

**Joint Public Consultation on a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030**

**Submission from the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) Adult & Community Education Working Group - 30th June 2021**

# Introduction

IDEA represents over 80 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 it has in fostering global citizenship and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

IDEA uses Development Education as a term that includes Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and related terms. Our members sometimes use different terms for their work, depending on the nature of their work, or their areas of specialism. As IDEA, we work together around the shared concerns of promoting and advancing education for global citizenship and sustainable development. We are aware that different government departments use different terms for this area, for example Development Education, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, or Environmental Education.

UNESCO, who lead in the UN system on this area, also use two terms, Global

Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. We use the term Development Education, on the understanding that we are including all relevant terms and approaches within the area of education for global citizenship and sustainable development.

Development Education takes place across a wide range of Adult and Community Education settings, such as community development projects, community education centres, further education centres, NGOs, women’s groups, men’s groups, trade unions, family resource centres, community gardens.

Delivering Development Education through the Adult & Community Education sector can play a pivotal role in increasing the number and range of people in Ireland who have access to quality Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development, by providing life-long Development Education learning opportunities. The sector can reach many hard-to-reach groups, including second chance learners, unemployed people, disadvantaged young people, adult basic education learners, older people, migrants, and the Traveller Community.

# Funding for the new National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

IDEA members in the Adult & Community Education sector have a crucial role to play in supporting and implementing the new strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. Our members have the values, knowledge and skills needed to enable learners by delivering quality Development Education engagements.

Development Education must be embedded in all education systems, formal, informal and non-formal. This will need a holistic, systemised approach to planning and implementation to ensure the new Education for Sustainable for Development strategy’s success.

In addition, it is essential that adequate funding is put in place to enable full and speedy implementation of the new strategy. As part of the funding response, a funding mechanism for civil society to deliver Education for Sustainable for Development needs to be developed and put in place within the Department of

Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The absence of such a mechanism has been a significant barrier to embedding Education for Sustainable for Development throughout the education system. This mechanism should ensure adequate resourcing to enable civil society to be key implementers of the new strategy for Education for Sustainable for Development.

# Policy: Advancing Policy/Policy Coherence

Education for Sustainable Development, and related practices, need a supportive and coherent policy context, and it should be an important element of many different government policy areas, including international development, education, climate action, justice, youth, community development, and more. We need the sustained engagement of those involved in Government & state institutions, as well as high strategic prioritisation of Development Education and Education for Sustainable for Development across Government departments.

* Coordination is needed between relevant Government departments. These should include the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and other relevant departments;

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Department of

Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

o Coordination is also needed between the strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and key policies, including the Irish Aid Strategy on Development and Global Citizenship Education, National Youth Strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy, The Climate Action Plan, The National Action Plan Against Racism, and the National Volunteering Strategy (2021 – 2025).

* Build high-level partnerships across civil society organisations, government departments, statutory bodies and corporate entities to support the strategy for Education for sustainable Development.
* Integration and prioritisation of the strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in relevant institutions and networks is also necessary. These include Education and Training Boards, schools’ networks, youth sector bodies and third level institutions.
* Support and fund the Development Education sector to map and review existing policies in education, local government/Public Participation Networks, environment, etc to identify synergies and gaps and opportunities for

collaboration.- there are also multiple important opportunities for Education for Sustainable for Development to become embedded in existing Local Authorities/ County Development Plans and Public Participation Networks/Community Wellbeing Statements.

# Education and Training: Transforming learning environments

The Further Education and Training sector is an important part of Adult & Community

Education. The recently published Future FET: Transforming Learning — The National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2020 – 24, includes commitments to Adult & Community Education that provides supportive policy context for implementation of the strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. The strategy for Education for Sustainable Development should be included in policy goals and departmental objectives for the Further Education sector.

There are important opportunities to establish collaborative partnerships at senior management level of the FET sector (e.g., SOLAS, ETBI, ETB FET Directors, ETB Chief Executives) to build support for deeper, sector-wide integration of Education for Sustainable for Development. This top-down endorsement would create a more enabling environment for Development Education providers to engage and collaborate with statutory bodies on the ground. The following investments will make significant and sustained progress in this area:

* Establish collaborative partnerships between Education for Sustainable for Development practitioners and the FET sector.
* Create and fund a Development Education/ Education for Sustainable for

Development facilitator post in each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to provide a key capability for delivering Development Education throughout the ETBs nationally.

* Development of education resources to enable integration of Education for Sustainable for Development into existing accredited programmes.
* Support development of QQI accredited programmes at Levels 1 – 5 that integrate Education for Sustainable for Development.
* Support the development of educational resources aimed specifically at adults and particular groups of adults (e.g. Travellers, older people), including online resources.

# Educators: Capacity building for educators and trainers

Building the capacity of teachers and educators, through CPD and education programmes, to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into their teaching, is vital to achieve progress in ensuring access to high quality Development Education for learners at all levels.

The establishment of an Irish Aid Strategic Partnership for Adult and Community Education and the Saolta programme is a welcome development, and this arrangement can also benefit the strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

The huge potential for Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Adult and Community Education can be fulfilled with further support for capacity development: o Continue support for the Adult & Community Education strategic partnership.

* Fund accredited and non-accredited capacity building programmes and activities for adult educators and facilitators that will build knowledge of Education for Sustainable Development and accompanying teaching and learning approaches. This should include training in Technology Enhanced Learning.
* Support and resource accredited CPD pathways for Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development practitioners working with adult learners.
* Create and fund posts for regional coordinators for NGOs and other civil society actors in the sector to coordinate with institutional actors and develop comprehensive and sustained Education for Sustainable Development delivery.
* Increase the number and capacity of organisations involved in the delivery of CPD to develop capacity to engage more educators/learners.
* Ensure students in Initial Teaching Education programmes for the Adult and Community Education sector have the same educational opportunities afforded to formal education Initial Teacher Education programmes around Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development (such as those provided by UBUNTU and DICE).
* To prevent ongoing loss of experienced Development Education practitioners in

Adult and Community Education sector;

○ ensure Development Education grantees are adequately resourced, so that employees have, in line with SDG 8, decent & secure work.

○ ensure pay and conditions for grant-approved employees are benchmarked against comparable positions in the Youth and Formal education sectors.

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

Ensure Development Education and Education for Sustainable Development are recognised as an effective response and support for communities who are struggling to navigate and act upon social justice issues, including racism, climate breakdown, gender violence and inequality, mental health crises, homelessness, etc.

○ Expand awareness programmes and Development Education engagements to build more cohesive, inclusive, solidarity-based communities.

○ Build partnerships with migrant-led organisations to enable Development Education to play a significant role promoting solidarity and countering racist and discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.

# Programme Evaluation and Research

There needs to be a strong commitment to measure the impact of the strategy and to understand clearly what's working and what's not. Monitoring and evaluation should be developed to reflect quantitative and qualitative measurements that can capture the long-term impacts achieved by Education for Sustainable Development on values and attitudes in particular.

This will strengthen the evidence base for Development Education and Education for Sustainable for Development, and in so doing, will address one of the challenges of short-term funding, which makes it difficult to measure change over a longer period. It will also enable policymakers and practitioners to improve both overall Education for Sustainable for Development strategy and the practice of Development Education.

○ A longitudinal, and participatory research component is needed to inform the development of monitoring and evaluation.

○ The impact of learning should be defined in multiple ways so that its nature and measurement is appropriate to the activity and adaptable to the context.

○ Fund research / policy positions in Development Education and Education for Sustainable for Development organisations so they can focus on researching local contexts to inform plans and strategies

○ Support the continuation of the mapping exercise, begun by Saolta, to fully capture the extent of existing provision in the Adult and Community Education sector, and identify opportunities for expansion and development, and other studies such as the audits of Development Education resources in Ireland by developmenteducation.ie.

# Summary

○ The Development Education sector in Ireland can play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the new National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

○ There must be a holistic, systemised, and fully-funded approach to planning and implementation to ensure Education for Sustainable Development is embedded in all education systems, formal, in-formal and non-formal.

○ Funding mechanisms should be put in place to ensure adequate resourcing to enable civil society to become key implementers of the new strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

○ Coordination with the Education for Sustainable for Development is needed between relevant Government departments and across key policies, including the Irish Aid Strategy on Development and Global Citizenship Education, National

Youth Strategy, Further Education and Training Strategy, The Climate Action Plan, The National Action Plan Against Racism, and the National Volunteering Strategy (2021 – 2025).

○ The recently published National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy

2020 – 24, provides an opportunity for the Education for Sustainable Development National Strategy and a supportive policy context to build support for deeper, sector-wide integration of Education for Sustainable for Development / Development Education in the Further Education and Training sector.

○ Building the capacity of teachers and educators, through CPD and education programmes, to integrate Education for Sustainable Development / Development Education into their teaching, is vital to achieve progress in ensuring access to high quality Education for Sustainable Development / Development Education for learners at all levels.

○ It’s important to ensure Development Education is an effective response and support for communities who are struggling to navigate and act upon social justice issues.

○ Monitoring and evaluation should be developed for quantitative and qualitative measurements that can capture the long-term impacts achieved by Development Education on values and attitudes in particular.