may not agree with me when I refer to it as a disease. You may see going out to the pub for a drink on Saturday night as harmless socializing, a part of Irish culture. However, I don't believe that pubs and drinking deserve a place in our rich Irish culture, as it, in fact, puts a blemish on it and has become a negative stereotype of the Irish person. The "All Irish people are alcoholics" stereotype. And the hard truth is, most of our lovely Irish people can't deny this, as 54% of them are harmful drinkers!

You may also argue that people all over the world drink, so why is it Ireland that is associated with this drinking epidemic? Well, when you take into account the fact that we are the second highest country in the world in terms of binge drinking, you begin to see why other countries see us as alcoholics. And when there are 3 alcohol-related deaths per day in our country, you see that our reputation isn't the only thing affected by our cultural habit.

My point is: drinking shouldn't be accepted as part of our Irish society. It has devastated the lives of many people. Unfortunately, it has already been accepted in this society, and is even encouraged, as part of "having the craic". Now, after boring you with these clichés, I want to give some suggestions on how to deal with the situation. Firstly, I believe that pushing bills such as the Public Health Bill is necessary to reduce the widespread availability of alcohol, so that less people will use it, less often. Then, in terms of raising alcohol awareness, I believe schools are an invaluable target, as many young people are fooled into believing that alcohol is "cool". This desire to fit in makes them oblivious to people simply telling them not to drink alcohol, so my proposal is that there is a focus on showing young people just how much alcohol destroys a person's body, and how much alcohol hinders you in your daily life, be it sport, school etc. on top of the immediate dangers of intoxication.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. There are other things that I want to talk to you about, but since you're a busy person, I'll leave you alone for now.¹

Yours faithfully,

¹ All facts are from www.alcoholireland.ie

Dear President,

I'm getting the chance to write to you today as a member of Mayo Comhairle na nÓg. We are a youth council in county Mayo that try to improve the lives of young people in the county. This year we have tried to improve the student councils in each school so that the students get more of a voice and have an impact to any changes that happen in the school. I personally am a fifth year student. Outside of school I enjoy spending time with my friends and playing Gaelic football for my local team.

As a member of the Comhairle we get the chance to write a letter, poem or verse to you, the new incoming President of Ireland. I have decided to write a verse.

Congrats to you

New president of Ireland

Join a selected few

From Dálaigh to Hillery

It's now onto you

With being the tenth President of Ireland

Comes great responsibility.

Best Wishes to you

Now time to

Enjoy the Áras.

Dear President,

I'm a 15-year-old girl and I live in Galway. I like to draw, listen to music and play basketball.

I think that living in Ireland at my age is mostly good. The transport system in Galway is very good and there are several sports and hobbies that I can take up in and outside of school.

The problem I face though, is that my opinion is often unheard by adults. As a teenager, I am coming towards an adult, so I have many views on issues in Ireland but in Ireland's eye, I am seen as a child who doesn't know what she is talking about.

I also occasionally get ignored by adults when I'm standing right in front of them. For example, I stand in a line in a food place or a shop and I'm clearly standing in it, but some adults just walk past me and skip me in the line. To some people, that might be fine, but to me, a person who often feels invisible, that really gets me down and makes me feel even more invisible. I know there probably isn't much you can do about this particular issue, but I just wanted to get it out there.

I hope that someday, Ireland won't push teenage views out the window and that we will be taken seriously.

I hope that during your 7 year term of presidency, you will find a way to help us all be heard.

Thank you for taking your time to read my letter,

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I don't even know what to say. I'll start off by introducing myself. I am 17 years old and I'm from Lithuania. We moved here when I was 3 when my mother wanted to have a fresh start. Being 3 I can't really say how hard it was moving into a new country and saying all the controversial stuff as I really can't remember. But I do remember sitting in class and hearing Irish for the first time when I barely knew English. Then every traditional Irish thing hit me. I was learning Irish poetry, songs, stories and dancing. It's safe to say when I was 6 I had two left feet and didn't have a notion of what I was doing.

Fast forward a good 12 years, I'm now currently in my 5th year of secondary school studying Ordinary Irish as I never really did grasp onto the language. I am very grateful being able to grow up in Ireland for a number of reasons. First of all, the Irish people are like nothing I've met before, you could be walking down the street and someone you've never seen or met before says Hello. In Lithuania if you said Hello to a random, I'm pretty sure you'd get a knock. Secondly, despite it raining 92% of the time, the heritage and scenery is outstanding. Driving down country roads and seeing all the trees and mountains and it's breath-taking. Finally it is home, I don't hesitate for a second to say Ireland is my home and that I'd consider myself Irish. Perhaps it is the people, or the beautiful scenery but there is definitely no other place like it.

Sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 17 years old. I am based in Co. Galway.

My talent is based on music. I have a passion with me for singing. I would love to start writing different types of music. I feel that this would influence young teenagers and bring a difference within the community.

Today in our society being a young person can be difficult, due to peer pressure affecting the actions of young people, this includes drinking, smoking, drugs, social media, religion, culture, racism and their lifestyle.

Being a young Irish Traveller woman today can be challenging due to discrimination in many aspects in our lives. This is a major problem within the education system and is very apparent when we look into the small percentage of young Travellers that complete their Leaving Certificate. This is something I feel very strongly about as I am starting in 6th year in September. I aim to go to collage the following year to do a course on nursing. I strongly urge that something changes within society and in the lives of young Traveller people to support them to achieve their full potential whether this is in education, employment, sport, talent, and being involved in their community. I feel devastated that this is not the case in our society today and that young Travellers' voices aren't being recognised and heard today. I strongly believe this has a big impact on their self-esteem and discourages them from participating fully in every aspect of our society.

Another aspect which prevents young Travellers from being involved within their community is discrimination experienced by young Travellers when socialising. I feel that there's a massive amount of stereotyping about what being a Traveller person in general involves. Despite Traveller ethnicity been recognized and equalised things still hasn't changed for the daily lives of Irish Travellers. Being a Traveller entails a big amount of rules and regulations due to traditional views which means that they don't have as much freedom as non-Traveller teenagers and there's certain things that is not allowed with young Traveller girls. This means it can be very difficult to socialise within the society and sometimes can feel a bit isolated. Religion is also very important to Travellers and sometimes can be judged.

My Dreams and wishes for the future Ireland is:

- The whole society should have a better understanding to do with Traveller culture and what it entails being a Traveller. I feel that this would encourage Travellers to reach their full potential.
 - Health services needs to improve e.g. more staff to decrease waiting lists.
 - Increased youth services accessible for all.
 - More support for helping marginalised young people into education and training
- I am asking you as President to hear my voice and the voices of young people.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am a 16 year old Traveller from Galway.

My youth worker asked me to write this letter when I was in doing my CV with her. I have completed my Junior Certificate and stayed in school for a bit of 5th year but I have left school. I am finding it hard to get a job as I am 16 years old, 17 in two weeks. It is hard to apply for jobs because they are looking for experience and I have none.

My youth worker asked would I do a course or go back to school, no way. I found school hard. My mother explained to the school I find it hard to concentrate. They helped me in primary, I used to sit beside the SNA who was helping a child with disability and she used to help me too. I loved primary school. When I went to secondary school and asked for help I was told I should be listening in class. I would be stopped in the hall for petty stuff – socks outside my pants and my jacket on. I wish all teachers in secondary school would have the patience and listen to me like my primary school teachers.

My neighbour is starting secondary school in September, he loves school, most of the smaller ones love school, hope they doesn't end up hating it like me.

I know teachers are busy but I needed help, asked for help, my mother asked for help and instead of helping they said I was a trouble maker.

My dream for the future is to get a job.

Kind regards,

Dear President

I'm sixteen years old and I live in Galway. I am a young person who has campaigned for speed ramps in my local area and I'm also a BT Young Scientist winner. I'm very interested in Law and Politics and what is happening in government every week.

I think it is great to be living Ireland as a young Traveller because I received great educational opportunities and my teachers and family have been a great support. Up to now, I have had only positive experiences as a young Traveller person in Ireland.

I feel though that as young person, the government does not provide sufficient facilities for young people. In particular, there are very few non-traditional sporting facilities, no playgrounds, and no musical or artistic resources. It is sometimes very frustrating that as a young person, my voice is not heard and opinions don't count.

My dream for the future is an Ireland where there are no institutionalised barriers to accessing education at every level, housing and an adequately funded public transport system.

My dream would also be for an Ireland where the government would address once and for all the scourge of alcohol and drug dependency amongst the young and create a just society where healthy alternatives are promoted and offered.

I would like you as the President of Ireland to commit more time to the issues facing the young people. This could entail holding an annual conference to really hear the voices of young people. A presidential award for a person, who has shown outstanding civic engagement could also be considered.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Your sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 16 years old and I live in Galway with a condition called Friedreich's ataxia.

I am grateful that you are taking the time to do this competition as it is great to see you care about young people in Ireland. Nothing is perfect but there is always room for improvement, for example, I need to use a wheelchair for long walks but, I can't push myself up footpaths and around Galway City because of the cobblestones and tiles. I never bring my chair to town to avoid the embarrassment of falling out of it, so instead I have to wobble around and fall :(I have seen other people without any disease fall and badly hurt themselves, I'm not sure who to send the top half of this letter to or if they will do something.

In the future I would love to be a computer programmer and set up a crèche, but school is focused on how to measure triangles and William Shakespeare, everything I don't take an interest in, but also that we are learning things over and over again in a classroom that looks the same as what it did in the 1800s with books that we barely use but spend way too much money on.

I would love for schooling to change and how impossible it is to get even a basic part-time job, but how easy it is to get work experience and work for free. I need to go to college, I do want to have my own crèche, but because I never get to learn how to do these things properly I probably won't get to do that stuff. In 2019 I will be 18 and I don't have a clue on how to pay any bills or how to do basic things like applying for college, until the panic of Leaving Cert then I get really upset because I don't want to listen to that this late into my time in an 'Educational' 14 year programme and most of those years I have been worrying because I think we will never learn about real world issues, e.g. am I ever going to be able to rent a house because it costs too much along with bills, and with it being so hard to find a job I probably won't like because college is too dear and too confusing.

And then there is the way people deal with bullies. The whole idea of following a guideline to help students and even adults is shocking. What if the victim doesn't want to speak up to anyone but they act a little off? And in some situations people will see it happening in front of them but do nothing. Everyone deals with hard situations differently, we are not the same people therefore we cope differently.

I don't like 'complaining' but it is crazy to see the government is on 95,000 a year and they demand more from us when it's their job to fix a pothole. But they choose not to and people both like me and not at all like me are breaking bones because of it.

No one deserves a hard time. It's some people that make it a hard time for everyone because we are all struggling to provide for our families but then they get to the top and realize there is nothing here for us and some people even build huge brand new houses beside a perfectly abandoned house.

I am unsure of whether to save every penny I get for my future or give it to someone that needs something like eggs.

Thank you so much for reading this and I didn't write this to make anyone upset or think they are bad for buying things they want, but to open someone's eyes to how everything needs to change and we are all in this together :)

Kindest regards,

Dear President,

As a teen in Ireland, there are many difficulties, especially in our local towns. Personally I feel there are not enough of facilities for us young adults to enjoy. My hope for young adults in the future in our local area is to have many social activities such as organizations, sports, clubs etc. I feel this would make the local towns grow as a community and have everyone come closer together.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 13 years old and from Galway. I go to two different Foróige groups. And I really enjoy them. I think that if I had the power of presidency I would open more youth centres for kids and fund more schools to build and expand, to take as many kids as they can so everyone can receive an education. I would encourage more young people to participate in clubs and other activities around the country.

That is all,

Dear President,

I am a student from the green fields of the West.

I have grown up on a farm and in the words of Douglas Hyde “Every crag and gnarled tree and lonely valley has its own strange and graceful legend attached to it.” That quote not only represents how I feel about my home, but my country. I have created memories from the very beginning and many of them are embodied in literal form. Modern Irish history is a literal embodiment of memories. I believe there is something that many Irish teenagers long for and that is a united Ireland. An Ireland where we are not two halves, but a whole. An Ireland where divisions are dissolved and an Ireland where the whole country is at peace. An Ireland where the men and women before us know that their efforts were not in vain. As a young person in Ireland today, I see a crack. A large crack in the form of a border. A border that will only become harsher as Brexit progresses. A border that separates two states, where there should be one.

I have a dream of an Ireland of the future. As stated in Poblacht na hÉireann: “Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.” Ireland has called for us to help her. She has called for over 800 years. Many men and women have answered her call, but through violence. I have a dream of a peaceful Ireland where we learn from the past and move forward. If we are going to unite, we must do so peacefully. A person’s patriotism is shown through their actions. As a young person in Ireland, I feel that it is our time to take action. As I have learned, there is no time like the present.

I am however under no illusions, President. I am aware that this began as a political issue and it will therefore end as one. I know that this is out of your hands and I know that you cannot mend these divisions overnight. I did say that I hoped for a peaceful united Ireland and I know how we can accomplish this. It all starts with things as simple as relations. Arrange to meet the leaders of the North. Invite the youth of the North over the border. Invite them to mix with the youth of the South. We are the future. One day it will be us who leads this country. You may not see a united Ireland but perhaps we will. You will be a member of all the amazing Irish people who worked towards this feat. If we begin to improve relations now, the leaders of tomorrow will maintain them. They will grow, they will strengthen and it is my greatest hope that one day they will blend. It won’t be today nor will it be the day after but if we start now, it will be one day. It will happen.

Yours truly,

A Uachtaráin, a chara,

Is as Co. na Gaillimhe mé. Tá mé i mo chonáí i gConamara. Tá beirt deirfiúra agus deartháir amháin agam. Tá mé i mó chonáí i theach cois locha. Sa samhradh, téim amach ar an loch ag seoltóireacht, ag snámh agus ag léim isteach san uisce. An caitheamh aimsire is fearr atá agam ná seoltóireacht. Bíonn mé ag rasaíocht báid le mo scoil. Ba mhaith liom go mbeadh níos mó áiseanna spóirt faoin tuatha do dheagoirí.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

I am a 16 year old student in Co. Mayo. I have also been member of Maigh Eo Comhairle na nÓg for the last year.

As a young person in this country I find that one of the most important things to people of my age group is having a voice. This could come across as many different things to many different people, but, I believe that the majority of people would agree with me when I say it means that you are listened to when you give a voice to your opinion.

I know that as teenagers we are going to have a lot of things to complain about and many of them are out of anyone's control, but, I feel there is something that can be done to help young people feel like they have more control over their lives. In my opinion, the legal age to vote should be lowered to 16 as it would make younger people feel like they can have more of a say with what happens in their life. However, some people oppose this idea as they say young people are not yet responsible enough to vote, but there is quite a lot of effort involved in getting your name on the register of electors; and so I believe that if a young person did not truly want to vote and have a say in what happened then they would not go through the tasks involved with becoming a voter.

Overall, I feel that the youth should be more involved in their society in general. I would like to see the promotion of youth groups or projects such as Comhairle na nÓg and Foróige as these groups can open up a whole world of opportunities for young people.

Regards,

Dear President,

I am 15 years old and I am a part of Comhairle na nÓg. I live in Co. Mayo. My topic is my hopes and dreams for a future Ireland.

One thing I hope you can achieve in the future is the decline in homeless people in Ireland. It is an issue that has gotten worse over the year and is something that can be avoided. If you insure there is affordable housing I believe there will be less people sleeping on the streets. There is also a lot of abandoned buildings that could house people if they were redecorated. This could lead to a decrease in homelessness.

Another thing I hope for the future in Ireland is to raise awareness for mental health. Suicide is a big issue in Ireland with approximately 500 suicides recorded each year. Suicide rates are three times higher in men than women. Ireland also has the fourth highest teen suicide rate. If we show people that it is OK to not feel good all the time I believe we can help decrease the amount of suicides each year. We should also attempt to create a society where people feel just as comfortable to talk about their mental health as they do their physical health.

Also I hope that Ireland can cut down on air and sea pollution. Wildlife in Ireland will suffer if we don't do something to stop the pollution and deforestation. We should be stricter on the amount of fossil fuels we use and have more land saved for trees. The amount of plastic we use should be decreased in an effort to decrease the amount of plastic in our oceans.

Thank you for reading my letter, I hope you take these things into account during your term in office.

Best of luck,

Dear President,

I live in Co. Mayo and I am a Junior Cert student. Both my parents are civil servants and I have a sister seven years younger than me. My father is also a part-time farmer and I have a great love of the land, animals and nature. I am proud of my country and proud to be from Mayo and hope we can bring Sam McGuire home to Mayo in my lifetime!

I am part of the so called “lost generation” that are frowned upon in today’s society, but yet are the future of Ireland, the generation that promotes change and equality. Young people today are encouraged in school and at home to be the best we can be. But how can we do so if the cost of school supplies, trips, uniforms and footwear are so expensive that the expense of these items has become such a burden for modern families that it is holding us back from achieving our goals and dreams. Education is a right and although the standard of education in Ireland is superb it is not “free” and as accessible to all as is portrayed in the media.

Anxiety is one of the biggest problems for young people in Ireland today. In 2017, 2,500 young people were left waiting for mental health services. They were unhappy at the lack of clinical protocols for children in a mental health crisis. My Nanny suffers from depression so I have seen what it is like for someone going through a mental illness and the impact it has on both the person and their family. It is imperative that young people in particular have immediate access to these crucial services which can often lead to life or death situations.

Another of my many concerns for the future is “Will I own my own home?” Presently in this financial climate young people are struggling to find affordable homes and start families. The number of young people still living with their parents is steadily increasing. Will it continue to become ever more difficult to get a foot on the property ladder for myself and my generation? Everyone wants the opportunity to “fly the nest” but will young people get a chance to live their lives if they can’t gain the independence of living in their own home. In July 2018, the number of children left homeless in Ireland had risen drastically from 749 children in 2017 to 3,867 children in 2018. I feel so lucky and blessed to live in a comfortable home with both parents in full employment and I often think of teenagers my age, trying to study while living in unsuitable accommodation and the insecurity and distress this situation causes them.

Overall, and despite the great difficulties Ireland has faced, the Irish remain hopeful, proud of their achievements and optimistic about the future for them and their families. The youth vote needs to be taken much more seriously in Ireland. Young people, like myself, have issues that we care about. We need to be listened to, represented and taken seriously.

To quote President John F. Kennedy “Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future”.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am a native of Sligo town, however, I currently reside in a rural town in Roscommon. I love reading, writing and taking part in things such as Comhairle na nÓg and Foróige. I love being able to work on local youth issues and to meet new people along the way but there are problems that need to be addressed and fixed and I hope by reading this letter you will understand and be able to do just that.

Being a young person in Ireland I feel that young people's voices and needs are not being carefully considered or thought through by our government. Since moving to Roscommon, it is pretty apparent there is not a substantial amount of funding and resources for rural communities in the way of youth clubs and youth-oriented activities. Compared to other counties, Roscommon and other rural areas are criminally underfunded and as a result there is an excess amount of youths who have turned to drinking and doing drugs out of the sheer lack of youth-friendly places to go to in order to express themselves. They are left after school hours to wander the streets with friends having nowhere really to go to or stuck indoors online bar maybe a sports practice every couple of days. There needs to be more funding for facilities in rural areas and more facilities being built in rural areas. Should you make this happen, I can see more young people going to accessible youth facilities where they can do something worthwhile with their lives outside of academia and bettering themselves for the future.

Despite being in a committee such as Comhairle na nÓg I still feel as though my voice isn't being heard in policies regarding young people. The youth of this nation needs to have a say on issues in the government that pertain to us. Our voices are not something politicians can simply choose whether to listen to or not. We are the ones that will have to live everyday according to the policies and laws you pass about issues pertaining to youth not the politicians who passed them. The governing body of Ireland and you, President, need to listen to what the youth of this country want to see happen through your term in office whether by letters like this, emails, petitions or campaigns. As the future of this great country we deserve to have our say on items pertaining to us, we deserve to be listened to and we do not deserve to be dismissed for simply being young.

I urge you to listen to my words and to focus on the youth of our nation as they are the people who will grow to become doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, politicians and President themselves and they are the ones who will continue making this country even better.

Thank you, President, for all you will hopefully do for us in the future.

Sincerely,

Dear President,

I am a sixteen-year-old secondary school student in Mayo and a keen representative of Comhairle na nÓg. I represent my school.

In my opinion, growing up a young person in Ireland today is scary. With the knowledge of widespread drug use around my area alone, I personally know too many people that do or have experimented with drugs.

Along with that, there's the impending doom of the Leaving Cert which is going to decide your whole future, trying to have a social life with homework, after school activities, study, and an overactive mind that's telling you something bad is going to happen tomorrow and you don't know what it is but it's going to happen. Growing up in general is scary, but it's much scarier knowing you feel as though if you talk your voice won't be heard.

I believe in the future we could do more to include youth in politics, and not just youths from advantaged places where the upper class reside, but kids from rundown areas who know what's wrong and are proud of where they come from so will do whatever they can to fix it. In my opinion, every county council could have one member 16 or 18+ to help make decisions. I believe this is also why Comhairle na nÓg is important to Ireland, as it does help get a youthful opinion out on everything, and as politicians often say, youth is the future.

The world is changing rapidly. With all the advancements in technology every day no one really knows what's going to happen tomorrow. It could be a cure for cancer, or flying cars could be invented, or there could just be another iPhone announced. All I know is, I'd like to have a say in what happens next.

Sincerely,

A Uachtarán,

Tá mé as Co.na Gaillimhe. Tá mé i mo chonaí i gConamara. Tá dhá deirfiúir agus dearthar amháin agam. Tá mé i mó chonaí i theach in aice le loch. Sa samhradh téim amach ar an loch ag seoltóireacht, snámh agus léim isteach san uisce. An caitheamh aimsire is fear atá agam ná seoltoireacht. Bíonn mé ag rasaíocht bád le mo scoil. Ba mhaith liom go mbeadh níos mó áiseanna sport faoin thuatha do deagoirí.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

Ireland is a beautiful country, where they put their honour where their mouth is. However we can be better, An Ireland free of racism, love is the only God we have on earth that can save us from ourselves and from the hate we have for each other, the outside is not a reflection of my humanity inside, Because inside I skip a beat every second just like any other Irish citizen. Should we fight as people, we should find a way back to each other. Racism has separated the world from greatness for a very long time. My dreams and hopes for my country Ireland is that we strive together, that we are united in every possible way. That I receive help from a stranger, for when my neighbour succeeds, I and Ireland succeed. I see an Ireland where education is key for every young person, where it is a priority for our government to invest more in, for an educated country is a strong nation that nothing can break. I want to see our country develop with more innovative ways that ensure a long, prosperous and healthy life for every Irish person. My dream is that Ireland one day becomes an example of a great nation of a non-racist and non-sexist country, that we never fall but keep growing stronger and bold, that every country we enter into as Irish people we are welcomed with honour and respect. That we implement strategies that put our country first. Working together to put Ireland on the map to have been the one to create amazing inventions that would help the world. We are human fighting for survival, for no one is superior to another but we are all equal. A growing economy that is solid and durable. Together we will rise from the ashes, together we will conquer, together nothing is impossible. We will be each other's pillars.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Hello. I am 17 years old, female, currently living in Co. Dublin. My Interest in sports would be 5/5. I'm involved with Irish Water Safety lifeguards training qualification currently passed 5 exams. This also helps me at home with kids choking and knowing what to do when my younger brother's seizures happen, by putting him into a rescue position. I'm a sporty girl as I'm part of Scouting Ireland, was also involved in the Irish Girl Guides which was an incredible experience. It got me and many others to go into the outdoors, and getting involved by entering the Gaisce Awards (bronze award) and achieving it during my Transition Year in secondary school was outstanding and I'm hoping to go on to my silver and gold in the future. I've recently been involved in the Leadership for Life conference which I passed module 1 and it was such a great experience as I was single going and I've met so many new people which I can get to know as life goes on and these people were also very open-minded, not just to me but to all the staff and volunteers helping out during the week of the course. I've also gotten involved in the hockey recently as I am a big fan of the Ireland hockey team #Greenarmy.

Life for me isn't as you would expect this to be, because my brother has a disability. It's very rare, AHC, which is a rare neurological disorder in which repeated, transient attacks of Hemiplegia (paralysis of a portion of the body, including the face) occur, usually affecting one side of the body or the other, or both sides of the body at once. This would cause my brother to get weakness in his muscles, get daily seizures or episodes and causing his brain side effects on his speech and physical and mental health. We have a families pet dog who would comfort my brother in these times especially when he gets a seizure, she would respond fast and calm his body. My brother is able to walk but spends most of his time in a wheelchair at home, away or in school (special needs school). He would have daily challenges both at home and school.

Living in Ireland as a young teenager today is great as there are lots of activities be involved in and so many challenges to conquer. I would like to put forward my choice for the voting for government. I was hoping that because we are the future stars, that we should be able to have the right and option to vote to for the future aged from 16 onwards.

My dreams for my future would be getting a degree in general nursing or childcare, and being able to become a leader of my own youth club service and committee.

I would like the President to invite more children to take part in the Gaisce Award as it's a great way to focus on nature and mental health ages from 12-18 and be able to represent to all societies and post-primary schools. Also make more awareness of special needs children to younger kids based on the "No Limits" book and audio as it's a great way for younger people to understand through reading and listening with audio.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Day by day, our society is changing. Equality is developing at a rapid pace. As a young person who is a member of the LGBT community and somebody who is on the spectrum, I feel safer and safer in my community. Many past presidents have fought for equality, and I pray that you – future President – will continue this fight for people like me who can often be underrepresented. One thing which I would like to change in future at some point is the legal voting age. I want to have my own say in the country I will grow up in, I want to start deciding my own future, At the age of 16 I am expected to decide my subjects that will influence my future education, and therefore affect my life as I enter adulthood. I want to create my own path in life, and if I can decide my career path at this point of life, I should have the right to vote for what I believe in for the country I live in. I'm not the only young person to believe this, and I want future generations to come to feel represented and understood. I have faith in you to take care of our country, and to look out for every member of the community.

Dear President,

Hi, I'm a young person in Ireland. I feel our voices aren't heard enough. We'll try tell adults and we get told "we were young once too". Well as true as that is, you didn't grow up with social media. Now it has many pros but quite a few cons. On social media you see the drop dead gorgeous, perfect social media stars who don't have one spot or one grey hair. We live in an era where perfect isn't good enough. Where the body shaming, homophobic comments, online bullying and trend keeper-uppers are real. We live in a time where you're expected to have lips like Kylie, hips like Shakira, an ass like Kim and look like, well, look perfect. Hello, no one is perfect!! So why are we meant to be perfect. We live in a world where we don't get heard anymore. Where most teenagers feel like even if they are screaming for help they don't get heard. Which leads me to the next point, mental health.

We live in a time where mental health issues make you weak and asking for help makes you weak too. So many young people are struggling with mental health and suffer in silence, this is not okay. On this topic of mental health, victims of sexual and physical abuse feel too scared to talk out because they are too scared and don't know where to go. We need a place in Roscommon where abuse victims can come together and talk, not a support group because trust me that won't help. A group in a safe place where we can just hang out and talk.

Dear President we just want to be heard, because not enough of us are confident enough to talk and be heard. Dear President please just listen to us.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

It's Nathdog on mic, we be up in the C
People trying drown my mood,
People trying put me in the dirt
Depression taking over
My Life is on a down low,
Not knowing what to do
I've nowhere to go or nothing to do
No resources, no programmes,
Nothing at all to relieve all this stress
Friends behind my back
Talking lies on my life
My friend count going down
Suicide thoughts running through my head
No one knew until I spoke up
Got the courage and needed to speak
Found out about the Quad
I opened up and told my full life story
Tears running down the sides of my cheeks
They comforted me
They brought smiles to my face
Got the help I needed to live
So I am here today to write this
Song to say to you that we need
These programmes and resources so other people
Don't have to go through what I had to.
Yeah
Peace Out!

Dear President,

I'm 16 years old. I'm from Co. Mayo. I'm writing to you to tell you about what my life is like as an Irish adolescent, and what I hope you can change in your term in office.

I live in a council estate on the outskirts of a town. I go to a school that's way too expensive for a public school that's supposed to be free. Neither of my parents are employed but I have a part-time job. Money means a lot of different things to different people. Some people see it as a means of judging the value of one's life. Others see it as an evil that corrupts good people. I see money as a barrier between myself and a normal life.

What do I mean by normal? I don't really know. Whether or not such a thing exists, I'm not sure. What I know for sure is that life is so much more difficult without financial comfort. I get good grades in school, I'm a caring person and I'm lucky enough to have talents but my family and I will always be judged on our street address and bank balances. No matter how successful I may be, I'll always have that label. Every day I'm reminded of the fact that I have less so therefore people think that my life is worth less than theirs.

When you put up with that stigma every day, it takes its toll. Your mental health wears thin and as a result your physical health becomes much worse as well. Men under 35 are the most at-risk demographic when it comes to suicide. Suicide is the second biggest killer of this group. While I'm one of the lucky ones who got help, many don't get the support they need. As a man, you're told that you have to be "strong" and be in a peak physical and mental state at all times. Some people may even go one step further and say mental health is not even a thing, simply because it can be deemed less tangible than physical health. That sort of delusion scares me. Those same people probably have everything they could ever need and yet they expect that everyone else should feel fine because they themselves feel fine. That's not how life works.

I may never be the leader of this country. I may never be a household name or be rich. But I want to be happy. I want to pursue my dreams and to try and get the course I want in college and get the job that I want. That may not all happen, and that's fair enough, but everyone deserves an equal opportunity to achieve their goals.

I hope that you, the leader of our country, and everyone across our political landscape, deal with the issues of mental health and inequality in a meaningful way. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

A Uachtaráin, a chara,

Tá mé ceithre bhliana dhéag d'aois. Tá mé i mo bhaill do gásóga mara i nGaillimh. Tá an-suim agam sa bhfarraige agus is breá liom bheith ag seoltóireacht. Mar gheall ar sin ba mhaith liom béim mhór a chur ar eachtraí spóirt sna scoileanna i gConamara. Slán anois. Tá súil agam go bhfuil tú ag baint an-sult as do phost nua mar Uachtarán na hÉireann.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

Congratulations on winning the 2018 election. I am 17 years old and about to enter 5th Year.

On the cusp of adulthood I am a part of a changing Ireland, a country making strides to catch up politically and socially with other first world countries. We have already made great progress in the past few years with overwhelming majorities voting in favour of issues such as gay marriage and repealing the 8th amendment. With these referendums, especially with the most recent of the two, there was a large increase in the amount of young people voting. This is a positive development to see young people who are politically aware and enthusiastic partaking in political affairs, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, or their own political beliefs.

It is great to see our country evolve into a proud modern nation that others admire, but I feel as though some other large problems in our country are being pushed to the side in order to present ourselves in a positive light. In my opinion, the most important of these issues being swept under the rug is homelessness. To quote Mahatma Gandhi, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

As I write this letter, the outstanding headline in today's news is that of Margaret Cash. She and her six children (aged between 1 and 11) had to spend the night in Tallaght Garda station as they had nowhere else to go. The Gardaí contacted multiple homeless shelters and hotels, but there was no accommodation available. By the time this letter is published and released, this family will be forgotten in the public eye, as will many of the tragic stories in relation to homelessness. An example of this is the case of a man called Jonathan Corrie dying very close to Leinster House on the 1st of December 2014. His story has now slipped into the archives and will most likely only reappear in a "Reeling in the Years" episode for 2014. To the public, it appears as though there is promise for reform to this issue, but that none of this has happened. These people are being stripped of the dignity that they all deserve as they sleep outside in horrible conditions, and it appears as if nothing is being done to combat this. None of us would wish this on our worst enemies and it leaves you feeling sick in your stomach thinking about how terrible this problem has become. We need to reverse the situation whereby the state has abdicated its responsibility to provide social housing, and rather has provided tax incentives to allow large swathes of newly-built dwellings to be hoovered up by foreign-owned investment funds. I ask of you that you do as much as you can to bring positive change so the number of stories like this decrease, and ideally disappear, in the future.

I hope you are the harbinger of great change for Ireland as we embrace a diverse and accepting future where nobody gets left behind.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 16 years old from east Ireland in a small county known as Kildare. I am an only child and grew up in the countryside with my parents and my grandparents and uncle living next door. I had an amazing childhood, the best, and I couldn't ask for anything to be different. I have had many role models in my life such as my mother and grandmother. Also I experienced grieving at a young age when my granny passed away when I was ten years old. Since my family were immensely close, this was a tragedy for me. It made me really think about life and for the next five years I continued to live a teenage life, gaining new friendships, learning life skills, developing talents as well as meeting new people and helping out where I could. I have no idea who you are, whether you are male, female, young or old but I hope you follow in previous presidents' footsteps like my idol Mary Robinson. I find her inspirational because she never gave up and that's a trait that is very strong in my heart.

I grew up playing Gaelic football and Irish dancing, I was a bit chubby also known as fat up until age 13. I was never super fit or super skilful or in fact great at running, and for these reasons I never got picked to start a match playing football. The only reason I would ever start is because there wasn't enough players or because my Mam was watching and they would take me off after the first two minutes. In addition they were waiting on a player to come, who was arriving late and I took her place for a few minutes. I did attend training most of the time and it was a small GAA club so they had no excuse when it came to they had too many kids, they just also had me on the sideline with maybe one of two other eager children whose confidence dropped every time they weren't played. Eventually when there weren't enough players and when they started playing me, I was really bad because I know that my coach didn't believe in me at the start and I was no good then. I didn't fight for the ball or make a huge attempt to run after it. I was always disappointed when I wasn't played. After a while I wished I wasn't put on because I knew I was so bad that I was just embarrassing myself. Even because I wasn't a fast runner. It's even happening today when I was 15 years of age. So then I thought that it was just the coach, did she have a bad experience being a sub, did she have something against me? I did a referee course and I didn't have enough confidence to referee for my club then. I had confidence in all other areas such as public speaking because I love drama, but when it comes to my stomach and fitness, I have major downfalls and I tend to give up very easily without a fight.

Now that you know some information about me, I want to inform you that my Mam is the best mother in the world. She's very caring and understanding, to be honest no adjective can describe her, I can't even describe how but from reading what else I have wrote, it's all because of her, she taught me to express my opinion, be true to myself and never give up!! And it will bring me a long way so I have stuck to that and I will continue to for the rest of my life.

At age 15, I entered Transition Year where I reflected on my past years, decided on a career option that would suit me and I came out of my comfort zone. I raised awareness for starving children in Kenya, Africa and I became a better person by listening to my family and seeing what reactions my peers would give. One major thing I learned is that teenagers can be very jealous and cruel when it comes to achievements. I attend an all-girls secondary school and I soon realized that girls can be very nasty in exclusion and just being rude even to someone's face. I can't stand bullies and I gained the

courage to stand up for myself. Every time I see someone being mean to someone else I always get involved and say stop to the bully. There's a motto that I follow very closely in life and I'm sure, President, you heard it before, I think it needs to be made more public. It's 'treat people like you would like to be treated'. That goes for everyone!

An issue that is important to me is obesity and weight diseases such as anorexia. Personally, being fit and having a healthy body is important but from the media, many teenagers develop the wish to have a perfect skin, curvy body. I believe that from seeing models in magazines, it makes teenage girls feel insecure about their height, weight and body shape. Sadly, it can lead to anorexia which is very common amongst teenage girls in Ireland. I am writing to you to request a change in the media and to not give funding to companies who wish to portray their clothing on a super skinny model.

Thank you for taking a few moments out of your busy life to read my letter. I hope that you make my wish come true. I believe that Ireland will be a better country if we get rid of the publicity of stick thin models.

I am going to end on one very important issue and it is age discrimination. So did you know you had to be 16 to do your work experience in a primary school when your dream job is to be a teacher; also you have to be 16 to go on a school volunteering trip when you are giving your time to help others; you have to be 16 to get a part-time job when you are just as responsible as most 16 year olds but since you are 15 you can't get a wage for working. However I proved this wrong, but it was hard, it took a lot of will power to not give up and to fight my ground. With the help of the bravery of my Mam and I, I managed to prove everything wrong. I know I managed to do it only because I have a supportive Mam, but other teenagers without supportive parents would just give up. So President I am asking you to rethink the age and what responsibilities come along when you turn 16. I understand 18 for drinking alcohol and 17 for driving but do you really think a 16-year-old can't do the same as a 15-year-old and just because they started school early they can't achieve part of the Transition year programme which is work experience?

Thank you for reading.

Kind regards,

Dear President,

I am 17 years old and I am going into my Leaving Cert year in a school in Co. Sligo. A big year for me ahead, and the topic of my letter to you. I hope that the education of young people holds a special place in your heart, as I believe it's the foundation of this country's future. I'm hoping you may be able to shed a little light on my concerns, and indeed the concerns of other people my own age.

Seventeen and eighteen is a very young age. At seventeen, under the eyes of the law we are still children. Yet, as a child I must decide on what I would like to do for the rest of my life. Or give a fair guess. This scares me and I know I am not the only one intimidated. I am not asking you to change the age that marks this decision and I am not asking you to postpone college life until a later stage. I am simply asking, that if we must make a decision this important at such a young age, then please ensure that we have the correct resources and that the people teaching us our options know everything that is on offer to us.

I'm referring to careers classes and career guidance counsellors. I don't wish to slander every careers teacher in this country, but from my own experience I'm not satisfied with what I was taught through Transition Year and Fifth Year. These are the years that all the students in my school begin their lessons in the careers class, and yet it took two years and a separate careers counsellor outside of my school to bring to light for me my academic ability and sort out my possible interests in a career.

My first concern originates from the fact that I had to source a careers counsellor outside of my school, county and province. Very recently I travelled to Co. Westmeath to see a very intelligent gentleman who helped me down the correct career path. With every intention to do medicine in NUI Galway as I walked in his doors, I was certain I wanted to do a course in communications when I exited his office. This is a massive difference, and the change of mind came from only an hour of research into who I am as a person and what I am interested in. Something I never did in my original careers class in school. Within my school classes, I was sent off by myself to do multiple tests online, for example on Qualifax or Careers Portal, but I completed these tests with the mind-set of a girl who was "destined" to study medicine, making my answers quite biased. Never once did I meet one-on-one with my careers teacher to examine my different interests and abilities. Looking back on the time I wasted in those classes, I am glad there are people out there who really know what they are doing. However, not everyone is as fortunate as me to have parents who earn enough to pay hundreds for a counsellor outside of school. This is why the level of accuracy these people hold should be the same with teachers inside school. I have spoken to tens of students from different schools over the past two years and I have found my school isn't the only one.

Within this one hour session outside of my school, I learned a lot about courses, subjects and colleges I thought I knew close to everything about. This is where my second concern derives from. In Transition Year is when I began my studies of colleges and courses for my future. At the end of this year we are told to choose our subjects for our Leaving Cert, based on what we want to study in college. I was sixteen years old. Personally, I think this is a ridiculous age to decide on subjects that will, in summary, decide our fate. Or make entering another course extremely difficult. I am a well-educated young girl, and I am aware that there are backdoors into every course but I believe that we

should be informed enough to be able to take the most direct path to our chosen career. At sixteen, unfortunately, I had no idea what that chosen career was but I had to make a decision. I was told then and there that if I wanted any chance to enter a medical course in college, I must choose chemistry. At the time, chemistry was up against business, a subject I strived in and loved to learn about, as opposed to chemistry, which I have never been very good at and still am not to this day. Later on in fifth year with all my subjects chosen and no going back or changing, I learned that NUIG, the college I had wished to study in, offers medicine to those who haven't studied chemistry in school. I realised, here I am studying a subject that I cannot connect to and that I don't necessarily need, when a subject I had great time for is taught in another class which would most definitely have boosted my chances of reaching higher points on Leaving Cert results day 2019. This misunderstanding and lack of knowledge in my careers class cost me a subject that would have benefited me greatly with reaching my maximum potential in the Leaving Cert. I fear for the other uninformed decisions my friends and students across the country have made, and indeed what other things we may have been taught that weren't 100% true. My point being, if we are to be taught about how we can reach our chosen career using our different academic abilities, please let us have the correct information.

I am coming to the end of my letter to you. My concerns are not only mine but concerns of hundreds of other Irish students who aren't fortunate enough to have a first-class careers teacher. So I plead of you, President, the young people of this country are finally getting a platform to speak to you directly through their letters, poems and verses. We ask that you take us seriously, our future seriously and work with us to create the Ireland we imagine to be perfect.

I look forward to following you in your new term in office. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Dear Future President

2018

and I guess that I'm happy

I just have a few questions

I'd like to mention

How do we stop poverty?

How do we love each other like we're all just one big family?

And how do we focus on the things that effect the youth and the elderly?

I'd like to see equality

I'd like to think we're all the same without no negativity

And I'd like to see, love spread throughout every single community

We've many things that have gone right

But,

We've also many things that as a country we could fight.

I'm sick of sitting back and watching things go wrong,

And people dying 'cause they didn't think they belonged!

The number of people sleeping rough

Plus the number of them that think it's alright to do drugs.

I just thought I'd let you know

'Cause, the President of Ireland

Has the full control

So I beg

So I beg

To you

To help

Dear President,

Hello there, I'm from a small village in County Mayo. I'm writing this letter to tell you what it's like to be a young person living in Ireland and some issues young people face today.

You wake up around 7am every morning for 5 days in a row Monday to Friday. You then take a shower, brush your teeth, comb your hair and get your school uniform on. Then you'll bring your school bag into the kitchen to put your drink and lunch in it unless you're buying a lunch at school. Eating your breakfast you might check your phone for any "news". Then it's off to the car, bus, bicycle, carpool etc. to arrive to the school.

Classes begin and continue for the day. You'll see your friends and catch up with the latest stories. Around 4pm classes end and you go home, usually with a bag full of books for the mountains of homework you'll have to do.

In the evening after completing your homework, you might go and play sports, meet up with friends, go to music classes, watch some TV, do chores or maybe you'll just start your homework!

Weekends are really the same as evenings on the weekdays. But sometimes there are birthday parties, discos or more weekend homework. Ahhh!!

Those are just average days though. Teenagers are looked down upon in society sometimes. Like every time you see a teenager in a hoodie you immediately think he or she is bad news but sometimes that's not true. Teenagers are very much the victims of stereotyping and it needs to be stopped. Also teenagers are put under tremendous stress as a result of homework in on time, upcoming tests, balancing their social life with their family life and doing their beloved hobbies. Stress is not good at all especially for teenagers. As future President I hope you tackle some of these issues and make Ireland a better place for all ages, races and cultures to live in. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Hello. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your success and hope for your term in office to be productive and the very best for you.

I live in county Galway. I am a 15-year-old male. My favourite interests are learning about other cultures and histories especially feudal Japan and world folklore, kendo, archery, competitive gaming. I do many martial arts as sports. The sports I do are kendo and judo. The biggest problem I have though is my other peers poke fun at me for doing strange sports instead of the popular soccer, GAA or hurling. But it doesn't get in my way for not doing what I love, that is probably the biggest difficulty I get in my day-to-day life.

As for Ireland, I shall hope to see Ireland thrive in the arts and prosperity. The future of Ireland is now and there are going to be many advancements that will make Ireland a great country such as health, transport, standard of living, and sport.

I see a bright future for Ireland and I am confident to see Ireland a great country like it is in the present. I wish you and Ireland well during your time in office.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I'm 17 years old and I'm a proud Mayo woman. I have been a member of my local Foróige club for five years now. I'm also a member of Mayo Comhairle na nÓg.

When I was younger, my Dad would always say to me "You'll be President someday", and if I was to ever become President, I would make sure that people from Mayo and Mayo itself, get the recognition they deserve.

There once was a saying, "To hell or to Connacht", implying that Connacht would be an equivalent to hell, but I believe it's one of the most brilliant places on earth. Mayo is a place where people know the meaning of team spirit (this mostly being exhibited in how dedicated the Mayo Gaelic supporters are and how they never ever give up), a place where the Mona Lisa has nothing on the beauty of our landscape and a place where whole communities bind together in times of need.

This being said, Mayo does lack one thing in particular which affects me and all of the youth of this brilliant county: facilities for our young people. Teenagers in the most rural areas of Mayo and even in the urban areas have nowhere to go, meet up and chill out in a safe and fun environment. If you are a member of a Foróige club or a No Name club, you may have a meeting once a week to have fun, chat with your friends outside of school and work on some interesting projects, but other than this, we have nothing. The only places for us young adults to go and I know from my experiences also, is places like McDonalds or Supermacs or lounge about the town in the rain.

I would love to see something happen on this front, I believe its one of the most important issues there could be - the experiences we have in our youth are what will shape us as adults.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Here are some issues I think are important in Ireland today:

- Homelessness, need to take care of the people who are homeless, it's not like they have very much money. We shouldn't leave them to just survive on it in a country with plenty of helpful hands. We should try to make it easy for them and set up help. I hope we can also keep them in our prayers.
- People who commit murders or have done crimes when in secondary school or in the first few years of college (like Anastasia). Take good care of them when arresting or talking to them. Think of the hard times they might have had or personal matters when dealing with the situation and remember this is a time of anxiety, stress and more.
- Sexual harassment towards all genders, ages and people/animals. I hope you can try your best to keep the chance of it down.
- There was a new species of lobster found around the coast of Ireland lately. They are usually found around the coasts of Africa or other countries. This is AMAZING. We should NOT hunt these fish as they are new. We have lived a lot without them as food and should not need them for this or any other supply. And we shouldn't threaten or hunt them and if we ever do may we not overfish them.
- Keep drug selling under control.
- Help those who have Down Syndrome.
- Not to be cruel to animals.

Yours sincerely,

A Uachtaráin, a chara,

Tá mé dhá bhliain déag d'aois. Tá cónaí orm i nGaillimh. Tá mé sa chéad bhliain. Is breá liom bheith amuigh ar an bhfarraige ag seoltóireacht nó ag cadhcáil agus fuair mé teastas dara leibhéal sa chadcáil an lá cheana.

An fáth go bhfuil mé ag scríobh chugat inniú ná ba mhaith liom dhá bhféadfá tuilleamh áit a chur ar fáil le haghaidh foscadh do bháid timpeall an chósta. Go mór mór sa gheimhridh nuair a bhíonn an aimsir go dona ar fad. Tá mé ag scríobh an litir seo chugat fad is atá an stoirm mhór Ali taobh amuigh. Bhí muid thíos ag an gcé ag seiceáil ar na báid agus bhí siad ar fad ag imeacht ó phosta go piléar agus iad i gcontúirt.

Mura mhiste leat, ba mhaith liom da gcuirfeá deis foscadh beag ag gach cé.

Do chara,

Dear President,

I live in Co. Galway. I love reading and writing poetry and short stories. I identify as a LGBTQ+ young person.

In Ireland today I feel that it's very expensive for young people and their families to live. Housing is in very short supply, it's too expensive and the only available houses are not accessible if a family does not have a car.

I feel that Alcohol is advertised too much in society and particularly in sporting events. I also feel that supports for the whole LGBTQ+ community needs to be mainstreamed and all aspects of health information and services for LGBTQ+ people needs to be as accessible as other mainstream services.

Schools are not accessible for young people with special and additional needs and mental health difficulties. Mental health services for all groups need to be better. In particular for young people, there is a need to improve and reduce waiting lists. I am on a waiting list for ASD supports for over a year and feel that the government does not care about the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

My dreams for Ireland is a number of things:

- All LGBTQ+ community be accepted, safe, represented and can be as active and involved in the community as they wish.
- Each person has somewhere safe to live and is accepted where they live.
- More equality about medical services and medical cards are accessible for everyone that needs them.
- Improvements to A&E services.
- Roads are safe and can be shared between cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles
- Farms need to be safer. Farmers can make a living and are involved in the social, economic and political conversation.
- More discussion about the health benefits of the legalisation of marijuana only for health purposes.

In conclusion I feel that government does not care enough about young people's mental health. I hope in your term as President you can help change this by bringing young people into decision-making and into politics. I really hope this as my generation will have to live in the world that older generations have created.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am a 16-year-old Traveller from Galway.

When I was asked to write this letter a few things came to mind that I would like to say to the new President. It is very rare to be asked what you would like to say to a President about life as a young person.

Don't know what you can do to change or help this. Daily we see used needles thrown outside our local shop, in the parks beside the woods and in the field beside the soccer pitches. All the places we hang out, we can't get away from it. Drug dealers are getting away with it. Some people in the soccer club are trying to clean it up and reporting it because it's on the pitches, it looks bad but it doesn't seem to change.

Don't want this for the small ones or for anyone to get hurt.

Thanks,

Dear President,

I was writing this late one night because I had so much homework. My brain was frazzled so I asked my mother what she thought life was like for young people in Ireland. She said "Under pressure if you ask me" before telling me "Stop taking pictures and get off your phone." This is when it struck me, Snapchat is a major aspect in our lives today so why not use it to ask young people their opinions on the topic instead of just giving my own? These are some of the snaps I received:

"Idek like it's all just people on their phones these days"

"It's a struggle because there's a clear difference between people living in cities and in rural areas"

"Tbh there's a constant pressure and high expectations put on people at a young age and also social media doesn't help either"

"Pressurising in terms of finance and don't get me started on the education system"

"Well I'm pretty sure we're all depressed"

"Ammm well I'd say we have it pretty good, GAA makes everything good"

"Drinks, drugs and GAA"

"Young people are goosed for the future"

"Alright but all adults think ya can't do anything so that's bad lol"

"Rural Ireland sucks, we have no donut shops"

"Very isolated to the rest of the world"

"Not enough catered towards young people in my opinion"

"Life is a toughie, so much pressure"

"There is a lot of pressure relating to school and getting into college but we have it better than the third world so we cant complain too much"

"It's great craic but right now it's 11:30pm and I'm still at work so I'm exhausted ... get me home to my bed please!"

"I'm not ready to leave my mom and they go throw me in the deep end (college)"

And last of all (sorry reader) ... "Sh*t"

So, there you have it, honest opinions from young people through one of our biggest problems today; social media. In all honesty, I could not have summed it up better myself. There are good and bad parts to life and that will always be the case. However, I hope and I'm sure young people all around Ireland hope that someday the positives in life will outweigh the negatives because lets face it, we are amazing and deserve to be happy!

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

The year is 2023. I am in my first year of college, I am attending a psychology course at DCU and I live in a rented apartment. The rent is affordable for someone like me who works, €500 a month in a single bedroom flat. This may have been lucky years ago but times have changed and as the economy has mended the rent has gotten cheaper, and, frankly more sensible.

I walk down to work at a local café and as I scan the streets and watch the people bustling to and fro in their daily lives and see the early buskers setting up shop my mind wanders back to only a few years ago when the streets would be lined with people bundled in thick blankets asleep. These people were no one and had nothing except what you saw. I earn only minimum wage at work, but it has risen to €11.50 per hour which isn't too bad.

Overall life is brilliant. The economy is thriving, hospital services and mental health services are quick and easy to get to, the homeless crisis is over too.

Until, walking home I run into a cyclist, and my world is jerked. I sit up straight and open my eyes. It was a dream. I am lying in the street in my old raggedy blanket. No one notices me. I am no one.

Kind regards,

Dear President,

We are a group of young people from Co. Dublin and although it is a beautiful place to live there is so little for us to do which is the same in so many other parts of the country. With the lack of facilities for young people it leads to boredom which in turn can lead to anti-social behaviour which impacts on the whole community, people feel unsafe in leaving their homes which leads to isolation, then the community spirit of helping each other diminishes.

Our vision for the young people of Ireland would be somewhere that they can go, to feel safe and supported if needed, to interact with other people which in turn leads to developing life skills and understanding of people's cultures and beliefs. We know that we have amazing youth organisations across the country, mainly in deprived areas, but we would like to see places in every town for every child. Adults who develop and deliver many of these services do not always know what we want or need, but we as the young people know. We are living in a council estate. The drug problems and anti-social behaviours are really high, and we can take some of the blame for this. We feel that if there was a service that not only was available for groups or 1-on-1s at allocated times, but a place that we can access for a large amount of the day, this would be good. A place to escape, to feel safe, to talk to people informally.

These spaces would be open at times when you could just drop in, chill out on bean bags, play board games, paint, create things, learn how to cook and bake. Ideally we would like to have some outdoor activities that don't cost a lot of money, like a big playground which is not just for young children.

In our area we have a really bad problem with anti-social behaviour. Young people are robbing cars all of the time and joyriding them on our narrow roads, it's so dangerous. We think if there was a safe and secure place that the boys can channel this 'need' for driving under supervision it would help to reduce the car theft and the dangerous driving. We think this can be done by developing a track where there are old cars that are fitted with safety equipment and we could drive the cars in a supervised zone. We could also learn about the cars, about road safety and how to safely drive a car without causing danger to other people or property.

Finally, at present there is not a lot to do for teenagers in our area, as pointed out above. There are football clubs, dance/drama etc. which are paid activities. Unfortunately, we live in households that cannot afford to pay for us to do anything, so we think that if lower-paid families with children could be given vouchers or discount booklets for activities in the local or surrounding areas that this would be more accessible for us.

We would like to finish by saying that we do receive supports from our local drug and alcohol youth service one day a week and through 1-on-1 appointments or family support on occasion. However, we would love to have a service that could cater for all youth from all ages and backgrounds to have a place to go, to interact with others and to feel safe and stay safe. There are a lot of issues in our estate, we don't believe we can fix them all but as young people we think that the above suggestions could help to minimise the drug use, anti-social behaviour and boredom that leads to both.

We hope that you, President, get the chance to read our letter.

Thank you,

Dear President,

I am 15 years old, I am a Transition Year student in a school in Co. Mayo and I am also a member of Mayo Comhairle na nÓg. I am writing to you in relation to what it is like to be a young person living in Ireland today.

There is no denying that being a young person in my generation has drastically changed since when our parents were our age, for example, when they used to walk down the street they would know almost everyone, whereas if I was to walk down the street I would do well to even know a single person on the street and that's coming from someone with a big family. But there is the obvious reason as to why this is, my town used to be a small community but it has vastly expanded over the years and it would be hard to know every Joe Soap.

I don't see this as a huge problem because it's not like we're all hermits who talk to themselves but if there is one problem that I have noticed and not only me but many of my friends have also noticed this problem, it is this. A common thing for teenagers to do would be to go into town and just hang around which isn't much to be asking for but there is the problem that if we were to go somewhere to sit down businesses are very hesitant to even let us in even if we had bought food, they generally make us leave so then we are left walking around town with our food and not even a place to sit. A solution: there are plenty of old buildings that are empty but are in perfect condition and I think it would be a brilliant development to make some of the buildings into a place for youths to go and not have to be forced to buy something or can even go if it starts raining or if they feel unsafe. I don't think it would be a hard motion to pass as plenty of people have a problem with teenagers "loitering" around town. Possibly in the cities there might actually be things like this for my age group but in other rural areas there isn't unless they're into sport and might be able to go to the clubhouse.

I think Ireland is a prospering country that keeps getting better and better and if even just considering this proposition could help us take the next step to becoming better I think you should take the leap of faith and consider the future of the country because the less of us on the streets feeling unsafe and unwanted could help push the perfect people to become our future leaders and even our future President in years to come.

Kind regards,

Dear President

I am 16 years old and live in County Mayo. I am a 5th year student. I am the second youngest of 6 children.

I feel so lucky to live in Ireland today as I feel we have come on so much as a nation. We are not afraid of change and we accept that all people are not the same. I was extremely proud that our country was one of the first in the world to vote in a referendum on equality for gay people.

One of my biggest concerns is that we do not do enough for the poor/old people in our society. We have a major problem with housing in Ireland, which I believe started with the banks handing out money like sweets during the "Celtic Tiger". The rich were buying up property all over Ireland but especially in the big cities like Dublin, Cork Galway etc. The young adults find it very hard today to get on the property ladder so end up renting. I feel that in the future more and more people will be renting hence making the rich cats richer. If I decide to go to college, which I hope to do, it will be nearly impossible to find accommodation. So many families are losing their homes because they are struggling to pay their mortgage. Children are suffering because both parents have to get a job now to survive. We have a major problem with homelessness and families are ending up in temporary accommodation because there are no available houses, which I find very strange when you see all the ghost estates dotted all over Ireland.

We also neglect our old people who depend on our government for care. Our health system appears to be stretched to its limits and no one knows how to fix it. It is very sad to visit an A&E and see all the people on trolleys, especially elderly people. Some old people prefer to live at home instead of going into a care home and this should be a person's right to choose. We don't have enough carers to cater for these people should they get ill. Some people live in remote rural areas and may not see anyone for days.

I do love my country and love living here, it is quite safe and we have freedom of speech, which a lot of countries still don't have. I live in a peaceful country and do not fear leaving my home, going to school etc. I am very lucky when you think about all the places in the world that are at war. I have plenty of food, warm clothes and a roof over my head and a good form of education. But I would dearly love to see every person in Ireland with the same.

Yours faithfully,

Dear President,

I am writing to you today in relation to what life is like for a young person in Ireland and my hopes and dreams for a future Ireland.

I am a Leaving Cert student from rural Mayo. Life for me is extremely different to one living in a city or even in a town. I just recently turned eighteen and I am immensely glad that I finally get to have my say, my opinion. I now have the right to vote! I am exceptionally interested in what is happening in our country! I always have been, and I also would've loved to have a say in the past referendums. My hope and dream for a future Ireland would be for the legal voting age to be lowered to 16. I am aware that questions would fly about "But sure, they're only immature" or "not all of them would vote anyway". While these accusations may be true, there are still thousands of young people out there like me, just wanting to be heard, just wanting a say on our future.

I'm sure you're going to get many responses on how the country should be run or what should change, but in reality for me, I think we're doing just great. As I have already mentioned, I'm from County Mayo, and I cannot stress to you enough, our desire to bring Sam Maguire back to the west is unbelievable. It is honestly just amazing to sit back and watch, see such a burning grà for our culture, see communities coming together for just 70 minutes of football. All-Ireland final day alone, heartbreak or not, you will see people all over the world tuning in to watch these glorious 70 minutes, these 70 minutes of hope. Even when things don't go our way, the homecoming is something else. There is such a formidable amount of respect for everyone that makes it happen and that is evident in the turnout alone! This is just one of the many things that a young person living in Ireland is so unbelievably proud of.

My hope for Ireland would be in twenty years time I could tell my kids about how when I was growing up there were these things that existed in our country called homelessness, poverty, discrimination, and they would turn to ask me "What are they?". I believe that as a country we can make this happen, we can resolve all of the negative issues in our society.

As an eighteen-year-old girl, I am living through these issues, these ambitions, these dreams. And as you, future President, will be the most powerful person on this beautiful island, I hope you could take my points into consideration. Thank you sincerely for taking the time to read my letter and I hope your term in office will bring you all the joy and love you can get!

Go raibh míle maith agat!

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

I live in Co. Roscommon. As a young person in Ireland living with Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy and Dyslexia, life can be a bit harder because sometimes I feel like I'm different from everyone else. I think there should be some youth groups for people with epilepsy and dyslexia so that they could talk about it and know that they are not the only ones and that there are people out there like them. Since joining my youth group I feel more accepted and like I belong.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Kind regards,

Dear President,

I'm 15 and I live in Galway. I love acting and I have a crazy food obsession for brownies. I would love to own a dog

This is something I wish people knew about me first instead of isn't she the one with the joint disease. I have arthritis but I would rather be known as the one that got cast as an extra in an upcoming American movie than as that (this is true), so let me introduce myself again. My name is ... Believe it or not I'm human too I have arms and legs just like everyone, my body is made up of blood and water just like everyone, so why I'm I seen so different. I'm not the queen of England, I'm not looking for attention. I'm not an alien from outer space although my arthritis does at times make me feel like an outsider. I'm definitely not lying; I've experienced enough pain already, why would I pretend when I'd rather be pain-free which is considered perfect in my eyes. Don't even get me started on all the disgusting medicine and injections I have to take almost every day. It's rather much the opposite, I pretend I'm fine.

The scariest thing for me was waking up at 5 years old and not being able to walk. The excruciating pain I felt when I tried is not something you can forget easily. From that day, for a very long time I had to be carried around everywhere. Whenever we went town I was pushed in a buggy. I couldn't do basic activities/things a 5-year-old could do. I was always in pain. I was always in pain. After rushing back and over to the doctors in Galway, they finally transferred me to Dublin where I was diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis. I was very lucky I didn't have to be put on the waiting list. If I didn't get the operation done I wouldn't be able to walk again. Up until this day I have had many different procedures done, frequent hospital visits, infusions and I take a lot of medication. Even though I still get pain and I might have this for the rest of my life, being able to walk is the best gift I could've wished for. Sometimes I wonder what it feels like to be normal and pain-free and to not have to miss out on much. I honestly can't remember what it feels like to be "normal", what is normal? A question I might never know the answer to. Living with arthritis is like a rollercoaster. An everyday task such as tying your laces and attending school is a huge challenge. Your body is constantly at war against infections, aches and pains, chronic fatigue, lack of mobility and the side effects. Arthritis puts huge emotional, financial and physical pressure on many families but every negative has a positive; just the way magnets needs negative and positive to connect, I got to meet amazing people who are just like me from support groups like iCAN. This really helped my family, especially me, because I knew I wasn't alone. We all have different stories but we are like one big family. If you needed advice or help they're always there for you and I love it.

Thank you for the taking the time to read my letter. I really hope during your time in office you will give young people suffering from arthritis a platform to have our voices heard. I do feel families with a child suffering from arthritis need more support and that there needs to be more awareness around juvenile arthritis. The waiting list is another huge problem.

Kind regards,

Dear President,

I wish you well in the presidential election. You have been a wonderful ambassador for our country as president.

I live in the cultural gem that is the west. I am 15 years old and I am currently in third year, where I am preparing for the Junior Cert. I have one brother and one sister, both younger so I have a lot of responsibilities to juggle with while I study for my exams. As I'm in third year this year I am participating in the first year of the new Junior Cert course for English/Business and Science. The new Junior Cert is much better because it allows me to show off my talents and my creative ability.

Outside of school I have many hobbies, I'm learning to play piano and I will be doing my grade 3 exam which is in November. I very much enjoy reading, my favourite authors include James Joyce (I have just finished reading Ulysses), Oscar Wilde and I'm quite partial to J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. They are amazing if you're ever looking to escape reality. I also love to write, and I hope that one day I might pen my own novel. I'm not a very sporty person but I do boxing and athletics. I know the importance of keeping fit and healthy, especially as obesity is posing us a problem in Ireland at present.

As I live in the west, Mayo specifically, and you reside in the east I feel as if our living and travelling experiences are currently quite different. In Dublin, the infrastructure is well developed in comparison to Mayo. Our roads are deteriorating rapidly, especially in rural areas, where there is a lack of public transport resulting in anyone who does not have a private car being isolated and feeling vulnerable. I hope that after the huge post office closure, which particularly hit Mayo very hard that you will time to consider.

As I'm in third year I would like to include this letter as part of my CSPE Action Project. I thoroughly enjoy CSPE as a subject and I find politics and history very interesting. I even own a copy of the constitution!

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read my letter and hopefully consider my points. I wish you a prosperous time in office and that you use your power to help as many people as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 16 years old and I live in a small village in county Monaghan, a short distance from the North-South border. I am a member of the Irish Girl Guides (IGG), which involves volunteering in my local branch on a weekly basis. Through IGG I receive many opportunities to improve my leadership and people skills and much more. I like living in Ireland, I think this country is continuously evolving and when abroad I am proud to say I am Irish.

With living so close to the border, Brexit is a huge concern for me, my family and my friends. I usually go to Northern Ireland once a week, and if there was a check point at the border, it would be much more difficult to travel. There are people who go through the border on their way to school, and needing to take a passport to go to school would be completely crazy. I believe Brexit will have a huge impact on the future of young people along both sides of the border, in terms of travel, trade, education and north-south relations.

As the seanfhocal goes “Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí”. I think education is the fuel of the next generation. In my opinion, we should teach primary school children more about how the government in Ireland operates, the structure of the EU and more about current affairs. This will entice children and hopefully encourage them to get more involved in politics in the future. I also think that the children of Ireland should be learning a European language in primary school. This would help strengthen Ireland’s trading relationships with the EU in the future.

Education happens outside the classroom with organisations such as Irish Girl Guides, GAA and Foróige. Through these organisations young people can become more confident, improve their skills, interact with others and learn more about the world around them. These organisations encourage young people to speak to one another instead of using social media.

In my opinion, Ireland should be accepting more refugees. I think that it will help make our communities more culturally diverse and that the experiences that refugees have is something we can all learn from. I think refugees should be equipped with the necessary resources and advice to help them integrate into Irish society. Refugees should be immersed in Irish communities and they should be encouraged to get involved in the committees, clubs and teams, whether it is through GAA clubs, Irish Girl Guides or Tidy Towns.

I hope that the President will try to improve Ireland for young people by giving them more opportunities to learn about the world around them and by giving them the resources to improve their own qualities and skills. I dream that Ireland will urge young people to continue improving their skills and qualities, encouraging them to learn more about the world around them, inside the classroom and outside the classroom through organisations such as Irish Girl Guides, GAA and Foróige. My wish is that Ireland will become a more accepting place for minority groups such as refugees. I hope Brexit won’t interfere with North-South relationships.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I live in a quiet, pleasant little village in Mayo, a village which I quite honestly adore. I adore the people in it, I adore the various shops and businesses that bear its name on their address and I do hope to remain as close as possible to my home village throughout my life- unlike many young people.

I would love to stay in this village for many reasons, the main one being community. The sense of community experienced in my humble village is one unparalleled by any in the world over, except I would imagine those Amazonian tribes that live, eat, sleep, and die together. Now that's community. But President I fear for our community in rural areas across the entire country. Because, as young people, we are constantly being told to travel, to get out, not to do the same (insert your own preferred expletive here) as your father did all his life. But here is where the problem begins. Because it is this attitude being instilled in our young people that "home isn't good enough" that will destroy our beautiful country. Because if there's one thing our nation is built on, it's community. And I firmly believe this is a notion that is slowly dissipating with every young person that emigrates, goes to college, leaves their beloved home to eventually live and work in the city. A city that may be vibrant and buzzing with the eclectic pulse of business, but if you look deeper, is dead at the core. There is no sense of community, or helping thy neighbour, but only an insatiable lust for money and endless seeking for promotion. Where people work for years with the eventual goal of retiring into the countryside, but without action there may not be anything desirable to retire to. Because, contrary to popular belief amongst city folk, the country is composed of much more than the odd culchie, and rolling fields, and cows. It is in my opinion one of the last great examples of real community we have in this world that is slowly being shook to derision and despair with every mere mention of fake news, or Brexit. It is the last surviving example of real people, with real heart working in tandem for each other, always there to support one another, in a sense, the incomprehensible generosity this country was built up on with wattle and daub. And it is to my great disbelief and disgust that I see our nation abandoning its roots and running for the big smoke. It is nearly pointless to reach out to our government that is slowly being poisoned by this greed and is being overrun by posh city boys incapable of ever understanding the needs of real people. Because real people do not only "get up early in the morning" as is our Taoiseach's belief, but real people are possibly up half the night with a cow calving or with a lamb not taking to its mother.

With every post office that closes and every rural school shut down, our society almost gladly migrates to the towns, allowing urbanisation to occur just like our neighbours across the pond, the ones we fought so hard against 100 years ago. So President, upon your election, I believe that perhaps this is something within your somewhat limited power. I plead with you to bring this country back to its roots, to make the ignorant aware of what is ongoing, and to rescue us from this bottomless pit from which there is no return. Over the next 7 years, make it your duty to meet and engage with as many young people as possible. One place to start could easily be our junior county councils or Comhairle na nÓgs. Try to save them from urbanisation and from the systematic culture destruction that is happening. Because our politicians won't do it. So I am asking you now. The first person to hold the office of President of our sparkling speckle in the Atlantic was Douglas Hyde, a man who fought tooth and nail to preserve our invincible culture by helping to found the Gaelic League, and who wrote the poem "An Gleann Inar Tógadh Mé", about the beauty of his home place. So please do what is right. Look into your green, white, and gold heart, and take the action to preserve what President de Híde worked so hard to achieve. Because what we are facing now is a mirror repeat of what faced that man on his election. Will you save "An Gleann Inar Tógadh Mé"? Will you save our village? Will you save rural Ireland?

Dear President,

I hope you are keeping well and have settled into your new role. I am 15 years old and about to start my Junior Cert in school. I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters. I am the oldest child along with my twin.

I love art, baking and my cat Ginger Nut. I live in a town but go to my granny's every day to work on the farm. We have 24 cows and calves altogether, we also have 32 sheep and a donkey called Pebbles. I have a cat called Ginger Nut and my whole family share our sheepdog Spud.

School is great. I have a lot of friends. However, I can't get the bus from my home town which I think should be changed. It is a long drive from my house to school. My granny lives in the country and the road into her village is all pot holes and it is dangerous. The county council need to do more maintenance. What really needs to be done is a new road made and wider bridges because the fire brigade can't get passed the bridges either end of the village. Also, I think that if someone wants to build a house on their land that they should be allowed and if they want the council to build a house on their land they should build it even if there won't be any houses beside it. The distance we drive is too long and it costs a lot of money, so we really need a house nearer to my granny's.

I like to do art and cross stitch. Whenever I get the time I draw anything that is near me outside.

Overall, I have had good experiences as a young person living in Ireland. I am happy with the new Junior Cert as it lets me show off my creativity like woodwork where I am top of my class and in Art I am one of the top people in my class.

Thank you for taking the time for reading my letter, I really hope that you will take on board the changes that we wish to be made in the country. I would also like this letter to be part of my CSPE project.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

In school, I am going to be taking my Junior Certificate examinations next June. I enjoy taking part in after school activities such as training for our cross country team. I am happy with the new Junior Certificate because it helps me show off all my different types of skills. I am taking the new course in English, business and science. I would like this letter to be a part of my project for CSPE. For last year's action project we focused on the work of an organisation called The Lions Club and this week my school were sent a letter inviting us on a tour of the Dáil this year.

I love living in my small community. We have a great bond and I have a lot of friends in school but I believe, that young people in Ireland are not always given the chance to have their voices heard. As a teenager in a rural area, it can be hard at times, because I am often faced with lots of challenges. For example there is no public transport so I have to rely on my parents. I think transport definitely has to be improved in rural Ireland.

Where I live there is very weak mobile phone signal and more commonly, none at all. There is also no broadband. Utility companies such as Sky or eir are unable to provide my neighbourhood with internet. My parents had to pay to put up a satellite so a private company would be able to provide us with a basic connection. In my opinion money needs to be spent on having phone coverage all over Ireland and having a stronger broadband connection.

As we are living on the popular Wild Atlantic Way it is also a concern that our roads are neglected. Our council struggles to keep the roads maintained. As we are so isolated I feel that we are always the last area of the county to have maintenance carried out. This effects everyone, locals and tourists.

I understand that our economy is only starting to improve and that major cities and towns will always need to be focused on, but if our rural area had more services then more people might be attracted to move here.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I hope during your time in office you will try to solve some of these issues and give young people a chance for their voices to be heard.

Yours faithfully,

Dear President,

Is cailín seacht mbliana dhéag d'aois mé i mo chónaí sa Ghaeltacht in oirthear na tíre. Tá mé i mo chónaí i mbaile beag faoin tuath le neart áilleacht agus dúlra agus is ceantar síochánta é. Níl muid suite rófhada ón mbaile mór. Dá bhrí sin, ní baile iargúlta é agus tá an t-ádh dearg orainn go bhfuil nasc leathanbhanda iontach againn. Tá mé i mbun mo bhliain deireadh sa meánscoil agus tá mé ag tnúth go mór é a chríochnú agus dul chuig an gcoláiste. Tá mé ró óg le vótáil sa todhcháin an bhliain seo agus nuair a bheidh cead agam beidh mé i mo fichidí agus is súil liom go mbeidh mé críochnaithe leis an gcoláiste. A Uachtaráin, beidh tusa ag tabhairt faoi thuras chomh maith agus tá mé ag iarraidh ort ionadaíocht a dhéanamh ormsa agus daoine óga eile i rith an am sin.

An rud a thaitníonn liom faoi mo shaol ná na deiseanna a bhfuil agam páirt a ghlacadh i spóirt. Tá sórt andúil agam don spóirt. Is breá liom cic-dornáíocht, camogaí agus karate ach chomh maith le sin bíim ag staidéar go cruu. Bhí mé hámharach caighdeán ard a bhaint amach sa spóirt, crios dhubh sna ealaín comhrac agus cúpla boinn sa camógaíocht. An chéad rud ar mhaith liom go ndéanfaidh tú ná aitheantas a thabhairt do na traenálaí agus oibreacha deonacha a tugann suas uaireanta chun muid a thraenáil agus cúnamh a thabhairt dúinn nuair a bhíonn muid ag fulaingt le deontais. Ba mhaith liom fíor-infheistíocht a fheiceáil in áiseanna agus traenálaí mar tá go leor de na clubanna rite in ionaid phobail a bhfuil fuar agus sean ofráilte ag oibreacha deonacha le dea-rún ach le easpa traenáil agus tacaíocht. Tá mé buartha faoi na daoine óga nach glacann páirt sa spóirt agus ba mhaith liom níos mó a fheiceáil chun gníomhaíochtaí a bheith curtha chun cinn i scoileanna, ar nós siúlóidí beaga eagraithe nó ceapaim go bhfuil sé uafásach nach féidir le paistí rith timpeall clós na scoile mar gheall ar cúrsaí árachas. Tá mé freisin ar an eolas maidir le murtall, tá sé le feiceáil i ngach áit, agus ba bhreá liom thú a fheiceáil eolas mór a chur chun cinn aiste bia ceart a ithe agus aclaíocht a dhéanamh. Chomh maith le sin oideachas a thabhairt do thuismitheoirí maidir leis an tábhacht a bhaineann leis.

Ceapaim go bhfuil sé seo an-tábhachtach, nuair a bhfuil easpa oideachas ag thuismitheoirí, níl sé cóir go bhfuil paistí óga chomh trom. Feictear paistí ag ithe bia mí-shláintiúil i ngach scoil.

Nuair a chríochnaím an gcoláiste i gceann cúpla bliain, ba mhaith liom bheith in ann obair agus cúnamh i gcumann ina bhfuil muid in ann páirt a ghlacadh in áiseanna glan agus sláintiúil a cuireann fáilte roimh gach duine. Má tá cúnamh ort sa chathair tá sé níos éasca hallaí agus ionad spóirt a fháil ach go minic faoin tuath bíonn ceann amháin a bhfuil sean agus fuar nó rite ag duine nach dtugann cead dhuit é a úsáid.

Tá mian agam an Ghaeilge a fheiceáil curtha chun cinn- ní mar arm chun daoine a dheighilt. Tá an t-ádh orm go bhfuil mé in ann Ghaeilge a úsáid ach go minic níl fonn orm é a labhairt mar chomhcheanglaím é le daoine ag tabhairt amach dom agus iallach a chur orm í a labhairt ar scoil agus sa chumainn agus bheadh mé i dtrioblóid dá úsáideann píosa beag béarla. Úsáideann an iomarca daoine í ar bhealach chun daoine a chur síos, iad a dheighilt agus idirdhealú a dhéanamh. Ba mhaith liom meon dearfach a fheiceáil nuair a spreagtar daoine í a úsáid agus ní cuirtear piónóis orthu mura labhraíonn siad í. Bíodh club againn i halla ach caitheadh amach muid, ba Ghaeilgóir é an traenálaí ach rinne sé an rang i mbéarla toisc go raibh a lán daoine nár thuig an teanga. Dúradh linn go raibh an halla le haghaidh daoine atá ag labhairt gaeilge amháin. Tar éis bogadh chuig halla a raibh 10 ciliméadar

níos faide, ní fhéadfaí le cuid daoine fásta agus páistí dul níos faide agus bhí orthu an spóirt a thabhairt suas.

Tugadh drochíde cúpla uair do mo mháthair agus mo comharsana atá sean mar gheall nach raibh siadsan ag labhairt i nGaeilge cé nach bhfuil siad in ann. Ba mhaith liom, a Uachtaráin, go cuirfeadh tú cumarsáid chun cinn agus nach ligfidh tú do dhaoine an Ghaeilge a úsáid mar bhealach chun ionsú a dhéanamh ar dhaoine. Tá a lán de mo chairde líofa sa Ghaeilge ach diultaíonn siad í a úsáid mar gheall ar an mbealach a fhórsálaíonn cuid mhúinteoirí agus dhaoine fásta iad. Nuair atá muid i gclubanna le daoine deasa a tugann misneach dúinn an Ghaeilge a úsáid nó ar scoil nó i teach duine éigin a labhraíonn i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla, tá sé sin iontach. Ba mhaith liom, a Uachtaráin, go gcuirfeadh tú dátheangachas chun cinn agus dúshlán a thabhairt chuig na dhaoine a úsáideann an Ghaeilge mar arm le daoine a ionsú.

A Uachtaráin, iarraim ort súil a choinneáil ar ár aibhneacha agus an t-áigéan agus go ndéanfaidh tú iarracht an plaisteach uafásach a fháil amach uathu. Tá faitíos orm go mbeidh na héisc agus an nádúr scriosta mar gheall ar na hábhair agus gáis diabhalta ag sní a mbealach amach san atmaisféar. Tá an damáiste le feiceáil agus tú ag siúl cois trá agus creidim gur féidir linn dul i ngleic leis an fhadhb. Má chuirtear stop le málaí plaisteach agus caitheamh tobac bheadh muid in an na farraigí a ghlanadh agus timpeallacht a shábháil.

A Uachtaráin, an mian atáil mo chroí ná bheith i mo chónaí ar oileán a chaitear le gach duine go cóir, agus nach bhfuill bullaíocht ná idirdhealú déanta orthu mar gheall ar dath a craiceann, a theanga. Ba bhreá liom má tá an deis ag gach duine coinneáil aclaí, aiste bia mhaith a ithe agus coinneáil saor ó drugaí.

Mise le meas,

Dear President,

I am from Mayo. I am 14 years old and about to enter my Junior Cert year in school. I have two sisters and a brother. I have many hobbies, but my favourite is sport and my favourite sport is soccer.

I live in a small town on the north-west coast and there is no reliable transport system. I am too young to drive so I rely on my parents to bring me everywhere. I think transport systems in rural towns really need to be improved.

Since I am doing my Junior Cert this year, we are the first year to do the new English, science and business exam. I like the idea that the course is more practical work and it is all spaced out over a period of around year. There are also more projects and presentations to be completed. I think every subject should be like this.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and I hope you are enjoying your new role as President. I hope you shall help us make the changes we wish to make and to listen to what we have to say.

Kind regards,

Dear President,

By now you have been inaugurated as President of our great country. I hope you are enjoying your new role and your wonderful new home. I hope to visit sometime.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am 15 years old and have just started my Transition Year in Mayo. I come from a typical Irish family of 6 living in a rural village in the west of Ireland. I have many hobbies, but my greatest passion is for sport, especially soccer and Gaelic football.

In your new role as a leader of our country I would expect that you would promote sports and fitness for girls and women in Ireland, as I strongly feel they do not get the same recognition as men. As a famous Mayo lady once said "Mná na hÉireann deserve to be heard and receive the same treatment as men." Having three sisters who each have their own interests makes it very hard on my parents to meet the needs of our family's social life. I live in a small village where we all know each other but sometimes it can be hard to access amenities in towns as we have no bus services and rely on car transport from our families and neighbours. My whole life my mother has selflessly driven all four of us from one end of Mayo to the other for different events throughout the years, and I strongly feel getting a better transport system for rural areas will take the pressure of family's like me and many more

My life at the moment is filled with studies, sports and experiences yet to venture and I am excited about the future of our great country. I have a lot of friends and my sporting ventures have seen our school win an all-Ireland soccer title in Dublin last spring. Ours is a small school that has such a small catchment area it was a huge achievement. All this success is down to our own commitment, our families, friends and supporters.

If you were a genie and you could grant me one wish during your next term in office, it would be that the educational system would review the Irish language and how it is taught to the youth. I would love to be able to speak my native language. If you could help to change the way Irish is taught, to turn it into a living language, not all students are academically inclined and I feel speaking the language would help.

I have read that throughout our history and against all the odds Irish people have always dared to dream that our economy will grow and we as people of Ireland value our truth and justice system. I hope for a better Ireland for young and old, rich and poor.

Thank you for reading my letter and I hope that during your term you will give young people a voice.

Is mise le meas,

Dear President,

I hope you are doing well and settling into your role. I am sixteen years old. I am in Transition Year and have just recently completed the Junior Cert. I have two sisters and I am the middle child. My hobbies include music, baking and football. I began to play Gaelic football was seven and have loved it ever since. I have won four county titles with my local club and have made many friends from neighboring parishes as my club is an amalgamation of a few areas. I am also a massive fan of Mayo football and follow them up and down the country in hope of one day winning the Sam Maguire.

To find me you should retrace General Humbert's footsteps (another great leader like yourself). Continue 27km away from Ballina towards a scenic, historic village right in the heart of the Wild Atlantic Way. There you will find my hometown. The historic Ceide fields stands majestically nearby facing the glistening Atlantic Ocean. Older than the pyramids it's a place brimming with history and culture overlooking the waves which continue their battle with the yet undefeated Down Patrick Head.

Despite all this beauty, the area has many problems. There are not a lot of facilities there. Since the recession, many local businesses have closed and young adults have emigrated for jobs and it has really taken the heart out of our community. Roads around tend to be dangerous with potholes and I would hope that you could undertake the initiative to improve this. There is no bus or public transport available locally. As I am a teenager and I am still under the age to drive, I must rely on my parents to bring me places and I hope this can be changed soon. There is very little for youths to do and the lack of facilities cause some teenagers turn to alcohol and drugs.

I previously mentioned that I am in Transition Year and have just completed my Junior Cert. This has been a great but stressful experience and I think a lot of pressure is put on students these days leaving them with little time for relaxation and exercise. This needs to change as it is not good for a person's well-being to be confined inside all day to staring at books. A solution at Junior Cert level is to cut down on the large number of subjects we must do. Overall, I think the educational system in this country needs to change as there is a lot of pressure on young people with the points system,

Another issue that I would like to draw attention to is the issue of drugs. I feel that a better effort needs to be made in this country to warn students in school about the dangers of drugs. In my opinion there should be a class in school to teach students how to identify which drugs are which and what they do to you. This will cut down on teenagers falling into the drug trap because they are seriously uneducated about the topic.

Thank you for taking time out to read my letter and I hope you found it informative and will take on board my suggestions.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I live in county Roscommon. I am 16 going on 17 in September. I am a very happy and intelligent young girl. I am attending school and I am going into 5th year in September. I love going to school to see all my friends. After doing Transition Year last year I have completed many different courses such as Gaisce Bronze award and my GAA coaching award.

In my spare time I really enjoy playing sports. I play Gaelic Football and Camogie for my local club. I also do set dancing. Last year I had the opportunity to be on the u-16 squad for Roscommon Ladies Football. This was the best experience ever. I also do set dancing and attend many Fleadhs.

I live on a farm and sometimes I help with the cattle. For my future job, I would like a degree in Agriculture. I will study agricultural science in 5th and 6th year and then I will try for my degree at Sligo I.T.

I play piano and accordion. When I am not studying or at sport, I love looking at make-up tutorials and copying what they are doing.

I am writing to you to talk about "Cyberbullying". I feel I need to bring this to your attention, as I see it happening every day. Online people are making anonymous apps that link up to Snapchat allowing people to comment whatever they like and not get caught out for it. I've seen things being commented that involves suicide, depression and being called all sorts of bad names. Some people even bring other people into it. I feel you should take "Cyberbullying" to a higher level because cyberbullying and lead to suicide or depression. I would expect you to hold a day to make more aware of cyberbullying and try to put a stop to it.

I look forward to meeting you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I don't really know what to say because I feel like my voice hasn't been heard as much as it should be and I know you probably have all the power and you are just looking down at us like you do when you are saying speech but I wish that my voice could be heard more because I am 17 years old and I wish that I could have voted for the rights for abortion because that was really important and not just that the gay rights and even voting for who our President should be they are all important.

My friends and I were talking and we felt that it was unfair that under the age of 17 we can go Juvenile Detention for committing a crime and at the age of 16 we can drop out of school after our Junior Cert. We are given those options yet we can't vote until we are 18 which I think in my personal opinion is unfair because you probably don't know this but some teenagers actually by the age of 14 to 17 years of age are a lot more mature than you think. I would have voted yes because at the end of the day it's our bodies and yes some people say we have to think about the unborn child but the thing is you don't know what going on in a mothers head and I think she should have the option to either keep the baby or not but also it could be a teenager as well that maybe doesn't want the baby and yes there is options out there like adoptions but maybe she doesn't want to go to full term but the worst thing was when people were trying to convince other people to say no and they were giving them false information.

I would have liked to have my vote in and I know I'm only 17 and I have a year to go but I feel like I would have been voting for the right reasons. I still feel like my voice hasn't been heard because we are spending our time, money and energy with stuff that ye want and not what we want and I think that's pretty unfair.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I am 15 years old and I live in Galway. I really enjoy the area where I live, it is a very friendly and quiet place. The people here are very co-operative. I attend my local Foróige club. I have lots of hobbies which include sport and music and of course technology.

The sports I like are Soccer, Gaelic, Basketball and Camogie. My favourite would be Gaelic. The music I enjoy most is pop. I am able to play the keyboard, guitar and tin whistle. I would really like to learn how to play the violin. As for the technology I like everything. When I am older I want to do videography and photography and do something along the lines of sound engineering maybe like work for a radio station. I also want to move out of Ireland maybe. I'm not so sure yet.

For when the new President is elected I would hope that she or he could do something about all the homeless people living on the streets. I think it is disgraceful the amount of people on the streets. I think every human being is entitled to their needs such as food, water and of course shelter. I hope that the future President does something about this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

I hope this letter finds you well.

Ahead of your term as President, I'm writing to you to tell you about the Ireland I live in, my dreams for the future of the country, and how I'd like you to represent me and my generation during your term.

I am immensely proud to say that I live in Ireland. I feel the Ireland I live in today is a country rich in culture, heritage and history. I live on a peaceful island, free from fear and threats of violence and destruction, which I feel incredibly lucky to be able to say. Modern Ireland is vibrant and home to people who come from every corner of the globe. While a small minority would say this is a bad thing, I feel it's a very good thing, and it makes me proud to think that people come to Ireland to contribute to our society. Ireland, overall, is a happy, healthy, inclusive place to live.

Although I feel we're doing very well as a country, there are lots of improvements we could make as we look to the future. I dream that one day, Ireland will be a land of opportunity, where every single person that lives here can achieve what they want to achieve and realise their fullest potential, regardless of their gender, age, race, or background. I dream that everyone will have equal, affordable access to higher education, healthcare, and housing so that all people have a solid foundation to live comfortably and aim higher.

I dream that Ireland will be a fully inclusive country, where everyone, regardless of their sexuality, gender identity or skin colour can express themselves fully.

I dream of an education system that embraces creative thinking and expression.

I dream that Ireland will continue to be a shining light of peace and progressiveness on the international stage and that we can expand that message and influence to other parts of the world where people continue to struggle and suffer.

During your term as President, I implore you to champion the young people of this country. Listen to us regularly and take our views and opinions on board. Take us seriously.

Encourage others to take us seriously. We aren't just the future, we're here now. We're leaders, innovators, and creators and we want to play a bigger role in Irish society, now.

To quote a letter from President George HW Bush to then President-elect Bill Clinton: "Your success is now our country's success, and I'm rooting for you".

Beir bua,

Dear President.

I am from the west of Ireland. I am 15 and I am about to start my Junior Cert. I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters. I am the eldest along with my twin sister. There's 2 sets of twins in my family. I live in Co. Mayo and my town is lovely, there is loads of shops, hairdressers, butchers and smelly fish shops! I have loads of friends but, I am rarely ever there. I spend most of my time at my Nanny's. My Mum and Dad now own her farm. We have loads of animals ranging from cows, sheep, chickens, lambs, calves, a dog and my very own donkey. Pebbles is his name. I have had hard times; my life is like a scary rollercoaster not knowing what comes next!

It takes 20 minutes to get from my town to our school every day! That uses a lot of diesel. Then we go to my Nanny's every day and night and it takes about half an hour to get to my Nanny's and that wastes a load of diesel. I wish you would try put the prices of diesel down because it uses a nice bit of money, money not everyone has!! Although I love my town I wish to ask that the County Council would build houses on their own out in the countryside. Then we wouldn't have to drive up and down to my Nanny's every day and night. I also would be closer to school and then could maybe get the bus to school to save my Mum and Dad driving me every day. The potholes in the roads these days are getting deadly, the whole car dips down with some of the potholes. I think some of the potholes should be filled in and even some of the roads should be resurfaced because they are very DANGEROUS"

I am happy that I am doing the new Junior Cert. I must study a lot and let's just say I'm not really a fan of studying. There is a lot of classroom-based assessment. I hope to use this letter as a part of my CSPE Junior Cert project and we have been invited my school to do a tour of the Dáil.

My school is a small school but it's the best. Only about 200 people go to it, but that is great because the teachers know your name and they are more focused on what you can do. My best subjects are English, physical education and metalwork

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter it means a lot to me. I really hope during your time in the office you will listen to the people of Ireland and try help them. All I ask is that you be the best that you can be.

Kind regards,

Dear Mr. President.

I will be 15 In August. I live In Co. Roscommon. In September I will be going into third year in secondary school.

I play football, camogie, soccer and I also enjoy horse riding. My hobbies are playing football, playing the piano and playing the concertina. I live on a farm and I like helping out now and again. On our farm we have cows and a dog named Bailey.

I really enjoy playing sports. It makes me feel happy and it is something that I feel I am really good at.

I like living in Roscommon. The weather is very nice the last few weeks. I love the view and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

There are many problems in Ireland, but I think the main one is HOMELESSNESS. I don't think anybody should be homeless. All people should always have a home. It is not right that people live on the streets. I think this needs to be sorted out and people need to come together and plan. Homelessness is caused by so many reasons, such as; financial problems, divorce, alcohol abuse, drug addiction and violent relationships. It is a pity to see so many houses unoccupied in the city and the countryside. Homeless people need the support of the government to survive and take them off the street, by making these vacant houses available to them. It's not safe on the streets at night. It's not fair with no washing facilities and cooking areas.

I would like you to take these matters up with the Minister for housing.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Mr. President.

I am going into third year, I will be 15 In August and I live in Co. Roscommon. I have a lot of hobbies, for example, art, music, sports and farming. Some of the sports I play are football, camogie, soccer and horse riding. My favourite by far is horse riding because not only is it fun but it allows me to work with horses, one of my favourite animals along with dogs and cats.

I live on a farm with my brother and sisters, Mother and Pops. We all get along quite well most of the time but you know what siblings can be like at times, Ha-ha. We only have cows on our farm but they can be a handful sometimes, especially for Pops who does most of the work on the farm. I have a heifer that I like, I haven't given her a name so I just call her by her tag number, 068. She's really quiet, like when I walk up to her in the field she comes over and lets me rub her.

While you are on your seven years in office I want to talk to you about a problem. I think that some people do not trust the parliament. I have been thinking about this problem and I know that you are a very busy person but, I think it would help if you turned up to more events across the country, for example, a Connacht final or events like this. I hope to meet you at an event sometime. In the future I think that I would like to be either an equine vet or a secondary school art teacher. I love both horses and art so it will probably be hard to choose between these, but sure, I have a while yet to figure that out.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President

I am turning 13 in October. I live in Co. Roscommon. This is my last year in national school. I am looking forward to secondary school in September.

I play football, hurling, soccer and I also like horse riding, which I do each Saturday. Last week we hosted 2 boys from Wicklow for Féile. This is the hurling Féile. A team of 22 players came to Roscommon to take part. This team got through to the final and were beaten. I went to their matches to support them. My team got to the semi-final. Our trainer told us, it was like the all-Ireland semi-final.

I live on a farm. It is great on a farm. Lots of things to do all year round. Feeding cattle. It is great living in Roscommon and I love it here. The weather for the last month has been great and we got the silage done - we bailed 20 acres. I love farming and swimming. I also like cutting the lawn with the lawnmower. If you don't mind, I would love it if you could do something about the fodder crisis in Ireland. Farmers may not have enough bales, due to shortage of grass and if they went to get some bales, they might have to sell cattle or even worse some may die because they don't get enough food to eat. Then the cattle would die of starvation and if something is not done about this soon, farmers may be out of business due to this crisis. Ireland is known for its good beef and this will go. That is not good. So, I say it should change. If you think of it this way, farmers may not have machinery to pick up bales or have machinery to bale their own fields and that's more money gone out of their pockets. They won't be able to pay for the bales coming into Ireland.

If we get a hard border, it could affect the exporting of farm products. People in other countries think Ireland has the best beef in the world and that should not change, due to higher taxes involving Brexit.

When I get older, I hope to keep up farming and contracting business in Co. Roscommon.

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

Hello we are two members of a Dublin Youth Committee, and when we are united as one, we are Pablo power. We are 17 -year-old female adolescents we both have similar interest different song interests that we share in football soccer and athletics, although my main interest is music and my friend's is playing badminton We are always open to try new activities and almost in fact that is why we were encouraged to join Foróige and happily write this letter to you. Living in Ireland there are various different aspects that are enjoyable for example to me they are the entertainment of the streets of Dublin ranging from Irish traditional music to music in today's charts. As for my friends, quality of food in Ireland area and in areas surrounding meet our expectations. They range from Chinese restaurant, Indian restaurants, fast food restaurants and a variety of others yet and negative aspects we have agreed on is the lack of facilities for young teens in the town. This should be recognised and dealt with as this will reduce the formation of gangs in areas not suited for them as well as being socially involved place to enjoy and recognise talent.

Our dreams for the future is to live achieve and succeed and have many supporting groups to help everyone fulfil and achieve their goals and dreams, oh and continue being surrounded by positivity endlessly to maintain happiness, that's essential at all times

Us young people would like the President to represent us on an equal level. Possibly by considering to lower the voting age, due to the fact that all decisions being made impact our future, more than the older generation who have the opportunity to vote. It should be equal among all citizens of Ireland as many people on a daily basis are discriminated by their age, race, colour, gender. Equality is key.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank you for reading this letter for an important person with a busy schedule. Yeah we appreciate your time maybe one day we will get the opportunity to meet you

Yours sincerely,

Dear President,

A poem for the Forgotten

With a heavy heart

And long-dimmed eye,

The broken woman holds a crying child

Close. Waiting, waiting,

Watching trolley jams-

Only to be told:

“come back tomorrow-

The Doctors are dealing with

More Important Issues.”

The broken woman and her crying child

Move on.

Standing at the Bank,

She stares blindly at the lie

“Open for business we’re here to help!”

With the shuddering sigh, she sees

“insufficient funds in your account”

“Come back tomorrow –

The manager is dealing with

More Important Issues”

The broken woman and her crying child

Move on.

Darkness closes in

And the moon becomes her partner,

She finds a spot in the church doorway-
Her resting place for the night.
“You can’t stay here this is the house of God!”
Come back tomorrow-
The priest is dealing with
More Important Issues.

The broken woman and her crying child
move on.

Dawn breaks limply
She stands and stares at Leinster House,
Home to King-Makers and
Law-Breakers-
You can’t stay here, the
old man-sighs -
“No point coming back tomorrow -
The Politicians are dealing with with
No Important Issues!

The broken woman and her crying child
Move on.

Yet stand still

Ireland 2018 -
Not much is changed
Since the Brave and the Bold
Fought for our Freedom
For our Rights to Self-Govern.
The Rising Leaders

Are forever remembered
the broken woman and her crying child
Are not.

Dear President,
In the name of Justice, Fairness, Equality and truth I beg you to be a glimmer for the hopeless;
A thorn in the side of those who promised to govern fairly
But never do.

Above all dear President,
I beseech you to be
A Light in the Darkness
Of a World of Silent Torture,
A Voice for the Voiceless
For the broken woman
And her crying child...
So that, one day they may truly
Move on.

Dear President, I beg you hear my plea for the forgotten.

