



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland




Shared Island
Initiative



Shared Island Initiative Report 2023

Action on a Shared Future





“Our commitment is to work with all communities and political traditions on the island of Ireland for a shared future, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement.”

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Foreword by Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD



Over the last three and a half years, the Government has taken forward our Shared Island initiative. Our commitment is to work with all communities and political traditions on the island of Ireland for a shared future, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. This report sets out what has been achieved throughout 2023, working with civil society, local authority and education partners, and with counterparts in Northern Ireland and the UK Government.

The initiative brings people together from different communities to look forward and to work on common concerns. I want to thank everyone who has participated so far, in dialogues, research or as part of the Shared Island Community Climate Action and Creative Ireland programmes, or on projects supported by the Civic Society Fund. These types of activities generate valuable community connections, understanding and common purpose for a shared future.

This is exemplified by the Shared Island Youth Forum, whom I met in December, comprised of 80 young civic representatives from diverse backgrounds across Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Youth Forum is working over a year to give voice to the vision and values of their generation for the future of this island.

The Shared Island research programme is contributing to deeper understandings of the island, in economic, social, cultural and political terms, and the dialogue series is providing a space for people across all communities to challenge ourselves to look to the future and to ask how to shape it together to the benefit of all on this island.

Informed by these interactions, and by the overarching objective of healing the divisions of the past and furthering reconciliation, the Government is committing unprecedented resourcing through our Shared Island Fund, to invest in a more sustainable, connected and prosperous island for all.

In June 2023, we announced €56m in funding, including in investment in Ulster University's Derry campus to expand higher education provision in the North West. Where possible, we have taken up opportunities to work with Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government partners, for instance, in November 2023 confirming €70m in joint funding for two new Co-Centres for Research and Innovation to address overcome challenges on Climate Change and Food Sustainability.

We want to undertake significantly more investment cooperation with the new Executive and with the UK Government, to work for the benefit of both jurisdictions.

The Shared Island initiative is an important part of how we will do that, and the Government is setting out new priorities and ambitious objectives for 2024, to be actioned in partnership and working with all communities for a shared future on this island, founded on the Good Friday Agreement.

Leo Varadkar T.D.
Taoiseach

Foreword by Tánaiste, Micheál Martin TD



I launched the Shared Island initiative in 2020 as a whole of Government priority to build consensus with all communities and traditions around a shared future, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. Since then, we have been working across Government and with partners and counterparts to deepen cooperation and connections between people from different regions, communities and sectors on the island of Ireland.

Through the revised National Development Plan (2021-2030), Government set an enhanced level of ambition for collaborative all-island investment, backed up by the €1bn Shared Island Fund. From 2021 to 2023, almost €250m has been allocated by Government from the Fund to deliver on our investment priorities, working through all-island partnerships.

Long-standing cross-border infrastructure projects like the Ulster Canal restoration and the Narrow Water Bridge project, which have been talked about for decades, are now moving ahead, demonstrating what can be achieved with commitment and resourcing.

The Government has also introduced a new generation of programmes, to help meet common concerns for the island as a whole, for instance on climate action and biodiversity conservation, developing the bioeconomy, on research and innovation and in higher education. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I introduced my Department's new €3m Shared Island Civic Society Fund in 2023, to promote practical cooperation and interaction in civic society, with two funding rounds already undertaken, supporting more than 50 new projects.

There is so much that can be achieved for the benefit of people on this island, by developing all of the relationships of the Good Friday Agreement, across the community in Northern Ireland, North/South on this island and East/West between Ireland and Britain. In 2024, the Government wants to do even more, working with the new Executive and the UK Government.

The Shared Island research programme and dialogue series have also continued through 2023 and I was pleased to convene a dialogue in October on how we accommodate national identity diversity on the island. These are important civic conversations that can help build up consensus on how, in practical ways, we can better share this island into the future.

I want to thank everyone who is contributing to the Shared Island initiative, local authorities, educators, researchers, business and trade union representatives, civic leaders, sportspeople, artists, and community voices from all walks of life. The Government will work with you in 2024 to broaden and deepen our connections and interactions as the foundation for a shared, reconciled future for all communities on the island of Ireland.

A handwritten signature of Micheál Martin in blue ink.

Tánaiste Micheál Martin T.D.
Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Minister for Defence

Shared Island Initiative Numbers

Building a Shared Island



€44.5m

for construction of a new teaching building at Ulster University's Derry campus.



€70m

joint funding with NI and UK partners for research Co-Centres on Food Sustainability and Climate Change.



€7m

for two all-island bioeconomy demonstrator facilities.



€2.5m

for respite centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families from across the island.



€3m

Shared Island Civic Society Fund; €500k awarded in 2023 to 20 projects.



€7.4m

to 5 new Arts projects to provide facilities for artistic exchange across the island.



€1.45m

to 13 community and creative climate projects under the Shared Island dimension to Creative Ireland.



24

feasibility studies completed under Shared Island Local Authority development funding scheme.

Shared Island dialogue 2023



1,000 people from across all communities, traditions, and regions on the island participated.



Dialogue on Media Representation of the Island at Convention Centre Dublin in April.



Dialogue on Education Systems and Connecting Communities co-hosted with Dublin City University Institute of Education in June.



Dialogue on Accommodating National Identities co-hosted with the Abbey Theatre in October.



New Shared Island Youth Forum commenced in September bringing together 80 young people to develop their vision and values for a shared future on the island.



All-island civic engagement led through 2023 by National Women's Council; the iCommunity hub; and, as part of the Labour Employer Economic Forum.

Research on a Shared Future



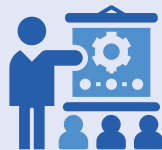
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Economic and Social Research Institute reports published on: early childhood care and education; migrant integration; student mobility; and, changing social and political attitudes.



8

Irish Research Council projects underway, including on: public policy agendas; biodiversity and bioeconomy; rare diseases; and, culture.



3

projects completed through Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) on curriculum delivery themes.



2

projects underway on all-island emergency planning cooperation and response.



Hydrogen

Research published on cross-border hydrogen regulation and safety.



Building a Shared Island

Building a Shared Island

The Government in the Programme for Government and revised National Development Plan (2021-2030) set out a significantly enhanced level of ambition for collaborative all-island investment.

The Shared Island Fund - with a commitment of at least €1billion out to 2030 - is being deployed by Government alongside other funding sources and working through all-island partnerships, with Northern Ireland and UK Government counterparts and working with Local Authorities, education institutions and civil society through island-wide funding programmes.

From 2021 to 2023, almost €250m was allocated from the Shared Island Fund to projects that contribute to a more connected, sustainable and prosperous island for all communities.

The Government will continue to invest at this unprecedented level and develop opportunities to take forward all-island cooperation that demonstrates harnesses and accelerates ambitious North/South and East/West cooperation, for the island of Ireland.

Projects taken forward in 2023 with support through the Shared Island Fund include:

A more sustainable island

Bioeconomy Demonstrator Initiative

€7 million in Shared Island funding will enable development of two biorefinery demonstrator facilities focused on agri-bioeconomy and marine bioeconomy. A facility will operate in each jurisdiction and will support integration of bio-based research and innovation in the agriculture and marine sectors across the island of Ireland.

Community Climate Action Programme

€3 million Shared Island strand to the Government's Community Climate Action Programme. This will support local authorities to step up climate action in partnership with communities across the island, including on nature recovery networks; farming for nature; just transition; improving land use and water quality; peatland restoration; renewable energy solutions; and flood forecasting. A call for applications is underway, launched by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD.

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Scheme

€15 million funding via National Sports Governing Bodies for the installation of up to 200 publicly accessible rapid Electric Vehicle charging points delivered in clubs and facilities across the island. Grant awardees will be announced by the Department of Transport's Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland (ZEVI) office in Q1 2024.



A more prosperous island

Teaching and student services building at Ulster University Derry

€44.5 million was allocated by Government from the Shared Island Fund in June 2023 for construction by Ulster University of a new teaching and student services building on the University's Derry campus. The building will help to grow student numbers and enhance higher education in the North West region and fulfils the Government's commitment under the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement to invest in the campus.

Co-Centres for Research and Innovation

€70m joint funding was announced by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, with United Kingdom and Northern Ireland partners in November 2023, to create two new research centres. The funding will bring together academics, industry and policymakers across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain to collaborate on the common challenges of food sustainability and climate change. The Co-Centres programme is funded by Science Foundation Ireland; the NI Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); and, is co-funded by industry. The two new Co-Centres commenced activities in January 2024.

Wild Atlantic Way and Causeway Coastal Route Brand Collaboration

€7.6 million to connect and enhance the visitor journey from the Wild Atlantic Way to the Causeway Coastal Route. Tourism agencies are working in collaboration to bring these two internationally-renowned tourism assets together, developing discovery points and signage along the routes in the North West and Northern coast and promoting the region in more joined up ways.



A more connected island

Local Authority Development Funding Scheme

This scheme enables Local Authorities on both sides of the border to cooperate on delivering shared regional development goals. Over €4.3m was awarded for 15 Local Authorities in the South to work with 9 Councils in Northern Ireland on 25 feasibility projects. Work was completed in 2023 developing cross-border capital investment proposals in areas such as biodiversity, tourism, and climate action. Completed feasibility projects will be reviewed in 2024 with a view to a number being supported to progress to the next stage.

Respite therapeutic centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families

€2.5 million was announced in June 2023 by the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, for construction of a respite and therapeutic centre for children diagnosed with cancer and their families from across the island, in Co. Mayo. The facility will complement the service provided by Cancer Fund For Children at Daisy Lodge, in Co. Down and enable CFFC to increase the number of children and families supported each year from 1,800 to 4,000.

Shared Island dimension to the Government's Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027

A Shared Island dimension to the Government's Creative Ireland programme is deploying the power of creativity by people and communities, North and South. In 2023, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, announced €850,000 for nine new Local Authority-led shared island community arts and creativity projects, and €600,000 for three new projects which develop awareness, through creativity, of climate change, on a cross-border basis.



Spotlight on Civic Society

Shared Island Civic Society Fund

The €3 million Shared Island Civic Society Fund is an initiative which supports practical North South cooperation and engagement through civic societies. The fund enables organisations to work on an all-island, regional, or sectoral cross-border basis on issues including: climate and environment; community development; heritage and conservation; social enterprise; charity and voluntary sector; and sport.

In October 2023, Tánaiste Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, announced the successful organisations which have received €500,000 across 20 projects (project summaries in Appendix). Applications for a second round were opened by the Department of Foreign Affairs in September 2023, and successful recipients will be announced in Q1 2024.

Projects supported under the first round of the Shared Island Civic Fund include:

iCommunity Shared Practice Hub

The Wheel and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action are continuing the iCommunity Hub supporting non-profits to discover the benefits of collaboration and highlighting examples of existing all-island practice while developing new opportunities to work together on shared challenges.

All-Island Civil Society Forum on the Environment

Irish Environmental Network and Northern Ireland Environment Link are strengthening links between environmental civil society organisations from Northern Ireland and Ireland through the creation of sustainable networks.

All-Island Women's Forum

The All-Island Women's Forum of the National Women's Council explores issues relating to women's representation, practical north south cooperation among civic society particularly in the women's sector. The National Women's Council and Women's Aid Federation are working to put a focus in Forum on practical cooperation to tackle Violence Against Women.

Awakening Summit

The Awaken Hub community for women founders is convening a women-led summit for participants to build relationships and gain new skills whilst improving communication, creativity, and collaboration and to launch a digital platform for women founders to connect.



Shared Island Dialogue





Shared Island Dialogue

Inclusive dialogue with all communities and political traditions is central to the Government's Shared Island approach.

The Shared Island dialogue series has brought together over 3,500 citizens and civic representatives across all communities to discuss issues of common concern for the future.

Over 2020-2022, dialogues were held on topics including education, tourism; sport; rural and community development; arts and culture; and tackling gender-based violence

In 2023, there was a focus on reconciliation, with dialogues held on Media Representation of the Island; Education Systems and Connecting Communities; and Accommodating National Identities.

Through the dialogue series, the Government is

listening to and fostering dialogue with all communities and political traditions on how, practically, consensus is built around a shared future on the island, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement.

The series also informs how the Government, working with counterparts and civil society partners, develops and delivers the Shared Island initiative.



2023 Events

Media Representation of the Island of Ireland

A Dialogue on Media representation of the Island of Ireland was convened on 24 April 2023, held at the Convention Centre, Dublin.

Moderated by Kevin Rafter, Full Professor of Political Communications at Dublin City University, the dialogue saw participation by over 150 journalists, media sector representatives, civil society groups, academics, and political representatives.

There was a focus on:

- Successes and shortcomings of media representation of the island of Ireland, how different communities, regions, and political and social issues are presented in media and social media and how this influences political and public debates.
- Media sector across the island and on development of deeper networks, organisation and collaboration in news and other media, both North/South and East/West.



Heard at #SharedIsland Dialogue:

“ Partition is very much reflected in the media in this country for a range of reasons, some of the very understandable, some of them less so...When I was a journalist, it was understood that ‘the North’ was a turnoff for audiences, editors would frequently say it. It wasn’t just here, it was also in London ”

Susan McKay, Press Ombudsman.

“ It is not due to hostility towards the Republic, that as a regional paper, we will not be closely covering what is happening across the border ”

Ben Lowry, Editor, Belfast NewsLetter.



“ Northern Ireland is effectively the place where British and Irish society overlaps. Now unfortunately the media in Belfast, obviously, would cover UK wide issues on a daily basis, but we don’t generally see daily news and political coverage of the rest of the island, even though the two parts of the island are so intimately connected ”

Steven McCaffery, Social Change Initiative.

Report and video summary available at www.gov.ie/sharedisland/dialogues



Education Systems and Connecting Communities

A dialogue on *Education Systems and Connecting Communities* was held on 16 June 2023, co-hosted with Dublin City University Institute of Education.



The dialogue was moderated by Professor Anne Looney, Dean of the Institute of Education at Dublin City University with participation by some 150 civil society representatives including teachers, academics, and government and political representatives from North and South.

There was a focus on:

- Achievements and shortcomings of education systems in bringing communities together over the last 25 years, asking what a no change scenario in education systems would mean for a shared island in 20 years' time.
- What a more ambitious approach to connecting communities through education would look like and what achieving it require in politics, communities and schools.
- Younger generation views on education systems, North and South, in the years ahead
- Reflections from political representatives from Ireland and Northern Ireland.



Report and video summary available at www.gov.ie/sharedisland/dialogues



Heard at #SharedIsland Dialogue:

“ Our curriculum in schools does not yet adequately reflect the diversity of our population. I was never taught by anyone of colour. The first person of African descent I was taught by was in UCD a couple of months ago ”

Emer O'Neill, Teacher and RTÉ presenter.

“ Parents choose schools for safety and the quality of education. Rarely do I meet a parent who chooses a school because their child will get a faith-based education ”

Dr. Martin Brown, Head of School of Policy and Practice, DCU Institute of Education.

“ I fully believe the school in the local community should reflect the local community, rather than something being forced on the community ”

Andrew Brown, Stranmillis University College.

“ If we're going to have a system for children in Ireland and Northern Ireland that works, then it needs to be integrated. We can't just pretend that we're all the same and have two separate systems ”

Dermot Hamill, Editor in Chief, Youth Voice NI.

“ While we've achieved a lot in the last 25 years, until we seriously tackle the issues of segregation in education it will be another 25 years until the children entering education come out the other end with an attitude and mindset that is more inclusive ”

Peter Osborne, Chair, Integrated Education Fund

“ It's worth mentioning the impact of thriving paramilitarism, and the ecosystem that allows it to continue... fear limits the ability of rational thought, never mind the ability to concentrate... There is no acceptable level of paramilitarism ”

Lisa Deitrich, CEO, Community Relations in Schools NI.



Accommodating National Identities

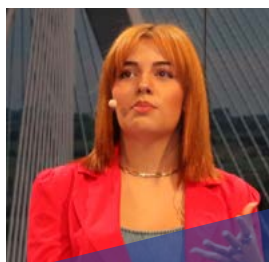
A dialogue on Accommodating National Identities was convened by Tánaiste Micheál Martin TD on 25 October 2023, and co-hosted with the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.



There was participation by over 300 people from across the island including civil society, political representatives, academics, and the faith community. The dialogue was moderated by RTÉ broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan.

There was a focus on historic experience and future actions to accommodate national identity diversity. Questions explored included:

- Where in society is national identity diversity well-accommodated; where not?
- How could the 20% of residents who were not born on the island be better recognised?
- What can be learned from the Decade of Centenaries on acknowledging identities?
- Have Irish and British identities changed in recent decades? What were drivers of change?
- Has a zero-sum view of Irish and British identity been transcended in Northern Ireland?
- To what extent in the South is complexity of national identity accommodated, including Protestant, Unionist, Anglo-Irish or British identity and background?



Report and video summary available at www.gov.ie/sharedisland/dialogues



Heard at #SharedIsland Dialogue:

“ Evolution of national identity is something that we should be much more upfront about. This isn't saying that there are no defining dimensions of Irishness, or any other nationality. But it is to recognise that collective identity and national stories are by no means closed or fixed ”

Tánaiste Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence.

“ Sean O'Casey's Captain Boyle might ask 'What is the Stars?' but many, many artists have asked on this very stage; what is a nation? What is our national identity? Do we need one? Do we have one? These are the questions that brought the Abbey into being, and they continue to shape our shared cultural future ”

Mark O'Brien, Executive Director and Co-Director of the Abbey Theatre.

“ People from unionist tradition are much more diverse than you would think. Seeing themselves as British, Irish, British-Irish and Northern Irish ”

Dr John Kyle, High Sheriff of the County and Borough of Belfast, former Councillor.

“ We set out to broaden sympathies, without having to abandon loyalties. That sentence became extraordinarily important to us as we began our work ”

Dr Maurice Manning, Chair of the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations and Chancellor of the National University of Ireland.

“ Language is your first cultural expression. For me as a protestant from the border, I've always considered myself Irish. I'm a protestant but that's only one part of my identity ”

Karyn Devenney, Deputy Principal, Manorcunningham Primary School, Board member of the Ulster Scots Agency.

“ Where does healing and reconciliation come into this? Because you can't start planting before you dig up whatever is underneath. I feel like we are really trying to plant new seeds when we have things that we haven't solved yet. How do we get to a stage where we talk about the harm that has been caused? I came here several decades ago and I knew my identity when I came here, and yet my identity is always questioned. How do we get to a point where we start healing the harm we have caused each other? And the language we use as well, we shouldn't be moving forward leaving another group behind. That's just causing more harm ”

Melody Chinenyanga, contributor at dialogue.

“ We still live with an imperfect and fragile peace. Better, definitely, than what was there before, but there are still open wounds. And as is the case in conflicts around the world, the voices of tolerance and compromise and respect can sometimes get drowned out. But I really feel that my Granda was onto something, in Keady on the 12th of July, 1979. From Ballymena, to Ballincollig, whether you're singing Derry's walls, or an Poc ar Buile, let everyone have their day ”

John Toal, Broadcaster, personal reflection on the 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement.

Shared Island Youth Forum



Shared Island Youth Forum

The Shared Island Youth Forum commenced on 8 September 2023.

The Forum brings together 80 young people aged 18 to 25, nominated by civic and community organisations. With 40 members from Northern Ireland and 40 from the South, the Forum reflects gender, ethnic, community, faith and other identity diversities.

Youth Forum members are meeting regularly over a twelve-month period to deliberate on and set out a statement of their vision and values for a shared future on the island of Ireland, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement

The Forum is considering their vision and values and future for the island across themes of: opportunity; sustainability; equality; wellbeing; and identity and culture.

The Forum's statement will inform development of the Shared Island initiative and contribute to broader discussions on a shared future for all communities on the island of Ireland.

The Youth Forum is organised by the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Action Northern Ireland.





In the last four months of 2023, the Shared Island Youth Forum met 5 times:

- The Forum was launched by Minister Simon Harris TD in Dublin Castle on 8 September. Members had a chance to meet each other in person and discuss what the Youth Forum's work should focus on.
- At a residential meeting at the Corrymeela Centre in Ballycastle, County Antrim from 15-17 September, the Forum considered the historic context of the Troubles and path to the Good Friday Agreement, as well as contemporary concerns related to the Peace Process. Members also finalised the areas and issues for discussion over the course of the programme, and got to know each other better as a group.
- A first thematic session, on Sustainability, was held on 20 October, at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin. Members heard from experts in biodiversity, just transition, climate justice, transport and other areas, and devised actions for sustainability on the island in the years ahead.
- At the second thematic session on the theme of Opportunity on 17 November, at the Duncairn Centre, Belfast, members discussed areas of education, jobs and housing. There were contributions from experts and campaigners in these areas, and the Forum put forward actions for greater opportunity on a shared island.
- Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD met with the Shared Island Youth Forum in Dublin on 7 December to discuss the Forum's work so far, members' ambitions for the programme and for the outcome statement in 2024.

The Youth Forum will meet a further number of times in 2024, both North and South with thematic sessions on wellbeing, culture and identity, and equality. The inspiring actions the Forum develops at each session will form the basis for preparation by the Forum of a statement of their vision and values of for a shared future on the island, to be published in Autumn 2024.

Among the inspiring actions already put forward by the Shared Island Youth Forum are:

Sustainability

- Seize opportunity of offshore wind energy for the island.
- Rapidly introduce renewable public and private transport (EV, hydrogen, biofuel).
- Stronger North/South cooperation on climate and biodiversity.
- Independent NI Environment Agency to work with Environmental Protection Agency.
- More open, inclusive, all-island civic dialogue on climate action.

Opportunity

- Integrated education as the norm .
- Student mobility programme for the island of Ireland.
- Lower the voting age.
- Stronger media and social media literacy in schools.
- More social housing; more public transport connectivity for the island.
- Harmonise revenue and social security systems.



Heard at #SharedIsland Dialogue:

“ Young people are not one-dimensional. We bring our own experiences and our own communities with us. This informs our own perspectives, and will come together to form our collective vision ”

Cohen Taylor, Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

“ I think the Government should definitely be engaging with young people from the South and the North and bringing them together ”

Joel McIlveen, Youth Action Northern Ireland.

“ If I had a magic wand, I would want to see young people be united, no matter where you're coming from, no matter your race or your tribe or your colour ”

*Princess Graham,
National Youth Council of Ireland.*

“ It gives an opportunity to meet young people from across the whole island from different communities and hearing people's experience and perspectives on what a shared island is going to look like into the future ”

*Dean Murray,
National Youth Council of Ireland*

“ Throughout this whole experience one thing that I've found is that I believe the future of our island is in safe hands. There are many inspiring and amazing young people I have been lucky enough to share this forum with who I know have the ability to change this island for the better ”

Adam Donovan, Citywise Education.



Shared Island Research



Research on a shared future

The purpose of the Shared Island research programme is to provide high-quality evidence and analysis of the whole island, on economic, social, cultural and political issues.

Research is commissioned by the Shared Island unit, working with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Irish Research Council (IRC), National

Economic and Social Council (NESC) and other partners. More than 30 reports have been published so far, available at www.gov.ie/sharedisland/research

2023 research includes

Department of the Taoiseach - Economic and Social Research Institute Joint Research Programme on Shared Island

Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland North and South - January 2023

Report draws on survey and administrative data, as well as in-depth interviews with stakeholders to document the nature of early years provision in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Findings include:

- Children in both jurisdictions are entitled to free universal pre-school provision, which have very high levels of take-up. Entitlement is to term-time, part-time hours in both, but hours are somewhat longer in Ireland (15 hours) than Northern Ireland (12.5 hours).
- In Ireland, mothers of young children work longer hours and are more reliant on formal childcare, while in Northern Ireland mothers are more likely to work part-time and are more reliant on friends and family for care.
- In both jurisdictions, centre-based care is more common when mothers are employed and family income levels are higher.

- The pace of policy developments in ECEC in Ireland has been rapid in recent years, with substantial government investment, while stakeholders in Northern Ireland expressed frustration that the lack of an Executive has stalled policy progress. For example, extensions in the hours of universal pre-school provision have been implemented in the rest of the UK but not yet in Northern Ireland.



Comparing migrant integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland - March 2023

Report examines how migrants are faring in employment, education, as well as attitudes towards migration in Ireland and Northern Ireland and migrants' experiences of cross-border travel since Brexit.

Some key findings from the report include:

- A significant proportion of those born outside of the island are citizens of their new places of residence (Ireland or Northern Ireland). This share is greater in Ireland, where 35 per cent of migrants are Irish citizens, than in Northern Ireland, where 17 per cent of those born outside the UK are British citizens.
- In both jurisdictions, most migrant groups are highly skilled and more likely to have third-level qualifications than the native-born population, though the skills profile of migrants is generally higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland.

- In 2017/2018, attitudes to migrants are more favourable in Ireland than in Northern Ireland on a range of outcomes measured. These differences in attitudes appear to be mostly explained by people in Ireland being more likely to have migrants in their social networks, being more optimistic about the future, and being more likely to believe their voice is heard in politics than people in Northern Ireland.
- Cross-border travel can be a fraught experience for some migrants and Brexit has exacerbated this issue. A reported lack of clarity around rights has led to considerable feelings of fear and uncertainty among migrant groups.



Student Mobility in Ireland and Northern Ireland - September 2023

This ESRI research, launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD examines the institutional factors which influence student mobility between Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain.

Some key findings from the report include:

- More students from Ireland go to study in the rest of the UK than in Northern Ireland, with numbers staying stable over time at just over 4,000 each year.
- There is a relatively large outflow of students from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK (13,685 in 2020/21), reflecting high levels of competition for places, with very little mobility in the opposite direction.
- Students from Northern Ireland can apply through the Central Applications Office (CAO) process to study in Ireland. However, applicants need to take four A-levels to achieve maximum points and only a handful of students in Northern Ireland do so.
- The language requirement for many courses in Ireland limits access for students from Northern Ireland where smaller numbers take a foreign language at A- or GCSE-level compared to the number of Leaving Certificate students.

The findings indicate:

- School-based guidance could provide greater awareness of options in other jurisdictions, a process which could be usefully supported by outreach by higher education institutions.
- There is a case to reexamine CAO point equivalences for A-levels, given the very small group of Northern Ireland candidates who take four A-levels, and to look at modern foreign

language requirements, given much lower take-up of modern foreign languages in Northern Ireland.

On 7 December, Minister Simon Harris TD, welcomed the publication of a Universities Ireland report recommending changes to requirements for students from Northern Ireland to access education in universities in Ireland. The report recommended changes to the CAO points assigned to A Level grades, which will enhance the opportunity for students from Northern Ireland to apply for courses in universities in the South. The report's recommendation must now be accepted by each University's Academic Council, and this is already underway. It is envisaged that this revision will be in place for students looking to start their studies in September 2024.



Changing Social and Political Attitudes in Ireland and Northern Ireland - November 2023

Research examined trends in social and political attitudes on the island of Ireland over the past 25 years, comparing trust in institutions and trust in other people; attitudes to income inequality and equal opportunities; political attitudes; and expectations for the future.

Some key findings from the report include:

- In Northern Ireland, there was a general rise in satisfaction with democracy since 1998, but a decline has been seen since 2016, and political trust, media trust, and especially optimism for the future have seen longer-term declines, particularly in the last few years observed (2016-2018) for Northern Ireland.
- In Ireland, with the onset of the crash (2007/08), satisfaction with democracy, political trust, media trust, trust in other people and optimism all saw substantial declines, while support for reducing income inequality increased.
- Overall people in Ireland started and finished the study period (1998-2023) with some of the most positive social and political attitudes in western Europe. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, had some of the least positive attitudes in western Europe.

- The past 20 to 25 years have seen the emergence and widening of gaps in social and political attitudes between more and less educated groups in both jurisdictions. While more educated groups generally have more positive societal attitudes, in both jurisdictions the size of this gap has grown (or recently emerged) for many measures.
- In Northern Ireland, older generations have tended to hold more positive social and political attitudes than younger generations. Over time, these generational differences in satisfaction with democracy, political voice, political trust, and social trust appear to have widened, due to increasingly positive attitudes among older cohorts, and stability or even increasingly negative attitudes among younger cohorts.



Spotlight on other 2023 research publications:

North-South Legal Mapping project

Commissioned under the Irish Research Council's New Foundations Shared Island strand, the [North South Legal Mapping Project](#) (NSLMap) has begun to identify the extent of legal convergence and divergence between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

Legal experts across the two jurisdictions benchmark and assess divergence and convergence in eight legal areas: Law and religion; Citizenship law; Administrative law; Private law of obligations; Employment law; Health law; Land and land use law; and, Human rights law. Papers on each will be published as part of the [Analysing and Researching Ireland North and South](#) (ARINS) series of the Royal Irish Academy and the University of Notre Dame.

Overall trends identified through the first year of NSLMap work include:

- Legislative versus judicial intervention: Divergence is more prevalent in areas that are primarily governed by legislation rather than by common law.
- Importance of legal procedures and practices: In some areas while the substantive law remains very similar, procedural rules and institutional methods can lead the two legal systems to operate very differently in practice.
- Relevance of social context: In some areas, the law has responded to very different social settings. Religion is a case in point. Both jurisdictions have been deferential to the religious practices of mainstream Christian denominations. The religious-ethnic-political divide has given religion a continued salience in the North as the legal system in the South has increasingly secularised.
- Different modes of legal-political engagement: Markedly different modes of legal-political engagement in the two jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, litigation continues to be an important

political tool for those advocating or resisting social change. In Ireland, there has been an increasing tendency for popular social change movements to find expression through legislation and constitutional referendums, with courts playing a lesser role.

- Continued relevance of EU law: Almost 50 years of EU law has left an indelible mark on both legal systems. As a result, in areas such as environmental law and employment protection, there remains substantial convergence between the two jurisdictions. That said, the UK's departure from the EU raises the possibility of significant regulatory divergence, whether through deliberate decision or drift.
- Dearth of cross-reference: Remarkably little cross-reference between the two legal system, reflected in a dearth of cross-jurisdictional citations in judicial decision and academic commentaries. Addressing this lack of cross-jurisdictional awareness is a significant challenge for legal educators, legal researchers and funding bodies.



Cultural Responsivity in Teacher Education: Research in Action' (CRiTERiA)

Commissioned under the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) Shared Island research partnership, the aim of the Criteria project is to examine the supports and programmes available to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students to prepare them for multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

CRiTERiA is informed by a series of studies in Europe which showed that teachers are struggling to find professionally sound ways of responding to cultural diversity in their classrooms, and the need to provide more multicultural and multilingual supports for teachers, with initial findings published in October 2023.

The CRiTERiA research:

- Analyses learning supports and programmes for ITE students to prepare for multicultural and multilingual classrooms; and,
- Surveys the challenges and opportunities of preparation of ITE students to teach in culturally diverse learning environments.

The research has provided a basis for further work underway, to co-design an ITE module on 'Cultural Responsivity in Teaching,' for the island of Ireland and other jurisdictions, which will be made available in 2024.



Appendix

Research programme publications

All research is published and available from: www.gov.ie/sharedisland/research

Economic and Social Research Institute joint research programme on Shared Island:

Publications to date:

- [Gender and Labour Market Inclusion on the Island of Ireland](#) - Helen Russell, Garance Hingre, Fran McGinnity, Emer Smyth (February 2024).
- [Contrasting Housing Supply in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom](#) - Wendy Disch, Paul Egan, Eoin Kenny, Kieran McQuinn (January 2024).
- [Changing Social and Political Attitudes in Ireland and Northern Ireland](#) - James Laurence, Stefanie Sprong, Frances McGinnity, Helen Russell, Garance Hingre (November 2023).
- [Student Mobility in Ireland and Northern Ireland](#) - Emer Smyth and Merike Dermody (September 2023).
- [Migrant Integration in Ireland, North and South](#) - Frances McGinnity, James Laurence, Emily Cunliffe (March 2023).
- [Children's Care and Early Education in Ireland, North and South](#) - Helen Russell, Frances McGinnity, Emer Smyth, Sarah Curristan (January 2023).
- [Calculating the Benefit of All-Island Coordination of Energy Infrastructure and Renewable Energy Supports](#) - Niall Farrell and Muireann Lynch (December 2022).
- [Modelling Productivity Levels in Ireland and Northern Ireland](#) - Seamus McGuinness and Adele Bergin (November 2022).
- [A North-South Comparison of Education and Training Systems: lessons for policy](#) - Emer Smyth, Anne Devlin, Adele Bergin, Seamus McGuinness (April 2022).
- [An Analysis of the Primary Care Systems of Ireland and Northern Ireland](#) - Sheelah Connolly, Aoife Brick, Ciarán O'Neill, Michael O'Callaghan (March 2022).
- [Enhancing the Attractiveness of the island of Ireland to High-value Foreign Direct Investment](#) - Iulia Siedschlag, Weijie Yan, Nigel Driffield (December 2021).
- [Cross-border Trade in Services](#) - Martina Lawless (December 2021).

National Economic and Social Council:

- [Social Enterprise on the island of Ireland](#) - Council Report No. 161, May 2023.
- [Exploring Shared Opportunities in the North West: Findings from Focus Groups](#) - Research Paper No. 25 October 2022.
- [Shared Island; Shared Opportunity: NESC Comprehensive Report](#) - Council Report No. 157, April 2022.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South:

2023 publications:

- [CRiTERiA: Cultural Responsivity in Teacher Education: Research in Action](#) – led by Dr. Patricia Eaton, Stranmillis University College, Belfast, and Dr. Martin Brown and Dr. Paddy Shevlin, Dublin City University, in collaboration with Dr. Manuela Heinz, National University of Ireland, Galway, and Prof. Joanne Hughes, Queen's University Belfast (October 2023).
- [SRASI: Shared Responsibility Across a Shared Island](#) – Teaching social justice in initial teacher education – led by Prof. Ann MacPhail, University of Limerick, and Dr. Paul Mc Flynn, Ulster University, Coleraine (October 2023).

Irish Research Council New Foundations programme (Shared Island strand):

2023 work on

- [Reading Rooms: Fostering constructive & inclusive dialogue between communities](#) - Dr. Padraic Whyte, University of Dublin, Trinity College.
- [Public Policy Agendas on a Shared Island](#) - Dr Conor Little, University of Limerick.
- [Doing Feminist Legal Work](#) - Dr Maebh Harding, University College Dublin.
- [An All-Island consortium to foster Educational Neuroscience research and practice](#) - Dr Michelle Downes, University College Dublin.
- [Towards an Intersectoral All-Island Network for Circular Bioeconomy Entrepreneurship](#) - Dr Orlagh Reynolds, Dublin City University.
- [Addressing Biodiversity Loss with Sustainable Finance: An All-Island Research Initiative](#) - Professor Sheila O'Donohoe, South East Technological University.
- [Audience Data for Cultural Policy: A Shared Island Approach to the Creative Industries](#) - Dr Steven Hadley, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin.
- [All Ireland Rare Disease Inter-Disciplinary Research Network](#) - Dr Suja Somanadhan, University College Dublin.

Shared Island Civic Society Fund 2023 projects

Organisations	Project Title	Project Description
Volunteer Ireland / Volunteer Now	Inclusion in Volunteer Programmes	Identify best practice in "Inclusion in Volunteer Programmes" and use this to develop a toolkit and associated training to support VIOs to improve inclusivity and diversity of their volunteers.
Burrenbeo Trust / Nature Friendly Farming Network	Farming for Nature Ambassadors Northern Ireland	Encourage and support farmers - those at the frontline of the climate and biodiversity crises - to 'farm for nature'.
Rural Action / Irish Rural Link	Synergy Rural Collaboration Project	Brings together two leading regional rural organisations (Rural Action in Northern Ireland and Irish Rural Link in Ireland) to identify and solve current issues facing rural communities.
Spraoi agus Spórt Family Centre / Sólás	Families Reaching Out Group	Two charities working to meet the needs of disabled children and their families from Inishowen in Donegal and South Belfast. Exchanging best practice to improve the outcomes for the children that they serve.
Linking Generations NI / Fingal County Council	Removing Barriers of Geography and Age	Facilitating development of intergenerational initiatives in two communities: Newry Mourne and Down and Balbriggan, Dublin.
Axis Ballymun / East Belfast Mission	Rising Tide: Ballymun & East Belfast	For young people aged 15 – 18, offering a creative and fun way of exploring the climate challenges our communities face and developing encouraging their unique skills as creative thinkers in the climate crisis.
LGBT Support and Advocacy Network Ireland / Rainbow Project	All Ireland LGBTQIA+ Forum	All Ireland LGBTQIA+ Forum is a new initiative, that seeks to foster new connections and North-South/ East-West links between LGBTQIA+ organisations and community groups.
The Wheel / NI Council for Voluntary Action	iCommunity: Continuing the Conversation	iCommunity supports non-profits to discover the benefits of collaboration highlighting examples of existing all-island practice while developing new opportunities to work together on shared challenges.
Fórsa / Unison NI	North-South Health and Social Care Professionals Conference	Fórsa and UNISON NI will host a Shared Island conference for Health and Social Care (HSC) workers to discuss challenges faced by staff in their professions and the communities the support.
Joyce Country & Western Lakes / Newry, Mourne Down Council	Growing Our Shared Island Geoparks	Connecting communities and businesses to share information and approaches on maximising benefits from achieving UNESCO Global Geopark status.

Organisations	Project Title	Project Description
Midlands Science / Goliath Trust	Sharing Accessible Science Outreach	Develop a sustainable shared community of best practice in accessible science outreach and education between the Midlands of Ireland and school communities within Northern Ireland.
Irish Environmental Network / Northern Ireland Environment Link	All-Island Civil Society Forum on the Environment	Strengthen links between environmental civil society organisations from Northern Ireland and Ireland through the creation of sustainable networks.
National Women's Council / Women's Aid Federation NI	Practical cooperation to tackle Violence Against Women	The All-Island Women's Forum explores issues relating to women's representation, practical north south cooperation among civic society particularly in the women's sector, and on issues relating to violence against women.
Irish Heritage Trust / Newpoint Players	Shared Island Heritage Forum: North South	Forum to help develop, deepen, and adopt an innovative approach to building cross-border relations between civic society heritage organisations on a North-South basis.
Newry, Ardee, Crossmaglen, Dundalk, Lurgan Credit Unions	MY-CU Financial Education Program	The MY-CU financial education program to help students learn about managing their finances. Program covers topics including budgeting, saving, credit, debt, and financial planning for the future.
Active Disability Ireland (Cara Sport Inclusion Ireland) / Disability Sport NI	Supporting active and healthy lifestyles for people with disabilities	Collaboration between Cara Sport Inclusion Ireland and Disability Sport Northern Ireland to strengthen awareness, increase access and provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities to be active.
Down Rural Community Network / Irish Men's Shed Assoc.	Shared Learning - Men's Shed project	Engaging 100 men in a capacity building project to build new North/South relationships, break down barriers, build skills and sharing learning.
Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions (AVEA)	All-Island Forum for Visitor Experience and Attractions Sector	AVEA, the Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions, is the representative body for visitor experiences and attractions in Ireland and will hold two cross-border in-person events to bring visitor attraction managers together.
AwakenHub	The Awakening Summit & Launch of 'AwakenTribe' Platform.	Women-led summit for participants to build relationships and gain new skills whilst improving communication, creativity, and collaboration. Includes a digital platform for women founders to connect.
Angel Eyes NI / Féach	Education Access in Ireland	Improving educational outcomes for blind and partially sighted children throughout the island of Ireland by sharing knowledge and learning in this specialised low incidence disability.

Notes



Shared Island
Initiative

“The dialogue series, has so far brought together over 3,500 citizens and representatives from across all communities. With a priority on hearing from new and underrepresented voices, on how in practical ways we can better share this island.”



As part of the Shared Island Initiative
gov.ie/sharedisland



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