

Shared Island Youth Forum Terms of Reference

Background

The Irish Government's [Shared Island initiative](#), launched in October 2020, is engaging with all communities and political traditions to build consensus around a shared future underpinned by Good Friday Agreement. The initiative is taken forward on a whole of Government basis, and through all-island partnerships, working with the Northern Ireland Executive, UK Government, Local Authorities, and civil society stakeholders.

As part of the initiative, the Shared Island Dialogue series is fostering inclusive civic dialogue about a shared future on the island of Ireland and opportunities for deepening cooperation and connections through the Good Friday Agreement. Over 2021-22, the Dialogue series held 14 events, with participation by over 2,500 citizens and civic representatives from across all communities and traditions.

Following a participant survey and consultations, a Shared Island Youth Forum is being convened as part of the next phase of the Dialogue series, to deepen engagement with and by young people on how we share the island of Ireland, today and into the future.

Shared Island Youth Forum

The Shared Island Youth Forum is convened by the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), to provide a space for young people to discuss their common concerns and values for a shared future. The Forum will see young people interact with their peers from across different communities, traditions, regions and backgrounds on the island of Ireland.

The purpose of the Forum is to build on existing youth engagement as part of the Peace Process, to foster deeper cross-border and cross-community relationships, and provide a space for young people to bring their perspectives and visions for how we share the island.

The Forum has the following objectives:

- Convene all-island dialogue by young people, to discuss common concerns and values for a shared future underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement.
- Build on wider cross-border and cross-community interactions by young people in civil society, in particular youth organisations;
- Provide a leading space for all-island civic dialogue, acknowledging both North/South and East/West relationships;
- Publish an outcome document of the Forum's deliberations to inform further development of the Irish Government's Shared Island initiative;
- Outcome document to contribute to broader public and political discourse on a shared future for all communities on the island of Ireland.

The Forum is convened by the Shared Island Unit, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland, and will meet 6-8 times over a 12-month period. Meetings will be held at different locations, North and South, and include plenary sessions, break-out discussions, workshops and presentations. Membership of the Forum will be for a 12-month period.

Forum meetings will focus on themes of common interest shaped by the members, which may include but are not limited to: mental health; environment; understanding of other communities and identities; youth connections; education and employment opportunities.

Membership

The Forum membership will comprise up to 80 young people aged from 18 to 25, with a balance of participation from North and South, from across different communities, backgrounds and identities. Nominations are sought from youth, student, community and civic organisations across the island.

The Forum will seek to include voices that have been often underrepresented, with reference to the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in Ireland and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. The Forum is seeking nominees from a range of organisations, from Ireland and Northern Ireland, to encompass a cross-section of society under the following sectoral and identity diversity categories:

Sectoral:

- General Youth organisation
- Youth Special Interest Group
- Uniformed Youth Groups
- Higher and Further Education
- Community/Voluntary/Advocacy
- Environmental organisation
- Heritage and Cultural
- Trade Union or Business

Identity diversity:

- Gender
- Ethnic minority
- Sexual orientation
- Religion/Faith
- Disability
- Rural or Urban
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Other

If oversubscribed, membership will be selected on an organisation basis to achieve a sectoral and regional balance, and a diversity of perspective, with inclusion of underrepresented voices, with reference to the above categories.

In attending meetings members' reasonable travel expenses will be covered at agreed rates.

All Forum members are required to:

- Treat all others attending the event with respect, including respecting different opinions and points of views.
- Respect one another's personal preferences in the way they wish to be addressed, personal space, appropriate topics of conversation and jokes, and other such issues.
- Actively contribute to an inclusive welcoming atmosphere for all participants, during formal and any informal elements of the Forum proceedings.
- Respect the confidentiality of others in the group.
- Attend and actively and constructively engage in the Forum proceedings.

Shared Island unit, Department of the Taoiseach