
Ballina EV Capital Candidate 2026 - Jury Feedback

Ballina is a municipal district within Mayo county in Ireland. The jury noted that Ballina already holds quite the reputation for outstanding volunteering - having been crowned Ireland's "**Best Kept Town.**" The town boasts a vast community of energetic volunteers. Last year they celebrated their 300th anniversary of Ballina with some 70 events that engaged a large number of volunteers. **Ballina 2023** created a magnet that attracted a wide range of volunteer organisations, along with new ones.

The jury were impressed that Mayo County Council works very closely with the **Mayo Public Participation Network**. However, they had some difficulties in gaining a clear view of who is doing what and would have liked to understand the exact role Ballina plays as compared with that of Mayo.

At the same time, the jury would like to understand the meaning of some sentences like "The Social Inclusion Pillar Forms," which sound somewhat enigmatic. On the other hand, the candidate was precise regarding the issue of enterprise volunteering and all the work done in this field. The jury appreciated the fact that the use of management and digital tools, as well as training, are a great part of Ballina's involvement in volunteering.

The jury understood the importance of the roots of volunteering in such a rural area, due to the ancient Irish "Meitheal" tradition - which undoubtedly helped with the development of volunteering over time. (The Irish word "Meitheal", pronounced "meh-hal", means "a collective effort for the greater good of the community"). Ballina will actively participate in the national **Project Ireland 2040** and contribute to the promotion of "the well-being and quality of life of our citizens and communities in Mayo". The jury noted that Ballina fosters a supportive and safe environment for their volunteers. Indeed, this greatly helps volunteers in their role of supporting well being and health. Although the evidence-based examples provided were appreciated, the jury would have welcomed more concrete examples of what has been done in this field.

Their list of actions demonstrate that volunteering has been well thought through, which gives great hope for development. Ballina has a solid strategy that emphasises community cooperation and sustainability. The integration with local and national strategies is strong, and there is a clear focus on enhancing volunteer visibility and capacity building. The legacy potential is significant.

The strategy connected to Blueprint for European Volunteering (BEV2030), mentions the close connection to school, but omits youth volunteering. They describe the context and the important role of **Mayo Public Participation Network Policy Framework**, as well as strategic



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objectives and actions that are focused on collaboration with different actors to strengthen volunteering.

As far as the strategic growth objectives are concerned, Ballina's examples show a comprehensive approach which should lead to success. However, the jury noted the lack of a fully elaborated forward looking strategy. There is a clear connection with other strategies in the municipality, which is positive but many of the objectives repeat what is already stated in their application. All in all, the strongest elements come from collaboration with other local and regional actors.

