

Cross over perspectives: Northern Ireland and Ireland students collaborate in filmmaking to address critical youth challenges across the island

What's it like to be a young person in Derry? What are the unique challenges that the youth encounter in the aftermath of Brexit? And how important is collaboration across the border?

To help us and all Europe navigate these important questions, we turn to the captivating collection of short films produced by the creative minds of Media, Journalism and Performing Arts students at the North West Regional College in Derry. These filmmakers receive mentorship from seasoned professionals at the Nerve Centre, thanks to the Citizenship Workshop within the EU/UK Youth Stronger Together project, led by the British Council and co-funded by the European Commission. The resulting films not only offer a window into the world of Derry's youth but also provide valuable insights on topics such as the rising costs of living, health and border control issues, as well as the unique situation on the legacy of The Troubles.

Serious should never be boring

In the context of filmmaking and the portrayal of modern day issues, John Peto, Head of Development at Nerve Centre, emphasises the challenging nature of balancing between making a provoking statement and keeping your audience engaged. For that reason, the filmmakers dedicated themselves to the task of presenting their ideas in both a captivating and professional manner. As representatives of the younger generation, they recognise the challenge of producing content in an age dominated by social media. Moreover, they seek to create long-lasting pieces that can resonate with the interests of young audiences across Europe.

There are some perks for the north and some for the south

"Skint" is a short film that masterfully blends drama with a touch of comedy. The film aspires to highlight the difficulties of unemployment and the cost of living crisis and projects the challenges faced by young people in their first steps of independent living across the border.

The film came to life because of the creative efforts of the students, who, under the skilled guidance of filmmaker Sean Coyle, transformed their ideas into a brilliant narrative.

Furthermore, within the process of filming “Skint”, students had the opportunity to explore the issue from their perspectives. Ultimately, this experience added significant value to the cross border communication amongst the students and the film itself contributes significantly on creating an ongoing dialogue.

Time is crucial in the context of life

Set in Muff, a border village in Ireland, this short staged film “Emergency Wait List” aims to highlight the critical importance of cross-border communication in regard to healthcare and well-being. This cinematic production focuses on the trials faced by a young person, who finds themselves within a situation which involves their friend who is in need of urgent medical care as a result of substance abuse. The scope of this film is that the medical care needed is only obtainable across the border and the difficulties this causes with the characters in the plot.

The young film makers in this project utilised their utmost creativity to best project the magnitude of the matter and the consequences it has on the border community. Additionally, addressing the challenges associated with substance abuse among young people. Students were mentored by Rachael McNamee, a professional coordinator in media production history, who coached the grouped through the topical areas.

Long-awaited vacations

The film “On The Fly” captures the issue of border control to the audience very well in a comedic tone. The plot involves two friends trying to go on holiday to an EU country from Northern Ireland, with the demise of their short lived venture being border control. Furthermore, the film is a comic spin on this regular, nightmarish, occurrence that young people in Northern Ireland genuinely face. Within this films plot, the two friends are sadly divided from each other due to having divided nationalities while travelling through airport security. The premise of this film is ironic being that political division used to keep friendships like this operating; now it is modern border control.

The group of budding film makers were mentored by Joe Millar, a camera assistant from Derry, who coached them through the film and the wider contextual areas and tones that the production projected. The group walked away with a wider array of understanding regarding 'Common Travel Area' rights and the benefits and strains that coincide with it.

The troubles are like a secret to young people

The documentary titled "The Secret" seeks to capture the perspective of 'The Troubles' from the points of both young and older generations. It endeavours to reveal the history and the legacy, with the aim to gain a deeper understanding of the heritage. The focal question of the documentary is: "Why have you not spoken about The Troubles?".

Guided by the experienced filmmaker Fiachra O'Longain, this documentary embarks on a journey to bridge the gap between generations and the complex historical narratives that have shaped their lives.

When creativity meets purpose

The Citizenship Workshop seamlessly brought together young minds from Ireland and Northern Ireland and guided them towards finding innovative solutions for pressing cross-border issues. The North West Regional College provided a valuable space for filmmakers to refine their skills, not just in terms of technical aspects but also in using their craft as a medium for positive impact. Beyond the filmmaking aspects, the workshop fostered the birth of meaningful connections and enduring friendships between the students.

In essence, the impact of the workshop extends beyond the created films, echoing into enduring friendships and the newfound sense of purpose each student carries forward as change-makers.