



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN

PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Message from President Michael D. Higgins

Lá Gaisce

Wednesday 22nd October 2025

Mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, is cúis mór áthais dom traoslú leo siúd atá ag ceiliúradh Lá Gaisce an bhliain 2025 seo. Is ócáid in onóir de bhur dtiomantas ag plé le saoránaigh óga na tíre a thug faoi aistear trí bheith páirteach i gclár Gaisce.

As President of Ireland, it gives me great pleasure to join with all those celebrating this year's Lá Gaisce, an occasion in honour of the dedication and achievements of countless young citizens who have embarked on a transformative development, a fulfilling journey through the Gaisce self-development programme.

This year's celebration is particularly meaningful for me. Over the past 14 years, I have been greatly heartened by the positive and lasting impact of Gaisce that I have witnessed across the country.

Gaisce continues to inspire positive change, foster a sense of unity, and it empowers young people throughout Ireland to embark on a journey that requires personal determination and a commitment to serving their communities and their fellow citizens. In doing so, it embodies the values that offer the best prospect for fulfilment, the values that we all wish would define our nation, those of empowerment, inclusion, equality, and respect.

All of society truly flourishes when it encourages and makes possible the participation of all its members, thus recognising the worth of every individual and valuing the diversity of their experiences and perspectives.

Over the years, Gaisce ceremonies have offered me, mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, the great privilege of meeting so many remarkable young people and those who encourage them from all walks of life — in community training colleges, with disability organisations, in prisons, and in centres of Direct Provision. Each of these encounters has been a reminder of the transformative power of opportunity and encouragement.

The world needs the passion and imagination of our youth to realise a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable future.

Pressing challenges, indeed real threats confront us. These include the perilous consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss, deepening inequality, and the scourge of famine and hunger. The ethical commitment and sense of responsibility demonstrated by young people offers us all hope and inspiration. They can craft a new and sustainable connection between social justice, equality and with ecological responsibility.

It is vital that we nurture this commitment, create the avenues through which your ideals can flourish, and ensure that your voices can and will be heard. It is your actions that can make the difference we all so clearly wish to achieve.

Today, as we celebrate Lá Gaisce, I invite all young people to consider beginning their own Gaisce journey, to set about realising their potential as fully active, participative and critically engaged citizens. The unique contribution that each of you can make to our shared community is what best serves our endangered planet and indeed democracy itself.

May I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all the President's Award Leaders, whose generosity of time, experience, and guidance make this remarkable programme possible. Your mentorship has been and remains a source of strength and inspiration to so many.

As we mark this year's Lá Gaisce, may I offer again my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all who participate and all who support the programme. I look forward to witnessing the continuing and profound impact that your efforts will have on our communities as you all strive to construct a more equitable, flourishing and fulfilling society.

Arís traoslaím libh agus beir gach rath agus beannacht d'on toidhchaí.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins." The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'H' at the end.

Michael D. Higgins

Uachtarán na hÉireann

President of Ireland