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Cork, Ireland

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# CP4Europe mid-term Conference on Child and Youth participation for Europe

Child-friendly summary report

Co-funded  
by the European Union



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## Introduction

### What is child participation?

Child participation means children have the right to be heard and to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, e.g. in schools, hospitals, courts.



### About the CP4Europe project

[CP4Europe](#) is a European Union and Council of Europe project that promotes children's right to participate in decision-making at local, national and European level.



## About the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT)

The [CP4Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool \(CPAT\)](#) helps European countries to measure how well they are doing at giving children a voice in decision-making. The CPAT consists of 10 indicators against which they can assess their progress involving children in decision making. It was decided to complement these 10 indicators with 'outcome indicators' to measure whether the initiatives taken by states to involve children actually make a difference in their own experiences. These new outcome indicators would capture those experiences.

### What should be measured?

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Imagine it is like building a home

- The building itself – the *structure* of the home
- The contents – the *process* of making it a home with furniture, bedding, kitchen equipment, and importantly, spaces for family and friends to be together
- The quality - the *outcomes* or whether it is safe, comfortable, and we are happy there



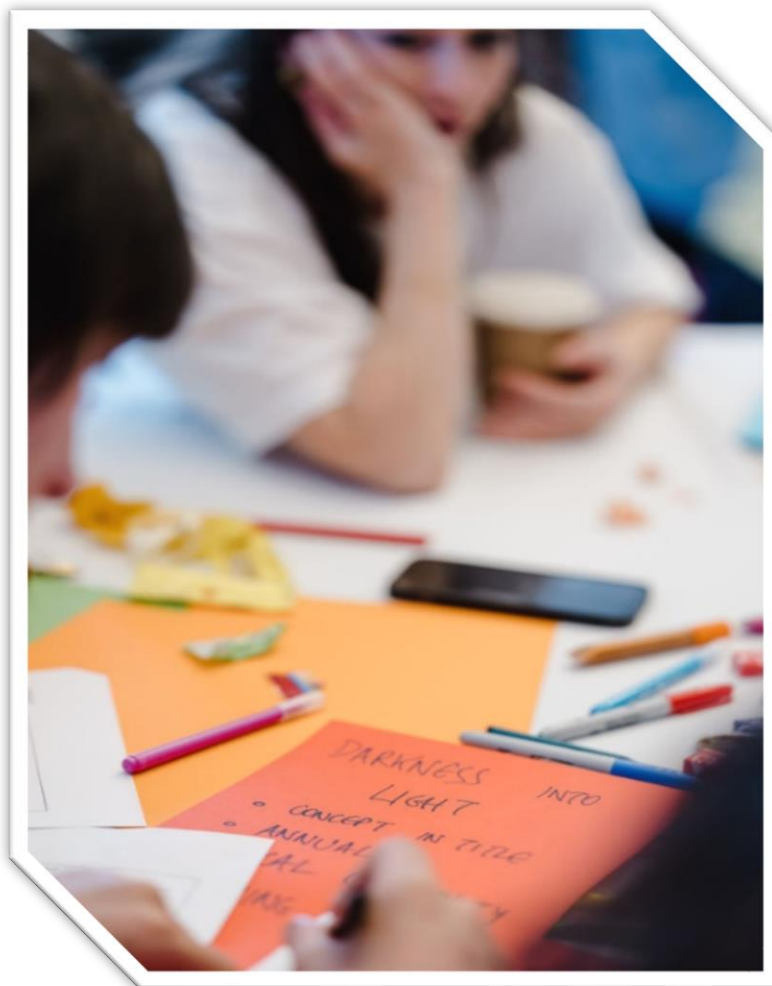
## About the CP4Europe mid-term Conference

The CP4Europe mid-term Conference was held in Ireland as it currently holds the Presidency of the Council of Europe. One of Ireland's key themes of the presidency is 'Hear Our Voices', which includes listening to and promoting children and young people's participation in decision-making. The Conference was run by the Council of Europe and the [Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth \(DCEDIY\)](#). More information about the conference can be found on the Conference [website](#).

## Key Messages from the CP4Europe Conference

### Child participation in times of crisis

- Many children are living in times of crisis, e.g. the war in Ukraine, climate crisis, the impact of Covid-19 on schools and learning.
- Children are often affected more than adults in times of crisis so it is very important to keep listening to children and include their voices in decision-making.
- Times of crisis and false information can make some children not trust governments, politicians and decision-makers.
- Parents can play an important role in including children in decision-making in times of crisis.



## Benefits of child participation

- Including children in decision-making on issues that affect their lives not only helps children but helps all of society to work better.
- Children are experts in their own lives, can help solve problems and come up with good ideas about issues that affect them.
- Children should be seen as important people to be included in decision-making now and should not be just seen as future adults or leaders.



## What helps child participation work well:

- Including children and young people from all backgrounds and those who are seldom heard in decision-making e.g., children with disabilities, migrant children, LGBTI+ young people, among others.
- Children's inclusion in decision-making being well planned and not just one-off events to help build trust.
- Adults listening to children, helping children give their views, working equally with children and not taking over.

- Children should be given information about topics they are being asked to make decisions about, e.g. education in schools, experts talking to children about topics.



### **What stops child participation from working well:**

- If children's participation in decision-making is tokenistic e.g., not meaningful, doesn't make any change.
- Children not having information about how to get involved in decision-making, lack of time and lack of access e.g. to technology, internet.



## Ingredients of innovation in child participation

- using multiple channels and means of expression,
- ensuring a wide diversity of profiles through creative selection methods
- Involving children early and throughout the process
- investing time and resources in preparation and building the capacity of children.



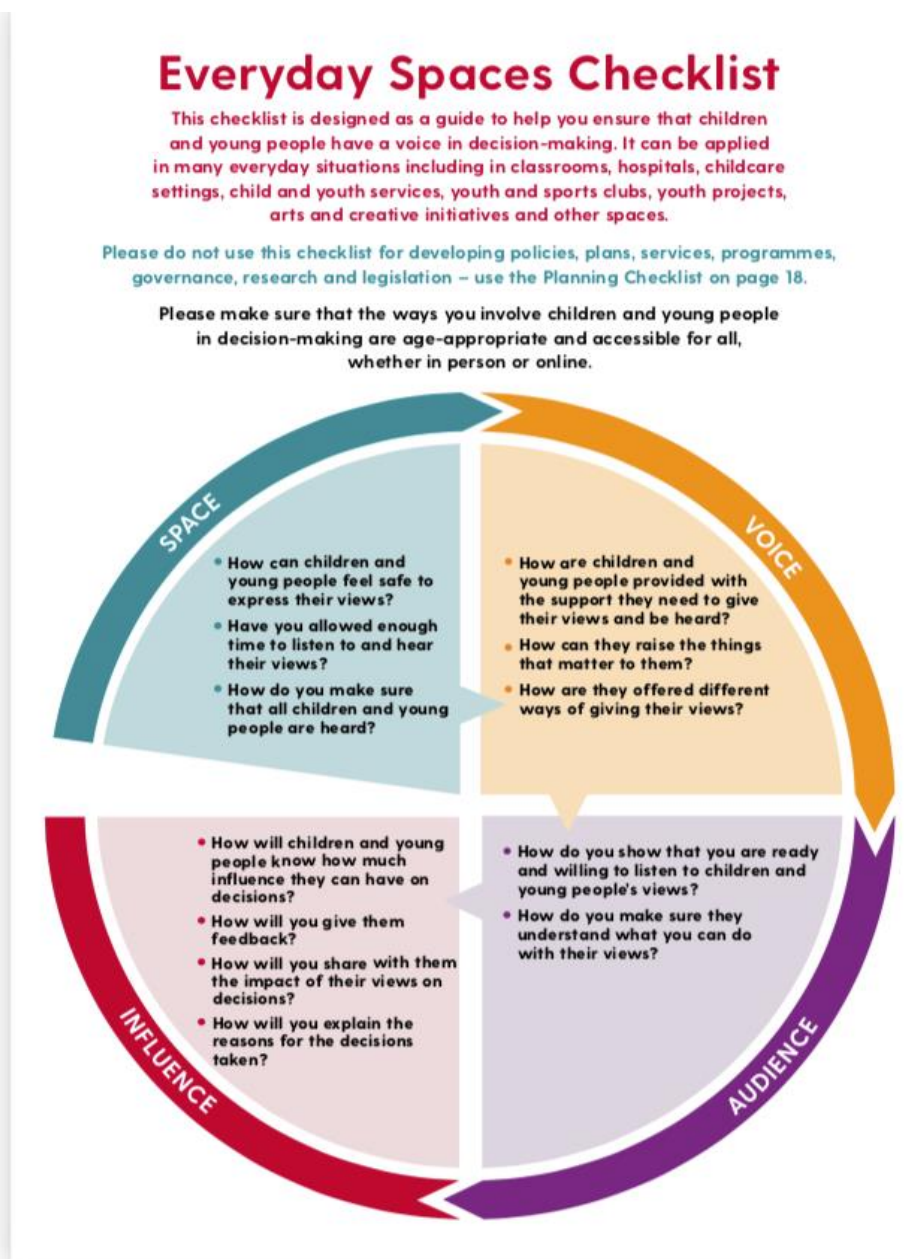
## Child participation with young children:

- Children of all ages have the right to be heard, including babies and young children.
- Babies and young children can communicate and be included in decision-making in a meaningful way at any age.



## Child participation in every-day spaces:

- Children should be included in decision-making in everyday spaces e.g. in schools, childcare, youth clubs, hospitals etc.
- The Lundy Everyday Spaces Checklist below is a good guide to make sure children and young people have a voice in decision-making in everyday spaces.



## Child participation structures:

- Child participation structures are important at local, regional and national levels e.g., Student Councils in schools, child and youth councils, child and youth parliaments.
- There should be more structures for children to talk to politicians and decision-makers.
- Technology can be used to consult with a wide range of children e.g. online decision-making websites, forums networks.



## Adult's roles in child participation:

- Some adults need to change the way they think about listening to children e.g., children being seen and not heard.
- Adult champions of child participation are important to make sure the voices of children are listened to and heard in government and society.



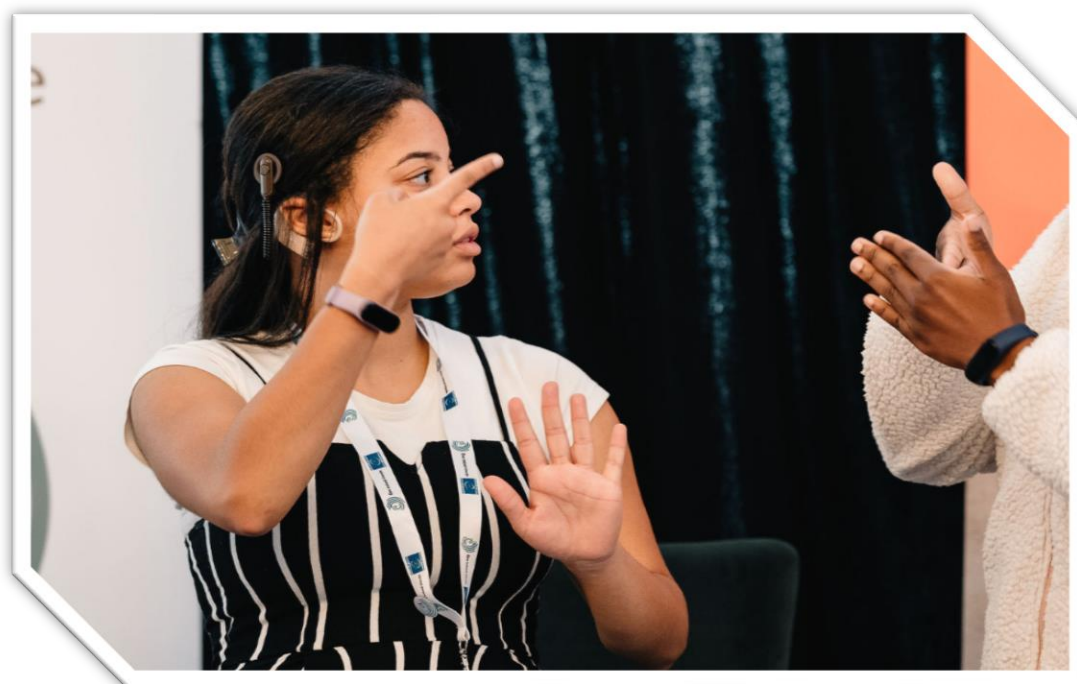
## Examples of CP4Europe countries' + Ireland's initiatives

### Portugal – Giving deaf children a voice in child participation

The National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People in Portugal worked with deaf children to give them a voice in child participation. They held focus groups and included children from seldom-heard groups such as Roma children, children with disabilities and children from migrant backgrounds. For many of the deaf children, it was their first opportunity to express their opinion on issues that affect them. The methods used allowed children to identify problems they face and come up with solutions. The project helped the children to feel empowered, have an impact on society and have the opportunity to be heard despite being deaf.

*"It is even more important for us to be consulted because we are not heard as deaf children and it is important that we participate. My recommendations is deaf children are seen as equal to other children and all we want is accessible services and to be heard in all contexts of our lives."*

[Young person from project in Portugal]

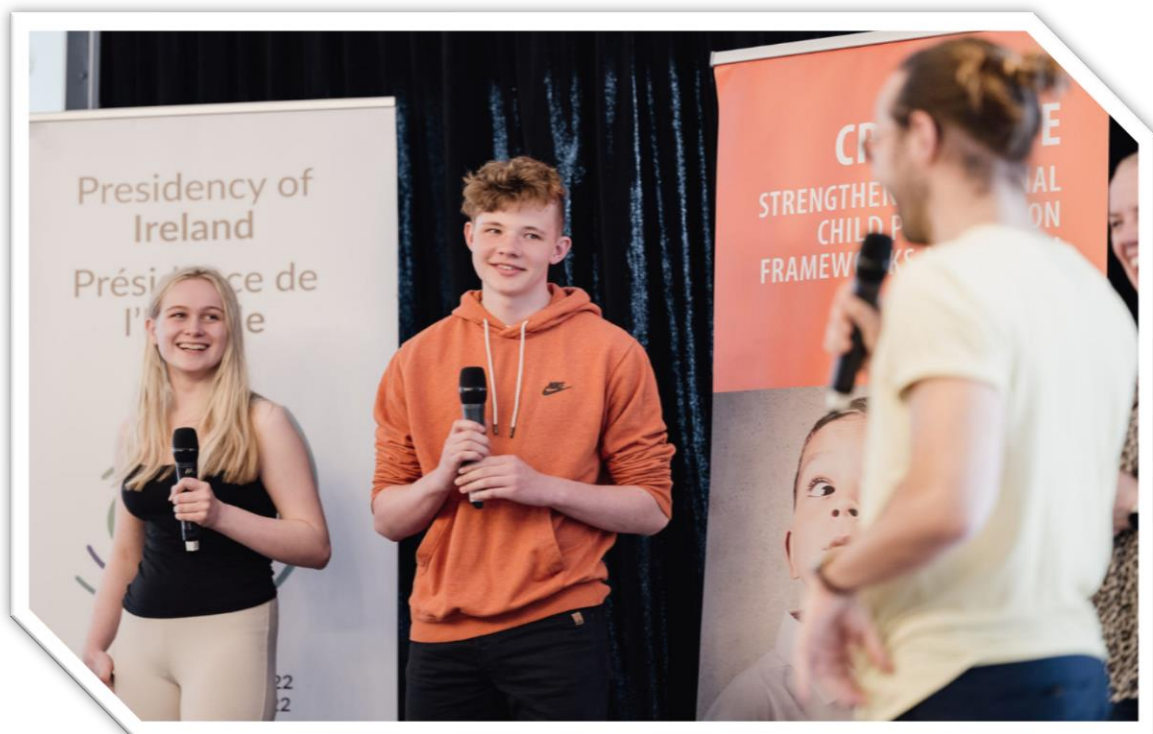


## **Iceland – Involving vulnerable groups in a children's conference**

The Ombudsperson for Children in Iceland hosts a Children's Conference every second year. The Children's Conference randomly invites around 400 children from Iceland to take part. This is done through a national registry app. The conference also includes children who are seldom-heard such as children with disabilities and non-native speakers through organisation who work with these groups. Seldom-heard children were asked what their needs were when planning the conference and were given supports to help them take part fully in the conference. At the conference, the children came up with recommendations and presented them to members of the Icelandic government who were also present. Children and young people enjoyed the conference, in particular being able to interact directly with politicians and decision-makers.

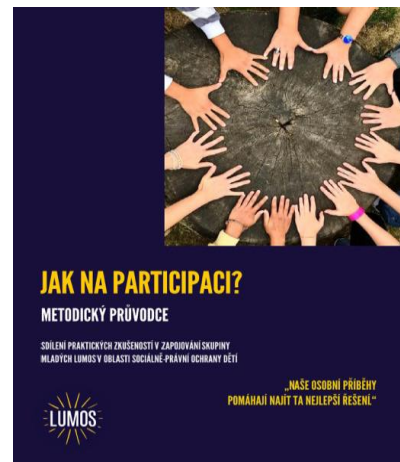
*"I felt very comfortable there and it was very good fun and I got to meet very important people and they treated us as normal people. The Minister for the Environment sat at my table and he answered all our questions."*

[Young person from project in Iceland]



## Czech Republic – Children with mixed experiences of institutional care become self-advocates

Lumos Youth Advisory Group gathers children with mixed life experiences - some of institutional care, others not. Together they advocate for the rights of children who are not able to live at home or have other concerns. They meet regularly and find opportunity to create change through public speaking, meeting with experts, and advising other child and youth-focused organisations. In this context, it is considered particularly innovative for these children to advocate for children's rights and participation for all children, rather than for children in institutional care only.



## **Slovenia – Child participation in establishing and operating first Barnahus for child victims of sexual abuse in Slovenia**

Children participation has been an essential part of the decision-making process in establishing Barnahus in Slovenia in 2022. Children participated in focus groups discussing the final draft Law on Barnahus, the design of premises and children-led consultative bodies in Barnahus. Mainstreaming child participation in all phases of the reform is considered a good and innovative practice.



## **Finland – Online panel for children and young people**

Children were involved in creating a new online service called Digiraati in Finland. The online service provides a safe online space for consulting children and young people on current issues and allows children, young people and decision-makers to talk to each other. The project involved seldom-heard groups such as Roma children, children with disabilities and migrant children. The ideas for the online space were developed in partnership with children, organisations working with children, researchers and government Ministries. The project helped different age groups and backgrounds talk to each other and made sure children's ideas were equal to adults. The adults involved in the project felt including children in decision-making improved the quality of the online service that was created.

*"To me, life becomes meaningful when I become more than just a bystander which is why I think young people should have a say in their everyday life and make decisions about their lives...I felt I was being heard because our ideas were taken, written up and became a strategy."*

[Young person from project in Finland]

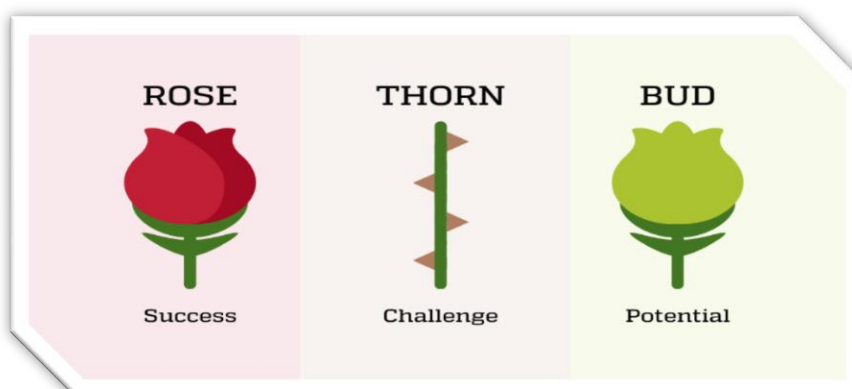
## Ireland - Examples of best practice in child participation

- Ireland was the first country in the world to have a law that says the government and local authorities have to listen to children and young people and include them in decision-making: [National Strategy for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making](#).
- [Comhairle na nÓg](#) are child and youth councils in 31 local authority areas in Ireland and [Dáil na nÓg](#) is the national youth parliament that happens every two years
- [Hub na nÓg](#) (youth hub) is a centre of excellence that gives children and young people a voice in decision-making and helps adults to give children and young people a voice.
- Hub na nÓg created a [National Participation Framework](#) which helps decision makers and adults working with children to give them a voice in decision-making.



## What did the children and young people say about the Conference?

After the Conference, the children participated in an evaluation session where they were asked feedback about the event. The analogy of a rose was used to collect their opinions about the conference and suggestions on how to improve the planning in future occasions. These suggestions will be definitely taken into consideration for the organisation of the final CP4Europe conference.



### Successes (roses):

- Chilled out dress code (no dress code)
- Nice hotel
- Lots of great people
- Friendly adults and environment
- Excellent attitude of all of the Council of Europe people
- Nice staff that seemed interested in hearing our opinion
- To know people from other countries
- Getting to meet other children that have similar interests
- Talking to the Portuguese deaf children
- The moment of our presentation was strong because we felt that it was powerful. And it was very positive. It was a new experience with all attention on us.
- Presentations of good practices



## Challenges (thorns):

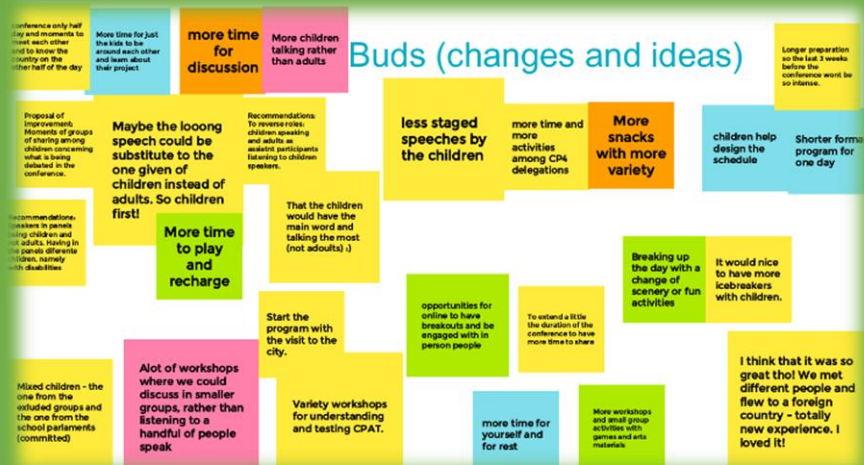
- Little time for rest and recharge
- Short time to explore the city
- Many activities for one day
- It missed a little more time for interaction with children from other countries
- Food (sandwiches) and no coffee in the late afternoon when needed the most
- It was hard to pay attention especially with long speeches and panels
- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day looong speeches (online experts) and short speeches on the children sides
- A lot of adults talking on behalf of children
- Top-down format not enough breakout rooms
- Not translated on the spot, but online. Internet connection was unstable so I couldn't hear it all the time



## Changes and ideas (buds):

- Children help design the schedule
- Start the program with the visit to the city
- Conference only half day and moments to meet each other and to know the country on the other half of the day
- More time for just the kids to be around each other and learn about their project
- More time to play and recharge
- Mixed children groups - children with less participatory opportunities should be put in groups with children that participate in school parliaments.
- A lot of workshops where we could discuss in smaller groups, rather than listening to a handful of people speak

- More time for discussion
- Variety of workshops for understanding and testing CPAT
- Less staged speeches
- Opportunities for children participating online to have breakout rooms and be engaged with in person people
- More time and more activities among CP4 delegations
- More snacks with more variety
- Breaking up the day with a change of scenery or fun activities
- It would be nice to have more icebreakers with the children
- Longer preparation so the last 3 weeks before the conference won't be so



**CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National  
Child Participation Frameworks  
and Action in Europe**



## **Certificate of attendance**

awarded to

**Anna, Arnar, Gloria, Izabela, Izabela Lara,  
Magda, Mariana, Maya, Sisu and Tuvia**

having attended the  
**CP4 Europe Mid-Term Conference**

—  
**Child and Youth Participation For Europe  
23-25 May 2022**

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Presidency of Ireland  
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