



## **Campus Engage Submission - Public Consultation Response Development of the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development to 2030**

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## Introduction

Higher Education plays a critical role in working with society to achieve the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030. To deliver, we need deep and radical transformations across the further and higher education system in Ireland to place knowledge and human capital at the centre of change for sustainable development. Incremental approaches will not be enough to tackle the urgent and complex challenges outlined by Agenda 2030. What is needed is a paradigm shift in higher education – a move towards positioning of the societal impacts of higher education, aligned with the global UN SDGs Framework for a greener, fairer, and more equitable society.

**Campus Engage** is led by the Irish Universities Association and governed by the eight University Presidents. It is dedicated to supporting Irish higher education institutions to embed, scale and promote higher education (HE) societal engagement to address complex societal challenges, including the UN SDGs, across teaching, learning, research and innovation. Campus Engage warmly welcome the Department's request to assist in setting out the priorities for a new ESD Strategy to 2030, and provide a series of recommended actions to be taken in the short/medium/long-term to ensure that DFHERIS can enable Ireland to achieve our targets for ESDG to 2030.

We at Campus Engage welcome EU Commission's leadership role in this field. Across Horizon Europe FP 9, impact assessment will be based on how countries are working together to implement the UN SDGs across research and innovation; and Erasmus+ across education, training and volunteering.

We have an opportunity now to evolve Irish sectoral response - to better align higher education outputs with the ambitions of [Horizon Europe FP9 Impact Assessment](#). As public sector institutions we have an obligation to place knowledge at the disposal of society to create a sustainable future.

The SDGs offer us a global Framework to time sensitive and profound systems change. Many Irish higher education institutions are already embracing the UN SDGs as a source of transformation and reinvention. Ireland is out-ranking the best universities on the planet across the Times Higher Education 2020 Societal Impact Rankings, under the UN's 17 sustainable development goals. Metrics include working with society for impact through research, teaching and learning. Some examples include: in 2020 University College Cork was placed no 1 globally in the Responsible Consumption and Production category; the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland was also ranked no 1 in the world for Good Health and Well-being. Trinity College Dublin was ranked 14th globally across all 17 Goals.

### Definitions:

**\*Sustainability:** is a broad term that describes managing resources without depleting them for future generations.

**\*Sustainable development:** describes the processes for improving long-term economic well-being and quality of life without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs.

## Campus Engage Support DFHERIS 5 Key Priority Areas

We warmly welcome the DFHERIS **5 Key Priority Areas** and understand that these will facilitate ubiquitous practice and policy to enable the Department to create and implement a new ESD Strategy for success. We agree that ESD for 2030 must aim “to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs”. BUT – to be most effective, ESD requires HE engagement with government, society, industry partners.

The following represents a comprehensive submission based on consultations with the Campus Engage Steering Committee and the Working Groups that include: 1) Engaged Research for Societal Impact – Higher education working with society to address societal challenges; 2) Community Engaged Learning – Students addressing societal challenges through the curriculum; 3) Student Volunteering.

#### High level recommended actions:

- 1) Higher Education Institutions should have ESD targeted plans that are ambitious, timely and resourced; as well as being regularly monitored and evaluated for their impact;
- 2) All higher education staff promotional criteria need to include embedding societal engagement across civic, civil society, industry partners to address the UN SDGs;
- 3) Launch DFHERIS Funding Calls to support HEIs to embed associated societal engagement infrastructure across campuses;
- 4) Refine HEA System Performance Framework to better capture data to evidence how higher education is working with government, society, industry partners to implement UN SDGs across teaching learning, skills, research, innovation, human capital; addressing societal challenges;
- 5) Align ESD policy with ambitions of Horizon Europe FP9 Impact Assessment Framework; Mission Based Calls; Erasmus Plus;
- 6) Invest in updating HEIs data collection systems to better align with Systems Performance Framework needs; this will better prepare HEI to submit data for EU Commission Horizon Europe funding calls and ranking tools, including Times High Societal Impact tool; benchmark best practice; inform budget/ policy decisions;
- 7) Particular attention should be paid to supporting capacity building of staff and students, and the university executive team so that they can drive the institutional agenda for sustainability.

## 1) Teaching, learning, training

**Action: Embed, scale and promote Accredited Community Engaged Learning & Research to enable UN ESDG #17 Partnerships:**

***Community Engaged Learning - students addressing real world problems through the curriculum*** - Accredited community engaged learning & research through the curriculum is an academic approach that enhances student work ready skills, while working in partnership with government agencies, NGOs, citizens to act on local and global societal challenges, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We at Campus Engage recommend the following actions to support the DFHERIS development and implementation of a new ESDG Strategic Plan across teaching and learning.

#### **Key Priority Area 1: Policy: Advancing policy/policy coherence**

##### **Recommended actions:**

- 1) Align National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) Strategic Objectives and funding calls to embed capacity building for accredited community engaged learning and research (CEL) across every campus in Ireland;
- 2) Ensure the National Skills Strategy incorporates social capital and work ready skills obtained through accredited community engaged learning – problem solving; collaboration, active citizenship; effective communication; team work.

#### **Key Priority Area 2: Education & Training: Transforming learning and training environments**

- 3) All higher education staff promotional criteria to embed societal engagement through teaching and learning to address the societal challenges, including UN SDGs;
- 4) NFETL to support HEIs to embed and scale CEL online training programmes with-in HEI teaching and learning units.

#### **Key Priority Area 3: Youth: Empowering and mobilising youth**

- 5) Mainstream CEL within the curriculum, particularly for 1<sup>st</sup> year, so that all students have the opportunity to engage with critical societal challenges, including the UNSGDs in partnership with government agencies, NGOs, citizens throughout their academic programme;
- 6) NFETL to award students for academic achievement in working with government agencies, NGOs, citizens to address complex societal challenges, including UN SDGs.

#### **Key Priority Area 4: Communities: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level and engaging with the wider community**

- 1) Create funding bursaries through the NFETL to support teaching and learning partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, citizens to address societal challenges, including UN SDGs.

#### **Key Priority Area 5: Culture: Changing attitudes, values and behaviours/transformational action**

- 7) Invest in new technology that can support HEIs teaching staff and students to partner with government agencies, NGOs, citizens and industry to facilitate and accelerate implementation of the UN SDGs;
- 8) Designate marketing and communication budget for accredited community engaged learning on and off campus to address UN SDGs.

## **2) Student Volunteering**

#### **Action: Embed, scale, promote Student Volunteering to enable #17 Partnerships for UN SDGs**

Campus Engage see non accredited student volunteering as a key function of the Irish further and higher education ecosystem. Student volunteering activities underpin the higher and further education's role in SDG #17 - Partnerships for Change, government agencies, NGOs, citizens, industry to address each UN SDG within their local communities or through local & international volunteering activity.

During 2016 an online platform [www.Studentvolunteer.ie](http://www.Studentvolunteer.ie) was seed-funded by the HEA via Campus Engage and is now centred on a national portal that acts as a 'matching service' for student volunteers and civic society organisations to work together. In September 2020, there were 1,093 CSOs representatives, 16,847 higher education students registered on studentvolunteer.ie and 202,176 hours volunteered since 2016.

Studentvolunteer.ie can now be leveraged across further & higher education to create the mechanism for scaling and evidencing student volunteering skills enhancement and addressing UN SDGs.

#### **Key Priority Area 1: Policy: Advancing policy/policy coherence**

##### **Recommended actions:**

- 1) Set up a centralised support unit for student volunteering to enable strategic partnerships with national and regional civic and civil society organisations to expand and scale student volunteering opportunities;
- 2) Devise a new Further & Higher Education Student Volunteering Strategic Plan to align with the National Strategy for Volunteering 2021-2025 - with a dedicated multi-annual budget;
- 3) Better integrate student volunteers across further and higher in partnership National Volunteering Strategy and Volunteer Ireland;
- 4) Scale [www.studentvolunteer.ie](http://www.studentvolunteer.ie) to include all ITs and further education institutions;
- 5) Include collection of data from studentvolunteer.ie, student active citizenship to address UN SDGs in Higher Education System Performance Framework.

#### **Key Priority Area 2: Education & Training: Transforming learning and training environments**

- 6) Ensure the National Skills Strategy incorporates work ready skills obtained through student volunteering – problem solving; active citizenship; effective communication; team work etc.
- 7) Align National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Strategic Objectives and funding calls to recognise student volunteering.

#### **Key Priority Area 3: Youth: Empowering and mobilising youth**

- 8) Invest in a targeted marketing and communications plan to scale and promote student volunteering and [www.studentvolunteer.ie](http://www.studentvolunteer.ie) across target markets – civic, civil society organisations, campuses, international student marketing campaigns;
- 9) Create a cross-sectoral studentvolunteer.ie governance structure with multistakeholder representation.
- 10) Build effective partnerships to integrate Enactus, Student Unions, Clubs and Societies into studentvolunteer.ie
- 11) Build awareness amongst students of the impact of student volunteering on skills, graduate attributes;
- 12) Create a national StudentVolunteer.ie Minister's Award for Further & Higher Education to recognise student's contribution to delivering the SDGs.

### 3) Research, Innovation, Training

#### Action: Embed, scale, promote Engaged Research & Innovation for Societal Impact

Pivotal to addressing the UN SDGs is the cooperation of all stakeholders – government policy makers, public, industry, and non-government agencies etc. to implement R&I outputs. The present silo-based operational models for research & innovation will fail to drive urgent transitions to address our own societal challenges & UN SDGs via low carbon technological solutions, AI, Big Data, Geolocating data, climate smart agriculture etc. We at Campus Engage have been building engaged research, societal impact tools and capacity training **Enabling researchers to work with society to address complex challenges and deliver excellence.**

Any new Strategy needs to prioritise engaged research /transdisciplinary opportunity (e.g., Trinity College Dublin E3 model); founded on long term strategic funding models - that include deep and continuous collaboration with all stakeholders for societal impact.

#### Recommended actions:

##### Key Priority Area 1: Policy: Advancing policy/policy coherence

- 1) Align the ESD Strategy with the new DFHERIS ESD Strategy, Research & Innovation Strategy and the ambitions of [Horizon Europe FP9 Impact Assessment](#) Framework and [Mission Based Calls](#) – mapping impacts metric across implementation of UN SDGs and co-creation, with society - for societal impact;
- 2) Create a series of ambitions national, interdepartmentally funded missions-based funding calls, aligned with Horizon Europe and UN SDG Agenda 2030.

##### Key Priority Area 2: Education & Training: Transforming learning and training environments

- 3) Work with Campus Engage to embed our capacity building programme for all R&I staff across engaged research & innovation to address societal challenges with and for society, including UN SDGs - all early, intermediary, advanced research staff cohorts through online micro-credentials.
- 4) Create micro-credentials targeting Government Policy Makers – to support their insights and capacity to address societal challenges, including SDGs;
- 5) Work with Campus Engage to help coordinate government policy makers and researchers to work better together – and make effective public policy decision to address societal challenges, including UNSDGs.

##### Key Priority Area 4: Communities: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level and engaging with the wider community

- 6) Consolidate funding to create big budget, longer term funding mechanisms to support blue skies and mission-based funding mechanism - with government agencies, civic society organisations, industry, others to implement the UN SDGs through research & innovation outputs – low carbon technological solutions, AI, BIM Technology, Blockchain, Adaptive Learning, Big Data, Geolocating data, climate smart agriculture etc.

##### Key Priority Area 5: Culture: Changing attitudes, values and behaviours/transformational action

- 7) Invest in disruptive technology that support Open Access of research findings to society and HEIs to partner with external organisations to facilitate and accelerate Goal #17 Partnerships for Change.

#### Appendix 1:

The submission has been informed and co-authored by the following representatives of the Campus Engage Steering Committee and Working Groups.

#### Campus Engage Steering Committee

Prof Fred Powell: Ombudsman for Students	UCC
Prof Kerstin Mey: President	UL
Dr Lorraine McIlrath: (CHAIR) Director CKI	NUIG
Prof Ronnie Munck: Head of Civic Engagement	DCU
Prof Catherine McCabe: Dean of Students	TCD

Vivienne Patterson: Head of Engagement	HEA
Prof Joe Carthy: Dean of Science	UCD
Dr Julie Bernard: Head of Access & Engagement	TU Dublin
Prof Brian Donnellan: VP Innovation & Engagement	Maynooth University
Lewis Purse: Director of Academic Affairs	IUA
Kate Morris: Head of Campus Engage	IUA

### Accredited Community Based Research & Learning Working Group

Dr Sarah Hayes	UL
Dr Josephine Boland	Independent
Dr Claire McDonnell	TU Dublin
Dr Ruth Hally	UCC
Dr Jamie Goggins	NUIG
Dr Lorraine McIlrathe	NUIG
Joanne Ozarowska	DCU
Jennifer Lloyd Hughes	Maynooth
Prof Deirdre McGillicuddy	UCD
Dr Amanda Phelan	TCD

### Engaged Research & Societal Impact Working Group

Prof Maura Adshead	UL
Michael Foley	TCD
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Martin Galvin	UCC
Prof Thilo Kroll	UCD
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Dr Ann Lyons	NUIG
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Sarah Bowman	TCD

### Student Volunteer Working Group

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