

# ANNUAL REPORT

TUARASCÁIL BLIANTÚIL



**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# 2016/2017

**TOGETHER WE'RE STRONGER**

**NÍ NEART GO CUR LE CHÉILE**

# PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

A CHARA,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the USI Annual Report for the academic year 2016/17. The year has been full of ups and downs, with mountains of work being done up and down the country, all with the shared aim of improving the student experience.

We started the year with a bang when the long-awaited Cassells Report was finally launched. We took it in our stride, and at SUT (Students' Union Training) student leaders from around the country committed to wholeheartedly and vehemently opposing any form of increased fees and loans schemes. This campaign has formed the backbone of the work we do in USI, going from leading a demo of 12,000 students through the streets of Dublin on October 19th, to building a Coalition for Publicly Funded Higher Education, which have lobbied and worked together on this topic consistently for the past year.

There have been other areas of focus this year too. Mental health played a huge role, and having been assigned a seat on the Government Mental Health Taskforce, we went on to receive funding to take on a Student Mental Health Project Worker. USI has also gone a little bit green-fingered, with our bid for Horizon 2020 funding being successful, and we are now leading a three-year student energy saving campaign. The team this year have been exceptional in bringing in sponsorship and funding for projects, ensuring that we deliver high-quality events with key leaders from industry supporting us, and consistently providing value for our members.

This year saw USI take to the national stage to be a voice on many topics of concern to students. We took a lead in the debate around repealing the eighth amendment to the Irish Constitution, and subsequently we were asked to present to the Citizens' Assembly, confirming us as leaders in the area of women's bodily autonomy. We presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Skills on the topic of future funding of higher education, and again to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs and Enterprise on the topic of banded hours and zero hour contracts. We lead the charge on student accommodation with our #HomesForStudy campaign, and received funding to take on a Student Accommodation Project Coordinator. Student engagement has been a key priority of ours, and after we secured funding last year to take on a Student Engagement Coordinator, we have seen the

project expand with 21 new institutions signing up. Students need to be engaged in the decision-making process at every level within their institution.

Alongside our ambitious workload and campaigns, we had three we had three affiliation referendums, returning a vote of over 90% each time in favour of remaining with USI. We also brought in new members, with NCAD Students' Union joining USI in May. This year, USI has more members than ever before, and we are the strongest and most cohesive we have been in years. This is all down to open engagement and communiqué with our members, along with strategic cooperation with stakeholders and outside interest groups. We ensured our student leaders were trained to the highest standard, with regular trainings provided throughout the year, and we changed the culture within the organisation to one that promotes collective responsibility for the direction and the work the organisation undertakes.

This year I am confident that we delivered on behalf of our members. I am incredibly proud to have lead a progressive, inclusive and representative organisation, that strives everyday to put the student at the heart of what we do, and to consistently produce the results that ensure the betterment of students' lives. This Annual Report provides but a snapshot of the work we have undertaken on behalf of you, the student, and I hope you thoroughly enjoy reading it.

With pride,



*Annie Hoey*

Annie Hoey  
President 2016/2017  
Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

# USI OFFICER BOARD 2016/2017

<i>Annie Hoey</i>	President
<i>Jack Leahy</i>	Deputy President & Vice President for Academic Affairs
<i>Cian Power</i>	Vice President for Welfare
<i>Sóna Cahill</i>	Vice President for Equality and Citizenship
<i>Daniel Waugh</i>	Vice President for Campaigns
<i>Maria Schäler</i>	Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge
<i>Niamh Murtagh</i>	Vice President for Southern Region
<i>Michael Kerrigan</i>	Vice President for Border, Midlands and Western Region
<i>Fergal McFerran</i>	NUS-USI President



# USI STAFF 2016/2017

<i>Ben Archibald</i>	General Manager
<i>Denise Glover</i>	Administrator
<i>Fiona O'Malley</i>	Communications Executive
<i>Eric Fitzgerald</i>	Commercial Executive
<i>Cat O'Driscoll</i>	National Student Engagement Coordinator
<i>Karolina Pietkiewicz</i>	Student Housing Project Executive
<i>Ailish Logue</i>	Public Affairs Assistant

# NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

<i>Athlone IT</i>	15th July 2016
<i>Queen's University Belfast</i>	17th August 2016
<i>Dublin IT</i>	23rd September 2016
<i>Tralee IT</i>	4th November 2016
<i>Galway-Mayo IT</i>	9th December 2016
<i>IT Blanchardstown</i>	10th February 2017
<i>Congress, Ennis</i>	27th March 2017
<i>Waterford IT</i>	26th May 2017
<i>University College Cork</i>	16th June 2017

## ABOUT USI

USI is the national representative body for the 354,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland. We are a membership organisation – our members are our affiliated Students' Unions around Ireland, North and South. USI Officerboard are elected by it's membership at its annual Congress and support students in a full-time capacity.

## USI MEMBERS 2016/2017

Athlone Institute of Technology  
 Belfast Metropolitan College,  
 Carlow College  
 Cork Institute of Technology  
 Dublin City University  
 Dublin Institute of Technology  
 Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology  
 Dundalk Institute of Technology  
 Galway Mayo Institute of Technology  
 Galway Mayo Institute of Technology – Castlebar  
 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown  
 Institute of Technology Carlow  
 Institute of Technology Tralee  
 Institute of Technology, Sligo  
 Institute of Technology, Tallaght  
 Institute of Technology, Waterford  
 Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Limerick Institute of Technology  
 Limerick Institute of Technology Tipperary  
 Limerick School of Art & Design  
 National College Art and Design  
 National College of Ireland  
 National University of Ireland, Galway  
 National University of Ireland, Maynooth  
 North Western Regional College  
 Northern Regional College  
 Queen's University, Belfast  
 South Eastern Regional College,  
 South Western Regional College  
 Southern Regional College,  
 St Mary's University College, Belfast  
 St. Angela's College, Sligo  
 Stranmillis University College, Belfast  
 Templemore College of Further Education

## TRUSTEES

Julian de Spainn  
 Ciara Brennan  
 Siobhán Fearon

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

Christopher Newell (Chair)  
 Gary Redmond  
 Richard Hammond  
 Michelle Byrne  
 Kevin Ronan  
 Annie Hoey  
 Ben Archibald



# JULY

## NYCI BOARD (JULY 1ST)

USI Vice President for Campaigns was elected onto the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) board at the 41st Annual National Youth Council Ireland AGM Assembly in Woodquay Venue in Dublin. The Vice President for Campaigns joined the NYC Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee and the NYCI Youth Funding Campaign Subcommittee.

## CASSELLS REPORT RELEASED (JULY 11TH)

The long-awaited Cassells Report was finally launched on the first day of SUT. From a media perspective, it was quite useful to be able to say that we were all travelling across the country to meet to discuss it! At SUT all the officers present committed to joining USI on our campaign for publicly funded higher education and to oppose any increase in fees or income-contingent loans. We spent the summer months planning for our lobby actions and the demo day, scheduled for October 19th. On the day of the launch of the report, there wasn't a single main media, radio, or TV outlet that USI wasn't on making a comment on the future funding of higher education. SU Presidents responded in local media, ensuring that no media outlet was left uncovered. We stood united in defiance of income-contingent loans and increased fees, and have remained united on that front throughout the year.

## STUDENTS' UNION TRAINING, ATHLONE IT (JULY 11TH - 15TH)

Sabbatical officers from all over Ireland were introduced to key modules on their roles, including events and marketing, drugs harm reduction, accommodation, policy making, academic engagement, campaigns planning and management, and media relations. The purpose of SUT is to provide full-time officers with the skills required to plan and execute a successful year as a sabbatical officer.



## MEETING WITH LEADING AMERICAN SOCIAL & FEMINIST ACTIVIST GLORIA STEINEM (22ND JULY)

The USI President and Vice President for Equality & Citizenship met with renowned activist Gloria Steinem in relation to the ongoing Repeal the 8th campaign in Ireland, and how best to empower the recently established "Students For Choice" work within the student movement.



# AUGUST

## #HOMESFORSTUDY (AUGUST 2ND)

On August 2nd USI launched #HomesForStudy.. The campaign launched with the USI Campaigns Subcommittee in attendance and a number of media outlets, seeing over 90 media mentions in a single day discussing digs, our partnership with Deposify and issue with student accommodation. 97,500 flyers promoting homes.usi.ie in areas around campuses availing of homes.usi.ie along with a digital marketing campaign promoted the website all over Ireland. USI received news of being awarded €49,000 to hire a Student Housing Officer to help identify new student accommodation, work on homes.usi.ie, assist with the Student Accommodation Strategy, conducting research and investigate the feasibility of a Student Housing Trust from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.



## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH TASKFORCE APPOINTMENT (5TH AUGUST)

On the 5th of August the Vice-President for Welfare was appointed onto the National Taskforce for Youth Mental Health in Ireland. The taskforce initiated and chaired by Minister for Mental Health and Older People Helen McEntee. The Taskforce is set to provide national leadership around youth mental health and wellbeing issues in Ireland to enhance how the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to work together. The Taskforce is asked to take an innovative and creative approach to these issues by leveraging technology, online platforms, social media, the education system and existing services to achieve its aims. The Vice-President for Welfare has contributed throughout the year to achieve the best possible outcomes for students and young people.



## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP (15TH AUGUST)

USI held the first of it's 2016 trainings for Women in Leadership in August, partnering with Women for Election to provide training to female-identifying full-time officers, on building networks, empowering and motivating others, and how to get the most out of your year. Keynote speaker for the event was Averil Power (former Senator and TCDSU President). Just under 30 sabbatical women from across Ireland joined the event, which would later develop into the 'Women Lead Project' run by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship.

## TOP UP TRAINING (22ND & 23RD AUGUST)

On the 22nd and 23rd of August, USI held an additional training day for Student Union Welfare and Education Officers. The training included a full day of casework training facilitated by Trinity College Dublin Counselling Service followed by an additional day of Policy Training & Campaign training



## LAUNCH OF USI #STUDENTSFORCHOICE TASKFORCE (28TH AUGUST)

Students' Union representatives elected to the #StudentsForChoice taskforce met in August to plan the campaign for the year ahead. The taskforce was addressed and guided by Ailbhe Smyth (Convenor of the Coalition to repeal the 8th amendment) and Una Mullally (Journalist and activist).



## ACCOMMODATION AND FINANCE GUIDE LAUNCH (30TH AUGUST)

The collaborative project which is carried out annually was launched in Maynooth Students Union on the 30th of August. The guide updated and re-designed was given to over 16,000 Third level students across Ireland giving advice on the rights of tenants, updated legislations and also advice for students on accommodation and also student budgeting.



## PRIDE FESTIVALS (JUNE-AUGUST)

USI attended Prides across Ireland in 2017, including Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Sligo and Galway. In each location with linked in with local Students' Unions. In Sligo, it was the first time in recent history that students had a formal presence as part of the town's pride celebrations. Working with NUS-USI in Northern Ireland remains a key focus, particularly given the severe inequality for same-sex couples that is still enshrined in law there.





# SEPTEMBER

## USI BUDGET 2017 SUBMISSION (6TH SEPTEMBER)

The Budget submission was launched outside Leinster House on September 6th. Meetings have are being scheduled across the country with TDs to discuss the submission. It is known that the summer economic statement outlined that there will be approximately €1 billion of fiscal space available for new initiatives across all Departments in Budget 2017.



## PART TIME OFFICER TRAINING - DUBLIN (7TH SEPTEMBER)

Part time Officer training for the Dublin region was held in Trinity College Dublin, Thursday 22nd of September in NUIG for the BMW region, and Friday September 30th for the Southern Region. Based on previous feedback, modules on areas such as Event Management, Time Management, Working with Staff and the National Campaign for part-time officers across Ireland.

## LAUNCH OF THE USI STUDENT SUPPORT CARD (8TH SEPTEMBER)

Ahead of World Suicide Prevention day September 10th, USI alongside Reachout and PleaseTalk launched the Student Support card. The card entailed numbers and resources for students and young people to avail of mental health supports. We sent out 20,000 cards across the country.



## LAUNCHING #EDUCATIONIS (26TH SEPTEMBER)

The campaign was launched in St Stephen's Green with USI, ISSU, TUI and NYCI on September 26th. The launch announced the date and purpose of the national demonstration and our intentions for this campaign. This garnered significant media Attention across national media with the target of 5,000 students taking to the street being the main headline against Income Contingent Loans.



## LAUNCHING THE COALITION FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION (28TH SEPTEMBER)

On September 28th, building on from momentum of the launch of the campaign, the Coalition for Publicly Funded Higher Education (USI, SIPTU, TUI, IMPACT and IFUT) launched their bid for a publicly funded higher education model as proposed by the Cassells Report. This took the form of a media briefing followed by a lobbying day in Buswells with 'Making the Case for Publicly Funded Higher Education'.





## 32ND EUROPEAN STUDENTS' CONVENTION (30TH SEPTEMBER - 3RD OCTOBER)

In late September, three delegates from USI National Council and officer board attended the 32nd European Students' Convention in Bratislava, Slovakia. The three-day conference discussed the European landscape for issues of access, transfer and progression, while also building capacity in students' unions to address urgent issues of refugee access.

## ONLINE SHAG (26TH - 30TH SEPTEMBER)

USI for the second year running ran the online SHAG campaign which aims to educate students on safer sexual health, changing attitudes and behaviors and promoting consent through online platforms. The campaign was supported by the HSE, Spunout, BelongTo and many more organisations.



## STUDENTS FOR CHOICE AT MARCH FOR CHOICE (30TH SEPTEMBER)

An unprecedented 500 students gathered in Trinity College Dublin before the Annual March for Choice organised by the Abortion Rights Campaign, the highest recent turnout of students at the action. The groundswell of support from third level students to repeal the 8th amendment of the Irish constitution was clear from the beginning of the semester, which continued right throughout the year.

## SEACHTAIN NA BHFREISIR

With thanks to Foras na Gaeilge and Conradh na Gaeilge, USI was able to distribute thousands of promotional materials amongst member organisations and Cumann Gaelacha at the beginning of the academic year. These materials were used by students to increase membership in Cumann Gaelacha and increase engagement at Irish Language events. This was also taken as an opportunity for the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to meet and plan with the incoming Cumann Gaelach committee and officers whilst distributing the materials.

## CEARDLANNA SCÉIM

Coordinated with Conradh na Gaeilge, the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge visited the majority of Scéimeanna Chónaithe (Irish Language Student Accommodation Schemes) at the outset of the academic year to promote upcoming campaigns and events.

## USI SUPPORTS MRCI CAMPAIGN FOR REGULARISATION (6TH OCTOBER)

At October National Council, USI's equality & citizenship working group put forward a motion to National Council to support the work of MRCI in its campaign to have undocumented people in Ireland regularised, particularly young people who are outside the system and cannot access any education. The working group heard directly about the migrant experience from someone who had lived it.



## BUDGET 2017 (11TH OCTOBER)

Budget 2017 was announced on October 11th and had a number of wins for USI. Some key points from Budget 2017 include: The government allocated €36.5m in core funding to higher and further education colleges (part of key ask in submission); From September 2017, the Department of Education would provide up to 1,100 maintenance grants of up to €6,000 to Irish postgraduate students from lower-income backgrounds (key ask in submission); Budget 2017 raises the tax-free income limit from €12,000 to €14,000 (accommodation campaign ask); The back-to-education allowance for the under-26s was increased from €160 to €193, while the contribution those on rent supplement have to make towards rent is being reduced from €30 to €10 for 18- to 24-year-olds and to €20 for those aged 25 (previous key ask and lobbying efforts); €35m extra for mental health to be with €15 to be initiated in 2017 (full key ask in submission).

## #EDUCATIONIS PETITIONS (OCTOBER 1ST - 19TH)

USI used petitions as a means to engage with people quickly, create a small action and sense of being engaged and to act as another measure to engage students. From this, we used (with permission from students as prescribed on the petition) to build databases to communicate USI's national campaign. We used Uplift.ie as our platform to gather online petitions. Over the course of a week, USI collected 17,221 signatures calling on the Government to not choose Income Contingent Loans as an option to fund higher education.

## #EDUCATIONIS NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION (19TH OCTOBER)

An estimated 12,000 - 15,000 people took the streets on October 19th. USI had originally planned for 5,000 and almost tripled in attendance. The march began at 13:15 and reached Merrion Square South at 14:05. At the stage, Carly Bailey (TCD student and parent), Gina O'Brien (Chair of the IMPACT Education Executive Committee), Jane M Hayes Nally (ISSU President) and Blind Boy (Rubber Bandits) as well as USI President speaking at the event. The entire event ended at 15:00. There were no incidents during the event. The arrival of buses was timed correctly, and the energy stayed up for the entirety of the event.





## STUDENTS WRITE TO THEIR TDS (THROUGHOUT OCTOBER)

One of the key actions for #EducationIs was to set-up a TD Letter Application. The application is hosted on [usi.ie/educationis/talktoyourtd/](http://usi.ie/educationis/talktoyourtd/). To reinforce that this campaign is not just for students, a specific letter to each group was created and hosted on the website for: students, graduates, second level students, parent, grandparent, college staff, teacher, and general. In one week, 3,099 letters were sent.

## TRAENÁIL NA GCUMANN GAELACHA AGUS NA HOIFIGIGH GHAEILGE (14- 16 DEIREADH FOMHAIR)

Over 75 students from 13 colleges took part in Irish Language Training held in DIT. Over ten speakers ran sessions and workshops over the course of the weekend to discuss, amongst other things, language rights, planning, campaigning and strategies to promote the language. It was a fantastic networking opportunity and a host of events and campaigns discussed at the training came to fruition during the year.

## SOLIDARITY WITH POLISH WOMEN

We stood in solidarity with the hundreds of people striking from work in Poland, as their government moved to restrict abortion entirely and criminalise those who seek access to it. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship spoke at the Irish-led action outside the Polish Embassy in Dublin.

## GAMBLING CONTROL BILL SUBMISSION (19TH OCTOBER)

USI alongside Problem Gambling Ireland and the Ruthland Centre put forward a submission to the Joint-Oireachtas committee on Justice and Equality outlining the need to introduce increased regulation through legislation on gambling. The Submission was written by the Vice President for Welfare alongside the two other organisations



## RESIDENTIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION

USI attended the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government consultation on Strategy for Rented Sector. It was an opportunity for stakeholders like USI to consult the Department of Housing, Minister Coveney and English and organisations on the need for increased scope on the housing situation. Ourselves in USI voiced student housing, deposit retention and increased rights for tenants as a main priority in the consultation.

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS) CAMPAIGN LAUNCH (24TH OCTOBER)

USI, alongside the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Drugs.ie launched a harm reduction campaign targeting the use of new psychoactive substances. The campaign was launched by Minister Catherine Byrne in IT Tallaght. The poster campaign detailed harm reduction methods for users of the substances MDMA and Ketamine. This was the first campaign by USI in relation to substance harm reduction and a campaign endorsed and supported by key health stakeholders like the HSE and Drugs.ie.





## TEACHING HERO AWARDS (27TH OCTOBER)

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in partnership with USI presented 37 Teaching Hero Awards to teachers from Ireland's higher education sector on Thursday 27 October 2016. The Awards marked the culmination of a 2016 Teaching Hero campaign that saw over 800 higher education teachers nominated by their students for these awards.

Students described their most impactful teachers as being outstanding, knowledgeable communicators and again emphasised the human touch as being an essential characteristic. Focused on innovative, creative and inspiring teaching and its impact on student learning, the 2016 awards honour the best of Ireland's higher education teachers for the influence they have on the development of their students and the part they play in promoting educational excellence in higher education. The award recipients honoured come from universities, institutes of technology and private colleges.



## MATURE STUDENTS' SEMINAR (28TH OCTOBER)

Students from across the country descended upon WIT in October to participate in the Mature Students Seminar, which featured modules in time management, essential study skills, public speaking, careers and college-exit strategies after completion. The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship worked closely with WITSU, WIT Mature Students' Society and with Mature Student Ireland to make it a success.



# NOVEMBER

## EARLY EDUCATION AND CARERS CAMPAIGN

USI were invited onto the SIPTU-led 'Big Start coalition as the national voice for students and recent graduates of this sector due to our success with other campaigns and positive relationship with SIPTU. By bringing workers, parents and providers together USI become a strong voice that the Government cannot ignore. USI continued to demand adequate investment in the Early Years services to make it affordable, accessible, high quality with professional pay.

## OIREACHTAS NA SAMHNA (4-6Ú SAMHAIN)

Oireachtas na Samhna is an annual event in celebration of the Irish Language and Culture, which took place in the Gleneagle Hotel in Cill Áirne in 2016. Over 600 students from all over the island took part in the celebration, competing in events such as Corn Uí Riada, the National Sean-Nós Singing Competition and Steip the National Sean-Nós Dancing Competition. AMLÉ worked closely with Conradh na Gaeilge and the organisers of the event, Oireachtas na Gaeilge to provide discounted entry for students. AMLÉ also organised discounted accommodation for students, to ensure maximum student involvement in the event.

## DÍOSPÓIREACHT NÁISIÚNTA GAEL LINN (5Ú SAMHAIN)

Following debating finals in each province, four teams competed for the national third level debating title held at Oireachtas na Samhna in Cill Áirne. The team from UCC took home the title following a lively debate with teams from OÉG, TCD and UCD. The motion under discussion was: Tá an duais Nobel don litríocht tuillte ag Bob Dylan (Bob Dylan earned the Nobel Prize for Literature).

## CHATS FOR CHANGE (7TH- 11TH NOVEMBER)

The annual Mental Health roadshow 'Chats for Change' was launched on the 7th of November. USI teamed up with Walk in my Shoes and Please Talk alongside our new sponsors Roberts and Roberts for the week-long roadshow. For the roadshow 20,000 mental health packs were sent to SUs and included two tea bags and a student support card. The roadshow was hosted by GMITSU, LITSU, MSU and ITBSU. USI, ReachOut, NYCI and Twitter held a mental health event in the new Twitter HQ on the Friday.



## SUBMISSION TO RENTAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION

On the 7th of November 2016 the Union of Students in Ireland made a submission to the Strategy for the Rental Sector. The Strategy provides a vision of the role that the rental sector will play in the short, medium and long terms, as set out in Rebuilding Ireland. USI underlined the importance of affordable and secure rental accommodation. The most prevalent problems for students in the private rental sector include increasing difficulty in finding accommodation, high, unaffordable rents, reluctance of landlords to rent to students, low quality accommodation, significant distances from college, unspecific deposit deductions without cost breakdowns, lack of written lease agreements, and lack of regulations. The Strategy for the Rental Sector will be built upon four pillars: security, supply, standard and service.





## REACT LAUNCH (15TH NOVEMBER)

USI held the official launch of REACT (Responding to Excessive Alcohol Consumption in Third Level) in University College Cork on the 16th of November alongside the HSE and UCC Health Matters. The event comprised of an update of the work that has taken place over the 18 months while planning for future initiatives. The event was highly attended by SU officers and staff from institutions who have signed up to the REACT programme.

## NATIONAL VOTER REG DAY (NOVEMBER 16TH)

USI led a National Voter Registration drive in November ahead of the close of the draft register, in partnership with Spunout.ie and the National Youth Council of Ireland. Almost 8,000 students were registered in drives on campuses across the country.

## PINK TRAINING (NOVEMBER 25-27TH)

The biggest event of its kind for LGBTI+ students in Europe, over 300 students gathered in University College Cork for three days in November for Pink Training, which this year provided over double the number of workshops (40) and facilitators (51), introduced the Inaugural all-island Lip-Sync battle, as well as presenting the Cork Queer History Archive. New modules included themes around disability, public speaking, being 'out' in the workplace, LGBTI+ and the Repeal the 8th movement. For the first time ever, participants were encouraged to undertake Rapid HIV testing during the conference, and students also participated in the launch of the 'being LGBT at third level' guide created by Dundalk Outcomers and USI.

Notable contributors included Senator Jerry Buttimer, Stephen Byrne (RTE), Robbie Lawlor, Bliss Festival's Beth Wallace and Snapchatter Paddy Smyth. Pink Training 2017 featured a unique partnership with Microsoft, and keynote speeches from Dena Lawrence ('LGBT Role Model of the year', Microsoft) and Colm O'Gorman (Director, Amnesty International Ireland). A follow-up event for World Aids Day in partnership with Prhomo raised funds for HIV Ireland.





# DECEMBER

## LOBBY OF THE OIREACHTAS (6TH DECEMBER)

USI held a lobbying day in Buswells Hotel with a number of Students' Union officers in attendance. The day ran from 11am to 4pm with a steady flow of TDs and Senators coming throughout the event. USI provided a comprehensive position paper, a quick fact sheet and other documents like the NERI Report 'We Need To Talk About Higher Education', and the Council of Australian Postgraduates Association paper on loans. Over 80 representatives attended the day.

## PRESENTATION TO THE OIREACHTAS FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION (8TH DECEMBER)

The USI President presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills on the funding of higher education alongside the President of the Students Union in Trinity College Dublin, the President of the the Irish Second Level Students Union, the Royal Irish Academy, the Governing Authority in NUI Galway and the Governing Authority in University College Cork. The second session saw the Committee meet with representatives of IBEC, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Social Justice Ireland, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Irish Farmers Association and the Higher Education Colleges Association. With the USI Deputy President, USI President and other members of USI Officer Board submitted the USI position paper and argued for a publicly funded higher education model.

## DCU REFERENDUM (29TH NOVEMBER - 2ND DECEMBER)

The result of a constitutional referendum in DCU was a resounding Yes to USI, with 94.4% voting to remain affiliated. 2,176 students from DCUSU voted to remain with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 2,304 votes cast. Polls opened at 9am on Thursday the 1st of December and closed at 5pm on Friday the 2nd of December.

## 71ST ESU BOARD MEETING (1ST - 7TH DECEMBER)

In December, seven representatives of USI National Council travelled to Gdansk, Poland, to attend the 71st Board Meeting of the European Students' Union. The board meeting involves a 3-day conference on student engagement and an intense 3-day meeting to review proposed policy papers, decide on organisational work priorities, and elect representatives. The conference held in advance of the board meeting involved insightful discussions on the subject of student participation in the governance of higher education institutions.



# JANUARY

## NATIONAL STUDENT HOUSING SURVEY (10TH JANUARY)

The population of the respondents during the 4-week period when the survey links were open for responses was a total of 3,597 respondents - 3% were disqualified and not able to proceed with filling out the survey. Those were students who are taking a break (26 respondents), stopped studying (11) or graduated (71). Finally, 3,447 respondents submitted their answers to the survey. The USI Student Housing Project Executive has used this data to shape the Student Accommodation Strategy.



## CONSENT TRAINING (18TH JANUARY)

USI partnered with Smart Consent NUIG to provide a training module to welfare officers around the issues of consent on campuses and how best to tackle the issue on college campuses around the country. This was the second part in training which begun in September with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre.

## APPOINTMENT TO HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (18TH JANUARY)

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship was appointed by Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton to the High Level Group on International Education. Steering group to support the Internationalisation of Ireland's education system in accordance with the Government's International Education Strategies (2010-2015), (2016-2020). This Interdepartmental Group will remain in place for the duration of the International Education Strategy which is due to end in 2020.

## BRIDGES NOT WALLS (20TH JANUARY)

USI led the 'Bridges not Walls' action with the European Network against Racism (ENAR) on January 20th, where students and community organisations gathered at the Ha'penny bridge in act of solidarity with all those who are marginalised under the new US administration, in particular immigrants, LGBTI+ people, and all those who would be affected by restrictions on reproductive rights. Other organisations working with USI on the action - which received world-wide press attention - included the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) and Irish Refugee Council.





## #WOMENLEAD17 (27-28TH JANUARY)

On Friday & Saturday 27-28th of January, USI ran the largest to-date Women in Leadership training event which was in partnership with Accenture Dublin, with just under 30 women from across Ireland attending. Speakers at the event included Ailbhe Smyth (Convenor, Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment), Orla O'Connor (Director, National Women's Council of Ireland), Michelle Cullen (Head of Inclusion & Diversity, Accenture), Linda Kelly (IMPACT organiser and former USI VPE Equality) and Angela Mezzetti (Journalist). Workshops focussed on empowerment and practical leadership skills, as well as including a consultation for the National Women's Strategy. Success from the event has seen a significant number of women both running for election to SU and also opting for leadership positions in college societies around the country.



**WOMEN**

**LEAD**

**17**



## GOVERNANCE CODE (30TH JANUARY)

On January 30th, USI's application to the Governance Code to be officially listed as being 'On the Journey' meaning USI was formally accepted to the commitment to undertake a process to comply with the Code. USI met with The Wheel's advisors on the Governance Code to lay out in detail the roadmap of where the union need to go, what the union need to fulfil and timelines to complete tasks so USI will be compliant with the Code.



# FEBRUARY

## USI'S LOW PAY COMMISSION SUBMISSION (9TH FEBRUARY)

USI made a submission on the National Minimum Wage to the Low Pay Commission in February calling for the gradual move towards a living wage of €11.50 per hour and to ban 'If and When' contracts.



**REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL  
MINIMUM HOURLY  
RATE OF PAY**

*Submission to the  
Low Pay Commission*

## TIONÓL 3Ú AMLÉ @ ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH NA GAEILGE (25Ú FEABHRA)

The Tionól Tríú took place in February in Cathair na Gaillimhe, coinciding with Ard-Fheis Chonradh na Gaeilge. This is the first event of its kind run by AMLÉ which is hoped to be run as an annual event. The tionól was taken as an opportunity to brainstorm, discuss and coordinate campaigns between Irish Officers and Cumann Gaelacha. A campaigning workshop also took place with one of An Dream Dearg's leading members, Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh.

## ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH NA GAEILGE (24Ú & 25Ú FEBHRA)

2017 saw a higher number of students in attendance at Ard-Fheis Chonradh na Gaeilge, along with a higher volume of motions submitted to the convention by students, than ever before. It also saw DCU's Caoimhe Ní Chonghaile elected onto the Coiste Gnó (Executive Committee) of Conradh na Gaeilge.

## SHAG WEEK (13TH-17TH FEBRUARY)

The central SHAG Week campaign which ran from 13 to 17 February the week of Valentines saw USI campaign teams carrying out direct campaign engagement on 4 campuses. Direct engagement took the form of a SHAG Roadshow in DCU, IT Sligo, WIT and QUB involving the distribution of some 11,000 condoms directly to students, facilitating over 400 STI screenings for Students, the distribution of some 30,000 SHAG packs nationwide, and increasing engagement through innovative online methods. USI partnered very closely with the HSE on this campaign and could not have been a success and the partnership that is in place is an assurance that will ensure that the Sexual Health campaign for Third level is funded and of the highest standard and quality assured.



# MARCH

## USI WELCOMES RECOGNITION OF IRISH TRAVELLING COMMUNITY (1ST MARCH)

1st March 2016 signified significant progress in the lobbying efforts of traveller rights' groups in Ireland supported by the USI, but we continue to call for increased, guaranteed funding for education and access programmes for this marginalised ethnic community.

## IRISH SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (FEBRUARY & MARCH)

Field work for the Irish Survey of Student Engagement took place in partnership with Students' Unions in February and March. ISSE is a quantitative survey of the experience of first and final year undergraduates and taught postgraduates, whose findings are used to create index scores for student engagement. Institutions can use the data, provided annually with new survey findings, to measure the success of student engagement initiatives. This year saw the fifth consecutive increase in participation.



## USI PRESENT TO CITIZENS ASSEMBLY (5TH MARCH)

Out of over 80 advocacy organisations identified by the Citizens Assembly, 16 groups were asked to present to the citizens themselves, including USI. USI discussed our strong historic connection to the access to abortion rights in Ireland, and pointed out that not one college has opted to retain the 8th amendment in nationwide referendums across campuses. For many, the USI President's contribution and concluding questions and answers session with the VP for Equality & Citizenship was understood as a key juncture for citizens in their understanding of the issues involved around abortion access in Ireland. USI was the only organisation to meaningfully include reference to the affects of restrictions on those who are transgender.





## 33RD EUROPEAN STUDENTS' CONVENTION (5TH TO 8TH MARCH)

Between 5th and 8th March, USI and NUI Galway Students' Union hosted 80 student representatives from 36 countries at the 33rd European Students' Convention in NUI Galway. The event explored the use of national access plans as an instrument for increasing participation among underrepresented groups, as well as discussing various barriers to participation. On the final day, the sessions examined the potential consequences for European higher education of a hard Brexit.



## USI PARTNER ON HSE #ASKABOUTALCOHOL CAMPAIGN (7TH MARCH)

USI partnered with the HSE campaign targeting alcohol harm and promoting harm reduction. The campaign which was launched by the HSE is fully supported by USI and several partners including Spunout.ie, NYCI and many others.

## USI JOIN STRIKE 4 REPEAL ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (8TH MARCH)

USI members across the country joined with the direct action of Strike 4 Repeal on International Women's day to once again raise the profile of the need to repeal the 8th Amendment.





## MAYNOOTH STUDENTS' UNION STAY AFFILIATED TO USI (8TH MARCH)

2,027 students from Maynooth University voted to remain members of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 2,142 votes cast. Polls opened at 9am on Wednesday the 8th of March and closed at 6pm. The final result was 95.7% of MSU voters said yes to USI.

## STUDENT SUMMIT 2017 (21ST MARCH)

The Student Summit (Ireland's largest student-led start-up expo, focused on helping students develop their start-up ideas and find employment with existing start-ups) took place at The Printworks in Dublin Castle. Regional Student Summit pitch-competitions took place in Dublin, Cork, Belfast and Galway. Four student start-ups pitched for a grand prize of €3,000 after being assessed by judges from Bank of Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Unifund, Goworky and USI. Make A Mark (TY students from Mayo) took home the grand prize. The two aspiring young entrepreneurs established their own mini-enterprise company 'Make a Mark', as part of the Student Enterprise Awards Programme, earlier this year, creating a hand-held gun for applying marking fluid to sheep.



## DITSU REFERENDUM (16TH MARCH)

DIT voted 91% to remaining affiliated to USI with a total poll of 3265 students voting over a total of two days and 2 weeks of campaigning , a total number of 2989 students voted in a overwhelming majority to remain members of USI.

## SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE NÁISIÚNTA (1-17 MARTA)

Millions took part in the over 200,000 events that took place as a part of the Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia festival (which was officially announced on the 9th February in Facebook HQ). The festival saw events organised across the country and all over the world. Céilís, language classes and traditional music sessions were among the events organised on campuses around the country. The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge supported member organisations on campus and by distributing materials sponsored by Foras na Gaeilge and Conradh na Gaeilge.



## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES CAMPAIGN SECOND PHASE (20TH MARCH)

USI alongside the HSE and Drugs.ie launched the second phase of the NPS campaign , this stage targeting harm reduction towards users of Cannabinoids and Mephedrone.

## USI JOIN CALLS TO RATIFY UN CRPD

USI were appointed to the steering committee for the coalition to ratify the UN CRPD (Convention on the rights of people with disabilities) led by activist Joanne O'Riordan, and supported a nationwide call to ratify legislation in Ireland on March 30th during USI Congress, as other groups organised rallies around the country.







USI Congress was held in the West County Hotel between 27th and 30th March 2017. Congress is USI's supreme governing body, setting policy and priority in addition to electing the USI officer board for the next academic year. Over 250 delegates from 26 institutions debated policies addressing Brexit, mental health, the funding of higher education and much more.



# APRIL

## OIREACHTAS BRIEFING ON FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION (5TH APRIL)

USI made a presentation to members of the Oireachtas on the funding of higher education by invitation of Tommy Broughan TD. With the USI. A wide array of TDs and Senators attended the briefing. The result of the briefing saw a number of TDs willing to ask PQs, and a Fianna Fáil TD insisting his party have a stance on the issue. The USI Vice President for the BMW and the AIT Students' Union President also presented their view at the briefing.



## 'IT STOPS NOW' LAUNCH (5TH APRIL)

The USI were appointed to the steering committee of 'It Stops Now' an EU funded initiative being led by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi). The pan-european project will build a culture of zero tolerance of sexual harassment and violence in third level institutions by raising awareness through active campaigning and by developing training and policy resources for students and staff. ESHE project actions will work to ensure there is a coherent framework driving clear reporting and disclosure mechanisms, resourcing strong support services and ensuring long-term, sustainable interventions.



## NSTEP EXPANSION (6TH APRIL)

On April 6th, the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) expanded from working in five pilot institutions to 23. NStEP is a programme run by USI, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and provides structured class representative training and institutional consultancy with the objective of improving student engagement in institutions.

## NCADSU RE-AFFILIATION (7TH APRIL)

On the 6th of April NCADSU re-affiliated with USI with a record breaking 98% vote to affiliate with USI. USI is delighted to have NCADSU part of the National student movement once again and are looking forward to working with them for the foreseeable future.





## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IRELAND (SAAI) 2017 (20TH APRIL)

USI held the 5th annual student achievement awards in Dublin Castle. The SAAIs, hosted this year by YouTube star Clare Cullen, are a celebration of the excellent achievements of third-level students and students' unions. The awards were sponsored by leaders in the relevant fields, including QQI (for class rep of the year), Amnesty International Ireland (for student leader of the year) and Samaritans (for Outstanding Mental Health Activism). 17 awards were presented in total, with the USI President's Award going to Jane Hayes-Nally, President of the Irish Second-Level Students' Union.



## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FORUM (21ST APRIL)

USI revived the International Students' Forum this year after several years hiatus in order to ensure their voice becomes central to our work moving forward, particularly as Ireland and the UK face into Brexit. Over 30 students attended the forum which USI held in partnership with ICOS. Students focused in particular on access to services to ensure wellbeing, as well as access to accommodation.

## USI SPEAK AT INMO BRIEFING ON EMIGRATION (25TH APRIL)

Using the data from the research USI conducted in 2015, the INMO ran a new survey on emigration, cost of living and engagement from the HSE. The INMO held a press conference on the report's findings that 78% of student nurses considered emigrating. USI spoke at this press event outlining the similarities from USI's research and the INMO's and emphasised the cost of accommodation for students based on the results from the National Student Housing Survey.



## USI AT GOOGLE/FACEBOOK EMEA CHILD SAFETY SUMMIT (28TH APRIL)

USI VP Equality & Citizenship and the VP Campaigns attended the summit, discussing wellbeing & resilience, revenge porn, sexting, consent, the sharing of intimate images, and being safe online.



# MAY

## HORIZON 2020 PROJECT STARTED (1ST MAY)

The Students Achieving Valuable Energy Savings 2 (SAVES2) project officially started on May 1st and will run for 42 months until 2020. USI received 273,667.50 EUR for the project for a full-time Student Dormitory Co-Ordinator to run the project, campaign materials, training and conferences. The funding will run the Student Switch Off campaign which will catalyse sustainable energy behaviours among over 219,000 university students in seven countries to help them reduce their exposure to fuel poverty. The universities involved in the Student Switch Off Campaign are NUI Galway, UCC, Maynooth University and DCU.

## 72ND ESU BOARD MEETING (1ST TO 7TH MAY)

In the first week of May, five representatives of USI officer board travelled to Malta to attend the 72nd Board Meeting of the European Students' Union. The board meeting involves a 3-day conference on digitisation in HE as a priority of the Maltese EU Presidency, and an intense 3-day meeting to review proposed policy papers, decide on organisational work priorities, and elect representatives.

## USI SUPPORT PASSING OF HISTORIC EUROPEAN-LEVEL LGBT STATEMENT

During the 72nd ESU Board Meeting in Malta, USI spoke on and strongly supported the passing of the significant LGBT Statement by the organisation, which seeks to enshrine policy for ESU for the rights of LGBTI+ students in Europe in their wellbeing, access to education, and success.



## LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS (3RD MAY)

On May 3rd the Vice President for the Southern Region spoke at the Launch of the National Strategy for Women & Girls 2017-2020 alongside Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Justice and Equality David Stanton, and Director of the National Womens' Council of Ireland Orla O'Connor. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship had worked on development and consultation for the strategy as a member of the National Steering committee before it's launch, and will continue to monitor it's progress. USI spoke on the importance of working towards the betterment of the lives of women and girls in Ireland, and the need to level the playing field for women of all backgrounds.

## PRESENTATION TO OIREACHTAS JOINT COMMITTEE ON JOBS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION (9TH MAY)

USI presented to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with the USI President on 'If and When' or zero-hour contracts and the Banded Hours Contract Bill 2017. During this presentation, USI called for the ban of 'If and When' contracts across all employment. USI presented alongside representative of Teachers Union of Ireland and Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland and representatives of TASC and Migrant Rights Centre Ireland.





## USI BRIEFS TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL ON PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION (16TH)

The Vice-President for Welfare and the Vice-President for the Southern Region presented to Tipperary County Council on the Cassells report. The Council put forward a motion in relation asking for the council to take a stance in favour of USIs position.



## NATIONAL LGBTI+ YOUTH CONSULTATION (13TH MAY)

The USI VP Equality was appointed by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone to the steering committee of the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy in January, and along with BelongTo, USI took a lead role in the consultation process, ensuring that young LGBTI+ people and students took part around the country. Over 4,000 young people responded to the online survey, and hundreds attended regional consultations. On May 13th, the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs addressed the National Consultation in Croke Park, Dublin.



## HEALTHY IRELAND NETWORK MEMBERSHIP (18TH MAY)

On the 18th of May the Vice-President for Welfare signed the Healthy Ireland Charter and USI officially became a member of the Healthy Ireland network and committing to the goals and objectives of the Healthy Ireland framework.

## HORIZON 2020 AND SAVES2 ANNOUNCEMENT (22ND MAY)

USI announced the Students Achieving Valuable Energy Savings 2 (SAVES2) project with MSU, DCU, ECO-UNESCO, NUIGSU, Gaelectric, and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment followed by a briefing session to kick start the project.



## AN LÁ DEARG (20 BEALTAINÉ)

As a result of the treatment of the Irish Language by the Executive in Northern Ireland, months of controversy, and a host of campaigns coordinated by An Dream Dearg, An Lá Dearg took place on 20 May, 2017. It saw over 12,000 people, both members and supporters of the Irish language community coming together at Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, Belfast to march on City Hall as a single voice. A loud and colourful, yet peaceful protest took place both in celebration and in demand of the Irish language and her rights and recognition.



## BIG GAY WEDDING WITH NUS-USI (22ND MAY)

As the Republic of Ireland celebrated it's second anniversary of the passing of the marriage equality referendum, USI joined with NUS-USI and students at a 'Big Gay Wedding' ceremony on the steps of Stormont in Belfast to highlight the issues ongoing for our students in Northern Ireland.

## USI WINS BEST ZERO BUDGET SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR #HOMESFORSTUDY (25TH MAY)

USI scooped up the award for Best Zero Budget Social Media Campaign sponsored by SpunOut.ie at the Social Media Awards Ireland in the RDS with USI's housing campaign #HomesForStudy. This is the second year in a row winning this headline award. USI were finalists in the Best Twitter Campaign and Best Twitter Account for a Non-Profit categories at the night.



## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING (30TH - 31ST MAY)

Mental Health First Aid took place in UCC on the 30-31st of May. The training lasted for two days and had a total of 37 student union officers attend in UCC. The training was purely funded by the HSE and Dept. of Health and without their support we couldn't have been able to run this intense but massively beneficial training.





## RUN FOR REPEAL (6TH JUNE)

Over 140 women and students participated in the 35th Annual Women's mini marathon, which included members of USI Officer-board, raising funds for the Repeal the 8th Coalition.



## LAUNCH OF STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT (12TH JUNE)

USI teamed up with the HSE, National Office of Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Helen McEntee, to announce the launch of a major project to tackle young people's mental health in the higher education sector in Ireland. USI will receive funding to hire a Mental Health Project Manager to conduct research on students' mental health and coordinate a national third level mental health campaign. The project, which is set to start in July, will see USI working with key stakeholders across the country to break mental health stigma, promote services and train student leaders to identify and respond to their peers' mental health needs. The project has a timeline of 9 months and is funded by the National Office for Suicide Prevention and the HSE.



## USI OFFICER BOARD 2017/2018

*Michael Kerrigan*

*Oisín Hassan*

*Niamh Murtagh*

*Síona Cahill*

*Amy Kelly*

*Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha*

*Michelle Byrne*

*Jimmy McGovern*

*Aisling Cusack*

*Olivia Potter-Hughes*

President

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Vice President for Welfare

Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Vice President for Campaigns

Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Vice President for Southern Region

Vice President for Border, Midlands and Western Region

Vice President for the Dublin Region

NUS-USI President





# REFERENDUMS

## DCU REFERENDUM (29TH NOVEMBER - 2ND DECEMBER)

The result of a constitutional referendum in DCU was a resounding Yes to USI, with 94.4% voting to remain affiliated. 2,176 students from DCUSU voted to remain with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 2,304 votes cast. Polls opened at 9am on Thursday the 1st of December and closed at 5pm on Friday the 2nd of December.

## MAYNOOTH STUDENTS' UNION STAY AFFILIATED TO USI (8TH MARCH)

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**USO** STUDENTS FOR CHOICE

**@ RALLY TO REPEAL**

CORK 1.30PM - GRAND PARADE  
DUBLIN 3PM - CENTRAL BANK  
GALWAY 2PM - EYRE SQUARE

**THIS SAT 17TH**



# STUDENTS FOR CHOICE

## 2016 - 2017





# EDUCATION IS NATIONAL DEMO

OCTOBER 19TH

12,000 TAKE TO THE STREETS FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED HIGHER  
EDUCATION IN DUBLIN









**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

CONTACT US

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