



**Submission by
ECO-UNESCO
to the
Consultation Process for Development of new Irish Aid
Development and Global Citizenship Education Strategy
2021-2024**

1. Nature of views (indicate personal / on behalf of an organisation):
On behalf of organisation

2. Organisation (if applicable): ECO-UNESCO

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8. Freedom of Information: Responses are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts and may be released in total or in part. Please indicate if there are aspects of your response that you seek to have withheld, and the reasons for same. **No**

Date of posting response: 19th March 2021

Strategy Questions

The response should address **some or all** of the following questions:

1. How can Irish Aid support life-long learning and increase public understanding of and engagement with development and global citizenship issues as well as increasing awareness of the Irish Aid programme?

- Irish Aids definition should recognise that life-long learning is a continuum across all education sectors, from early years through to higher education, and in non-formal and informal education and that there is a learner centred approach adopted. Life-long learning can be seen as *'ongoing learning in formal, non-formal and informal ways, cradle to grave learning and knowledge-building'* (CANDO, 2011).
- Lifelong learning in GCE/DE is a means of implementation for SDG 4 and sustainable development, as outlined in the *Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development*
- Irish Aid should refer to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning 'Embracing a Culture of Lifelong Learning'¹ which sets 10 key messages for creating a culture of lifelong learning:
 - *Recognize the holistic character of lifelong learning*
 - *Promote transdisciplinary research and intersectoral collaboration for lifelong learning*
 - *Place vulnerable groups at the core of the lifelong learning agenda*
 - *Establish lifelong learning as a common good*
 - *Ensure greater and equitable access to learning technology*
 - *Transform schools and universities into lifelong learning institutions*
 - *Recognize and promote the collective dimension of learning*
 - *Encourage and support local lifelong learning initiatives, including learning cities*
 - *Reengineer and revitalize workplace learning*
 - *Recognize lifelong learning as a human right*
- Irish Aid should support DE/GCE youth sector programmes/projects with secure funding that allows long-term engagement.
- Irish Aid should include a Youth Development Education Officer to its team who would support a greater understanding of and linkages with the Youth Sector.

2. Are there other groups or organisations we should seek to work with in order to build this awareness and engagement?

- **Youth Sector** – the youth sector is very broad and includes a range of voluntary and paid youth programmes and services. Whilst DE/GCE has been adopted as a core element of their work by some in the sector, there is a still a wide range of groups and organisations not engaged including national youth organisations, regional youth services, youth clubs etc/

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374112>

- **Environment sector** – there are a broad range of organisations in the environmental sector who are also engaged in justice issues including climate justice who could be further engaged.
- **Volunteering Sector**
- **Local Government Sector**
- **Further education and training sector** incl. Solas
- **ETB's and ETB Youth Officers**
- **Corporate Sector**
- **Media** organisations including RTE, Newstalk etc. & social media organisations
- **Union of Second Level Students**
- **Other government departments and public agencies** e.g. Dept. of Community and Rural Affairs, Pobal, EPA, SEAI

3. What has changed in the external environment since 2017, both in the education sector and broader societal changes nationally and globally, and how should that be reflected in our priorities, our relationships and in our revised strategy?

- There has been a rise in young peoples interest, voices and engagement in climate issues and a mainstreaming of climate action in young people. This is highlighted in the recent survey carried out by ECO-UNESCO and SpunOut.ie: ²
- There is a heightened awareness of global issues in young people and the interconnected nature of these e.g. climate emergency, migration, social justice, poverty, gender inequality, racial equity. There has been an increase in global understanding of the inherent links between development and our natural environment.
- There is an increased sense of anxiety around these issues and young people are more fearful for their futures and need greater levels of support.
- There is growing importance being placed on hearing young people voices and having platform for young peoples voices to be heard.
- Young people we work with identified that *'... a massive political divide has sprung up between the right and the left, it seems people no longer want to talk and reach compromise they just want to throw hate at each other. ...there's a huge divide at the moment and the people on both sides are constantly alienating each other on the internet...'*
- The pandemic has impacted young peoples lives – we have seen increased isolation, mental health issues and loss of hope.
- It has brought to the surface inequalities faced by young people all over the world – incl. those in digital poverty; those whose homes are not a safe space and who do not have the escape of school or extra-curricular activities.
- Education for Sustainable Development is being given more focus from the Department of Education and a new strategy is being developed.

² <https://ecounesco.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YouthClimateJusticeSurveyReport.pdf> as well as the Youth 2030 Young People's Committee youth climate justice manifesto: [Young people of Ireland want climate justice - National Youth Council of Ireland](#) highlights this.

- There has been a growing awareness of and support for the SDGs and climate justice across Government departments, Local Authorities, Educational Bodies, and Civil Society. However, general awareness of the SDG's remains low.
- The move to working online has opened up new opportunities to work together internationally in new and innovative ways and has presented opportunities for increased engagement beyond borders
- There should be greater acknowledgement of and supports for youth-led activity in place.
- The administrative/governance burden for charities has increased since 2017 in terms of SORP, Charities Regulator, and GDPR.
- On-going curriculum reform offers many opportunities for GCE/DE

4. What do you consider to be the key areas of progress made since 2017 in the implementation of the Irish Aid Strategic Planning process? Are there any key lessons learnt or gaps in the current response?

- Multi annual funding and support has been an important development to help grow programmes and initiatives and ECO-UNESCO has welcomed the move to multi-annual funding.
- Digital tools have enabled an expansion in the breadth of DE/GCE/ESD. It should not, however, be used to replace the depth this work necessitates, aligned with a strong youth work practice which is about relationship building and trust.
- There are many benefits from cross-sectoral working and Irish Aid should fund work spanning different sectors.
- Monitoring youth participation requires qualitative tools that differ from what is there – currently there is limited scope for qualitative M&E .The focus on numbers and not on quality is a problem in youth work where work is undertaken often with smaller numbers of young people but in a more in-depth way.
- A 3-year multi-annual funding option should be included in future grants rounds along with dedicated funds to support greater engagement by the non-formal youth sector.
- The Youth Strategic Partnership with Irish Aid is a good start to supporting deeper DE engagement by the youth sector whilst recognising more needs to be done.
- WWGS has been successful in deepening the engagement of post-primary schools and in supporting the range of NGOs and programmes available to schools.
- There is more communication between Irish Aid and the Department of Education and Skills through the ESD Advisory Committee. Irish Aid are more engaged in the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

4. With reference to the five output areas of the current Irish Aid Development Education Strategic Plan, what do you consider the key priorities for 2021- 2024 should be?

Output 1: Policy Coherence

- Continue to link to international frameworks e.g. UN SDG's and UNESCOs ESDfor2030 international framework³; feed key learnings of the UNESCO Global Action Plan on ESD into its strategy. UNESCOs five priority_areas include: *Advancing Policy, Transforming Learning Environments, Building capacities of educators; empowering and mobilising youth and accelerating local level actions.*
- Irish Aid should ensure DE/GCE providers are adequately resourced and supported in engaging with policy development at all levels.
- Irish Aid should develop a cross-departmental measurement strategy for SDG 4 that captures the contribution of GCE/DE/ESD in Ireland to achieving the SDGs (*SDG 4.7 does not however, capture the non-formal education youth contribution to achieving this target.*)
- ECO-UNESCO works in the non-formal youth sector, the formal education sector and as a QQI accredited training centre in the Adult and Community sector. We believe in cross sectoral working and learnings and therefore proposes greater levels of cross- sectoral work and cross departmental work.

Output 2: Capacity Building

- Irish Aid should support opportunities for learning between the 'sectors' - cross collaboration e.g. formal education linking with non-formal education (e.g. teacher capacity building and youth & community capacity building)
- Irish Aid should support organisations who build capacity in young people directly to be effective peer educators and youth leaders; one way is by examining ways in which high impact and tried and tested quality programmes can scale to reach more young people across Ireland i.e. ECO-UNESCO's Youth for Sustainable Development programme, funded by Irish aid since 2007 has the potential to reach greater numbers of young people directly with this high impact, well-established initiative supporting young people to become peer educators and work with their peers on the SDG's and youth workers to carry out and support the programme.

Output 3: Formal Education

Post-primary

- Although there have been many advancements in DE/GCE/ESD the post primary sector through WWGS and NGO work, we have received feedback from young people participating in our Youth for Sustainable Development programme of the lack of DE/GCE/ESD in their schools and outline that an initiative should as the Youth for Sustainable Development programme in secondary school would be beneficial e.g. in Transition Year. This supports ECO-UNESCO's own experience of incorporating non-formal approaches into formal education and the benefit to each sector. One young person from the YSD programme highlighted the importance of building capacity in

³ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/toolbox>

teachers and young people in schools e.g. *'Teach students all the way up; no matter the year have ongoing workshops with them. Teach teachers how to make these kind of lessons fun and interactive.'*

- Within secondary schools, increase the focus on schools management incl. - Principal and Deputy Principals - important to engage management who can support the whole organisation approach
- Schools, as a whole are learning institutions; there should be continued recognition that the whole school is a learning environment with in-class curricula and out of class opportunities for learning. Support and recognition should be given for out of school extra curricula activities and initiatives.
- There should be greater engagement with students councils

Output 4: Non-Formal Education: Youth Sector and Adult and Community

Youth Sector

- With over 600,000 young people in Ireland between the ages of 10 to 19 (CSO 2016) young people are a key stakeholder. Young people should be provided with opportunities to become actively engaged in DE/GCE/ESD to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to make positive contributions as active citizens. This can happen through non-formal, informal and formal education.
- ECO-UNESCO agrees that *'The formal and non-formal education sectors may at times have a very fluid complementary and interdependent relationship. The non-formal education sector provides opportunities for learning through action as well as learning for action which can contribute to extra-curricular projects and educational inputs in the formal education sector.'* This is outlined in the current Irish Aid Strategy. ECO-UNESCO believes that this complementary relationship should be developed and enhanced and that there are greater opportunities for work across sectors.
- There should be a focus on the empowerment of young people which allows them to take action on issues of concern to them. ECO-UNESCO has experience through our Young Environmentalist Awards action project framework⁴, of empowering young people by up-skilling them in project management, building their confidence & their communications skills. Young people are supported to take action in whatever way they want, are encouraged to liaise with decision makers; to link their project to the SDG's and global issues. Young people have also fed back that this approach also helps reduce anxiety sometimes causes by global issues which can feel overwhelming.
- Formal and non-formal education should be facilitated and supported to explore each-others work, the methodologies being used, and the legacy/impact of each-others work.

⁴ <https://ecounesco.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/YEA-Programme-Manualv1.pdf>

- Irish Aid should continue to support its impactful programmes and should explore ways of expanding these
- Irish Aid should continue to support training and upskilling of the youth sector to enhance knowledge and confidence on DE/GCE methodologies.
- Continued support for youth engagement and upskilling including additional supports for youth led DE/GCE to prepare young people to deal with whatever issues emerge.
- Irish Aid should support DE/GCE in the youth sector and provide additional funding for additional youth organisations to participate
- Continued flexible funding is required.
- A 3 to 5 year multi-annual funding option to be included in future grants rounds with the view to building organisational capacity over the long term.
- Review and revise the funding application process to make it more accessible.
- Revise Monitoring tools -as well as using quantitative data include qualitative data. *(It is important to recognise the value of deeper engagement with smaller groups - facilitates in depth conversations and exploration of issues; supports building of relationships and creation of an environment where individuals can be heard.)*

Adult and Community

- Map DE/GCE/ESD in the Adult and Community sector organisations including through independent training providers, ETB's, etc.
- Advocate for and support the development of QQI accredited programmes at Levels 1 – 5 that reflect the goals and objectives of DE/GCE/ESD
- Support resource development which helps integrate DE/GCE/ESD into existing accredited programmes.
- Create and fund posts in NGOs to coordinate with institutional actors and develop comprehensive and sustained DE/GCE delivery.

6. Irish Aid is considering changing the name of the programme and strategy to Global Citizenship Education, do you have any comments or concerns in relation to this suggestion?

- It is important to note that ECO-UNESCO uses the terms Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Development Education (DE). We believe Global Citizenship education lies alongside ESD and has many commonalities.
- We believe that Global Citizenship Education would describe more clearly development education to those not already engaged in development education.

7. What opportunities have arisen from the COVID-19 experience and how can we learn from it in order to reach a broader audience?

- Organisations have developed skills in online delivery which has helped to expand the reach of programmes and services and has broken down regional barriers. There are

therefore new opportunities which can be explored further. For example, ECO-UNESCO developed its Youth for Sustainable Development 12-week initial programme into an online programme and opened it up to young people across Ireland. This was a very worthwhile and enriching experience and allowed young people from across all areas of the country to gain access to the YSD programme; in many cases young people wouldn't have been able to engage previously – this has been a very positive development and we envisage that a blended approach could be used in the future.

- This does not however replace the need for in person or face to face delivery and can enhance our face to face work. Young people tell us they want to meet face to face with their groups and have fun. The relationship between the youth worker and a young person is a unique and defining feature of youth work. This person-centred approach is what allows for skill development and experiential learning. The online space can maintain this relationship, but it is very hard to initiate this kind of person-centred relationship online – see *NYCI research*⁵.

8. How can technology and digital outreach help us?

- Technology and digital outreach are tools which can help us reach young people from a wide geographical area. It can provide us with many opportunities and open up new audiences and new opportunities. These include opportunities to liaise and link with young people in the global south; engage with a range of global agencies and global actors.
- It can, however, also lead to greater inequalities between young people and communities where there is a greater digital divide and digital disadvantage between young people. This has left some young people behind due to their lack of access to devices, absence of private space within their home, households not having broadband or weak unreliable phone signals and broadband connections and young people reliant on phone credit. There is digital poverty and especially in disadvantaged communities, young people are less likely to engage.
- With the use of technology and digital, there should be an integrated blended approach with a continued focus on face-to-face delivery.
- Technology and digital outreach shouldn't be used to replace the relationship building and learning acquired in the non-digital world and as such should be supplementary and complementary in both formal and non-formal contexts.

ECO-UNESCO has fed into the IDEA Task groups responses to this consultation and responses above have in many cases aligned with IDEA Task Group responses.

⁵ NYCI undertook research during Covid which gives additional information from the youth sector on the opportunities and challenges brought about by Covid-19 - [NYCI research shows Covid-19 pandemic impacting most severely on 'at risk' youth - National Youth Council of Ireland](#)