

Education for Sustainable Development
Request for submissions to inform the development of a
National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in
Ireland

Template for submissions

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Submissions should be returned by e-mail to esd@education.gov.ie or by post to Fatima Mendes, QCAP Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 by close of business on Friday 27 September 2013. Any queries can be directed to Fatima Mendes at (01) 889 6453 or to the e-mail address above.

Outlined below are a number of key questions. You are invited to provide your feedback on each question. There is also a space at the end of the template for any other more general comments you may wish to make that are relevant to the issue of education for sustainable development.

1. A definition of sustainable development is provided on the background paper as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Defined by the Our Common Future (The Brundtland Report) - Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development; Quoted in Our Sustainable Future - A Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland, p.10)

How would you define 'education for sustainable development'?

For Just Forests, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is about analyses, reflection and actions that will ensure a better world. It requires us to learn from past experiences and to act to shape a just, equitable and sustainable future.

What is the key priority for making ESD a reality?

Issues of sustainable development cannot be separated from global justice, inequality, human rights and cultural diversity. To create effective learning and change in the 3 core pillars of sustainable development: the environment, the

economic and the social , it is essential to address global inequality, local to global interconnectedness and rights based approaches.

There is a very close relationship between development education (DE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) when it come to changing behavioral patterns. Both DE and ESD places great emphases on "addressing a number of broader issues that can contribute to a more equitable society, such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, active citizenship, human rights, gender equality and cultural diversity."

The global perspective of development education (DE) is therefore essential for the delivery of an effective and impactful Irish National Strategy for ESD. The DE sector in Ireland (IDEA and UBUNTU members for example) has a wide experience of social learning in the Irish context and has been recognised at the European level as a leading example of educational practice and social engagement . The DE Sector is experienced in moving people towards deeper engagement with difficult issues and promoting changes in behaviour and attitudes such as those needed to create the changes envisaged in sustainable development and ESD approaches.

Identifying and building upon existing educational opportunities for ESD within formal and non formal education, and putting structures in place that extend, strengthen and support them.

2 Objectives, challenges and actions

Objective 1: Embedding education for sustainable development at every level of the education system³.How can education for sustainable development be most effectively embedded at every level of the education system? Please give practical examples if possible.

(1) All stakeholders to recognise that ESD is not a standalone entity. All subjects and curricular areas can and should contribute to a student's understanding of what it means to live and act in a sustainable and equitable manner. As such build upon existing curricular links. For example:

- Materials Technology Wood (MTW)-this subject connects the head, heart and hands. Many argue that giving equal importance to head, heart and hands in learning is essential. MTW helps learners to determine what tools and skills will enable them to produce expected results. Learners will develop correct procedures needed to bring a project to fruition-for example a piece of furniture. The same logical approach can be used and applied to many other aspects of life. Also learners will realise the importance of policy as a tool for 'sourcing' or 'procuring' wood in an effort to avoid endangered and over-exploited timber species and illegally logged timber species. They will also learn how independent forest certification standards will help ensure 'responsible' forest management as a means towards sustainable development.

- Construction Studies (CS) - introduces pupils to knowledge and skills involved in construction technology and construction materials (timber) and practices. CS helps develop pupils' ability to communicate ideas and information ...through the exploration of [construction] materials [such as timber and its source].
- Environmental and Social Studies (ESS)- is one of the subjects that can help learners to find out about the world in which they live. They learn about things that happened in the past and how they shape and effect life today (how Ireland has gone from 1% of our land in forests in 1900 to almost 12% today). They find out how the area they live in has changed and what they can do to protect the environment in which they live.
- Business Studies- helps learners to make more informed decisions in the everyday business of living. It brings in issues associated with local, national and international trade and sustainability. It deals with consumer rights and the impact of government and foreign trade on business, the consumer and the environment. Economics studies the allocation of scarce resources within the economy to satisfy consumers' needs and wants.
- Geography - Learners study all about places, people and what shapes their environment. They learn how the environment influences people and visa versa- how people shape the environment. They develop the ability to understand terrestrial bio-regions (such as forests) outside the classroom through fieldwork. Geography studies are an excellent way for students to learn how human and animal habitats are linked locally and globally and to communicate that interconnectedness.
- Science - Students will develop 'an appreciation of the role of science in the everyday world', 'a scientific interest in the local community and environment' (JC Science). The LC biology syllabus aims to 'create an awareness of the application of biological knowledge to modern society in personal, social, economic, environmental, industrial, agricultural, medical, waste.'
- Religious Education (RE)-this subject introduces learners to "values' essential for sustainable development. They will learn about what people believe, why they believe and how these beliefs influence their lives, the lives of others and the world around us. They learn what the great religions of the world have to say about "creation" and why sustainable development is essential to all the earth's inhabitants.
- Music - music is a very important part in everyone's life. Through this subject Just Forests helps learners realise just how dependant they are on the world's forests for the precious timbers (tonewoods) used in the making of our beautiful musical instruments. <http://www.justmusic.ie>
- Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) - aims to help learners to become actively involved in their community, their country and the wider world. In CSPE learners get the opportunity to think about becoming an active citizen, community, making a difference, human rights and environmental protection.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)- you learn about what might help you to make choices for a confident and healthy life. In SPHE you will learn how to get along with others-your classmates, and the wider society as well as help others to be healthy, safe and well.

(2) All stakeholders to recognise that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is very closely aligned with Development Education (DE). Both ESD and DE:

- Explore issues such as poverty, social exclusion, climate change, food and water security, migration, debt and human rights.
- Consider the concepts of development and sustainability.
- Emphasise the links between local and global contexts.
- Have an intergenerational focus
- Emphasise the development of skills such as systems thinking, critical thinking, critical media literacy, problem solving, decision making and communication.
- Draw on active teaching and learning approaches, empowerment of students, and civic engagement.
- Relate to a range of curricular areas in formal education.

(3) The DES to seek out opportunities to support and build upon Development Education (DE) work in formal and non formal education that promotes the knowledge, skills and understanding that are central to ESD, for example,

- The Ubuntu Network (supports the integration of DE and ESD into post primary initial teacher education, working across 13 HEIs to plan, deliver and evaluate appropriate DE/ESD interventions in teacher education programmes),
- the DICE Project (integrating Development Education and Intercultural Education into post primary initial teacher education),
- Worldwide Global Schools (World Wise Global Schools supports and funds schools, school based activities, resource development, and capacity building and teacher education by provide a range of supports for development education initiatives at post-primary level under the extended Development Education Strategy 2007-2015.),
- IDEA (Engages people critically in and with our increasingly interdependent world, development education aims to challenge global inequalities, and works towards creating a more just and sustainable future for our planet.)
- NGOs such as ECO-UNESCO (Promote the personal development of young people and raise environmental awareness through practical environmental projects.), Just Forests (Makes real (local and global) links between Ireland's reliance on imported timber and wood-based products and global forests and how this international trade impacts people and environments in the Global South. They use wood as the 'hook' to explore issues of sustainability with the formal and non-formal education sectors).
- OTHERS - the Irish Environmental Network(member organizations play different but equally important roles in environmental development and protection, providing specific expertise within their focus areas and offering a variety of skills through their members for the benefit and future safeguarding of the nation's biodiversity.)

(4) The DES to seek out opportunities to support and build upon ESD related extracurricular initiatives, e.g.

- Young Social Innovators, Young Scientists (Science for Development Award), Concern debates.
- Green Flag Schools, Yellow Flag Schools

(5) All stakeholders to recognise that ESD is central to the new JC framework; it is reflected in almost all Statements of Learning and in the development of key skills.

(6) All current and future curriculum change to incorporate ESD principles and objectives.

(7) Change in examination - rewarding pupils for critically examining and reasoning with the issues that are central to ESD (see above), rather than rewarding the reproduction of lower order cognitive responses.

(8) The Teaching Council to recognise the importance of including ESD (and DE) in Teacher Education programmes and CPD in order to provide pre-service and practicing teachers with the knowledge, skills and experiences necessary to understand how ESD relates to their role as a teacher of young people.

4. What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

While many nations around the world have embraced the need for education to achieve sustainability, only limited progress has been made on any level. This lack of progress stems from many sources. In some cases, a lack of vision or awareness has impeded progress. In others, it is a lack of policy or funding. According to Charles Hopkins, who has spoken with people at many levels of involvement in education (i.e., ministers of education, university professors, K - 12 teachers, and students), twelve major issues stymied the advance of ESD during the 1990s and new millennium. By addressing these critical impediments in the planning stage, governments can prevent or reduce delays or derailment of ESD efforts and, ultimately, the attainment of sustainability. In addition to these generic issues, governments at all levels will need to address issues that are specific to local conditions (e.g., the quality of the relationship between the school governors and the teacher union. Source: <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/discussion/challenges.htm>)

The UBUNTU Network (of which Just Forests is a member) has identified the following 'key challenges':

- Establishing a structure for meaningful and 'joined up' thinking between stakeholders, particularly the DES and DFA (and Irish Aid's strategy to incorporate DE across all sectors).
- Addressing the examinations system. An examination system that best rewards areas of study with definitive answers is not conducive to ESD. For example, the LC geography, it is easier for the majority of pupils to score higher marks in the Geo-ecology option than in the Development option.

- Evaluating the effectiveness and impact of ESD in the curriculum.

Just Forests also sees the reluctance of the economic sectors in Ireland to engage meaningfully as a major obstacle. Many indigenous and multi-national companies based in Ireland are still not grasping the significance of climate change and sustainability. The monetary value of nature – in particular the goods and services it provides us such as water, food, energy and clean air – is enormous. Various estimates have put the value at many times the total of the world's gross domestic product. But this value is often not taken into account in economic and tax policy, financial systems and markets. Nearly all environmental and social issues have an economic component and many are driven by market distortions. We believe that the conservation and sustainable use of the world's forests for example can only be achieved with the active cooperation of all those that hold a stake in their management and exploitation.

5. What actions are required to address the challenges?

Opportunities for dialogue between all stakeholders- economic, social, environmental and academic.

Objective 2: Promoting public awareness of education for sustainable development

6. How can the public awareness of education for sustainable development be promoted?

At this moment in time ESD and DE are seen by many as a threat to economic development.

This myth must be squashed immediately. Make ESD and DE available throughout the entire education system.

Television and newspaper features.

We urgently need an AMBASSADORE of high public (economic) standing to state the obvious.

7. Who are the key stakeholders in promoting public awareness of education for sustainable development?

For many years the Irish development education (DE) sector (IDEA, RCE Ireland and UBUNTU members for example) have been bringing a global perspective to ESD, by making real local links to global issues that lead to action. The DE, Community and NGO sectors are critical players to the effective delivery of a National Strategy on ESD going forward and must be seen as key to making education for sustainable development (ESD) a reality. However, we now need to get the Local Authorities, County Development Boards, IDA Ireland and Chambers of Commerce on-board.

Together they can help other key players identified in the DES background paper such as "Government Departments, Public Sector Bodies, the Media and Private Enterprise," to make ESD work for all people.

8.What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

Getting all the above on-board.

Motivation of education institutions, government departments and industry to engage in CPD.

Adequate and sustained financial support for such initiatives.

9.What actions are required to address the challenges?

Engagement of all the above stakeholders. Adequate and sustained funding to be made available to RCE Ireland and the proposed RCE Dublin initiatives without any delay.

Objective 3: Promoting capacity building in support of education for sustainable development

10.How can we promote capacity building in support of education for sustainable development? Please give practical examples of how this can be done.

Teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, is essential to building capacity in schools and embedding DE and ESD practice in schools. The work of IDEA members with formal links to teacher training, such as the DICE and Ubuntu Network, as well as members with links to teachers' capacity development through schools partnerships, school linking, schools networks must be supported. It is also essential that civil society and DE actors have input to the delivery of the National Strategy by focussing on the capacities and expertise within the DE sector.

(1) All initiatives to promote an emphasis on ESD in education should be accompanied by opportunities for teachers to build capacity in this area through appropriate CPD workshops. These workshops may be offered through in-service, through workshops offered by organisations such as the Ubuntu Network, or through initiatives such as the World Wise Global School projects.

(2) Importance of integrating ESD into teacher education to be emphasised given the opportunity for multiplier effect.

11.What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

Quality assurance of CPD offered.

Motivation of teachers to engage in CPD.

Adequate and sustained financial support for such initiatives.

12.What actions are required to address the challenges?

Support for an organisational structure to coordinate and facilitate appropriate and evidence based CPD.
Adequate and sustained funding to be made available.

Objective 4: Promoting high standards of environmental management in education institutions

13. How can we most effectively promote high standards of environmental management in education institutions? Please give practical examples if possible.

Just Forests believes that the formal and non-formal education sectors that are empowered to educate Irish society must lead by example. All education institutions (if they have not already done so) MUST adopt and implement without delay a responsible

- paper procurement policy
- furniture procurement policy and in the case where education institutions are building new structures or refurbishing existing structures they must have a responsible
- timber procurement policy

Furthermore, all institutions must ensure all the environmental goods and services deployed by them are both legal and sustainable and where possible be independently certified. Just Forests believes this will send out the right signals to teachers, staff and students of such education institutions.

14. What are the key challenges relating to this objective?

The Irish economy is currently experiencing a period of recession, resulting in high levels of unemployment. Many public servants such as teachers have had significant cuts in their salaries. Student fees have increased. The present threats of strike by secondary teachers are creating a backdrop of insecurity. All this is not helping to focus institutions minds on ESD.

- The institutions 'will' to do so
- Institutions close relationship with economic interests

15. What actions are required to address the challenges?

Make ESD and DE mandatory in all education institutions-it's central to our survival as a species.

Education to be paid for from the public purse thus giving education institutions independence from economic interests that may have influence over what kind of education is promoted.

III.Additional views

16.Comments on the background paper would be appreciated:

Just Forests welcomes the National Strategy on ESD. We hope the final document will be published without any further delay.

17.Please make any other point you consider relevant to the issue of education for sustainable development.

Indebtedness both locally and globally has implications for sustainable development.

The importance of ESD must reach beyond the educational community and be embraced by economic interests as well as the general public.

As a member of RCE Ireland and RCE Dublin (soon to be formed), Just Forests will continue to provide support for, and participate in, the work of the Regional Centre(s) for Expertise on ESD as a focal point for identifying research needs and best practice on ESD.

18.If there is documentation you are aware of relevant for this topic could you please provide a web link or reference:

1. See "DE Watch" report, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE_Watch.pdf
2. See <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/discussion/challenges.htm>
3. One World, One Future, Ireland's policy for International Development
<http://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/allwebsitemedia/20newsandpublications/publicationpdfsenglish/one-world-one-future-irelands-new-policy.pdf>
4. Policy and Practice, Issue 6, 'Education for Sustainable Development'
<http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue6>
5. UNESCO, Draft Global Action Programme on ESD
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/esd-after-2014/draft-global-action-programme/>