



[Sent via email]

Deputy Kehoe, TD
Leinster House
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Coalition 2030
Macro Centre
1 Green Street
Dublin 7

3 October 2020

RE Sustainable Development Goals in Work Programme of Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Dear Deputy Kehoe,

We write to you on behalf of the 75 civil society organisations and networks that make up Coalition 2030. These organisations come from the international development, environment, social inclusion/anti-poverty, trade union and academic sectors. We are committed to upholding Ireland's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at home in Ireland and in over 50 countries by 2030¹.

The Coalition is writing to the Committee regarding the motion approved in the Dáil on the 30th of July 2020. This [motion](#) sets out that each select Committee must address 'progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' as part of its work programme.

We are contacting you to highlight that the Committee must incorporate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in its new work programme. In order to give effect to the motion the Committee should in particular:

- Address SDG implementation, not merely as a one-off meeting topic, but as a core ongoing benchmark of policy planning and delivery.
- Ensure that associated sub-targets and indicators are used to monitor policy planning and implementation as part of the Committee's deliberations and meetings.
- Ensure Ministers, Departments and public bodies provide information on progress on relevant SDG targets, and plans to meet targets, when presenting to the Oireachtas Committee.
- Address actions being taken by their line Departments to support SDG implementation as part of the development of a new National SDG Implementation Plan.
- Ensure civil society groups and vulnerable communities, particularly those most at risk, are invited to provide their views on Ireland's response/progress.
- Provide information on SDG implementation in the Committee's annual reports and/or letters to Departments.
- When considering a just recovery and economic stimulus in response to the Covid-19 pandemic address SDG implementation as a means of increasing state, regional and local resilience.
- Examine whether existing indicators are adequate to monitor SDG progress and whether official data collected on Ireland's SDG performance sufficiently tracks major cross-cutting challenges, such as actions to eradicate poverty and curb inequalities.
- Make use of relevant evidence and resources on SDG implementation, Ireland's progress and a just recovery from Covid, e.g. the Central Statistics Office [SDG Dashboard](#), [reporting](#) and [analysis](#) by UN Agencies, the [Global SDG Index](#), OECD [research](#), as well as reports by [NESC](#), [Social Justice Ireland](#), [Coalition 2030](#) and the [European Environmental Bureau](#).

The **Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** has an important role to play in ensuring effective governance and accountability related

¹ See <https://www.ireland2030.org/about-us> . Our full membership is available [here](#).



to SDG targets and indicators, as well as in promoting sustainable development pathways that can improve resilience, enhance quality of life and protect the most vulnerable. It should be noted that this is not limited to SDG 4 on Quality Education. For example Ireland's response to sub-target 13.3 on improving education on climate change and sub-target 9.5 on increasing R&D are particularly relevant to the Committee's work. These targets should be met in an inclusive way, focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalised and leaving no one behind, by ensuring early and transparent consultation before decisions are made.

To provide some background, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets bring together economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in order to end poverty and realise an inclusive and sustainable world by 2030. In order to deliver on the Goals, Governments must give priority to improving wellbeing, reducing inequalities, and achieving sustainability and resilience. The comprehensive Agenda demands more than a minor adjustment to certain policies. It rather requires that the SDGs become a core guiding framework, with targets and indicators actively built into the ongoing design and assessment of policy.

However, the unprecedented health, economic and social crisis impacts of Covid-19 are now threatening lives and livelihoods and making the achievement of SDGs even more challenging. While the Covid crisis has seriously jeopardised progress on the SDGs, it also makes their achievement all the more urgent and necessary. It is imperative that Ireland pursues a just and transformative recovery from Covid-19 which prioritises the cross-cutting SDG targets, and its associated monitoring framework, as the roadmap to increase resilience for the most vulnerable communities and workers across our society.

Notwithstanding Ireland's leadership role in reaching international agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, Government action to date has not advanced anywhere near the speed or scale required. There exist fundamental weaknesses in Ireland's National SDG Implementation Plan which is currently led by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. Consultation and engagement with civil society through the Department's Stakeholder Forum has also been lacking. We are now concerned by recent internal restructuring within the Department which has left the SDG without a dedicated policy unit. We consider that the Department of the Taoiseach should be responsible for leading and coordinating Ireland's SDG response.

However, the Programme for Government includes positive commitments rooted in SDG delivery, including initiatives regarding community development and local authority planning. There also exists an opportunity to overcome long-standing weaknesses as part of the upcoming development of a new National Implementation Plan and for all Departments to take immediate steps to integrate SDG targets in policy-planning and delivery as part of their Statements of Strategy. **We consider that a fundamental part of these SDG-related processes must be effective monitoring and oversight of SDG implementation and policy coherence by Oireachtas Committees.**

The Oireachtas Committees on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science has a major opportunity to help to drive progress on Ireland's road to fulfilment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Coalition 2030 members are eager to support and advise Committee members with this process.

Yours sincerely

*The Steering Committee of Coalition 2030**

***Coalition 2030 Steering Committee:**



Seamus Boland	Irish Rural Link
Oisín Coghlan	Friends of the Earth
Ivan Cooper	The Wheel
Michael Doorly	Concern Worldwide
Niamh Garvey	Trócaire
Niall McGuirk	ICTU Global Solidarity Committee
Elaine Nevin	ECO-UNESCO
Yvonne O'Callaghan	SIPTU
Diarmuid Torney	Dublin City University