



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Ireland's Education for Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030

Consultation Paper

April 2021

Introduction

This paper has been developed for public consultation by the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, in cooperation with members of the Advisory Group on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which was established to monitor and support the implementation of the first National Strategy on ESD to 2020. The paper has three main aims:

- to inform participants of the key achievements of the ESD Strategy 2014 – 2020.
- to present an overview of the international context for ESD and its potential contribution to the achievement of ESD targets identified to 2030¹.
- to inform the development of a National Strategy for ESD to 2030, which will be jointly led by the Department of Education, and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The paper is structured into five main sections which are as follows:

1. What is Education for Sustainable Development?
2. How does ESD link with the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
3. Achievements to date
4. What will inform the framework for Ireland's new ESD Strategy to 2030?
5. What are Ireland's key priority areas for ESD to 2030?

It concludes by providing the information that you, as a key stakeholder, will need should you wish to make a submission.

Six appendices listed A – F are also included. These serve to provide additional and background information which may further assist in your understanding of the paper itself, and participating in the consultation process:

- A. Key Achievements identified in the Interim Review of the current strategy
- B. Key Priority Areas and Suggested Actions
- C. The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals
- D. Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education – and its Targets
- E. Programmes which support the delivery of the ESD Strategy
- F. Glossary of Terms

¹ UNESCO, 'Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap' (Paris: UNESCO, 2020).

1. What is Education for Sustainable Development?

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs².

- Our Common Future/The Brundtland Report (1987)

Sustainable development is about the interdependent relationship between people and the planet, and is grounded in the idea of intergenerational equity.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable future³. As a lifelong learning process, it enables people to understand the world around them and to identify the links and interdependencies between our individual selves, the wider society, and the natural and humanly constructed environment, locally and globally.

ESD is grounded in principles of social justice, equity and a respect for human rights and seeks to foster engaged and active citizens, of all ages, motivated to take action towards a sustainable future. By learning from one another and working individually and collectively, solutions to key global challenges of the 21st Century, such as climate change, poverty, inequality, sustainable consumption and wellbeing can be identified and implemented.

“ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning, and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society⁴.”

ESD is a key enabler towards the achievement of Global Citizenship. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) empowers learners of all ages to understand that human rights violations, inequality and poverty are global, not merely local issues, and enables them to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable societies. ESD is also pivotal to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

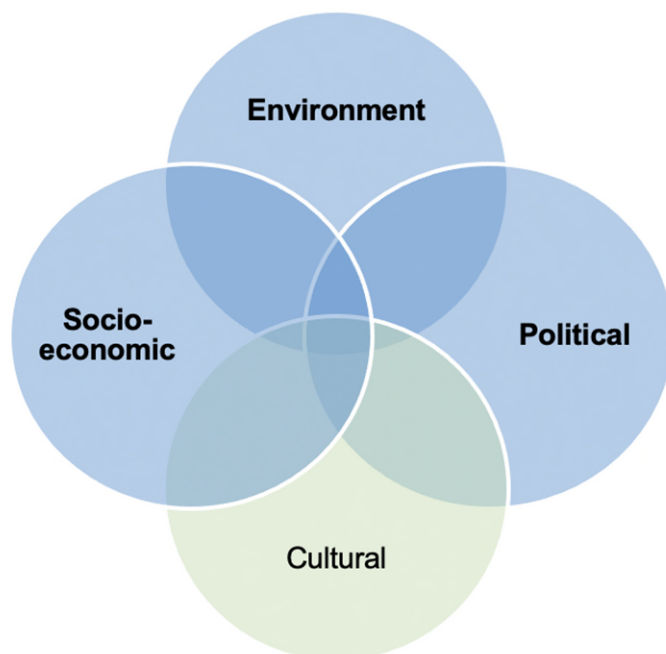
ESD happens at the nexus of and is underpinned by interlinked pillars, which are illustrated in **Figure A** and further detailed below:

² The United Nations, 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future' (Oxford University Press, 1987)

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

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd> [Accessed 4th February 2021]

Figure A: ESD Nexus



ESD has typically been seen as having three interlinking pillars: Environmental; Socio-Economic and Political. However, the role of Culture in the promotion and advancement of sustainable development has increasingly been recognised as being pivotal in supporting the transition to a sustainable society. For this reason, we have included Culture as a potential fourth Pillar of ESD for consideration in the context of this consultation process.

Culture shapes people's behavior, including the way we think and act. Transforming our educational institutions, and indeed the whole of society will require the challenging of cultural norms, so as to embed a new culture of sustainability across society. It is vital that everyone is part of this conversation and journey. Developing an openness and respect for people from other cultures, and an appreciation for diversity will be key to ensuring open and effective communication that supports an inclusive democratic culture. Nurturing the critical capacity of learners to ask questions, engage in dialogue and challenge misinformation robustly will help in navigating the complex global challenges we face.

Involving heritage, the arts and cultural institutions offers the opportunity to creatively explore alternative visions of the future. SDG Target 4.7 addresses the appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development as being core to the knowledge and skills necessary to promote Sustainable Development.

- **Environmental** education and biodiversity form an integral part of ESD; healthy ecosystems and conservation are essential for humanity's continued security and sustainability, and affect all aspects of people's lives (climate change; disaster risk reduction; environmental protection; natural resource management; urban decay; water security).
- **Socio-Economic** (economic growth; poverty; food prices; child labour; social exclusion; justice; debt-security; human rights; health; gender equity; cultural diversity; production and consumption patterns; corporate responsibility; decent and fair work; population growth; migration; global inequality).
- **Political** (citizenship; peace; ethics; human rights; democracy; governance; international cooperation and multilateralism).

2. How does ESD link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

In 2015, the UN published the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also known as the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, designed as a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all"⁵. **See Appendix C.**

While education is recognised as an enabler for the achievement of all 17 Global Goals, it is also a Goal in its own right. SDG 4 – Quality Education – aims to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”⁶. It has a number of targets, with Target 4.7 focused on ESD, which states that:

“by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

In Ireland, the 17 SDGs are supported by the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020, which is currently being updated. This is a whole of Government plan with whole of Government commitments. Implementation of the plan is led by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, which chairs an interdepartmental working group of which the Department of Education and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science are members. Civil society, NGOs and individuals have also played an important role in the advancement of the SDGs.

Ireland presented its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the UN’s High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in June 2018: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19382Ireland_Voluntary_National_Review_2018.pdf, has committed to provide further reports to the UN every four years, with the next VNR due for presentation in 2022.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> [accessed 8 December, 2020]

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> [accessed 4 January, 2021]

Figure B below sets out the targets in SDG4: Quality Education



Image Credit: UNESCO: Bangkok, 2018.

Ireland's first National Strategy on ESD 2014-2020⁷ promoted an integrated approach to Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship for all learners in formal, informal and non-formal learning environments⁸.

The objective of the 2014 - 2020 ESD Strategy was to “ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the ‘what’), the key dispositions and skills (the ‘how’) and the values (the ‘why’) that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future”.

In 2018, the Department of Education published an interim review of the ESD strategy, and an Action Plan for Q4 2018 – Q4 2020 available on the Department's website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/02952d-national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development-in-ireland/>

Our task now is to develop a follow-up strategy for ESD in Ireland from 2021 - 2030.

⁷ The Department of Education and Skills, 'Education for Sustainability: The National Strategy for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014 – 2020', (Dublin: The Department of Education and Skills, 2014).

⁸ For the purposes of this paper, these are defined as follows: Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organizations; and informal covers everything else e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues.

3. Achievements to date

The [2018 Interim Review of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development](#) found that, in the case of most of the 48 recommendations, positive and decisive action had been taken. Additionally, the review highlighted that the 2014-20 strategy had proved to be a useful reference document for many organisations in promoting the journey to sustainable development.

Key achievements identified in the review include the below. These are further detailed in **Appendix A**.

- **Curriculum:** Integration of ESD into all new curricular developments by the NCCA.
- **Resources:** A large number of pedagogical resources have been developed and are now available online.
- **Data Collection:** Data from existing sources has been collected and evaluated, in addition to the creation of new data hubs.
- **Teacher Education:** ITE and CPD programmes include and promote the SDGs and ESD.
- **Further and Higher Education:** A large number of higher education courses, which integrate sustainable development are now available at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Research funding calls with a focus on the SDGs and Sustainability have increased the pipeline of research and researchers with expertise in these areas.
- **School Infrastructure:** Sustainable design, energy efficiency and retrofitting are now key elements of school infrastructure.

4. What will inform the framework of Ireland's new ESD Strategy to 2030?

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic highlights the critical importance of ESD as all of us, young and old, navigate this increasingly complex and interdependent world. The global education sphere has now been forced to re-imagine teaching and learning environments, while the inequities that exist within the global learning community have been highlighted. Remote and digital learning has come to the forefront and with it the potential to address and close some of these divides both inter and intra-generationally. ESD can contribute during and after the pandemic by helping to build resilience and to transform our lives towards a more sustainable world, as well as to advance the understanding and implementation of education as life-long learning for all of society.

The Department of Education, and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science are responsible for meeting targets within their remits as set out by the UN under SDG 4 – Quality Education, and as further elaborated on by the SDG National Implementation Plan. A range of inter-departmental strategies support their implementation. **See Appendix D.**

The current National Strategy on ESD runs up to the end of 2020. The Interim Review identifies the key achievements since 2014. We now need to develop a new strategy to 2030 to ensure that we continue this work and so that further measures of progress can be identified, for example in the areas of: capacity building of educators; an increased focus on youth; engagement of communities and other local actors; non-formal and informal education that we should take to ensure that the key objective of achieving the SDG 4.7 target by 2030 is realised.

Since the publication of the 2014 - 2020 ESD Strategy, a range of other national and international strategies have been published and it will be important to ensure policy alignment and coherence in the development of the new National Strategy on ESD. These include the following which will inform the development of the new strategy and the identification of the actions required:

- [UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap \(ESDfor2030\) \(2020\)](#)
- Council of Europe [-The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) (2018)
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth - [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020.](#)
- Department of Foreign Affairs – [Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023](#)
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications - [SDG National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020.](#)
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2019) -
- [Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Action Report](#) (2019)
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science: Ireland’s Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology (successor strategy to Innovation 2020) (in development in 2021).

There have also been other initiatives undertaken such as the position paper:

[ENVISION 4.7 – Roadmap in support of SDG target 4.7](#) (2019)

The Government’s Climate Action Plan, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan, UNESCO’s Framework for ESD to 2030, the Programme for Government and both the Department of Education, and the

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's Statements of Strategy and Action Plans for Education, are the chief policy/strategic instruments which, together with the feedback from the consultation process, will contextualise and inform the development of Ireland's ESD Strategy to 2030.

5. What are Ireland's key priority areas for ESD to 2030?

Following international consultation, UNESCO, the lead UN agency for ESD, drafted a roadmap ESD for 2030⁹; a global framework for the implementation of ESD for 2030. UNESCO stated that ESD must be integrated into global, regional and national policies which relate to education and sustainable development so that these policies can create an enabling environment for pedagogies that support individual empowerment, and provide skills for socio-political engagement. Coordinated efforts should be made for ESD to find synergies with other relevant national and international agendas, and policies on education and sustainable development.

The UNESCO framework should be considered and adapted to the Irish context. Action Areas identified in the framework which might be considered as priority areas of focus for the next strategy are set out below. These may frame ideas as to where Ireland might focus its priorities for ESD to 2030.

- Policy
- Education and Training
- Educators
- Youth
- Communities

These suggested priority areas are as follows and are further detailed along with proposed ideas for actions in **Appendix B**. These should serve to assist you in your consideration of whether these should constitute key priority areas for ESD in Ireland to 2030 and/or whether this could be expanded to include other areas of focus.

⁹ UNESCO, 'Education for Sustainability: A Roadmap' (Paris: UNESCO, 2020).

Policy: Advancing Policy/Policy Coherence

As already indicated, there are a number of different government strategies that are inter-related and mutually reinforcing; it will be important that there is alignment and coherence with these as the next national strategy is developed, to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication of actions. Consideration could also be given to the structure(s) that support the two Departments in monitoring the implementation of the next strategy, and to reflect the expanded focus of the next strategy, support coherence and ensure accountability for the delivery of actions, while also facilitating opportunities for sharing of information and learning within and across sectors.

There is an opportunity in the next strategy to leverage the research capabilities of the Higher Education sector in particular, to inform policy in the area of education for sustainable development, as well as the teaching of and learning in relation to ESD at all levels.

Consideration should also be given in the next strategy to ensuring policy planning and alignment in terms of: Whole of institution approaches (including Infrastructure); Policies within the formal school, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) environments; Policies outside the formal education sector. In addition to this, developing quality assurance criteria for ESD should be given consideration.

Education and Training: Transforming learning environments

Under the current ESD Strategy, significant advances were made in integrating sustainability principles into many areas of the curriculum at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels, including into the examination processes. At further and higher education levels, many specialised courses have been introduced that include a focus on sustainability and other aspects of the SDGs, however further efforts are now required to ensure that all learners are exposed to education for sustainable development in their courses.

Continuing to advocate for whole of institution approaches to ESD and extending this to reach out beyond immediate learner communities, to engage with the wider community and local actors, is an area for further consideration within the next strategy. Strategic policies and measures need to be in place to reinforce the interaction and cooperation of the formal, non-formal and informal education settings.

The importance of the cooperation of learning institutions with community-based local leaders, families, as well as non-governmental and private sector actors working for sustainability in order to engage the local community as a valuable setting for interdisciplinary, project-based learning and action for sustainability, merits increased attention and focus.

Educators: Capacity building for educators and trainers

Education providers and professional support services have integrated sustainability principles into teacher education along the continuum. There is scope to make the sustainable development links more explicit both in professional development and practice, in order to ensure that learner awareness, knowledge and competencies are realised. A more targeted approach to capacity building for educators is required in the formal, informal and non-formal sectors.

The understanding of how transformative actions occur must be reflected in the capacity-development programmes for both formal and non-formal educators so that they are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the various pedagogical approaches they adopt and utilise. Educators must be the facilitators of learning who guide the learners through the transformation as well as expert transmitters of knowledge themselves.

Therefore, opportunities for educators to increase their capacity to empower learners must be identified and created, the aim of such being to increase the overall capacity of educators and trainers to more effectively deliver and embed ESD in programmes.

Further focus should be given as to how trainers of educators can systematically provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning where pioneering educators can share knowledge while demonstrating how ESD can be integrated step-by-step into daily teaching practices, and also to how educators themselves can employ innovative pedagogies to empower learners to become agents of change.

Consideration could be given to exploring how to engage those individuals with responsibility for sustainability within their workplace organisations, including private organisations.

Youth: Empowering and mobilising youth

The engagement of young people and active creation of spaces for this is crucial to sustainable development and relevant processes. Young people must be recognised as key agents in addressing the challenges of sustainability, and be mobilised to participate in and become involved in key decision-making processes concerning sustainable development. Young people have creative and innovative minds, and activities created for them should aid in the development of these attributes. Education aimed at young people should have a key focus on empowerment in taking action outside of learning and key skills. Trends among youth regarding their behavioural patterns and values need to be monitored closely in order to identify the best way to support and utilise their strengths.

Communities: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level and engaging with the wider community

We need to harness the community spirit to achieve our goals. There is an opportunity to develop policy measures to encourage place-based and project-based learning on sustainability issues in the community. Building upon initial steps taken to date, further consideration should be given to fostering and developing the understanding that it is in the community where meaningful transformative actions - and therefore transformation itself - are most likely to take place. Given that the concentration of the world's population is in urban areas, empowering local governments in these areas is a particularly sound strategy, while still taking into account and not overlooking the acute needs of rural communities. In that regard, UNESCO's ESD for 2030 recommends its implementation not only as one of the priority action areas but also, and more importantly, as another priority area of action that needs to be closely aligned and linked with the implementation of all other areas, especially those concerning youth.

How can I contribute to the development of Ireland's ESD Strategy to 2030?

Achieving the ambitions of sustainability where climate change and social justice concerns are tackled require engagement by all sectors of society, including the government, public sector, enterprise, civil society, NGOs and individuals, locally and globally.

The Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science are now preparing to develop a joint strategy on ESD to 2030.

As part of the drafting of a follow-on strategy for ESD to 2030, as a first step we are engaging with key stakeholders in a range of sectors to obtain their views.

We want you to assist us to setting out the priorities for the new strategy, and the actions which should be taken in the short/medium/long-term to ensure that we achieve our targets for ESD to 2030.

Subsequent phases will include engaging directly with the school community, and the public.

If your organisation would like to make a detailed submission on ESD to 2030, please do so and submit it to ESD@education.gov.ie or ESD@dfheris.gov.ie by Wednesday, June 30th 2021.

Some questions which may assist or guide you in making your submission are set out below:

- Do you feel that the key priority areas proposed and outlined in this paper should constitute the main focus of the new National Strategy for ESD to 2030?
- What other priority areas, if any, do you think should be included?
- Should any of the priority areas proposed be excluded?
- What do you feel we should aim to achieve in respect of the above?
- What key actions could be taken in terms of advancing and further developing these priority areas? Please give three examples of suggested actions in each case.
- What, in your view, are the main challenges you/we face in delivering on ESD goals/targets?
- Are you or your organisation involved in research linked to ESD or the UN SDGs? If so, what is the main focus of your research?

A survey which can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/ESD_Survey also provides you with the opportunity to contribute your views on the way forward. Please complete and submit this by June 30th.

Appendix A – Key Achievements identified in the 2018 Interim Review of the current ESD strategy

Curriculum Integration of ESD into all new curricular developments by the NCCA	Aistear, the curriculum framework for early childhood includes themes of Citizenship, Environment, Wellbeing, Voice etc.
	New Junior Cycle – Clear coverage of UNESCO competencies for Sustainability (NCCA audit of the curriculum) within the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and across subject specifications.
	Short course in CSPE includes Global Citizenship, Sustainability, Local and Global Development and effecting Global Change.
	Junior Cycle Wellbeing facilitates learning about ESD (through CSPE) and learning for ESD (through the wellbeing indicators)
	Template available to guide the development of short courses in line with <u>the Framework (2015) – e.g. Ethical Education (Educate together)</u>
	New Politics and Society specification at Senior Cycle. New Agricultural Science and Economics specifications include the theme of Sustainability.
	Review of Senior Cycle currently underway
Resources	ESD portal has 250 + ESD related resources: https://www.scoilnet.ie/esd/
Data Collection	CSO data hub for Irish SDG data: https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie/
	Co-coordinating collection of data from existing sources
	Lifeskills Survey in 2015 and 2018 include ESD related questions.
Teacher Education	Initial Teacher Education programmes includes mandatory elements on Citizenship, creativity, inclusion and diversity.
	Continuing Professional Development programmes for teachers that promote key principles of ESD
Further/ Higher Education	ESD in Further Education – SOLAS report – 360 courses on the Green Economy
	ESD in Higher Education – the Higher Education Authority reported 90 undergraduate and postgraduate courses include a module on or an element of Sustainable Development
	€2.1m in funding provided to Higher Education Institutions in 2018 to promote Sustainable Development
	Research funding dedicated to SDG related themes
School infrastructure	Sustainable design in School Buildings
	Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting Programme for schools

Appendix B – Key Priority Areas and Suggested Actions Policy: Advancing Policy/Policy Coherence

As already stated, the sustainability principles have been integrated into the many areas of the curriculum and the examination process at all levels, Building on these achievements, consideration should be given to ensuring policy planning and alignment in terms of: Infrastructure; Policies within education across each of the levels from Early Years to Higher Education. In addition to this, developing quality assurance criteria for ESD should be given consideration.

(i) Ensuring policy planning and alignment in terms of

(a) Infrastructure: buildings and other learning environments from early years onwards Managerial staff of learning institutions should ensure that facilities and operations embody sustainability principles. This can include, for example, passive energy buildings, sustainable and safe transportation options for staff and learners, procurement of locally produced sustainable products, and sustainability audits;

(b) Policies within the formal school environments: Curriculum related policies at each level (languages, culture, digital, etc.). Provide a reference framework to enable education institutions embed ESD values within the ethos mission and vision of the organisation

(c) Policies outside the formal education sector: Educational programmes offered by bodies, agencies and organisations (Teagasc, The Heritage Council, The Irish Maritime Administration, Waterways Ireland, The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Human Rights, SDGs etc.)

(ii) Developing quality assurance criteria for Education for Sustainable Development to ensure that educational institutions embed ESD into their accredited programmes and develop best practice exemplars (e.g. including ITE).

Education and Training: Transforming learning and training environments

Under the current ESD strategy, education providers and professional support services have integrated sustainability principles into teacher education along the continuum.

There is scope to make the sustainable development links more explicit both in professional development and practice, in order to ensure that learner awareness,

knowledge and competencies are realised. A more targeted approach is required in the formal, informal and non-formal sectors.

We need to develop policies and measures to ensure that we work with community organisations and agencies to build linkages between these and formal education settings at local level. Steps need to be taken to ensure that strategic policies and measures are in place which reinforce the interaction and cooperation of the formal, non-formal and informal education settings, and that educators and learners will be motivated and celebrated where they have successfully integrated ESD into their teaching and learning.

For example, this could be done by recognising ESD initiatives as a part of reviews of institutional education quality, through fora at different levels etc. Opportunities for educators to increase their capacity to empower learners need to be created. Educators must be the facilitators of learning who guide their learners to become active citizens as well as expert communicators and mediators of the knowledge, skills, values and competencies that promote sustainable development themselves.

Adopting whole of institution approaches, emphasising the importance and necessity for schools and other educational institutions at all levels from early years to higher education and lifelong learning, which embed ESD and the principles of sustainability across all areas of operation, is pivotal.

A climate of democratic dialogue should be enhanced in order to ensure whole of school/institution/community engagement with ESD (to include students, teachers, parents, management and patron bodies).

Educators: Capacity Building for Educators and Trainers

Education providers and professional support services have integrated sustainability principles into teacher education along the continuum. There is scope to make the sustainable development links more explicit both in professional development and practice, in order to ensure that learner awareness, knowledge and competencies are realised. A more targeted approach to capacity building of educators is required in the formal, informal and non-formal sectors.

The understanding of how transformative actions occur must be reflected in the capacity-development programmes for both formal and non-formal educators, so that they are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the various pedagogical approaches that they adopt and utilise. Educators must be the facilitators of learning who guide the learners through the transformation as well as expert transmitters of knowledge themselves.

Therefore, opportunities for educators to increase their capacity to empower learners must be identified and created, the aim of such being to increase the overall capacity of educators and trainers to more effectively deliver and embed ESD in programmes.

Further focus should be given as to how trainers of educators can systematically provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, where pioneering educators can share knowledge while demonstrating how ESD can be integrated step-by-step into daily teaching practices, and also to how educators themselves can employ innovative pedagogies to empower learners to become agents of change.

Consideration could be given to exploring how to engage those individuals with responsibility for sustainability within their workplace environments, including private organisations.

Enhanced continuous professional development (CPD) processes that support ESD should be developed.

Youth: Empowering and mobilising youth

The engagement of young people and active creation of spaces for this is crucial to sustainable development, and relevant processes. Young people must be recognised as key agents in addressing the challenges of sustainability, and be mobilised to participate in and become involved in key decision-making processes concerning sustainable development. Young people have creative and innovative minds, and activities created for them should aid in the development of these attributes. Education aimed at young people should have a key focus on empowerment in taking action outside of learning and key skills. Trends among youth regarding their behavioural patterns and values need to be monitored closely in order to identify the best way to support and utilise their strengths.

Actions taken in this area to date include the development of the Students and Parents Charter Act, and the incorporation of the student voice into curriculum shaping processes and review through work with the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU). DCEDIY (The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) has taken a number of measures to promote active engagement of children in policy-making (e.g. Dáil Na nÓg), and a number of actions have also been taken at school level. We need to build upon these and take further actions to:

- (i) empower students to be more involved in shaping their education.
- (ii) build networks to ensure collaboration from early years to higher education on sustainable development.
- (iii) raise awareness through advocacy by the youth to facilitate equity of access to education for all.
- (iv) include students in all relevant discussions in a representative manner as key stakeholders.

In addition, decision-makers and members of public and private institutions should recognise young people as key stakeholders, contributors and actors in all efforts to promote sustainable development. In particular, young people must be fully and meaningfully included.

Furthermore, decision-makers and members of public and private institutions should recognise young people as key stakeholders, contributors and actors in all efforts to promote sustainable development. In particular, young people must be fully and meaningfully included in a representative manner in the design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes on education and sustainable development.

Communities: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level and engaging with the wider community

We need to harness the community spirit to achieve our goals, and to develop policy measures to encourage place-based, project-based learning on sustainability issues in the community, in order to accomplish this. Building upon initial steps taken to date, further consideration should be given to fostering and developing the understanding that it is in the community where meaningful transformative actions and transformation are most likely to take place. Given that the concentration of the world's population is in urban areas, empowering local governments in these areas is a particularly sound strategy, while still taking into account and not overlooking the acute needs of rural communities. In that regard, UNESCO's ESD for 2030 recommends its implementation not only as one of the priority action areas but also, and more importantly, as another priority area of action that needs to be closely aligned and linked with the implementation of all other areas, especially those concerning youth.

Formal and non-formal education providers in the community could be encouraged to coordinate their programmes so that together they address local sustainability challenges in a coherent way. Community learning centers could serve as a hub for lifelong learning on ESD in their communities. Citizens should be encouraged and supported by local policy to address key sustainability challenges, develop skills to compare different future scenarios for their community, embrace values and attitudes that support a more sustainable future, engage in public decision making processes and take action as responsible citizens.

We need to extend this further to the wider community and to civil society – the space for collective action around shared interests, purposes and values.

Further actions that could be taken include:

- Working with local authorities and using their networks and structures to support engagement with communities at local level in order to promote learning and an understanding of the benefits of sustainable communities, Tidy Towns etc.
- Engaging and developing working relationships with LGMA Sustainability Officer(s) and fostering and establishing relationships with the Parks Division of the local authorities.
- Engaging with National Parks and wildlife services in relation to their education and sustainability initiatives/programmes.
- Make existing programs more effective by developing best practice guides, standards, and case studies and through continued monitoring, evaluation and research.
- Engaging with local and national youth organisations delivering education incorporating sustainable development through non-formal and informal methods.
- Develop and promote best practice standards for community education. The standards will assist education for sustainability providers to improve their overall impact.
- Enhancement of community education programs and develop initiatives to build the capacity of protected areas and heritage sites, zoos, museums, and aquaria to engage the public in activities aligned with the principles of education for sustainability. Working with these bodies, ascertain the most appropriate ways to align existing education activities with best practice community education for sustainability will be examined, including through networking, coordination and information sharing.
- Capacity building for local government in partnership with relevant bodies will see initiatives will developed to enable local government to provide best practice community education for sustainability. The focus will be on increasing opportunities for training and mentoring, providing access to case studies and resources, and coordination and networking.

Appendix C – The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals



1. No Poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Good Health and Well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
4. Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Clean Water and Sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Affordable and Clean Energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
10. Reduced Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Responsible Consumption and Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Life below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Life on Land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

16. Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Partnership for the Goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Appendix D – SDG 4 – Quality Education – and its Targets

[SDG National Implementation Plan Policy Map](#)

Target	Department of Education Strategy
<p>SDG 4.1</p> <p>By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes</p>	<p>Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Plan</p> <p>The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014- 2020</p>
<p>SDG 4.2</p> <p>By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</p>	<p>Early Childhood Care and Education Programme</p>
<p>SDG 4.3</p> <p>By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university</p>	<p>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019</p> <p>National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030</p> <p>National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019</p> <p>National Skills Strategy 2025</p> <p>The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014- 2020</p>

<p>SDG 4.4</p> <p>By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030</p> <p>National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019</p> <p>National Skills Strategy 2025</p> <p>The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014- 2020</p>
<p>SDG 4.5</p> <p>By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p>	<p>National Traveler and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021</p> <p>Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools</p> <p>Plan National Skills Strategy 2025</p> <p>The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014- 2020</p>
<p>SDG 4.6</p> <p>By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy – Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020</p> <p>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Plan National Skills Strategy 2025</p> <p>The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014- 2020</p>

<p>SDG 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development</p>	<p>National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2014-2020</p> <p>Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 - 2023</p>
<p>SDG 4A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</p>	<p>Action Plan for Education 2016-2019</p>
<p>SDG 4B By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries</p>	<p>A Better World – Ireland's Policy for International Development (Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs)</p>
<p>SDG 4 C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States</p>	<p>A Better World – Ireland's Policy for International Development (Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs)</p>

Other SDGs with direct relevance to ESD

<p>SDG 12.8</p> <p>By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature</p>	<p>Our Sustainable Future (DECC) National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021 (DHLGH)</p>
<p>SDG 13.3</p> <p>Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning</p>	<p>National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2014-2020</p> <p>National Mitigation Plan (DECC)</p> <p>National Adaptation Framework (DECC) National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (DECC)</p>

Appendix E – Programmes, organisations and initiatives which support the delivery of ESD

There are a variety of ESD programmes which support the delivery of the ESD strategy in Ireland. We have included a representative sample here below.

- Blue Star Programme
- Concern
- Department of Foreign Affairs/Irish Aid
- Development and Intercultural Education (DICE)
- ECO UNESCO
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Global Citizenship Schools (INTO)
- Green Schools and Green Campuses
- Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) and its members
- Saolta – Development Perspectives (Adult and Community Education Sector)
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
- Trócaire
- Take 1 Programme (ETBI)
- UBUNTU Network
- Worldwide Global Schools
- Youth 2030 (National Youth Council of Ireland)

Appendix F - Glossary of Terms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DE	Development Education (Dev Ed)
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DoE	Department of Education
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IDEA	Irish Development Education Association
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
PPLI	Post Primary Languages Ireland
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.