



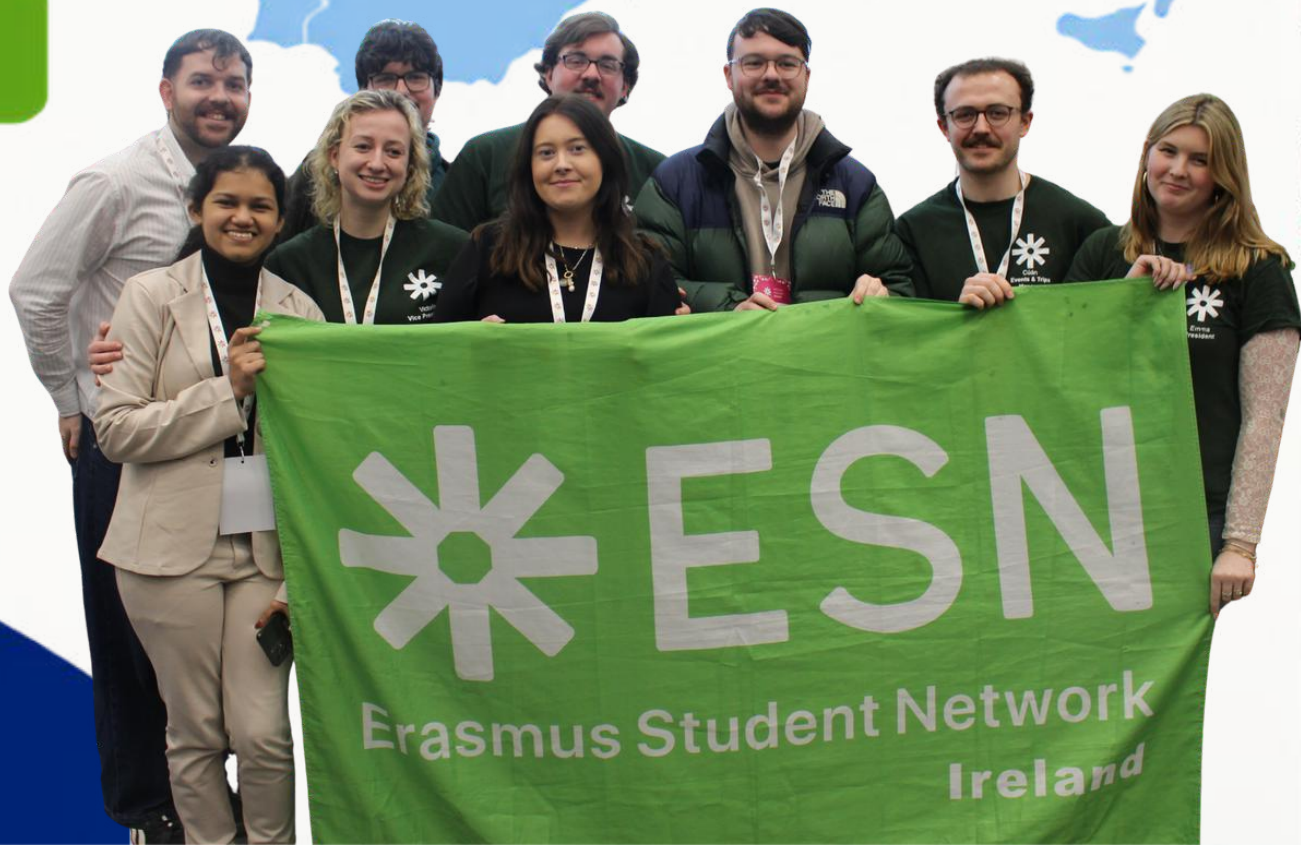
EU PRESIDENCY TOOLKIT



What it is.
Why it matters.
How it affects you.

 **JULY - DECEMBER 2026**

Developed by Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Ireland during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2026.



*Ní neart go cur le chéile.
Strength with Unity.*



UNDERSTAND

the EU Presidency and how it works.



DISCOVER

why it matters for students.



EXPLORE

its impact on education, mobility and youth.



GET INVOLVED

and make your voice heard in Europe.



STAY INFORMED

follow ESN Ireland for updates throughout the Presidency.

WELCOME

Let's be honest... Europe can be a little bit confusing sometimes.

Between the Council, the Commission, Parliament and the Presidency, it's **easy to lose track of who does what.**

We created this toolkit to **explain things in a clear, student-friendly way and show why Europe actually matters to you.**

THE BIG PICTURE

Most students know about Erasmus+...

However, very few know how the decisions behind it are made.

Well, This toolkit changes that!



WHY THIS MATTERS

Ireland is holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. **But what does that actually mean and why should students care?**

Well, **we should care.** The decisions made in Europe affect our studies, our opportunities and our future.



WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE

This guide explains:

- What the EU Presidency is
- Why Ireland is leading it
- Why it matters for students
- How you can get involved



READY TO EXPLORE?

Whether you're an Erasmus+ student, an ESN volunteer or simply curious about Europe...

Use this toolkit to learn, share, discuss and take action. Whether that is in your university, your community or across Europe, **get involved!**

ABOUT ESN IRELAND

ESN Ireland is the national branch of Erasmus Student Network (ESN). ESN is one of Europe's largest student associations. We support and represent international and local students through a network of volunteers in 40+ countries.

ESN's mission is simple:
Students Helping Students



40+

COUNTRIES

A truly European network



500+

LOCAL SECTIONS

On campuses across Europe



15,000+

VOLUNTEERS

Making a difference every day



150,000+

STUDENTS

Supported every year

01

WHAT IS THE EU PRESIDENCY?

Think of Ireland's role as *Europe's team lead for six months*. However, *every six months, a new team lead takes over*.

In official terms, every six months, a different EU Member State takes on the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (*the Council*).

During this period, the Presidency:



Chairs meetings
at all levels in the Council



Helps **negotiate and build consensus** between countries



Represents the Council in negotiations with other EU institutions



Works to ensure that **legislation and policies move forward**



Ireland will not 'run Europe'. However, it will **help 27 countries work together**.



THE PRESIDENCY ROTATES

Every six months



Cyprus
Jan – Jun 2026



Ireland
Jul – Dec 2026



Lithuania
Jan – Jun 2027



Greece
Jul – Dec 2027



02 WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF THE EU?



Let's clear something up.

The **Council of the European Union** isn't the same as the **European Council** or the **Council of Europe**.
Confusing? Absolutely.

The **Council of the European Union** is where **EU governments come together to make decisions and adopt laws**.



It represents the governments of the EU Member States.



Ministers meet in Council formations based on policy areas.



Together with the European Parliament, it adopts EU laws and the budget.

HOW IT WORKS



1. MEMBERS

Ministers from each EU country attend meetings in their area of expertise.



2. DISCUSS

They discuss proposals, search for common ground, and build agreements.



3. DECIDE

Decisions are usually made by qualified majority voting.



4. DELIVER

Together with the European Parliament, the Council adopts laws and agrees the EU budget.

PART OF THE EU INSTITUTIONS



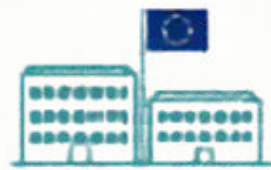
EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Head of State or Government set the EU's political priorities.



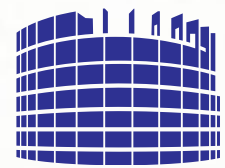
COUNCIL OF THE EU

National Ministers adopt laws and coordinate policies.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Proposes laws and ensures the EU treaties are applied.



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Representatives elected by citizens debate and adopt laws.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Council has 10 different formations, including Education, Youth, Culture and Sport. Ireland will chair these meetings during its Presidency in July – December 2026.



03

IRELAND'S VISION FOR THE PRESIDENCY



Let's bring it back to Ireland for a minute.

Every Presidency sets out *priorities*, outlined in its Presidency Programme, to *guide its work over six months*.

However, remember that Ireland's role is to *serve all 27 Member States* by building consensus and moving discussions forward.

... THE THREE PRIORITIES ...

Ní neart go cur le chéile 

[Nee nart guh cur luh kay-la] Proverb

Ní neart go cur le chéile is a traditional Irish proverb that translates to *"There is no strength without unity"* (or *"There is strength in numbers"*). It reminds us that *people are at their strongest, most capable, and most resilient* when they *cooperate and work together*.



COMPETITIVENESS

Building a stronger, more innovative Europe through skills, research and opportunity.



VALUES

Protecting democracy, equality, inclusion, human rights and the rule of law.



SECURITY

Building a safer, more resilient Europe that can respond to global challenges.

FROM PRIORITIES TO IMPACT

Ireland's priorities shape the discussions it leads. Those discussions can influence student-focused areas like these:



Higher Education



Erasmus+ & Student Mobility



Research and Innovation



Sustainability & Green Transition



Youth Participation & Inclusion



The Presidency is built on *cooperation*. Just like "Ní neart go cur le chéile", Europe's greatest achievements come from *working together*.



04

WHY SHOULD STUDENTS CARE?

During the Presidency, *Ireland helps lead discussions on issues that affect students across Europe* (yes, that includes you!), from studying abroad and higher education to skills, inclusion and youth participation.



ERASMUS+

The EU's flagship programme for education, training and youth.

More opportunities to study, train or volunteer abroad?



STUDENT MOBILITY

Policies that make studying abroad easier and more accessible.

Easier access to life-changing experiences across Europe?



HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality, inclusion, recognition of qualifications and more.

Better quality education and recognition for your studies?



SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT

Supporting young people to develop skills for the future.

Skills that help you succeed in your future career?



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

Building strong alliances and international cooperation.

More collaboration between universities and cultures?



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Your voice matters in shaping Europe's policies.

More opportunities to have your say in decisions that affect you?



Spoiler: The decisions made today shape your opportunities tomorrow.

That's why student voices are important!



05

HOW DOES THE EU MAKE DECISIONS?

It might look complicated... but it's actually just a series of steps.

1



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Comes up with a new idea or law.

2



WORKING GROUPS

Experts from each Member State examine the proposal in detail.

3



COREPER

(Committee of Permanent Representatives)
Ambassadors from each Member State work towards agreement before ministers meet.

4



COUNCIL OF THE EU

National ministers discuss the proposal and agree the Council's position.

5



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MEPs debate the proposal and agree Parliament's position.

6



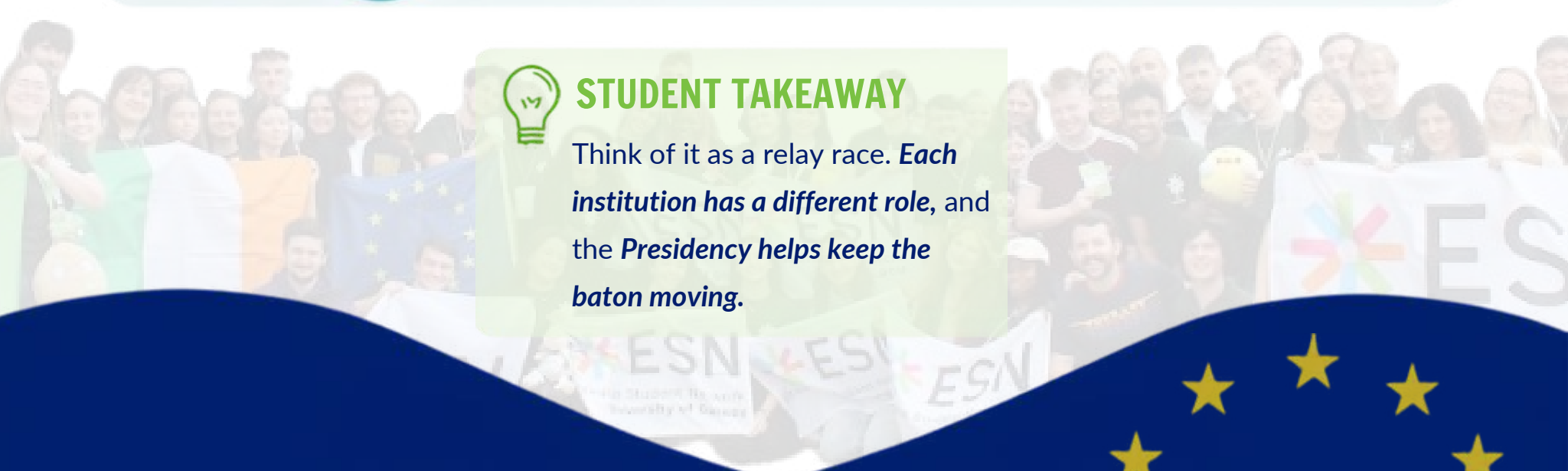
EU LEGISLATION

After the Council and the European Parliament approve the proposal, it is then adopted and applied across the EU.



STUDENT TAKEAWAY

Think of it as a relay race. *Each institution has a different role*, and the *Presidency helps keep the baton moving*.



06

IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY IN ACTION

So, we've established that Ireland's role will be to coordinate the work of the Council. This all sounds really cool, right?

WELL, THESE ARE BASICALLY IRELAND'S MAIN TASKS

BUT, WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS DURING THE PRESIDENCY?

CHAIR MEETINGS

Irish ministers and officials chair meetings across the Council.

BUILD CONSENSUS

Helping Member States find common ground and reach agreement on shared priorities.

REPRESENT THE COUNCIL

Ireland represents the Council in negotiations with the European Parliament and the European Commission.

HOST EVENTS

Ireland welcomes ministers, officials and stakeholders from across Europe to meetings and Presidency events.

WORK WITH THE TRIO

Working closely with Greece and Lithuania to ensure continuity, coherence and a strong agenda for Europe.

COMMUNICATE & ENGAGE

Communicating priorities, progress and opportunities and engaging citizens and young people.



WHAT SHOULD I FOLLOW?

Students may want to follow developments in areas such as



DID YOU KNOW?

Ireland has held the Presidency seven times before. The last time was in 2013!



Education & Training



Youth



Mobility



Skills & Innovation



Sustainability & Inclusion



International Cooperation



07

THE PRESIDENCY TRIO



The Presidency *isn't a solo mission*. One Presidency lasts six months but three countries work together over 18 months to keep the *EU's work moving smoothly*.



IRELAND

Jul - Dec 2026

LITHUANIA

Jul - Dec 2027

GREECE

Jan - Jun 2027



Leads discussions and chairs Council meetings.



Builds on Ireland's progress and keeps negotiations moving.



Completes the Trio and prepares the handover to the next Presidency cycle.



For students, the Trio means that important priorities like *Erasmus+*, *education* and *youth participation* can **continue beyond a single six-month Presidency**.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Trio was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty to improve continuity and cooperation. It helps the EU plan ahead and deliver long-term results.



08

STUDENTS AND THE IRISH PRESIDENCY



YOUR VOICE MATTERS

ESN Ireland contributed to the *national consultation* for the Irish Presidency.

We *gathered our own student perspectives* and shared *what matters most to young people* across Ireland and Europe.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Presidency helps shape discussions and decisions on *issues that affect students in everyday life*.

By getting involved, students can:

- ✔ Influence priorities
- ✔ Raise awareness
- ✔ Make a real impact

KEY THEMES HIGHLIGHTED BY STUDENTS



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Quality education for all and lifelong learning opportunities.



STUDENT MOBILITY

Making mobility more accessible, inclusive and sustainable.



INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

Ensuring every student feels welcome and represented.



SKILLS & EMPLOYABILITY

Preparing students with the skills Europe needs for the future.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Empowering young people to take part in shaping policies and decisions.



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EUROPE

Ireland's Presidency is a chance to:

- ✔ Strengthen Erasmus+
- ✔ Advance the European Education Area
- ✔ Promote mental health and wellbeing
- ✔ Support digital and green transitions
- ✔ Build a more connected and inclusive Europe

When students speak up, Europe moves forward.



09

HOW ESN REPRESENTS STUDENTS

ESN is Europe's largest student network.

Every year, thousands of *students share their experiences with ESN*. We turn those experiences into ideas, recommendations and advocacy that *help shape discussions across Europe*.

FROM YOUR VOICE TO EUROPE



STUDENTS SHARE

Students tell us about their experiences through surveys, consultations and events.



WE LISTEN

ESN identifies common challenges and opportunities across Europe.



WE REPRESENT

We bring student perspectives to policymakers, universities and European institutions.



WE CREATE IMPACT

Student voices help shape recommendations, policies and future opportunities.

OUR PRIORITIES



ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
Ensuring every student can access quality education, regardless of background.



STUDENT MOBILITY FOR ALL
Promoting fair, flexible and sustainable mobility opportunities.



WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH
Supporting student wellbeing and creating supportive learning environments.



SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE
Equipping students with skills for employability in an evolving world.



YOUTH PARTICIPATION
Empowering young people to take part in decisions that affect their future.

DID YOU KNOW?

ESN represents students at local, national and European level, working with universities, national agencies and EU institutions.



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HOW CAN STUDENTS GET INVOLVED?



STAY INFORMED

Follow updates and learn about topics that matter to you.



PARTICIPATE

Take part in youth events, public consultations and policy dialogues.



GET INVOLVED WITH ESN

Join ESN activities, projects and advocacy work.



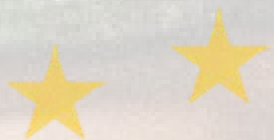
EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES

Make the most of Erasmus+, volunteering, internships and more.



SHARE YOUR VOICE

Your experience as a student helps shape better policies for all.



*You are Europe.
Your voice matters!*



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STUDENT VOICES ACROSS EUROPE

Every day, thousands of ESN volunteers and Erasmus+ students experience the impact of European cooperation firsthand.

Cool, right?

Here's what they had to say about the *European Presidency*...



CIARAN KELLY

Education Officer, ESN Ireland

What does the Presidency of the Council of the EU mean to you?

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union is an opportunity for young people to have their voices heard, share their ideas, and exchange best practices with peers from across Europe. Students' voices matter because they bring fresh perspectives and help shape decisions that will directly impact the future of education and youth.



What do you hope is achieved during the Presidency?

I hope Ireland's Presidency brings countries closer together, strengthens collaboration across Europe, and continues making higher education and student mobility more accessible and inclusive.



GEORGIA VASILEIOU

Social Impact Coordinator, ESN Cyprus

YOUR EXPERIENCES SHAPE EUROPE!

Your story doesn't stop with your exchange. When you share your experiences, it helps improve Europe for the next generation of students.



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USEFUL RESOURCES



Ireland's Presidency 2026

ireland2026.eu



European Youth Portal

europa.eu/youth



Erasmus+

erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu



ESN International

esn.org



ESN Ireland

esnireland.ie



*Europe is shaped by
the people who participate in it.*

Follow ESN Ireland for updates throughout Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU 2026.



@esnireland



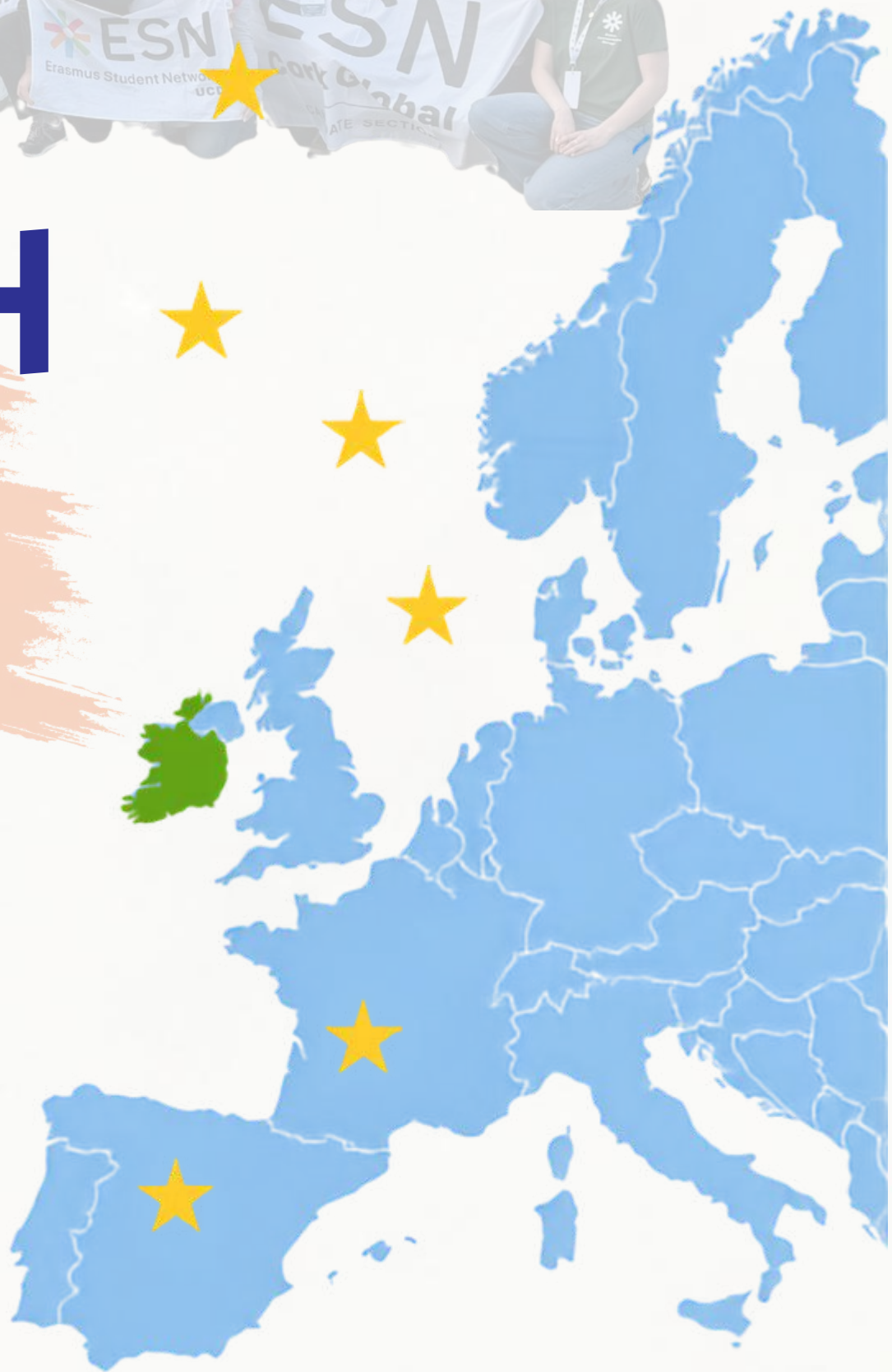


GO RAIBH MAITH AGAT

Created by ESN Ireland in June
2026.

This toolkit was developed by
Caoimhe Lawless, Ciarán Kelly &
Erin Grealis on behalf of ESN
Ireland.

With special thanks to ESN
Cyprus for their contribution and
support.



*Ní neart go cur le chéile.
Strength with Unity.*

