



YOUNG
SOCIAL
INNOVATORS

education that changes the world

**Submission to the Consultation Process for
the Development of a new Irish Aid
Development and Global Citizenship
Education Strategy 2021- 2024**

- Nature of views (indicate personal / on behalf of an organisation): These views are presented on behalf of an organisation
- Organisation (if applicable): Young Social Innovators
- Role in organisation (if applicable): Learning and Training Specialist
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Freedom of information: Responses are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts and may be released in total or in part. Please indicate if there are aspects of your response that you seek to have withheld, and the reasons for same.

- Date of posting response: 19/03/2021

About Young Social Innovators

Young Social Innovators (YSI) is a not for profit education body which promotes civic participation and social innovation among young people in Ireland and beyond.

YSI has demonstrated the high impact of social innovation education as a means to positively engage young people in civic participation and social innovation learning and action. YSI's reach into the youth population is significant, with over 140,000 teenagers having taken part in our programmes since 2001.

YSI is a global leader in youth-led social innovation education. Its work embraces, complements and strengthens Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainability.

Key Recommendations

The new strategy should:

- 1. Recognise Young Social Innovators as one of the main channels for Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development in the Irish education landscape.**

Young Social Innovators has been a global leader in social innovation education for 20 years. This is values based education that enables young people to gain new knowledge, develop new skills, and take action on issues they care about. YSI supports young people to develop their agency and engage in innovative civic action.

- 2. Include a strategic partnership with Young Social Innovators to spread the benefits of social innovation education and further the commitment in the current Programme for Government: Our Shared Future to “expand access to social innovation programmes to all post-primary schools.”¹**

As detailed below, YSI is committed to delivering innovative, values based education programmes that have a real impact on communities at a local and global level. YSI works with primary and post-primary students, in formal and non-formal settings. We also work with a range of partners, to deliver social innovation action programmes to young people in countries such as Zambia, Lebanon and Palestine.

Social innovation education is an important channel through which young people can become active global citizens; this can be strengthened through a strategic partnership between YSI and Irish Aid.

- 3. Include a commitment to develop and support innovative uses of technology to strengthen global citizenship education, increase learning opportunities, and build connections between young people at a global level.**

As detailed below, YSI has developed a range of online learning opportunities in response to COVID-19. We recognise the value of online learning and are using it to pilot innovative approaches to global citizenship education. This includes bringing young people from Ireland and Lebanon together to share ideas and learning, and work together on citizenship projects. The new Strategy should include a proposal to support and build on such initiatives.

¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>
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How can Irish Aid support life-long learning and increase public understanding of and engagement with development and global citizenship issues as well as increasing awareness of the Irish Aid programme?

Young Social Innovators (YSI) strongly supports the view that Development Education (DE), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) or Global Citizenship Education (GCE) ought to be an option for all learners, throughout and beyond their formal education.

YSI believes that the learning about global citizenship is synonymous with engagement and action. Learning by doing is key to generating deep understanding and a lifelong interest and awareness.

YSI has been a major provider of citizenship education in Ireland for 20 years. It gives up to 9,000 young people every academic year the chance to become effective global citizens: gaining new knowledge; developing key skills; applying progressive values; and taking action. In this context, YSI would like to see the new strategy acknowledge the value of social innovation education as a key pillar of GCE in Ireland, and recognise the value of the work YSI has been doing in this area, through a renewed strategic partnership.

Furthermore, given the Government’s focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the view that all individuals should have the opportunity to mobilise efforts to achieve the goals, GCE is the ideal pathway for many to play their part.

To this end, Irish Aid ought to work with a broad range of providers to ensure all people can access the information they need to learn about local and global issues, and take action to address the issues they care about.

This should not be limited to formal education settings. It should also be made available through other providers and settings such as Youth and Adult Learning Services, Community Groups, the Prison Education Service, and a broad range of non-formal education providers.

In an attempt to support lifelong learning and enable a broader range of people to benefit from GCE, YSI is working with the City of Dublin Education and Training Board to develop new QQI Level three and four courses.

Irish Aid can play an important role in supporting lifelong learning and increasing public engagement with global citizenship issues by supporting this and other similar initiatives.

Are there other groups or organisations we should seek to work with in order to build this awareness and engagement?

Early Childhood	Primary	Post-Primary	Further and Higher Education	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic Primary School Management Association. • Irish National Teachers' Organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior cycle for teachers (JCT) • Various teacher professional networks (e.g. Association of Art Teachers of Ireland or Business Teachers Association of Ireland) • Joint Managerial Body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEA • Campus Engage • The National Forum for Teaching and Learning • Solas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Forum for Teaching and Learning • Teaching Council • Irish Research Council • Quality and Qualifications Ireland • Migrant rights organisations,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish Primary Principals Network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish second level union of students - https://www.issu.ie/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Youthreach Union of Students in Ireland STAND Irish Universities Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Centres. StudentVolunteer.ie Professional Accreditation Bodies - Engineers Ireland; Social Work; Nursing; The Irish Prison Education Association AONTAS NYCI Youth Work Ireland
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Range of school networks - trust bodies Young Social Innovators 			

What has changed in the external environment since 2017, both in the education sector and broader societal changes nationally and globally, and how should that be reflected in our priorities, our relationships and in our revised strategy?

Recent years have brought significant changes in the external environment. While some of these are negative, creating greater challenges for GCE, many others present new opportunities for educators, learners and active citizens.

Challenges:

- The rise of neo-nationalism and nativist populism at a global level, including in Ireland
- Increased inequality due to COVID-19
- Increased digital divide due to COVID-19
- The increasing climate emergency
- The rise of fake news, misinformation, and a greater reliance on social media for information

Opportunities:

- Ongoing curriculum changes, including the Senior Cycle Review² and review of the Primary Curriculum
- The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and increased consciousness of racial inequalities
- The rise of #metoo and increased awareness of women’s rights issues at a national and global level
- Young people’s response to the climate emergency, including school strikes
- Increased digital literacy among young people

YSI believes education is the most appropriate way to prepare students to address the challenges of the day. There is a clear appetite among young people to learn about, engage with, and take action on the social issues that they care about. However, young people frequently need support to effectively create change; therefore, Irish Aid should play a role in supporting organisations that work with educators and learners in this area.

The ongoing Senior Cycle Review presents an opportunity for Irish Aid to work with the NCCA and the Department of Education and Skills to ensure GCE is an important part of the

² <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-review>

curriculum. YSI made a full submission to the consultation process³ available [here](#). In it, we suggest, more space should be provided in the Senior Cycle for young people to engage in activities such as GCE.

What do you consider to be the key areas of progress made since 2017 in the implementation of the Irish Aid Strategic Planning process? Are there any key lessons learnt or gaps in the current response?

The existence of an Irish Aid strategy is positive and welcomed. There is little doubt that Development Education (DE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), along with GCE have a higher profile in schools thanks to the efforts of Irish Aid and WWGS.

The Government's efforts to ensure all people have meaningful opportunities to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are also having an impact on the education infrastructure in Ireland.

With reference to the five output areas of the current Irish Aid Development Education Strategic Plan, what do you consider the key priorities for 2021- 2024 should be?

- Output 1: Policy Coherence:

YSI would like to see a comprehensive and coherent policy which promotes and engages all people in global citizenship. This should be supported by a well-funded and integrated plan, identifying delivery partners.

- Output 2: Capacity Building

YSI believes there is real value in increasing the impact of GCE through Continued Professional Development for educators.

Central to the success of GCE is the ability of educators to deliver content in a way that does justice to the knowledge, skills, values, and actions involved.

This will only be possible with increased funding.

In the development of its new strategy, Irish Aid has a great opportunity to work with organisations currently providing CPD for educators and develop new and innovative ways to deliver content and ensure increased numbers are proficient in the delivery of GCE.

This can be delivered to educators in all stages of the formal education sector, as well as those working with other, frequently more marginalised, learners in the non-formal sector.

- Output 3: Formal Education

YSI supports moves towards further integration and mainstreaming of quality GCE in formal education curricula, programmes and structures.

Primary Level:

³ https://ncca.ie/media/4377/young-social-innovators_ncca_seniorcyclereview_oct19_final.pdf

The redevelopment of the primary curriculum presents an excellent opportunity to provide quality GCE options.

Young Social Innovators is the Ireland Country Champion for the Global [Design for Change](#) initiative. This programme, involving young people from over 70 countries, is a great introduction to social innovation for young people, empowering them to make a difference to the world around them. The programme encompasses all the features of quality GCE.

YSI would be happy to share information about the initiative with Irish Aid and work together to increase participation rates in Irish schools.

Post-Primary:

YSI welcomes the investment in the post-primary sector and calls for this to be continued.

The ongoing reform of the Senior Cycle allows for a strategic and coordinated approach to GCE, and Irish Aid should work closely with the Department of Education and Skills and the NCCA to ensure all young people have the space to benefit from experience of GCE.

YSI recommends that Young Social Innovators be a strategic partner for the delivery of global citizenship education at primary and post-primary levels, building on its expertise, experience and network over 20 years in Ireland.

This aligns with the commitment in the current Programme for Government: Our Shared Future to “expand access to social innovation programmes to all post-primary schools.”⁴

- Output 4: Non-Formal Education

YSI supports the increased integration, quality and spread of development education in non-formal education curricula, programmes and structures. The knowledge gained, skills developed, and values nurtured through GCE ought to be democratised and made available to people of all ages and backgrounds.

As mentioned elsewhere in this submission, YSI is currently working with the City of Dublin Education and Training Board to develop QQI Level three and four programmes in social innovation. We remain committed to delivering programmes in as wide a range of settings as possible. We would welcome input and support from Irish Aid to ensure these programmes reach a wide audience.

- Output 5: Irish Aid Awareness Programme

YSI supports the increased awareness within the education sector of Ireland’s development cooperation programme and the SDGs.

We support the view that all young people should be given the chance to not only increase their awareness of the SDGs, but also to take positive action and contribute to the realisation of the goals. To that end, YSI asks all young people participating in the programmes to locate their action within the context of one or more of the Goals. Subsequently, every academic year, up to 9,000 young people engage with the goals and see how their agency contributes to a more equitable and sustainable future at a local, national or global level.

⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>
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YSI also takes a unique and innovative approach to Ireland's development cooperation programme. We support the view that effective and sustainable development occurs when populations are empowered to make change for themselves. YSI works with NGOs and education bodies in a number of countries to give young people the opportunity to challenge the social justice issues they feel passionate about. YSI has trained educators from Zambia and Lebanon, and is currently in discussion with an organisation based in Palestine.

Most recently, YSI is engaging students across countries with classes linking our partner in Lebanon to classes in a primary school in Co Cork. Students in both countries from 4th and 5th classes, are working on issues identified during an online meeting and will share and develop their ideas. This is a new type of global citizenship education which YSI is testing through on and off line methods. We would like the new strategy to take on board the advances in technology and online communications across cultural, social and economic divides.

Irish Aid is considering changing the name of the programme and strategy to Global Citizenship Education, do you have any comments or concerns in relation to this suggestion?

Young Social Innovators supports the change to Global Citizenship Education. YSI shares UNESCO's view that GCE empowers "learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure societies."⁵

It is important that GCE allows learners to take action on issues that affect all the communities they live in, from the local to the global. It is vital that GCE is about processes as well as outcomes. It is an opportunity for learners to gain new knowledge, develop new skills, and share progressive values, as well as take action on the issues they care about. Even if learners are taking action at a local level, they are becoming more effective global citizens.

The programmes offered by YSI to a wide range of learners achieve these outcomes. Educators are supported, resources and activities are provided, and young people are empowered to use their agency and have increased control over the communities they live in.

What opportunities have arisen from the COVID-19 experience and how can we learn from it in order to reach a broader audience?

The experience of COVID-19 created a significant opportunity for young people to show their ability to respond to local and global issues.

In May 2021, YSI issued an 'Open Call to Teenagers', where young people were invited to present their ideas to deal with the challenges in their communities as a result of COVID-19. Young people presented ideas individually and as part of a team, and developed innovative responses to the specific challenges of:

- Staying Healthy and Safe;
- Providing Services;
- Staying Connected and Informed;
- Staying Human; and

⁵ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/definition>

- Preventing the Spread

The young people whose ideas had the greatest potential were invited to pitch to representatives from business and NGOs, and many received support to implement their ideas. Some of the ideas can be seen [here](#).⁶

The initiative allowed young people to actively participate in public life. Reflecting Lundy's model of youth Participation,⁷ the young people were given the space to develop their ideas, the information to use their voice effectively, an audience to listen to their ideas, and the potential to influence public life.

It is noteworthy that these efforts were recognised by in the current Programme for Government,⁸ which commits to:

- support the work of YSI to assist young people to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath in Ireland, to address issues facing their country as a whole, and to harness their energy, skills and talent; and
- expand access to social innovation programmes to all post-primary schools

The new strategy should ensure funding to organisations that empower and support young people to use their agency effectively and give them a sense of control over their communities.

How can technology and digital outreach help us?

Digital technology is now part of the norm of learning for different age groups. YSI has adapted its programmes and training support to the online environment.

YSI has illustrated the potential impact of digital learning through a rapid, innovative and high quality response to the needs of educators and young people by adapting its technology and digital output while students were not attending school due to COVID-19. This included:

- Virtual Platform to host events
- Online training for educators and virtual TeachMeets for YSI Guides
- Online Support sessions for young people
- Remote Learning resources (video step-by-step guides, social distancing action ideas, guidebooks, lesson plans, support for educators – how to use G-Suite and Microsoft Teams to facilitate social innovation in an online learning environment.

Furthermore, YSI is currently undertaking a pilot initiative between children in primary school in Cork and Lebanon, working collaboratively. This is a grassroots initiative driven by teachers and facilitated by YSI. Such connections of students online in different regions demonstrates a new way to experience Global Citizenship which is valuable and fun for young people and their teachers. YSI proposes that the new strategy would provide a new means and methods to

⁶ <https://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie/ysi-open-call/all/>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>
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further explore new ways of students and teachers connecting, expressing and learning about GCE. YSI would like to support such a strategy.