

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



Information sheet

BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF YOUTH

IRELAND



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1. Promotion and support of youth research

Is there a government strategy or programme for promoting and supporting research in the field of youth?

The National Children's Strategy (2000) and the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016 are both relevant.

The [National Children's Strategy](#) was launched in 2000 by the Office of the Minister for Children in the Department of Health, which has subsequently (in 2011) become the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) led by a full Cabinet Minister. This strategy included a stated commitment that "children's lives [will] be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and effectiveness of services". The strategy established a set of proposals for achieving these goals, including:

- A National Longitudinal Study of children and young people's progress and wellbeing from birth to adulthood. This was launched in 2007 as [Growing Up In Ireland/National Longitudinal Study of Children](#), which is being carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin.
- [Other measures](#) to encourage and develop research work on the lives of children and young people include developing a children's funded research programme, Research Scholarship Programme, Research Placement Programme and compiling a biennial State of the Nation's Children Report.

The [National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016](#) provides a framework for research and data management being undertaken by the DCYA. The stated aim of the strategy is "to set out a plan to guide and support the development of research and data around children's lives... for the purpose of ensuring children and young people benefit from improved understandings of their lives". The strategy identifies a number of actions designed to build research capacity and generate supports for the compiling of data on the lives of children and young people. They include:

- generate a comprehensive and coherent understanding of children's development, preferences, needs and appropriate supports and services;
- develop research capacity in the area of children's research and data;
- develop, support and promote good infrastructure in the area of children's research and data;
- improve monitoring and evaluation of children's services in Ireland at local, national and international level;
- support a continuum of research and data use within policy and practice settings.

Allied to this, the Strategy includes an action plan comprising 59 actions to be undertaken by a range of organisations. Activities range from the development of survey instruments and datasets, evaluation and reporting on services for children and young people, ethical guidance and production of data and research.

2. Legal basis for an evidence-based approach to youth policy

Is there a reference to better knowledge on youth ensuring an evidence-based approach to youth policy in national legislation or policy strategies?

The [Youth Work Act](#) (2001) [section 8] included among the functions of the relevant Minister the responsibility, as far as practicable, to "conduct research or cause research to be conducted in support of youth work...programmes and services...".

3. Structures and actors that play a role in gaining a better knowledge of young people

3.1. Departments in universities gathering knowledge on youth

There are a range of departments, research units/centres and individuals in universities gathering knowledge on youth in Ireland. These include:

- [Centre for Youth Research and Development, Department of Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland Maynooth](#)
- [UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway](#)
- [Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin](#)
- [Centre for Social and Educational Research \(CSER\), Dublin Institute of Technology](#)
- [University College Dublin \(UCD\) Social Science Research Centre, Children and Families Research Programme](#)
- [Family Study Centre, Department of Applied Social Science, UCD](#)
- [UCD Geary Institute](#)
- [School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork \(UCC\)](#)
- [Migrant Children Project, Department of Geography, UCC](#)
- [School of Education Studies, Dublin City University \(DCU\)](#)
- [The Centre for Talented Youth, Ireland, DCU](#)
- [Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway](#)
- [Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College Dublin](#)
- [National Nutrition Surveillance Centre, School of Public Health & Population Science, UCD](#)
- [Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin](#)

3.2. Major public and semi-public bodies dealing with [youth research](#), public companies included

- [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) (DCYA) which has a [research division](#).
- Also under the auspices of the DCYA are:
 - [Family Support Agency](#) (FSA)
 - [National Education Welfare Board](#) (NEWB)
 - [Irish Youth Justice Service](#) (IJYS)
 - Other units with interests in specific research topics relating to youth.

Other public bodies that conduct or support research include:

- [Health Service Executive](#) (HSE)
- [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](#) (NCCA)
- [National Council for Special Education](#) (NCSE)

Two other examples may be given here:

- The [Economic and Social Research Institute](#) (ESRI) is an independent “think tank” whose research includes a focus on youth employment and unemployment, labour market studies, education and training.
- The [Centre for Effective Services](#) is an independent intermediary organisation that supports the work of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

3.3. NGOs gathering knowledge on youth

- [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (national representative body for youth sector NGOs, conducts and commissions research on young people)

- [Irish Youth Work Centre](#) (a resource centre hosted by Youth Work Ireland, a national youth work NGO)
- [Foróige](#) Best Practice Unit (national youth work NGO)
- [Headstrong](#) and [Inspire Ireland Foundation](#) (both focusing on youth mental health)
- [Barnardos](#) (focus on children and young people, poverty and social exclusion)
- [UNICEF Ireland](#) (“Changing the Future” Reports on Adolescence)

3.4. Private companies dealing with youth research

Examples include:

- [Amárach Research](#) (& [ID Youth Research Programme](#))
- [Clear Channel Ireland](#) (Youth Research Programme)
- [Pfizer Ireland](#) (Reports on young people's attitudes to [Diet, Lifestyle and Obesity](#); [Smoking](#); and [Sexual Health](#))

In 2012 [Indecon](#) economic consultants were commissioned by the National Youth Council of Ireland to conduct an assessment of the economic value of youth work. The report is available from the [NYCI](#).

3.5. Statistical offices that collect statistics on youth

Examples include:

- [Central Statistics Office \(CSO\)](#)
- [StatCentral](#) (a portal for CSO and other official statistics)
- [Department of Health Statistics](#)

3.6. Directory of national youth researchers

There is no national directory specifically relating to youth research.

3.7. National research networks on youth

Launched in 2010, the [Children's Research Network](#) is supported by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (in Ireland) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (in Northern Ireland). It aims to support the research community to better understand and improve the lives of children and young people, by creating and maintaining an inclusive, independent, non-profit network through which information, knowledge, experience, learning and skills can be shared.

3.8. Transnational networks on youth with relevance for national networks

Individual researchers and institutions have links with transnational networks such as the Research Committee on Youth of the International Sociological Association ([RC34](#)).

3.9. Knowledge networks supporting youth policy

Is there a permanent national network for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organizations, NGOs)?

If yes, give names and contacts and explain its structure and your role within this network.

If no such network exists, please explain why and if there have been any attempts to set up such a network.

No formal network specifically for youth exists as yet. It is currently under discussion by stakeholders. There is a Children's Research Network (see 3.7 above)

Was such a network set up specifically for some project/purpose?

4. Promotion and support to youth researchers and other actors who work towards a better knowledge of youth

Is there any measure undertaken for the:

- facilitation of exchanges between researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field of youth
- support of mobility and skills improvement of youth researchers

Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners have come together for the purpose of developing youth work policy and other aspects of youth policy. The [National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007](#) was the result of an extensive process of research and consultation involving all the above-named stakeholders.

The [Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#) is currently undertaking the preparation of a Youth Policy Framework and its work is informed by a Reference Group comprising researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, including international members. The National Youth Work Development Plan will be reviewed in the context of the new framework.

The journal [Youth Studies Ireland](#) was established in 2006 as a partnership initiative involving policy-makers, youth organisations and practitioners, and academic institutions in both the north and south of the island of Ireland.

5. Publications and accessible data in the youth field/on youth

5.1. Data collections which provide updated statistics on youth (public and private)

5.2. Regular youth reports

On national level

- [Biennial State of the Nation's Children Report](#) (DCYA)

On regional level

Not applicable

5.3. National journals and reviews on youth research

- [Youth Studies Ireland](#) (see 4 above)

5.4. According to publications and recent data collections: what are priority themes in the field of youth research in your country

There are a number of priority themes across the area of youth research in Ireland, these include:

- Research on the provision of services for young people
- Education and training; employment and unemployment
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Diet and lifestyle

- Social inclusion/exclusion
- Youth crime and justice

6. IT dissemination of knowledge in the youth field

Is there a dissemination of knowledge on youth via dedicated internet portals or online publications?

If yes, please explain.

Major youth NGOs offer up-to-date information on their websites on youth research and other “knowledge-related” activities. All major youth NGOs are members of the National Youth Council of Ireland ([NYCI](#)), through which access can be gained to their websites.

6.1. Web-Portals and online databases on a better understanding of youth

Examples include:

- [Inventory of Data Sources on Children’s Lives \(DCYA\)](#)
- [Irish Child Health Database](#)
- [Children’s Act Advisory Board Research Databases](#)
- [National Documentation Centre on Drug Use](#) (includes database of youth specific research)

6.2. Other

7. Good practice related to fostering a better knowledge of youth

Please describe methods and approaches for gaining a better understanding and knowledge of youth and for keeping it up to date.

Recent years have seen a much-increased emphasis on adopting a *strategic approach* to acquiring knowledge about children and young people, and to keeping it up-to-date and applying it appropriately. This is reflected in the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children’s Lives 2011-2016 (see section 1 above). The Strategy distinguishes between “research” and “data”. It says:

“The inclusion of both data and research is an explicit recognition of the importance of achieving a comprehensive understanding of children’s lives. Although there is much overlap between research and data, in general, agendas have evolved separately from each other and issues arising are usually addressed in different fora and through individual strategic developments.” (p. 2)

Organisations concerned with youth, both statutory bodies and NGOs, have increasingly tended to develop a specific research function (whether conducting research or commissioning it or both) and have also worked increasingly in *partnership* with each other and with the academic research community. An example from the field of youth work is the research report on [The Nature and Purpose of Youth Work](#) (2009), jointly commissioned by all the largest youth organisations in Ireland.

In this and in other successful research and knowledge-related activities, important principles have been: involving the full range of stakeholders (including young people) in all stages of research design and planning, implementation and dissemination; adopting a variety of approaches and methods as appropriate for different purposes, contexts and audiences; and creating regular opportunities for the research, policy and practice communities to engage in formal and informal interaction and exchange.