

**Department of Education and Skills  
Education for Sustainable Development  
Request for submissions to inform the development of a National Strategy on  
Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland**

**Irish Development Education Association  
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**Contact name:** Frank Geary

**Name of your Organisation (if applicable):** Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)

**Address:** 5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2

**Contact Phone Number:** 01 661 8831

**Contact Email Address:** [frank@ideaonline.ie](mailto:frank@ideaonline.ie)

**How would you define 'education for sustainable development'?**

IDEA supports the definition of ESD contained in the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (192 EX/6) produced by UNESCO in July 2013, Annex p 2, Principles. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002223/222324e.pdf>) This framework states that ESD is education that allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. It is transformative education in that it aims at reorienting societies toward sustainable development. ESD is not one educational initiative, but an umbrella for many types of education. As UNESCO point out, ESD consists not just of existing educational initiatives but also of

new ones that remain to be created. ESD promotes efforts to rethink educational programmes and systems (both methods and contents) that currently support unsustainable societies.

(<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/education-for-sustainable-development/>)

IDEA sees a global justice dimension as integral to a definition of ESD. Issues of sustainable development cannot be separated from global justice, inequality, human rights and cultural diversity. To create effective learning and change in the 3 core pillars of sustainable development: the environment, the economic and the social, it is essential ESD addresses global inequality, local to global interconnectedness and rights based approaches.

IDEA would point to the many similarities between ESD and Development Education (DE). Furthermore, UNESCO acknowledges that ESD includes Development Education. Irish Aid defines DE as

...an educational process that aims to increase awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. It is about supporting people in understanding, and in acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and others at personal, community, national and international levels.

*(Irish Aid and Development Education, Irish Aid, 2006).*

Hogan and Tormey (*Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review, Issue 6, 2008*) point out three key characteristics that ESD and DE share:

- DE and ESD enable knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow learners to engage critically with issues of injustice, inequality and unsustainability;
- DE and ESD are based on a vision of education that moves away from conventional didactic methods towards active, participatory and cross-curricular approaches;
- DE and ESD promote action for positive personal and social change.

### What is the key priority for making ESD a reality?

Preserving the broad definition of ESD, as proposed by UNESCO and the Department for Education and Skills (DES) briefing paper on the National Strategy on ESD, is the key priority for making ESD a reality in Ireland. As the briefing paper states, Sustainable Development is much wider than 'environmental concerns'; therefore Education for Sustainable Development must encompass a wide range of educational interventions and involve a broad base of stakeholders across state institutions and civil society. An ESD strategy must include actors within formal, non-formal and informal education settings, Government Departments, public sector bodies, the media, private enterprise, and civil society actors such as Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society organisations (CSOs), community-based organizations, activists and community education practitioners. For ESD to be successful it must involve this broad range of partners across civil society and be focused on societal change, not only changes in individual behaviour.

In particular, IDEA stresses the importance of ESD engaging meaningfully with the broad global justice foundation underpinning the concept of Sustainable Development. This can be achieved through close collaboration with the Development Education (DE) sector in Ireland, an active and long established sector in Ireland focusing on global justice, local global interconnectedness, active citizenship and participatory learning.

### Objective 1: Embedding education for sustainable development at every level of the education system

3. How can education for sustainable development be most effectively embedded at every level of the education system? Please give practical examples if possible.

IDEA believes that embedding ESD at every level of the education system requires integration into curricula, including cross-curricular approaches, working with formal and non-formal education settings, focussing on capabilities and competencies of educators, and building on existing good practice in development education, global education and education for sustainability.

It is essential to ensure an enabling policy environment for ESD. The DES National Strategy for ESD will create a strong policy support for ESD. A cross-departmental or whole of government approach should be encouraged. Complimentarity with key related policy instruments should be considered in the ESD National Strategy, such as 'One World, One Future' the Irish Government policy on International Development which commits to supporting DE activity in Ireland, and with the Irish Aid Development Education Unit as a key actor. The UN Post-2015 framework should inform the National Strategy, in particular the emphasis on a rights-based approach to development, on participation and on global justice, ensuring policy coherence for international development and for sustainable development.

To effectively embed ESD into every level of the education system, there is a need to:

- Build key ESD competences in educators (see response to Objective 3)
- Promote the ability in pupils/students to situate themselves in terms of their environmental impact in a fragile and interdependent world. This requires an exploration of values and culture.
- Recognise that ESD needs to be integrated across the curriculum and not isolated in subjects such as Geography.
- Ensure that active citizenship education, as currently delivered in SPHE and CSPE, promotes active engagement with issues of sustainability at local and global levels. We need to promote models of citizenship that challenge the status quo with a focus on engaged, critical, active citizenship.
- Capitalise on openings for ESD issues and themes in the new Junior Cycle across a range of subject areas.
- Build on the Green Schools programme, which already has the buy-in of schools and has great potential, especially in terms of involving the whole-school community in making decisions and taking informed actions. In expanding the Green Schools programme, however, it is essential that the programme continues to engage with deeper issues of sustainability which are the basis for ESD.
- Draw on the wealth of knowledge available in the community on issues of sustainable development. Ireland has a particular expertise on climate justice issues and the relationship between environmental, development, and global justice issues. Take advantage of curricular opportunities to include input from NGOs, campaigners and community groups who are active in sustainability and climate justice.
- Ensure adult, community and youth sectors are integrated into ESD national planning. Draw on the participative learning pedagogies pioneered in Adult and Community education to ensure whole-institution approaches and transformative learning.
- Build on the expertise and reach of the Development Education sector within the Irish education system, and the key role DE plays in bridging education and civil society practitioners.

With the strategy's aim to change behavioural patterns and create societal change, it is important that DE, with its explicit action dimension, is included in the process of embedding ESD at every level of the educational system. The DE Sector is experienced in teaching methodologies that can move learners

towards deeper engagement with complex and difficult issues, and can work effectively towards the types of changes needed for sustainable development to become a reality.

DE works to build the capabilities and competencies of educators and also directly with learners of all ages and walks of life in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. IDEA members have developed innovative approaches to integrating global justice and sustainability issues into a range of curriculum subjects at primary and post-primary levels. The National Strategy for ESD should draw upon cross-curricular approaches in DE as examples of good practice, for example the IDEA Good Practice Guidelines for Formal Education

([http://www.ideaonline.ie/sites/default/files/idea\\_good\\_practice\\_schools\\_full\\_report\\_144dpi\\_spreads.pdf](http://www.ideaonline.ie/sites/default/files/idea_good_practice_schools_full_report_144dpi_spreads.pdf)). It should also be noted that the DE sector in Ireland has a wide experience of social learning in the Irish context and has been recognised at the European level as a leading example of educational practice and social engagement (See “DE Watch” report, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE\\_Watch.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE_Watch.pdf)).

### What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

Challenges have also been referred to in the previous question. Principal challenges are:

- The need to build capabilities and competencies of educators – strengthening the capacity of educators, policy makers and other change agents to become learning facilitators for ESD.
- The need to ensure an enabling policy environment for ESD.
- The need for ESD cross-departmental and cross-curricular infrastructure.
- The need to create structures which facilitate educators and institutions to integrate working with civil society into an already heavily loaded curriculum and limited classroom time.
- The need for resources. It is essential that any National Strategy is adequately resourced.
- The need to address the popular misconception that ESD is only about Environmental Education. Viewing ESD through the narrow lens of ‘environmental education’ will limit its impact and ignore the roots of sustainable development in social, economic, political and cultural practices. This entails a danger of ‘greenwashing’ or superficial engagement with complex and often uncomfortable issues; for example, focusing on recycling of waste rather than unsustainable consumption.
- The need to further strengthen citizenship education in the formal curriculum, ensuring the ESD focus and CSPE have central position in school curricula, are valued by educators and well taught, and engage on critical rather than ‘soft’ terms. (Bryan and Bracken, *Learning to Read the World*, 2011)

### What actions are required to address the challenges?

Please see question 3 for additional detailed actions.

- Ensure sufficient resources are invested in the roll-out and ongoing support of the National Strategy on ESD.
- Ensure policy coherence across government departments and state institutions through the National Strategy on ESD .
- Establish ESD inter-departmental liaison committees and liaison between DES, key government departments and civil society, in particular with the DE and ESD civil society sectors.
- Integrate ESD into schools curricula, facilitating space for cross-curricular activity and for 'permeable classroom' (<http://www.suehorner.com/resources/English+21+-+Playback.pdf>) approaches in partnership with civil society.
- Collaborate with existing centres of best practice in ESD, DE and Global Education.
- To ensure ESD is not limited to 'environmental education', in addition to robust policy and curricular approaches focussing on critical thinking skills and the pillars of sustainability – environment, economy, society , ensure participation in the delivery of the National Strategy on ESD by Civil Society actors, particularly DE practitioners and sustainability campaigners such as Transition Towns and Cultivate.
- Supporting an increased emphasis on critical citizenship skills in the new Junior Cycle curricula and the roll out of the Leaving Certificate 'Politics and Society' syllabus.

## Objective 2: Promoting public awareness of education for sustainable development

### 6.How can the public awareness of education for sustainable development be promoted?

UNESCO include informal educational contexts within ESD and state that ESD encompasses public awareness activities within wider efforts towards sustainable development.

Public awareness is therefore fundamental to the National Strategy on ESD as is outreach to informal education contexts through media as well as community networks such as the GAA, Chambers of Commerce or Tidy Towns.

ESD should be integrated with existing training opportunities such as regional, county or local sustainability plans and development plans, trade union activities, community networks.

Public Awareness raising for ESD should aim to create a deeper engagement with sustainability and should avoid short term and 'shallow' information-oriented approaches. Examples of best practice with regard to this can be found in the Development Education programmes of Irish NGOs and CSOs (<http://www.ideaonline.ie/members>), the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (<http://www.dochas.ie/Code/>) and Finding Frames (<http://findingframes.org/>).

To ensure that the ESD message is heard, it is essential that measures designed to promote public awareness of ESD

- Address local issues and concerns
- Use accessible and jargon-free language
- Reach out to young people through appropriate media channels
- Value the life experiences of older members of the community
- Utilise culture and creative arts to stimulate empathy and new ways of thinking about sustainability
- Encourage the belief that ‘another world is possible’
- Build a sense of ownership and emphasise the ability of people to make a difference.

### 7. Who are the key stakeholders in promoting public awareness of education for sustainable development?

**NGOs and CSOs** are key stakeholders in promoting public awareness of ESD. As UNECE point out in their ESD strategy document, NGOs and CSOs are able to implement processes of civil empowerment as well as integrating and transforming complex knowledge into information that is accessible and interesting to the general public. UNECE argues that ESD needs to be ‘permeated by the experience of life and work outside the classroom’ (UNECE, *Strategy for ESD (2005)*, p. 7, available: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2005/cep/ac.13/cep.ac.13.2005.3.rev.1.e.pdf> ), and NGOs and CSOs, particularly those that have local roots and global connections, are ideally placed to promote public awareness of ESD.

**Local Communities** are also key stakeholders, as awareness of global sustainability often emerges in response to local issues and concerns. The ‘local global spiral’ which has been used so effectively by DE/Community Education groups can enable local communities to reflect on their own lives, to compare their own situation with that of others, to understand better the root causes of problems and to learn from strategies used by other people and communities facing similar problems. (Lourdes Youth and Community Services, *Connecting Communities*, 2005) The awareness of a global ESD context can empower local communities to develop innovative and effective solutions to their own sustainable development challenges.

**Youth** are key stakeholders, especially in terms of their role as change agents for sustainable development through ESD (UNESCO, *Proposal for a Global Action Plan on ESD*, 2013). Youth have a high stake in shaping a better future for themselves and their planet. Young people’s competencies and skills in IT and social media make them essential drivers of informal learning and awareness-raising.

**Older people** are often neglected stakeholders in raising awareness of ESD issues, yet there is a constituency of concerned, articulate and active retired people who have witnessed, in their lifetimes, a gross abuse of the world’s resources. Their concerns and energy could be effectively tapped into via active retired groups, and NGOs such as Age Action.

### 8. What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

A key challenge in awareness-raising is to communicate the complex elements of ESD in a manner that is both accessible and creates a deeper engagement with sustainability and global justice.

Ensuring clear targets and impact for public awareness raising on ESD, and measuring impact over an extended period of time.

### 9. What actions are required to address the challenges?

ESD public awareness raising should concentrate on:

- Utilising pre-existing networks and structures created by NGOs, Community organisations, Youth organisations and organisations for older people.
- Capitalising on social media as a 'hook' for deeper engagement and for building online communities of interest.
- Learning from NGO, CSO and DE best practice in public awareness raising and public engagement ensuring deeper engagement with complex global issues (see above, question 6).
- Establishing clear target audiences for Public Awareness raising campaigns.
- Investing in research and evaluation of impact for ESD public awareness raising and sharing this information with stakeholders.

### Objective 3: Promoting capacity building in support of education for sustainable development

#### 10. How can we promote capacity building in support of education for sustainable development? Please give practical examples of how this can be done.

Building ESD competencies and capabilities for educators, institutions, policy makers and civil society must be central to a National Strategy.

ESD key competencies:

- Learning to know (critical thinking, problem solving, decision making)
- Learning to be (developing agency, clarifying values, forming goals)
- Learning to live together (communication, cooperation, negotiation, empathy)
- Learning to do (practical skills and action )

(UNECE strategy for ESD, <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2005/cep/ac.13/cep.ac.13.2005.3.rev.1.e.pdf>)

#### Capacity building for Educators

Teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, is essential to building capacity in schools and embedding ESD practice in schools. The work of IDEA members with formal links to teacher training, such as the Irish Aid-funded DICE (Primary ITT) and Ubuntu (Post-Primary ITT) programmes, provide models of best practice in teacher education and important structures for ensuring ESD is integrated in

teacher education in Ireland. These programmes work with student teachers on challenging questions of inequality and unsustainable development, equipping student teachers with methodologies to integrate potentially challenging issues of global justice and sustainability into classrooms. In addition, IDEA members facilitate teachers' capacity development through schools partnerships, school linking, schools networks, and training programmes.

Recommendations at Initial Teacher Training (ITT) level:

- Approach ESD in the broad context and enable student teachers to explore reasons why current societal practices and systems perpetuate inequality and unsustainable development.
- Explore a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler and Zembylas) inviting critical enquiry of deeply held beliefs, ; counter-hegemonic education (Gramsci, Freire, hooks); critical thinking; and the transformative educational practices reorienting society towards sustainability which underpin ESD.
- Introduce DE & ESD training to ensure understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental issues with social justice, Human Rights and equality issues. DE methodologies give student teachers the confidence to integrate sustainability into their teaching practice in a participative and engaging manner.
- Promote the Post-2015 framework emphases on sustainable development, rights-based approaches and participation as central to education.
- Ensure ESD & DE are highlighted in the revised syllabus for 2 year ITT programmes.

Practising teachers:

- Practising teachers need to be given in-service opportunities to explore ESD and transformational educational focussing on societal change and moving beyond individual behaviour.
- Need for CPD opportunities to integrate environmental issues with global justice, inequality, human rights and cultural diversity.
- Utilise DE methodologies as a way of delivering ESD training for teachers and also as a transferable tool for them to use in the classroom.

#### Capacity building for institutions and policy makers

An ESD National Strategy requires changes in practice and in conceptual frameworks for policy makers and institutions. Inter-departmental capacity building and liaison can play a crucial role, for example, DES staff working with Irish Aid's Development Education Unit. UNESCO offer mechanisms for policy exchange and capacity building through the Decade of ESD, regional ESD networks, and the Global ESD Forum. Related networks such as GENE, the Global Education Network Europe, of which Irish Aid is an active member, the European Multi-Stakeholder Group for Development Education, or the Council of Europe North South Centre provide policy-makers with an excellent resource for exchange of best practice and developing capacity. Civil Society organisations such as IDEA can provide capacity and competency building for policy makers and have the benefit of in-depth experience of ESD and DE practice and policy.

#### Capacity building for Civil society

Ensuring civil society and DE actors have input to the delivery of the National Strategy is essential for the success of the strategy. There is significant expertise and capacity within the DE sector in facilitating partnership between civil society and educational institutions.

IDEA has a comprehensive capacity development plan addressing the pedagogical, policy and organisational needs of the DE sector. This can serve as a model of good practice for an ESD National Strategy, in addition to providing a mechanism for civil society capacity development.

### 11. What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

- Resourcing. It is essential to ensure that the National Strategy is adequately resourced.
- Provision of in-service capacity development, and introducing transformational education ethos and practice into teaching practice.
- Ensuring ESD is central to ITT curricula despite competing priorities.
- Steep learning curve for institutions, policy makers and delivery partners.
- Challenging beliefs and values that are deeply embedded in our education and knowledge systems which are contributing to the unsustainable development. As Sterling points out:

Far from being an agent of change, education often underpins individualism, unsustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption, directly or by default.

(Sterling, *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review, Issue 6, 2008*)

### 12. What actions are required to address the challenges?

- Ensure sufficient resourcing is committed to the National Strategy on ESD.
- Establish a comprehensive in-service capacity development programme for educators, drawing on best practice in ITT and expertise from established sectors such as DE.
- Prioritise ESD & DE training in ITT colleges across all subject areas, building on existing structures such as the DICE and Ubuntu programmes. Within the context of the supportive and constructive learning environment of teacher training colleges, these programmes empower student teachers to deliver transformative education. Ensure adequate cross-departmental resourcing for this activity.
- Establish civil society liaison and international liaison (see above) with ESD National Strategy policy makers and delivery partners.

- Establish a comprehensive ESD outreach and capacity building programme for civil society actors, drawing on best practice such as IDEA's DE sector capacity building programme.

Objective 4: Promoting high standards of environmental management in education institutions<sup>13</sup>. How can we most effectively promote high standards of environmental management in education institutions? Please give practical examples if possible.

14. What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

15. What actions are required to address the challenges?

### III. Additional views

16. Comments on the background paper would be appreciated:

The background paper is very useful and provided helpful and informative background on the call for submissions.

The broad definition of ESD and the broad approach to education contained in the background paper is to be commended and should be preserved in the National Strategy

The breadth of stakeholders outlined in the paper is to be commended and should be preserved in the National Strategy.

17. Please make any other point you consider relevant to the issue of education for sustainable development.

#### One World, One Future

*One World, One Future*, Ireland's policy for International Development, a whole of government policy, provides a key policy context for the National Strategy on ESD. As stated previously, it is essential to include global justice issues within ESD. *One World, One Future* commits to supporting and promoting Development Education in Ireland. As a whole of government policy, *One World, One Future* provides a policy mechanism for inter-departmental cooperation on ESD, and enables a complimentary approach to ESD and DE.

#### Post 2015 Framework

Discussion on the post-2015 framework which will replace the Millennium Development Goals has focused on the need for a universal approach to global issues that will include all parts of the world. The emphasis in Post-2015 discussions, including the UN Special Event on the MDGs and the Post-2015 Framework in September 2013, on participation in decision-making, rights based approaches and shared

global responsibilities reflects the priorities of DE and ESD. The post-2015 framework and the potential development of SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals – should play a significant role in a National Strategy on ESD. The National Strategy should include mechanisms to amplify and communicate to the UN and inter-governmental bodies the innovation and best practice within Irish Civil Society on these core approaches of the Post-2015 framework, approaches which are exemplified in the Irish DE, ESD and Development sectors.

### Global Citizenship and The UN Secretary General’s Global Education First initiative

Global Education First, the UN Secretary-General’s Global Initiative for Education, highlights fostering global citizenship among its three priorities. As discussed in this submission, global citizenship, global justice and shared responsibility for sustainability development are central to DE and ESD. Global Education First provides an important international support for Ireland’s National Strategy on ESD in particular in the priority to foster global citizenship:

The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings. It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it. Education must also be relevant in answering the big questions of the day. Technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st Century.

(<http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/priorities.html>)

### Education as both contributor to unsustainable development and a key to change.

At a recent IDEA webinar on ESD (IDEA webinar, September 23, 2013), Prof Daniella Tilbury, Chair of the UNESCO Expert Group on the Monitoring and Evaluation of ESD, stated that “the paradigms deeply embedded in our education knowledge systems and relationships are contributing to unsustainable development”. She cited David Orr, who urged people to recall “that those who contribute to exploiting poor communities and the earth’s ecosystems are those who have BAs, MBAs, MSCs and PhDs ...” (David Orr, 2004). Prof Tilbury stated the “Paradoxically, Education holds the key to change. Higher education has shown that it can break social paradigms and bring transformation to societies.” A National Strategy on ESD must take into account the risks and challenges inherent in our education system in order to create a transformational education strategy.

18.If there is documentation you are aware of relevant for this topic could you please provide a web link or reference:

See links and references in the text of the submission.