



IDEA submission on Ireland's National Implementation Plan (NIP) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the Interdepartmental Group chaired by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

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Submission from IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association,

Supporting and advancing development education

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IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association, is the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent over 70 members involved in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen Development Education in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role of Development Education in achieving an equal, just and sustainable future.

Overall points

IDEA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft NIP, whilst expressing concerns at the very poor timeline and lack of inclusiveness in this initial process.

We welcome the NIP and the focus of the Strategic Priorities. The focus on government leadership and public participation in the achievement of the SDGs is very welcome. Ireland has been a global leader in the development of the SDGs, and we believe Ireland must continue this leadership in the implementation of the Goals. Therefore, Ireland's NIP should show international leadership by taking a 'whole-of -society' approach to the SDGs, as pioneered by the Finnish national implementation plan.

The Stakeholder Engagement outlined in the NIP needs to be widened in order to achieve the public participation envisaged by this NIP. We welcome the Stakeholder Forum and the emphasis on working with civil society. However, the need for wider consultation on Ireland's implementation of the SDGs remains. Public consultation should be undertaken for the development of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. It should be included in the processes to develop each National Report, or if that is seen to not be feasible, for each combined National Report VNR year. More information on the modalities of Stakeholder Forum would be appreciated, as it is difficult to ascertain from the NIP what is being proposed.

To achieve the level of public engagement and involvement in the SDGs envisaged by the NIP, a broader public education and outreach plan is essential. Focussing solely on communications will not achieve the desired aim. In order to achieve behavioural change a deeper engagement through public education is required. This needs to be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal education. Ireland has a very strong track record in this area, and our work in Development Education has been acknowledged internationally. This gives Ireland an untapped strength to enable us to make the SDGs a whole of society achievement. There should be an emphasis on public understanding of the SDGs and engagement with the SDGs. For example, all references to raising public awareness should also include public participation, understanding and engagement. There should be a refocusing from communications only to a 'public awareness, education and engagement strategy'.

Resourcing the NIP is essential. Irish Civil Society, and the Development Education sector, are ready, willing and enthusiastic to work in partnership with the state to deliver the transformative ambition of the SDGs. The vibrant Irish Development Education sector is well

placed to have a significant impact on public participation in the SDGs. This requires investment and requires a step change from current levels of resourcing. Resourcing this and all aspects of the NIP must be a priority.

IDEA is a member of Coalition 2030, and is represented on the Coalition 2030 Steering group by IDEA Director, Frank Geary. IDEA supports the Coalition 2030 submissions to the NIP.

Specific Points

In the following section, we outline specific points and suggestions on the text of the NIP.

Mainstreaming the SDGs – p 11

The commitment to mainstreaming SDGs across all policies is welcome. For Ireland to be a leader in the implementation of the SDGs, this should go further and include a requirement that the SDGs are reflected in all relevant policies. SDG-proofing of all legislation being brought before the Oireachtas should be introduced as a mandatory process.

Budgeting – p 12

There should be a specific commitment to providing additional budget for SDG implementation. There should also be a commitment to prioritising SDG related activity in national and departmental budgets. As outlined in the Overall Points above, the step change required to achieve the SDGs requires budget prioritisation and additional resourcing. A clear commitment should therefore be included in the NIP to provide additional resources for the delivery of the SDGs and to prioritise the SDGs within national and Departmental budget.

SDG Vision and Priorities p 12 -13

Education is necessary to ensure public participation and ownership of the SDGs. Therefore, the Vision and Priorities should include a point about education. A bullet point on education should be included. Suggested wording for this: “Where all people have received education for sustainable development and global citizenship education at all stages of lifelong learning.”

P14 - the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020 and the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2013 should be included in the list of key pillars.

Political Engagement - p 15

As stated in the Coalition 2030 submission, we welcome the proposed high-level political engagement with the SDGs, with the national implementation of the SDGs subject to overall political oversight through the Cabinet, and the role of the Taoiseach regarding the HLPF. However, for this oversight to be strong enough to create the necessary Government cohesion, there needs to be a Cabinet Committee chaired by the Taoiseach.

The role of the Taoiseach in leading SDG implementation should also be reflected on p 16 in the paragraph on the roles of the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Stakeholder Engagement – p 18-20

As outlined in the Overall Points we believe this section needs to include education for a deeper public engagement and participations with the SDGs as well as the need for wider consultation.

Key stakeholder groups listed on p18 should include Education.

The Stakeholder Forum membership on Page 19 should also include Education. As stated above, to achieve the ambition of this plan education must play an active role and must be an active stakeholder.

In particular, under both these points, Development Education should be prioritised as a key stakeholder sector in particular with regard to the public engagement and public participation in the SDGs.

In the bullet points at the end of p19 outlining Stakeholder Forum proposals, the second point should include: “raising public awareness, education and participation in the Goals”.

The SDG communications and awareness strategy referenced on p19 should be an SDG awareness, education and engagement strategy.

To ensure public participation, activities outlined in this section must go beyond the SDG online platform and the national SDG Champions to include a programmes focussing on public education and public participation in the SDGs.

Communications and Awareness Raising - p21-22

There should be an emphasis on public understanding of the SDGs and engagement with the SDGs and participation in their implementation. For example, all references to raising public awareness should also include public understanding, engagement and participation. There should be a refocusing from communications only to a ‘public awareness, education and engagement strategy’. As well as the SDG Platform and Champions, this should include a prioritisation of Development Education, including Education for Sustainable Development

and Global Citizenship Education. As Ban Ki Moon's Global Education First Initiative has stated: "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."¹

To achieve the level of public engagement and involvement in the SDGs envisaged by the NIP, a broader public education and outreach plan is essential. Focussing solely on communications will not achieve the desired aim. In order to achieve behavioural change a deeper engagement through public education is required. This needs to be delivered through formal, non-formal and informal education. Ireland has a very strong track record in this area, and our work in Development Education has been acknowledged internationally. Development Education in Ireland aligns with SDG Target 4.7 and UNESCO's focus on Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. The membership of IDEA encompasses major actors working in the Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland. IDEA is the representative voice for Irish actors in this sector.

The Participatory Approach (p22) required a participation strategy including awareness raising, education, active outreach, and meaningful consultation and participation in decision making.

Perhaps a new Section of the Plan could outline how the Government intends to support public participation in Ireland's delivery of the Goals would fit better under the title "A Participatory Approach".

Transparency and Participation – p25

The National Stakeholder Forum is a welcome inclusion in the strategy. As stated above, to ensure a the whole of society approach to the SDGs engaging a breadth of national stakeholders must be a priority for the NIP. Therefore, the Stakeholder Forum should be complimented by broader public consultation, eg. for the development of the National Sustainability Strategy and for every VNR/ National Report.

Sectoral Reporting – p25-26

There should be a requirement on all Government Departments to report on progress in SDG related activity.

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/gefi/priorities/global-citizenship/>