

# The National Council of the Union of Students in Ireland

## Minutes

National Council USI, NC 59.3

Dublin Institute of Technology

21<sup>st</sup> September, 2018

**Chairperson:** **Richard Hammond**

**Deputy Chairperson:** **Cathy Pembroke**

## **NAMES APPEARING ON THE ATTENDANCE LIST:**

(No liability and/or reproach accepted for difficulties deciphering manuscript notations)

### **CCSU**

Ryan Shannon

### **DCUSU**

Callaghan Commons

### **DITSU**

Pierre Yimbog

Róisín O' Donovan

Rebecca Gorman

Jess Morris

### **DKITSU**

Maria Maguire

### **GMITSU**

Aaron Burke

Victor O'Loughlin

Emma-Louise Duffy

### **IADTSU**

Chloe Power

### **ITBSU**

Luke Daly

### **ITCSU**

Richard Morrell

Ronan Larkin

Roisín Sheridan

Erica Cunningham

### **ITSSU**

Tara Ní Raghallaigh

Laura Muldoon

### **ITTDSU**

Amy Keatinge

Megan O'Neill

Lee Bennett

### **LITSU/LSADSU**

Ashling McGrory

Úna Cahill

**LYITSU**

William Daly

**MSU**

Leon Diop

Kim Lockyer

Katie Deegan

**NCADSU**

Ross Kelly

Issey Goold

**NUIGSU**

Megan Reilly

Clare Austick

**STACSU**

Marie Lyons

**St Mary's Belfast SU**

Bronagh McCaughan

**TCDSU**

Shane DeRis

Paraic McLean

Oisín Vince Coulter

Conor Reddy

**UUSU**

Kevin McStravock

Meghan Downey

Conor Keenan

Collette Cassidy

**WITSU**

Darren Malone

John Fortune

**Bord na nOifigeach, AMLÉ**

Síona Cahill, President

Oisín Hassan, Deputy President/ Vice President for Academic Affairs

Damien McClean, Vice President for Welfare

Michelle Byrne, Vice President for Campaigns

Barry Clohessy, Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Lorna Fitzpatrick, Vice President for the Southern Region

Colm O'Halloran, Vice President for the Dublin Region

Aoife Deasy, Vice President for the Irish Language/Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

**NAMES FOR WHOM APOLOGIES WERE OFFERED TO THE MEETING:**

CCSU; Amanda Bowes, GMITSU; Gary Tobin, IADTSU; Niamh Grennan, IADTSU; Grace Latham, ITSSU; Vanessa Molloy, LITSU; Paul Cashin, LITSU; Jade Foynes, LITSU; Ryan Burke, LITSU; Niamh Foley, LITSU; Michael O'Connell, LYITSU; Paul Lynch LYITSU; Siobhán Howe, MSU; Paul Kenny, USI OB; Andrew Forde, USI OB; Aisling Cusack, USI OB; Olivia Potter-Hughes, UUSU; Emma Bonner, UUSU; Owen McCloskey, UUSU; Andrew McAnallen, WITSU; Marie Sheedy.

## **Preliminary Notes**

- The attendance of guest speaker Dr Rory Hearne **was passed unanimously**. It was also agreed to adjust the Agenda to allow the guest speaker deliver his presentation ahead of Item 5; Officer Reports.
- The attendance of media organisation, Trinity News was **agreed by a majority**.

### **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting which occurred at University of Ulster Coleraine, on 16<sup>th</sup> August were proposed by GMITSU and seconded by TCDSU and **passed without objection**.

### **2. Matters Arising**

- TCDSU noted that their question regarding the decision making capacity of sub-committees wasn't recorded in the last National Council minutes.

### **3. Pre-Nominated Any Other Business**

- TCDSU pre-nominated an emergency motion; "National Day of Action" in relation to the housing crisis.

### **4. Elections**

None.

### **5. Students and the Housing Crisis Presentation by Dr. Rory Hearne**

Dr. Rory Hearne introduced himself and highlighted his previous involvement in the student movement in both USI and TCDSU. The speaker then continued by presenting an analysis on the Irish housing crisis and how it's affecting students while also discussing solutions and strategies for change that Students' Unions can take on board.

Some of the highlights of the presentation included the fact that the housing crisis was affecting student's ability to obtain affordable rents and suitable student accommodation. Furthermore, it was also emphasised that more students are now having to commute long distances in order to attend college. The speaker also noted that this issue is affecting students from lower income families the hardest and will affect the student's education/studies and overall college experience. The speaker ended by noting the fact that housing is now the number one issue in Ireland and that the current government is weak on tackling the housing crisis and there needs to be a shift in policy in this area.

DITSU asked how is it possible to measure what is affordable accommodation. The speaker noted that it is defined as 30% of an individual's income and explained that in terms of a student perspective it would be important for Students' Unions to determine

and set what is affordable for students to be able to pay. DITSU asked was there an issue in Ireland in terms of high building costs. The speaker outlined that high costs are associated with the actual price of land in Ireland. The speaker continued by saying that this is why he would recommend that the state hand over any available land in order to build affordable social housing and student accommodation.

TCDSU questioned if there is any other city in the world that is facing a similar breaking point as Ireland. The speaker responded by explaining that a number of US cities would have similar issues as Ireland as they have moved away from building social housing, along with London and some Spanish cities. The speaker did note that Ireland is one of the worst in the European Union. The speaker also confirmed that in the last two years Ireland and the UK had the highest drop in home ownership rates. MSU commended and thanked the speaker for the very informative presentation.

The President thanked the speaker for his presentation and stressed the need for continued conversation at National Council level regarding this particular topic. The President continued by highlighting the need for the student movement to be at the forefront of campaigning for a change in policy as this issue affects so many students.

## 6. Officer Reports

The Vice President for the Irish Language/Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge had nothing to add to her report. UUSU offered their sincere thanks for advice received regarding the Irish language up in Northern Ireland which the VPIL gratefully accepted. NCADSU highlighted that they are in the process of setting up a new Irish Language Society and noted that they will be in contact soon for some additional support which the VPIL welcomed.

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The Vice President for the Dublin Region had nothing to add to his report. ITBSU offered their sincere thanks for all the help and assistance in recent weeks which the VPDR gratefully accepted. DCUSU questioned if the VPDR had claimed any expenses as it wasn't included within their Officer Report. The Deputy President and Vice President for Academic Affairs explained that any Officers who are missing their expense details will include two months of expenses in their next Officer Report.

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The Vice President for the Southern Region had nothing to add to her report. LITSU offered their sincere thanks for all the help and assistance in recent weeks which the VPSR gratefully accepted.

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The Vice President for the Border, Midlands & Western Region had nothing to add to his report. MSU offered their sincere thanks for attending and participating within their team bonding day which the VPBMW gratefully accepted.

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The Vice President for Campaigns had nothing to add to her report. DITSU highlighted their concerns regarding not receiving any campaign materials and questioned what was the reason for the delay. The VPC explained that this particular campaign is the biggest protest of civic society and that the delay was due to the decision making process having to go through a number of different organisations and sub-committees. The VPC also noted that she hadn't yet received the proper files for design for the #RaiseTheRoof branding. The VPC finally highlighted and thanked TCDSU Communications and Marketing Officer for creating the "Student Lockout" logo.

DITSU requested if there was an update regarding the planned route for the march. The VPC confirmed that a route has been proposed to the Gardai. The VPC explained that they are currently still waiting for a response back from the Gardai but they are hopefully to receive confirmation by this coming Monday. The VPC added that a lot of issues need to be considered such as avoiding Luas routes and that she will notify every one of the planned route once the Gardai have confirmed everything.

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The Vice President for Welfare outlined the following dates;

- World Mental Week is running from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of November
- A video launch for Mental Health Week will happen on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October
- An online campaign on the basics of sex will be launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October
- An STI campaign will be launched in December
- SHAG Week will run on the week of the 11<sup>th</sup> of February
- A women centric SHAG campaign will be run during International Women's Week.

ITTDSU confirmed they will be running a campaign on World Mental Health Day which is the 10<sup>th</sup> of October and asked what will USI be organising. The VPW explained that their main focus will be on World Mental Health Week.

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The Deputy President and Vice President for Academic Affairs had nothing to add to his report. DITSU looked for an update on the email that was sent regarding Students' Union mergers and TU's. The DP&VPAA noted that he had asked a series of questions in the email and got a lot of responses back but it was a big mandate that covered a lot of areas and is trying to prioritise what is needed for immediate attention first.

DITSU requested that for the next National Council that there be a separate Working Group arranged to discuss issues regarding the TU mergers. The DP&VPAA responded by noting that this is something that can be looked at to be arranged, but, if there are time constraint issues this is something that could be covered under Union Development.

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The President had nothing to add to her report and took questions on behalf of the absent NUS-USI President, Vice President for Equality & Citizenship and Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs.

UUSU requested if there was any follow up from Keir Starmer MP (UK Shadow Secretary on Brexit). The President confirmed that she has sent a follow up email

requesting a meeting at the upcoming Trilateral meeting in London so that he can discuss things further with the three President leaders. The President added that during this encounter, Mr. Starmer apologised that students to date have not been met to discuss the effects of Brexit on students.

TCDSU requested clarity on the date for Women in Leadership event. The President explained that it was moved to later in semester one as students usually consider before Christmas if they will be running for election but she will refer this back to the VPE&C.

NCADSU highlighted that they feel they may have possibly been given an incorrect amount regarding their USI fees. The President explained how USI fee amounts are based on student numbers that they receive from the HEA but apologised if any mistakes have been made. The President explained that she will bring this to the attention of the USI General Manager.

TCDSU questioned how much is VideoDoc paying to be present on USI Social Media platforms. The President confirmed that USI hasn't charged them for availing of their social media platforms as they were providing a valuable service for students. The President also confirmed that USI has not received any money from VideoDoc apart from sponsorship for this evening's food but that they have just been identified as a useful service for students.

ITBSU asked how locations for campaign roadshows were decided. The President clarified that for the Repeal campaign USI sought interest from MO's. The President continued that in some instances it's dependent on what MO's are free to host and that it's not very often that there is any competition. ITBSU requested if there is any update regarding sponsorship for Pink Training. The President confirmed that they are still in conversations with Microsoft and that they are working on a grant application.

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## **7. Media Report**

The President confirmed the recent appointment of Aoife Duff as USI PR and Communications Executive and noted that she will be commencing her role next week. The President explained that a detailed and up to date media report will be prepared for the next National Council.

## **8. Items for Agreement**

### **8(a) The Separation of the Church and State**

The motion; The Separation of the Church and State was proposed by the President on the behalf of the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and seconded by ITBSU and was passed without objection.

## **Motion to Separate Church and State**

### **National Council notes:**

That people in Ireland have different religious and spiritual beliefs or none and we live in a pluralistic society.

### **National Council notes with concern:**

The religious nature of Bunreacht na hÉireann and how it can further impact the advancement of positive change in Ireland.

### **National Council believes:**

That Bunreacht na hÉireann and our laws should be secular and that religious or spiritual faith and practices should have no influence on our legislative processes or laws and that no one religion should have supremacy over others.

### **National Council mandates:**

USI Officer Board to support campaigns and lobby groups working towards a separation of church and state. This includes, but, is not limited to supporting the provision of objective relationships and sexuality education in schools and removing the offence of blasphemy from Bunreacht na hÉireann.

## **8(b) Removal of Pre-Nominated AOB from National Council Agenda**

The motion; The Removal of Pre-Nominated AOB from National Council Agenda was proposed by MSU and seconded by ITBSU and **was passed without objection.**

### **Removal of Pre-nominated AOB from National Council Agenda Motion**

#### **National Council notes:**

Pre-nominated AOB is a defunct standing item on the National Council agenda. It is so for the following reasons:

- It slows up the meeting as people must name what they want to talk about under one item of the agenda and then discuss it in another.
- It's purpose may be to bring forward issues so that officer board have time to prepare for it throughout the meeting. However, it has been seen in previous meetings of National Council that this does not happen as members of National Council can just bring these up in regular AOB.

#### **National Council mandates:**

National Council Agree to remove Pre-nominated AOB as a standing item from the National Council agenda.

**9. Items for Discussion**

None.

**10. Items for Information**

**10(a) #RaiseTheRoof Update**

The VPC explained that full details regarding the campaign will be discussed at tomorrow's Campaigns Working Group during a two hour session.

**10(b) Pink Training Location**

The President confirmed that Pink Training will be held in NUIG.

**10(c) Students for Choice at ARC March 2018**

The President outlined that there will be a gathering on this issue in Trinity College to highlight the current situation in Northern Ireland and asked MO's to try to attend and please share the event details. TCDSU added that they are delighted to host such an important event and explained that they will be distributing flyers around.

**10(d) Congress 2019 dates**

This item was removed.

**11. Any Other Business**

The emergency motion; National Day of Action was proposed by TCDSU and seconded by GMITSU and **was passed without objection.**

**National Day of Action Motion**

**Proposed by TCDSU**

**National Council regrets**

The amount of vacant buildings within Ireland and its contribution the current housing crisis. In the 2016 Census, 183,312 houses and apartments were vacant.

**National Council notes**

That 429 out of 7,000 homeless on the night Census 2016 was taken were students.



That in USI's National Student Housing Report 2017, 38 students stated they have no accommodation that they sleep on friends' couches/floors and cars and that in two cases students stated they sleep on the streets.

**National Council mandates:**

USI to actively and publicly support the National Day of Action on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

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DITSU, ITTDSU and ITBSU noted that they will be circulating a joint email to MO's with questions regarding class representatives and kindly requested if colleges could please respond back to the email.

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TCDSU thanked DITSU for hosting today's meetings.

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The President expressed sincere thanks to DITSU for hosting today and tomorrow and thanked TCDSU for their emergency motion which highlights the massive national issue that students face regarding finding affordable housing and how important the role that the student movement will play in tackling this issue.

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The Chairperson thanked DIT Students' Union for hosting today's meeting, thanked all present for their participation and wished everyone a safe journey home before closing the meeting.