



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release
Youth Work Ireland
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“Don’t make us choose between voting, and Maths and Geography” - Leaving Cert Students disappointed that call for Local and European Elections to be held on Saturday, June 8th, rather than on an exam day was not answered.

The National Youth Action Group of Youth Work Ireland expressed disappointment upon the announcement that the Local and European Elections will be held on June 7th. The NYAG had previously aired concerns that the Local and European elections and another Referendum may be held on an exam day. Increasingly many 18 and 19 year olds are taking the Leaving Cert and voting on the same day as an exam is another hurdle they could do without. The group expressed the view that the government holding elections on dates that young people can’t work around (state exams) is no way to engage them in the elections. The group also flagged problems relating to transport and believe free public transport should be available on election day. Similarly, the group believed that many young people in remote rural areas and on islands find it difficult to get out to vote.

“By holding polling day on Saturday the 8th of June, the government would be honouring the work they have already done to raise engagement from those who are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but already are the leaders of today. It’s crucial that young people are given the opportunity to exercise their right to vote without the added pressure of exams. Shifting the local elections to Saturday, June 8th, would make it more accessible for students to balance their academic responsibilities with civic duties. “These elections play a pivotal role in shaping our communities, and it’s essential that the youth’s voice is heard. Rescheduling the elections to Saturday would empower young voters and encourage their active participation in the democratic process. We want to ensure that the voices of the next generation are heard loud and clear. By moving the election date to Saturday, we’re not only easing the burden on students but also fostering a more inclusive and participatory democracy.” said Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin, the campaign organiser.

“As a current 6th year student who will be voting for the first time in this election I am heartbroken over the inaccessibility. When I first heard this election would be held on the first Friday of the Leaving Cert I was appalled. This decision feels to me as if the government does not want to hear young voices or opinions. Over 130,000 students will only have one focus on that day - their Leaving Cert - and to then add the extra pressure of local and European elections, as well as a referendum to the mix is crazy. It is unfair on the mental health of these students to expect them to have a stable and clear mind whilst in the midst of the, arguably, worst weeks of their life. If the voting were to be held on Saturday the 8th it would give me and my fellow students the chance to actually think about what and who we will be voting for. Hopefully the government will have a change of heart and put the needs of the students before anything else.” said Jessica Moffitt, an 18 year old Leaving Cert Student and First time Voter.

“I’m in sixth year and this election will be the first time I’m able to vote. I pre-registered as soon as I realised I could, and I’m really excited to be able to properly express my opinions by voting. But at

the same time, I know I'm going to be worried about my exams and the students in my year group will be focused on our Leaving Certificate rather than about properly considering how to vote. With the vote being held on the same day as the maths and Geography exams I feel, for students, it'll take priority, and rightly so. Between voting for our future, waiting for someone else to make change or taking an exam where we'll see the impacts immediately on our future, all our attention will be on our Leaving Certificate. Some young people might know the importance of voting, supporting a healthy democracy, putting an opinion out there and having it counted but that's not common knowledge. Their voices, opinions and experiences will be totally overlooked because of the unfair timing of this election. All our efforts to get young people to come out to vote will have been for nothing if the only thing they can focus on is their exams and can't make properly informed votes." said Leo Galvin (18), a first-time election voter who will be sitting the Leaving Certificate.

"Although I will not be 18 in time for these elections, the majority of students sitting their state examinations in June will be and for many it will be their first opportunity to exercise their vote. My classmates who are of age deserve to have the opportunity to fully consider their voting decision and this simply cannot be done simultaneously to these vital exams. Having the vote being held on the Friday is a huge barrier for young people who wish to have their voice heard in the election. At least if it were on a Saturday, students could take some time out of their studies and head down to the polling station without having to sit possibly two state examinations on the very same day. If we want to encourage young people to build a life-long habit of exercising their vote in elections, their first ever opportunity to vote should not be happening while they are sitting important exams which will naturally take precedence over making a fully informed vote on the day." said Máirín Harding, a 17-year-old Leaving Certificate Student

"Students who are eighteen and nineteen are juggling exams, and having elections on Leaving Cert days just adds more stress. Although I will not be taking exams that day, most of my friends are. The youth want to vote, but exams take precedence. Weekends provide a fair shot for every teen to cast their vote without exam worries. If we truly want young voices heard, let's make democracy accessible, not an extra exam for me and my friends." said Eoin Murphy (16), a TY student.

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