



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

Feedback from the NUI Galway Community University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP) Team – June 22nd, 2021

About Sustainability @ NUI Galway

At NUI Galway we recognise the pivotal role that our teaching and research activities can play in developing the next generation of students, researchers and innovators for tackling society's evolving sustainable development challenges. Over the next five years through the [NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy](#), using a [Learn-Live-Lead](#) Model we are seeking to transform the university's teaching and learning culture so that sustainability becomes a core part of our student learning objectives and that individuals across our entire campus community gain the necessary knowledge and skills to become sustainability role models and leaders. The [Community University Sustainability Partnership](#) (CUSP) team led the development of the NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy. CUSP is a multi-disciplinary, voluntary team of students and staff from across the university and Galway University Hospitals. At CUSP we recognise that the Consultation Phase of the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030 is a tremendous opportunity to share our feedback on ways to advance policy in the area of ESD, transform learning environments, increase the overall capacity of educators to more effectively deliver and embed ESD in programmes and to encourage place-based and project-based learning on sustainability issues in the community. Feedback has been developed through consultation with members of CUSP Research and Learning working group and also we have provided a European perspective. NUI Galway was a member of a European Universities Association (EUA) Thematic Peer Group examining the Environmental Sustainability of Teaching and Learning over the last year and we are drawing on finding from [the work of this group](#) in our submission.

Policy

- Build ESD into overall policy framework- top level commitment that is transported into colleges/ schools and operating units such that sustainability becomes universal learning outcome.
- Create permanent structures enabling Education for Sustainable Development (staff roles, programmes, venues etc)
- Embed ESD in quality assurance processes - ensuring that in programme development and review process that sustainability is at the core of outcomes
- A shared sustainability charter signed by all higher education institutions (e.g. similar to [Campus Engage Civic and Community Engagement Charter](#)) that commits to 1) embedding ESD into the curriculum for all students at both

undergraduate and postgraduate level 2) increasing the number of programmes delivering sustainability content) and 3) providing ESD related co-curricular opportunities for all students.

Education and Training

- Beyond programme focused action embed sustainability into modules and disciplines- build sustainability into programmes across all disciplines- create an opportunity for all to learn about sustainability
- Create permanent processes and role for engaging with sustainability through extra-curricular opportunities such as service learning, internships, awards, community action.
- Engage co-curricular staff in the sustainability agenda, through communities of practise, civic mission, entrepreneurship, living labs etc.
- Build opportunities for use of outdoor teaching spaces and outdoor classrooms, for example, see NUI Galway leading work in this area [here](#)
- Implement more education around lab greening across all institutions to help transform learning and training environments. See NUI Galway leading work in this area with the Galway Green Labs Initiative <http://www.nuigalway.ie/sustainability/projectsresources/thegreenlabsinitiative/>
- Increasing the opportunities for use of the campus as a living lab. See NUI Galway Student Sustainability Internships [here](#)
- Implement a mechanism to map and monitor sustainability literacy, e.g. [Sulitest](#). ESD we believe needs the following as an imperative at all levels
 - Systems Thinking” – reductionist and holistic thinking
 - Managing Resilience
 - Sustainability Leadership
 - Critical Thinking – (could be aligned with Systems thinking)

Sustainability IQ, including things like Planetary Boundaries - There are various measures on the UN SDGs – which is a handy framework– however, these are not aligned with the 9 Planetary Boundaries – these are not mentioned in the document. It is a much more powerful concept that demonstrates the need for awareness and further research:-

- Limits to growth
- Circular economy
- Natural capital
- Life cycle thinking approach

Educators

- Inclusion of sustainability in all staff development programmes. Introductory training and integration phases for newly recruited staff, as well as within academic career progression. Inter university staff cooperation and the exchange of sustainability practises.

- Placing sustainability on the agenda of all meetings, minutes of meetings, cross departmental and interdisciplinary working groups.
- The previous one was heavily focused on youth – which was really great, and a resource hub was created etc. A similar resource hub for Higher Education would be great too –
- It would be great to create a national Network of Educators in HEI to collaborate and share resources and work together in addressing challenges.

Communities

- Partnerships. Build external engagement and networks – extending ESD beyond the campus walls.
- Civic mission Aligning sustainability policy with the needs and priorities of the local community e.g. At NUI Galway, students are supported in volunteering with relevant local non-profit organisations and awarded volunteering certificates, and alignment of voluntary efforts with the SDGs is recorded.
- Living labs approach. Problem solving, critical thinking, system thinking, collaboration skills, build partnerships, work with a team.

General Comments

1. The strategy should set the scene as to where we are currently at i.e. a recognition that we are in a sustainability crisis that needs addressing and how ESD will support this. The European Green Deal defines the four prongs of this crisis being Climate Crisis; Pollution Crisis; Resource Crisis and Biodiversity Crisis. Also share information on how Ireland currently performs and some measures to align with these (for example, we are 1.7% circular economy compared to the average 17% in Europe; Ireland has the third-highest emissions of greenhouse gases per capita in the EU). Below is a recent SDG Dashboard for Ireland.

Figure 24 Ireland's Current SDG Dashboard



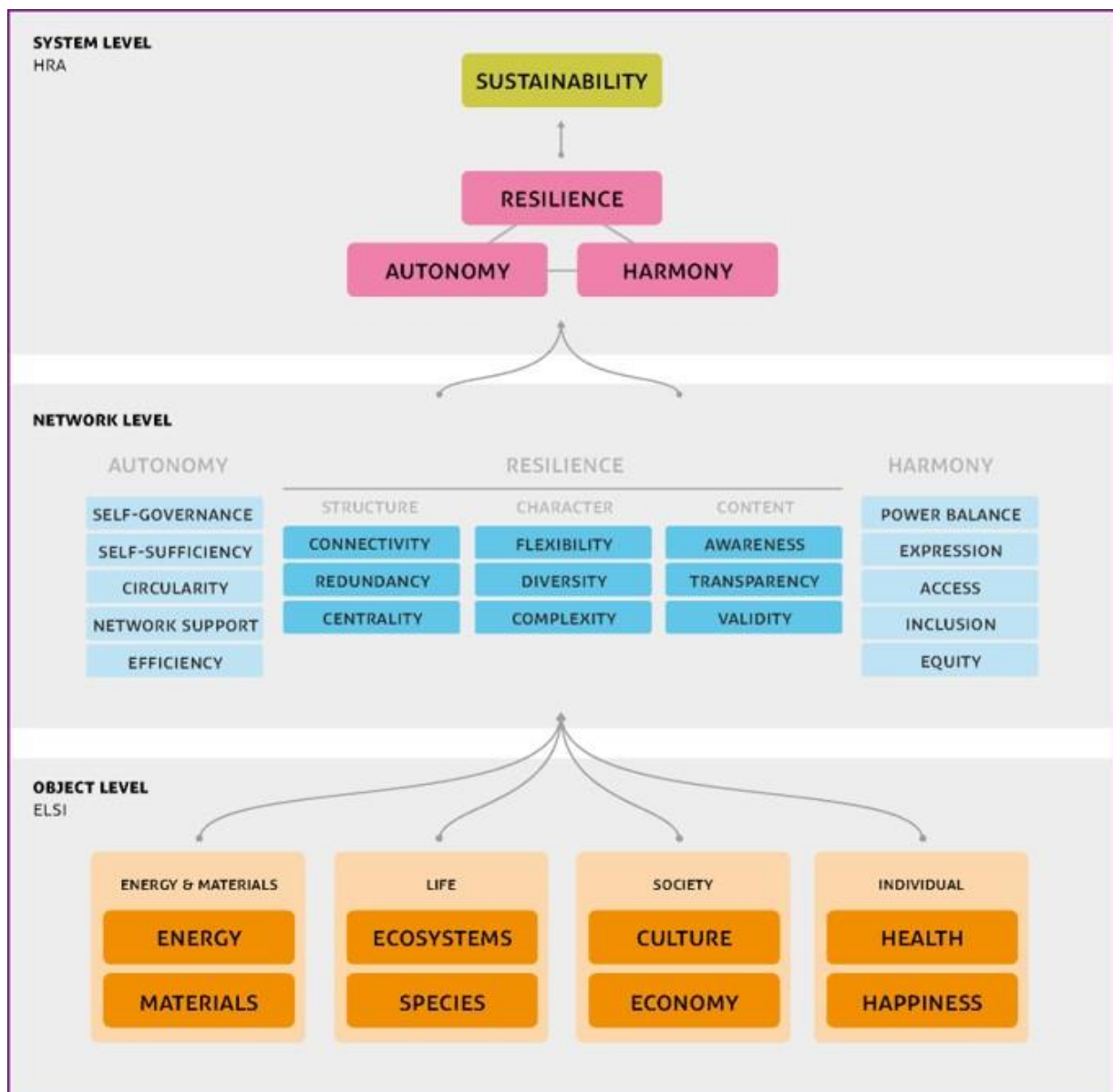
Source: SDSN & IEEP (2019, p. 90)

2. The "ESD nexus" is an oversimplified diagram and does not give any depiction of what it is about. These things are not equally overlapping like separate items. An improvement on this would be good to see

Figure A: ESD Nexus



For example, a Good framework from Tom Bosschaert that could be used to create a framework for Education – http://thinksid.org/?post_type=product



3. The arts is mentioned in passing, I think that a lot of creativity is going to be needed, and the importance of this sector must be highlighted and stressed.

4. ESD needs the following as an imperative at all levels:-

- “Systems Thinking” – reductionist and holistic thinking
- Managing Resilience
- Sustainability Leadership
- Critical Thinking – (could be aligned with Systems thinking)

- Sustainability IQ, including things like
 - Planetary Boundaries-There are various measures on the UN SDGs which is a handy framework, however, these are not aligned with the 9 Planetary Boundaries – these are not mentioned in the document. It is a much more powerful concept that demonstrates the need for awareness and further research
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5. Section 4 – mentions policies that will underpin the new strategy,

The new EU programme talks about its five research “Moonshots which are

- Conquering cancer
- Soil mission
- Climate-resilient neighbourhoods
- 100 carbon-neutral cities
- Protecting and restoring oceans

The ESD Strategy needs to align with these also.

If you have any queries in relation to this submission please contact

Michelle O'Dowd Lohan, Sustainability Officer @ NUI Galway

Michelle.odowd@nuigalway.ie