

YOUNG VOICES

Have Your Say

Youth Empowerment in Ireland

Part One: An overview of Young People's Political Participation and Access to rights

National Youth Council of Ireland

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. www.youth.ie

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established in 2011 and focuses on harmonising policy issues that affect children in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, child welfare and protection, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people, youth work and cross-cutting initiatives for children.

The National Working Group

The National Working Group on Structured Dialogue in Ireland has representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Leargas, the academic community and young people who have participated in the Structured Dialogue process. The role of the working group is to oversee the process in Ireland and to support implementation on young people's recommendations.

Sandra Roe Research on behalf of the National Working Group on Structured Dialogue.

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and Access to rights**

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Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of youth empowerment in Ireland, with a particular focus on the political participation of young people and young people's access to rights as a means to foster youth autonomy, or independence, in Ireland.

This report was written as part of 'Structured Dialogue,' a European programme which ensures that the opinion of young people and youth organisations are taken into account in developing youth-related policies in the EU. Youth empowerment is the main topic relating to this cycle of the Structured Dialogue process.

Youth empowerment is a broad and complex issue. There are many definitions of youth empowerment, however it is essentially concerned with young people gaining skills to change and impact their own lives and lives of other individuals, organisations and communities. Youth empowerment can be divided into three different categories: individual empowerment, organisational empowerment and community empowerment. Youth empowerment has many benefits for young people, organisations and communities including, improved health, mental health, well-being and environments.

There are a number of policies which are relevant to youth empowerment and children and young people's rights in Ireland, however the most significant ones are the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Our Children - Their Lives: The National Children's Strategy and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out the basic human rights of children. The National Children's Strategy has three main goals including that "*children shall have a voice in matters that affect them*" and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People sets out a vision of Ireland as a country where "*the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled.*"

This report investigates the political practices of young people in Ireland. While there may be a view that young people are not interested in politics, young Irish people show relatively high rates of political participation compared to other EU countries. However, barriers to political participation among young people do exist, for example not being registered to vote. Suggestions to encourage young people to engage in political participation include lowering the voting age to 16, automatic registration of young people when they can vote and introducing online voting.

Political participation among young people Ireland happens in a number of different settings including government structures, youth organisations, schools, third level institutes, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and political parties. The main structures identified in Ireland are as follows: Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg in government structures, campaigns, programmes and youth work models in youth



organisations, Student Councils in schools, student unions in third-level institutes, youth advisory groups in NGOs and young candidates and youth sections in political parties.

The report examines what young people said about youth empowerment in previous consultations. This included consultations which were part of the Structured Dialogue process as well as other relevant consultations. The empowerment of young people on a personal, community and national level through involvement in group structures such as Comhairle na nÓg, Youth Advisory Groups, advocacy and social activism groups and interest groups was one of the key themes to emerge from the previous Structured Dialogue consultations. The importance of access to rights such as education, employment and housing in relation to the social inclusion of young people in society was another emerging theme.

The disempowerment of young people through negative stereotyping and portrayal was raised in another consultation. Young people can experience stereotyping in different sectors of Irish society such as the media, their local communities and schools. A further consultation on young people's participation in decision-making in organisations in Ireland found that three quarters of young people involved in Student Councils felt they were having a high impact in their schools. The majority of Student Councils had impacted changes in school policies, rules and regulations.



Finally, the report explores how young people's access to rights such as education, employment and healthcare help them act and think independently. The main rights young people need to access in order to gain independence are employment, education and training, housing, healthcare and social inclusion. Young people in Ireland are currently experiencing relatively high levels of unemployment and are having difficulties accessing rights such as housing and healthcare which is affecting young people achieving autonomy in their lives.

Introduction

Report aim

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of youth empowerment in Ireland, with a particular focus on political participation of young people and young people's access to rights as a means to foster youth autonomy in Ireland.

Report limits

Youth empowerment is a broad and complex area. Therefore, this report aims to provide a general overview of youth empowerment and to broadly explore the issue rather than provide a comprehensive analysis of the topic. It should also be noted that because this report is relevant to young people from 15-30 years of age, policies and legislation aimed at young people under 18 years of age are, at times, different to those that are aimed at adults 18 years or older. This therefore, adds to the complexity of the topic of youth empowerment.

Research methods

This report was compiled through conducting a review of literature and policies relating to youth empowerment in Ireland and internationally. A questionnaire was also developed which asked members of the National Working Group on Structured Dialogue to provide examples of policies, reports or research on youth empowerment. They were also asked to comment on the key issues relating to youth empowerment in Ireland. These responses fed into the development of the report.

Report summary

The report is presented in the following format:

- ◆ Section 1 gives a brief overview of the structured dialogue process.
- ◆ Section 2 is a short literature review on youth empowerment.
- ◆ Section 3 is a short policy review on youth empowerment in Ireland.
- ◆ Section 4 examines the range of political participation practices of young people in Ireland.
- ◆ Section 5 looks at young people's access to rights as a means to foster youth autonomy in Ireland.
- ◆ Section 6 looks at what young people said about youth empowerment in previous consultations.
- ◆ Conclusions



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**Section 1:
An Overview
of Structured
Dialogue**

Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of the Structured Dialogue process.

What is Structured Dialogue?

This Report on Youth Empowerment in Ireland was undertaken as part of 'Structured Dialogue,' a European programme which makes sure the opinions of young people and youth organisations are taken into account when youth-related policies are being developed in the EU. To achieve this, Structured Dialogue brings together young people and policy-makers across the EU to jointly discuss and feed into youth policy at national and European level.

How Structured Dialogue works

The structured dialogue programme is carried out in work cycles of 18 months, each focusing on one topic, which is discussed by young people and policy-makers in all EU Member States. The results of these discussions form the basis for the joint debates between young people and Ministry representatives from all EU Member States at the EU Youth Conferences, organised by each Presidency every six months.

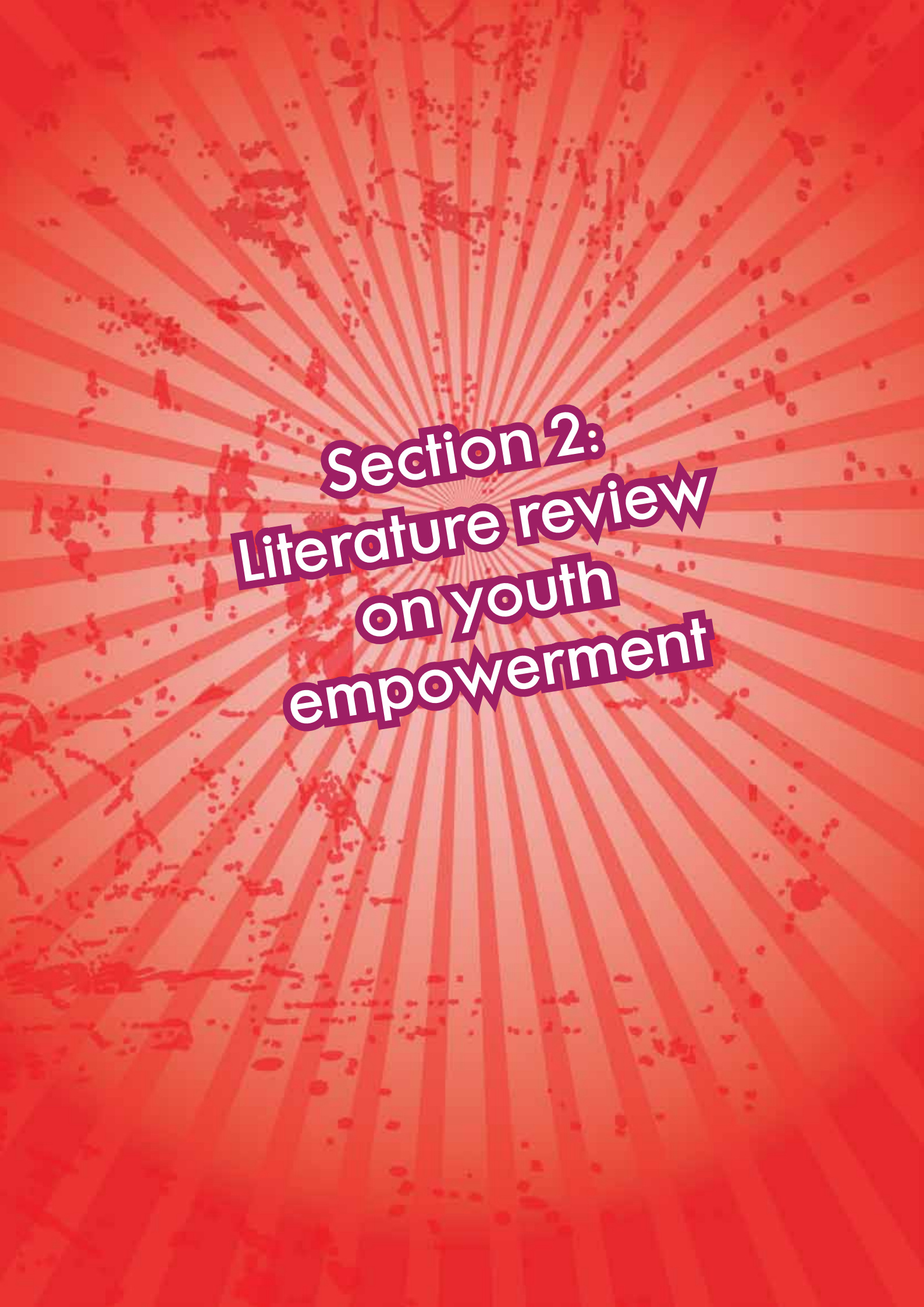


Key topic

Youth empowerment is the key topic for the fourth cycle of structured dialogue. The first phase of this cycle aims to develop a common understanding and approach to youth empowerment, focusing on young people's access to rights as well as their political participation. The key output of this phase of structured dialogue will be a set of questions that young people around the EU can give their views on.

For more information on the structured dialogue process see the link below:

<http://www.youth.ie/youngvoices>

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**Section 2:
Literature review
on youth
empowerment**

Introduction

This section provides a brief review of what has been written about youth empowerment in previous literature, including definitions of empowerment and youth empowerment and the types, levels and benefits and challenges of youth empowerment.

What is empowerment?

Empowerment is defined as “making someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights” (www.oxforddictionaries.com).

Empowerment refers to individuals, families, organisations, and communities gaining control in the social, economic and political aspects of the lives, in order to improve fairness and quality of life in their lives and in society (Rappaport, 1984; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000).

What is youth empowerment?

There are a number of definitions of youth empowerment including the following:



- ◆ “Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults.” (Vavrus and Fletcher, 2006)
- ◆ “Youth empowerment is the outcome by which youth, as change agents, gain the skills to impact their own lives and lives of other individuals, organizations and communities”
- ◆ (YES! Youth Empowerment Model Definition: www.youthempowerededsolutions.org)
- ◆ “Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others “. http://www.dsw.org/fileadmin/content/Docs/SRH_manual/Glossary_changed.pdf

Types of youth empowerment

Youth empowerment can be divided into three different categories, individual, organisational and community empowerment (Ledford et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 1988; Zimmerman, 2000, Minkler, 1990):

- ◆ Individual Empowerment: individual empowerment involves young people or adults developing skills to exercise control and improve their know-how, as well as developing 'critical awareness' or the ability to ask informed questions so they can work together better for the good of organisations and communities.
- ◆ Organisational Empowerment: organisational empowerment involves organisations that provide, and benefit from, the opportunity for young people or adults to acquire the skills needed to gain control over their lives, provide alternatives to service provision, as well as organisations that develop and influence policy decisions.
- ◆ Community Empowerment: community empowerment involves efforts to improve the community, respond to threats to quality of life, and provides for people's participation at a local, state, and national level.



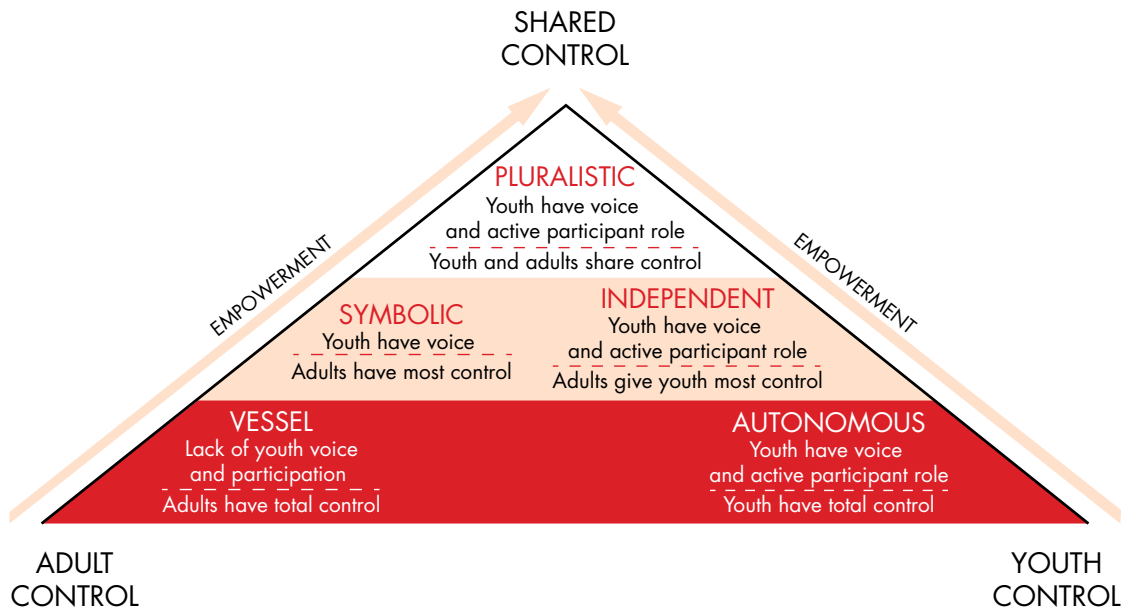
Collective youth empowerment

Collective empowerment can occur in families, organisations and communities and involves processes and structures that can increase skills, provide mutual support necessary to effect change, improve collective well-being, strengthen networks and maintain or improve the quality of life in communities (Jennings et al., 2006:33). Youth empowerment can also occur across different dimensions. For example, lowering the voting age could enrich young people on an individual level, i.e. increasing self-esteem and sense of belonging, as well as on a collective level, i.e. strengthening the collective voice of young people.

One example of collective youth empowerment in Ireland is Empowering People in Care (EPIC). EPIC is an independent association that works with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or who have had an experience of living in care. Their aim is to advocate at a national and local level for the rights of young people in and with care experience and to organise and amplify the voices of young people in and with care experience. See: www.epiconline.ie

Levels of youth empowerment

There are various levels or degrees of youth empowerment. This is represented in the Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid below (Wong et al., 2010). It presents five types of participation that outline various levels of youth-adult involvement and empowerment. The pyramid shape represents degrees of empowerment.



Youth empowerment and participation

Empowerment is a key principle of good practice in youth participation. Participation should involve young people in ways that are empowering leading to an increase in self-esteem and confidence. It should also promote skills such as decision-making, problem-solving and negotiation (National Youth Health Programme, 2013:97)

Benefits of empowerment

Empowerment has been linked to improved health, well-being, and environments for individuals and communities (Jennings et al., 2006). On an individual level, benefits of empowerment for young people can include greater control, better decision-making skills, compassion, and strong mental health (Pittman et al., 2007). Youth empowerment also has positive benefits for organisations and adults engaged in its practices. Adults and organisations become more connected and responsive to young people in the community, resulting in improved youth programmes and youth empowerment principles and practices becoming embedded in the culture of organisations (Zeldin et al., 2008).

Challenges to youth empowerment

Individual young people, youth groups and communities do not experience empowerment in the same way (Jennings et al., 2006:53). Differences such as race, class, gender, culture, language, immigration status and sexuality can affect how young people experience empowerment. Young Irish people from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to be registered to vote than those from middle class backgrounds (NYCI, 2009) and young people who are unemployed are less likely to participate in political activities (Eurofound, 2014a). A study which looked at children and young people's participation in decision-making in organisations in Ireland (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011), found that some groups of young people are less likely to be consulted than others. According to the study, the least consulted groups were those in hospital, children under 12 years of age, those formerly or currently in foster or residential care, young refugees and asylum-seekers, children and young people with a physical or sensory disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) young people, young offenders and those with a learning difficulty.

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**Section 3:
Policy review on
youth empowerment
in Ireland**

Introduction

This section examines the main policies which are relevant to youth empowerment and children and young people's rights in Ireland. A table which summarises the policies in this section can be found in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Irish Constitution

The Irish Constitution (Article 40) says that "all citizens have the right to express their opinions freely." It also states that all citizens have the right to vote at 18 years of age.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an internationally agreed set of standards and obligations that most countries in the world, including Ireland, have signed up to. The Convention spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled.

Each article of the UNCRC details a different right. These different rights can be grouped under four themes:



1. **Survival rights** recognise the child's right to life and the needs basic to the child's existence. These include nutrition, shelter, an adequate standard of living and access to healthcare.
2. **Development rights** outline what children require to reach their full potential, for example, education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
3. **Protection rights** require that children be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. They cover issues such as special care for refugee children, safeguards for children in the criminal justice system, protection for children in employment, and protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered any form of abuse or exploitation.
4. **Participation rights** recognise that children should be enabled to play an active role in decisions affecting their own lives, in their communities and societies in preparation for responsible adulthood.

The Convention protects these rights by setting minimum standards that governments must meet in providing healthcare, education and legal and social services to children in their countries. While the UNCRC was ratified by Ireland in 1992, not all aspects of the convention have been incorporated into Irish law. Ireland is assessed by the UN every

few years on its implementation of the Convention and the latest observations made by the UN (UNCRC, 2006) encouraged Ireland to “take further action to incorporate the Convention into domestic law.”

Our Children- Their Lives: The National Children’s Strategy (2000)

The Irish Government published the National Children’s Strategy in 2000. It was a very significant national document committed to promoting, developing and implementing basic rights and entitlements of children and young people in Ireland.

The National Children’s Strategy is made up of three primary goals:

- ◆ Goal 1: Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity
- ◆ Goal 2: Children’s lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.
- ◆ Goal 3: Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.



One of the key outcomes of Goal 1 of the National Children’s Strategy was the establishment of the 34 Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Councils) that provide children and young people with a voice on topics that affect their lives at a local and national level.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 - 2020)

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 – 2020), sets out the Government’s agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people under 25 and provides the overarching framework for the development and implementation of policy and services. The vision outlined in the *Policy Framework* states:

‘Our vision is for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in which to grow up and to raise a family and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.’

‘Listening to and involving children and young people’ is a transformational goal and the *Policy Framework* commits to the development and implementation of a National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making. It further

commits to the establishment of a Children and Young People's Participation Hub by the DCYA to become the national centre for excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making. This Hub will support implementation of the Strategy through the provision of information and training for Government departments and agencies and the non-government sector.

The implementation structures for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* directly involve children and young people in its oversight. Children and young people from the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and young people from the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group have a formal and direct engagement with the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in identifying issues of importance to their peers and act as consultative groups on issues that need the views of children and young people or child-proofing.

Children Act (2001)

This act makes provision in relation to the care, protection and control of children. It deals with the age of criminal responsibility and other youth justice provisions such as the establishment of the Garda Diversion Programme on a statutory basis.

Youth Work Act (2001) and National Youth Work Development Plan (2003-2007)

The Youth Work Act and the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 provide a definition and direction for youth work in Ireland. The National Youth Work Development Plan directly connects participation in youth work to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the view of young people as citizens:

"The emphasis in youth work on the importance of the active and critical participation of young people is in keeping with the view that young people have rights as citizens" (Department of Education and Science, 2003:14).

Children First (2011)

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children sets out a number of key messages relating to the duty to protect children. These messages include the safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, children will have safer lives where everyone is attentive to their wellbeing and people who work with children across a range of areas understand their responsibility for safe practice and the reporting of concerns.

Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act (1996)

This act is specifically designed to protect the health of young workers in Ireland and ensure that work carried out during school years does not put young people's education at risk. The Act sets minimum age limits for employment, breaks and maximum working hours and prohibits the employment of anyone under 18 on late night work.

Education Act (1998)

The Education Act deals with education in general but emphasises the rights of children with disabilities and with other special educational needs. The Education Act also requires School Boards to "encourage", "facilitate" and "give all reasonable assistance to" students wishing to establish Student Councils.

Education (Welfare) Act (2000)

The Education Welfare Act deals with issues such as the minimum age young people can leave school at and school attendance issues. Under the Act, Education Welfare Officers offer advice, support and guidance to young people and their parents in relation to attending school regularly. Other supports include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). The Act also has an obligation to help early school leavers to avail of educational opportunities like Youthreach, an education and training programme for early school leavers.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act provides that children are to be educated in an inclusive setting unless this would not be in the best interests of the child or the effective provision of education for other children in mainstream education.

Ombudsman for Children Act (2002)

The Ombudsman for Children Act outlines the role of the Ombudsman for Children which is to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of children and young people under the age of eighteen. The Ombudsman for Children Office (OCO) initially established a Youth Advisory Panel which was involved in interviewing for the post of Ombudsman for Children and other activities such as the development of their website. The OCO no longer has a Youth Advisory Panel as they now consult directly with different groups of children and young people they have identified in order to highlight their needs.

The Act allows the Ombudsman for Children to:

- ◆ Support people, including children and young people, to find out more about children's and young people's rights;
- ◆ Find out what's important to young people and let the Government and others know what matters to young people themselves;
- ◆ Carry out research to get a better understanding about things that are really important in children's and young people's lives;
- ◆ Give advice to the Government and others about doing what's best for children and young people;
- ◆ Receive and, where possible, look into complaints made by young people or by adults on young people's behalf.



National Minimum Wage Act (2000)

The National Minimum Wage Act sets out what the national minimum wage is in Ireland (€8.65 since July 2011). Young people aged under 18 years of age are only guaranteed up to 70% of the national minimum wage.

Employment Equality Act (1998)


The Employment Equality Act was amended by the Equality Act in 2004 and these acts deal with discrimination within employment. The Acts deal with discrimination related to any of the following grounds: gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community.

Equal Status Act (2000)

The Equal Status Act was amended by the Equality Act (2004). These acts relate to discrimination based on gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community. However, it is argued that the Equal Status Act allows discrimination of young people under 18 on the basis of age. For example, shopping centres can legally exclude young people under 18 from the premises.

Social Welfare and Pensions Act (2014)

Section 18 of Social Welfare and Pensions Act provides for the introduction of the Youth Guarantee where the Government will be empowered to positively discriminate in favour of young people under 25 years of age with respect to employment supports.

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Section 4:
Political participation
of young people
in Ireland

Introduction

This section looks at the political participation practices of young people in Ireland, including levels of participation, types of participation, barriers to participation, benefits of participation and participation settings and structures.

Debate on political participation of young people in Ireland

While the level of political participation of young people in Ireland is considered by some to be a “clear and growing problem” (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007:16), others (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2013) argue that young Irish people are very interested in politics. They disagree that low voter turnout is associated with young people’s lack of interest in politics and believe young people will respond and engage in politics if they are encouraged. Although past studies have shown that the younger people are, the less likely they are to be interested or informed about politics and current affairs (European Commission, 2005; Devlin and Tierney, 2007), young Irish people’s level of political participation appears to be increasing in recent years.

Level of political participation of young people

Young people in Ireland show relatively high levels of political participation compared with other young people in the EU (Eurofound, 2014a:20). Young Irish people ranked fifth highest in the EU in terms of participation in any political activity. Overall, 38% of young Irish people said they had participated in political activity in the last year. Voter turnout among young people in Ireland has also increased considerably in recent years. In 2002, half (50%) of those aged between 18 and 24 years said they voted in the general election, compared with 62% in 2011 (CSO, 2011). This shows an increase of 12% in the number of young people voting.

Types of political participation

A recent EU survey (Eurofound, 2014a) reported that the most common type of political participation among young Irish people was signing a petition, including an email or online petition, which almost one quarter (26%) of young people said they had done in the last year. This was also the most common form of political participation among other young people across the EU. A further 12% of young people in Ireland had attended a protest or demonstration, 11% had attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or political action group and 7% had contacted a politician or public official. The study found that young people in the EU who are currently in education are the most likely to participate in political activities and those who are unemployed or inactive are the least likely to have participated in any kind of political activities.



Most effective types of political participation

Another EU study (European Commission, 2012a:46) found that the majority of young Irish people (63%) felt that voting in elections was the best way to ensure their voice was heard by decision-makers. The next best way was considered to be joining a demonstration (16%), followed by joining a political party (14%), signing a petition (13%), being a member of a consumer association (12%), joining a trade union (12%), going on strike (11%), participating in debates at a local level (7%), being a member or supporter of a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) (6%) and participating in debates using the internet (4%).

Barriers to political participation

Just over one quarter (26%) of young people aged 18 – 25 years are not on the electoral register (NYCI: 2009: 16). The highest number of young people not registered to vote is among the 18 – 21 age group, with up to 36% not registered. Young people from lower socio-economic groups were less likely to be registered to vote than those from middle class backgrounds. Not being registered to vote has been shown to be the main reason why young people do not vote in elections in Ireland (NYCI, 1999; CSO, 2003).

How to encourage political participation

Young Irish people consider online voting and automatic registration to be the most effective methods of encouraging voter participation (NYCI: 2009). Other recommendations made by the NYCI (2009) to increase voting among young people included automatic registration of young people when they reach the age at which they can vote, reducing the voting age to 16, examining the introduction of online voting systems and better strategies for political parties to interact with young people.

Benefits of political participation

Early participation of young people in institutions such as youth councils fosters understanding of political life and of democratic procedures, and helps strengthen democratic values (Council of Europe, 2013). Other outcomes of early participation in democratic decision-making include a sense of citizenship and belonging, active involvement in community matters at an older age and higher participation levels of young people in democratic life.

Political participation settings

Youth civic engagement typically takes place in settings such as government structures, youth organisations, schools, third level institutes, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and political parties (Brady et al., 2012).

Government structures:

The main government structures for political participation among young people in Ireland are Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg.

- ◆ **Comhairle na nÓg** are child and youth councils in the 34 local authorities of the country, which give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies. See www.comhairlenanog.ie.
- ◆ **Dáil na nÓg** is the annual national parliament for young people aged between 12-18 years. Delegates are elected to Dáil na nÓg through their local Comhairle na nÓg. One representative from each Comhairle na nÓg is elected to the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, which follows up on the recommendations from Dáil na nÓg to make changes for young people in those areas. See www.dailnanog.ie.



Youth organisations

Young people can engage in political participation practices in youth organisations in different ways, for example, through specific campaigns, programmes and models of youth work. Some examples are outlined below:

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, invited young people to join its campaign on lowering the voting age to 16 in local and European elections. As part of NYCI's campaign, a Vote at 16 youth group was established to advise and provide the voice for the campaign (www.youth.ie).

Foróige, a youth organisation which works with 56,000 young people aged 10-18 each year in Ireland through volunteer-led clubs and staff-led youth projects, has developed a Youth Politics Programme. The aim of the politics programme is to engage young people in a dialogue about the relevance of politics in their lives, to raise awareness about the different political systems that exist and explore how they can engage in the political process at a local, national, European and global level. Its goal is to encourage young people to become interested in politics and to become active and engaged citizens. The programme contains 12 sessions each lasting 1.5 hours and culminates in a 10 hour political engagement project. Participants reflect weekly on their learning and also have a take home assignment where they have the opportunity to explore a relevant topic in their community (www.foroige.ie).

BeLonG To youth service, which works with Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people between the ages of 14 to 23, operates with the critical social education model of youth work. This model of youth work has the positive intention

of transferring power to the young people who use the service. The young people are actively engaged in identifying, exploring and understanding issues of concern to them, and the relationship youth workers have with the participants is undertaken with a view to engaging with them as partners. On a practical level, young people are trained in a variety of skills, with specific leadership skills imparted to youth leaders. These youth leaders in turn facilitate groups of young people on issues of their choice that are affecting both their social and educational development (www.belongto.org).

Clondalkin Equine Club is a local youth group which focuses on horse welfare but also encourages horse owners to engage with councils and government for resources to help them care for their animals and themselves, and promote a rights and responsibilities approach to facilities and public safety in the area (www.facebook.com/condalkin.equineclub).

Schools

The main structure for political participation of young people in schools in Ireland is Student Councils. Student Councils are described as:

"...a representative structure through which students in a post-primary school can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management and staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students" (Department of Education and Science, 2002:8).

The Education Act (Department of Education, 1998) requires School Boards to "encourage", "facilitate" and "give all reasonable assistance to" students wishing to establish Student Councils. Student councils provide young people with a way of learning about democracy as well as acting as student representatives (National Children's Office, 2005). See: www.studentcouncil.ie

The Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) is the National umbrella body for school Student Councils. It is a voluntary student rights' organisation which represents second-level students in Ireland. The ISSU has a dual role: to promote the benefits of young people becoming part of the decision-making process that affects their school lives, and to provide individual students with support for voicing their views and opinions. See www.issu.ie

Political parties

Many young people in Ireland are members of political parties or run for election. In the 2014 Local Elections, 259 candidates, or 12.7% of the total candidates were aged between 18 - 35 years. Many political parties also have youth sections or wings, for example Young Fine Gael, Ógra Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein Republican Youth. These are essentially youth organisations which represent the values of the specific political party. See: www.yfg.ie; www.ogra.ie

NGOs

Some NGOs have youth advisory panels or youth advisory groups which provide a structure for young people to have their voices heard and contribute to the development of policy and services within those organisations. For example, Jigsaw, a network of programmes in Ireland run by Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health has a Youth Advisory Panel. The Jigsaw Youth Advisory Panel is made up of a group of young people from across the country who advise them on providing and developing their support services for young people. See www.headstrong.ie/jigsaw

Third level institutions

The main structures for political participation in third level institutes or colleges in Ireland are student unions. The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the representative body of the 354,000 students in third level education in Ireland, both north and south. Almost all Student Unions of third level colleges in Ireland are members of USI. See www.usi.ie.

Other political participation practices

Other political participation practices young people in Ireland engage in which were highlighted in the development of this report include social movements (large, sometimes informal, groupings of individuals or organisations which focus on specific political or social issues), protests, single issue campaigns, joining organisations, getting involved in campaigns, petitions, e-petitions, blogging, social media campaigns, going to public meetings, attending marches and boycotting certain products.

An example of a social media campaign in Ireland which engaged a large number of young people recently was the Donal Walsh 'Live Life' anti-suicide campaign. Donal Walsh was a Kerry teenager who died from cancer aged 16 and came to prominence through his writings and appearance on national television. The Coroner for Co. Kerry reported a significant reduction in the number of suicides in Kerry after the teenager spoke out about suicide, with no known suicides in a six month period between March and August 2013.

Case studies: Vote at 16

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, is running the 'Vote at 16' campaign in order to change the law so young people aged 16 and 17 can vote in Ireland. NYCI believes that young people should have a greater say in decisions and actions that affect them and their community. In their opinion, "lowering the voting age will serve to motivate young people to vote and increase civic engagement and participation" (NYCI, 2013).



The NYCI Vote at 16 campaign successfully convinced the Constitutional Convention to propose a reduction in the voting age to 16. In July 2013, the Irish government agreed with the proposal to amend the Constitution to lower the voting age to 16 and will hold a referendum on the issue before the end of 2015.

The NYCI gives 'nine good reasons' to lower the voting age to 16:

1. **Generate Greater Interest** - create more interest and awareness of politics among young people, empower them and encourage political involvement.
2. **Promote Political Participation** - promote practical political participation such as voting among young people which will encourage lifelong participation.
3. **Why Not?** - young people at 16 can leave school, seek full-time employment and pay tax.
4. **Mature Enough!** - young people are mature enough to vote at 16.
5. **The Demographic Factor** - governments should be representative of younger people so they should be allowed to vote for them.
6. **Young people are Informed** - they learn about politics in school and have access to information online.
7. **Putting Youth Issues on to the Political Agenda** - make sure the voices of young people are heard through engaging in politics, raising youth issues and influencing policies.
8. **Why 16 rather than 17?** - 16 is the age young people gain other rights and responsibilities.
9. **Consistency with our European Counterparts** - other European countries have lowered the voting age to 16.



For more information see www.vote@16.ie and www.voteat16.eu

Case Study: Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils in the 34 local authorities of the country, which give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies. Comhairle na nÓg is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and run by local authorities. They ensure young people's voices are heard in two ways which are through working on young people's topics and acting as a consultative forum.

Comhairle na nÓg allows young people to select and work on topics of importance to young people locally, for example mental health awareness and services for young people, facilities for young people, how young people are treated by the adult world and homophobic bullying. The work of the Comhairle na nÓg on these topics includes: getting the views of other young people, doing background research, meeting with local decision-makers, developing surveys, organising meetings, making videos, producing leaflets or posters, developing online materials and other activities. This work culminates in the Comhairle na nÓg members seeking to make an impact or change to improve the lives of young people.




Comhairle na nÓg is also a consultative forum for adult decision-makers in the locality. Increasingly, local agencies use the Comhairle na nÓg as a mechanism to get the views of young people on the development of relevant services and policies, such as heritage plans, play and recreation policies, policing plans, giving feedback on youth-friendly questionnaires, giving feedback on the location or type of new sports facility to be established in the area. Comhairle na nÓg are often asked for (or volunteer) formal submissions on local policies or to take part in public consultations.

Delegates are elected to Dáil na nÓg (National Youth Parliament) by the 34 Comhairle na nÓg. One representative from each Comhairle na nÓg is elected to the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, which follows up on the recommendations from the Dáil and tries to make changes for young people in those areas through conducting research and meeting with relevant Ministers, TDs, Government officials, policy makers and other stakeholders to seek their support in making changes for young people.

Some extremely important wins have been achieved by young people from successive Dáil na nÓg Councils in recent years, who have linked with adult decision-makers and brought to public attention issues of importance to the lives of young people. For example, in 2010 they influenced the Minister for Health and Children's decision to commence the cervical cancer vaccine programme for 12 year-old girls. In 2011, the findings of a consultation with young people they were involved in fed into the Framework for reform of the Junior Cycle curriculum in Ireland being implemented by the Minister for Education and Skills.

For more information see www.comhairlenanog.ie, and www.dcyia.ie

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**Section 5:
Youth autonomy
and young people's
access to rights
in Ireland**

Introduction

This section explores young people's access to rights as a means to foster youth autonomy in Ireland, highlights the main barriers to youth autonomy and examines how to promote youth autonomy.

What is youth autonomy?

Youth autonomy can be described as a situation where young people "have the resources and opportunities to manage their own lives, fully participate in society and decide independently" (European Commission, 2009:3).

Barriers to youth autonomy

The main barriers to youth autonomy for young people are difficulties in education, employment, inclusion and health, combined with problems in finance, housing or transport (European Commission, 2009).

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are at risk of isolation, lacking autonomy and can have mental and physical health issues (Council of the European Union, 2013). The most recent statistics (OECD, 2014) show that 21% of young people aged 15 - 29 years in Ireland are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This is well above the European average of 15%. Access to education can also be a more significant issue for young people from lower socio-economic groups because of issues around cost and fees (NYCI, 2009:5).

Early school leaving

In 2013, 8.4% of young adults aged 18-24 years in Ireland left school early before finishing their secondary education (Eurostat, 2014). This shows a decrease from 9.7% in 2012.

Youth unemployment

Youth employment is a key factor for youth autonomy. The latest youth unemployment rate in Ireland is 23.2% (Eurostat, June 2014). This is a decrease from 23.6% in May 2014 and 26% in January 2014. Low incomes and part-time and temporary jobs are also obstacles to youth autonomy and contribute to poverty and social exclusion of young people. The number of young people in temporary jobs in Ireland has risen from 11.2% in 2004 to 34.9% in 2012 (Eurofound, 2014b).

Social exclusion and poverty

Young people are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty as they move towards an independent life, which involves looking for work and establishing their own household (European Commission, 2012b:199). Almost one in ten (9.9%) children (under the age of 18) in Ireland are living in consistent poverty. Almost one fifth (18.8%)

of children are at risk of poverty and one in three (32.3%) children are deprived of basic necessities (CSO, 2012). A recent report found that 40% of young people in Ireland aged 16-24 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which was the highest figure in the EU (OECD, 2013:16).

EU statistics show that youth poverty rates are higher in countries in which young people have access to their own resources such as a job, housing, or study loans, and lower in countries in which achieving independence is more difficult. Ironically, this means that young people with better opportunities are more at risk of poverty in the short term (European Commission, 2012b:202).

Moving out of home

Some studies have found that moving out of the parental household is the “strongest predictor behind youth poverty” (Aassve et al, 2007:331). A recent EU study (Eurofound, 2014) showed that 42% of young people in Ireland are living with their parents. Another study in 2009 (NYCI, 2009) found that 60% of young Irish people they surveyed lived with their parents or a family member. Possible reasons for this lack of autonomy include an increase in youth unemployment, cuts in social welfare for young people and a serious housing shortage in Ireland (www.youth.ie/nyci/New-study-highlights-impact-recession-young-people).



Housing

Many people believe Ireland is currently experiencing a housing crisis due to a shortage of social housing, rising private rents, an undersupply of family homes and stretched homeless services (The Irish Times, May 26th 2014). A shortage of private rented accommodation in Dublin this year has affected students who are experiencing high rents and difficulties finding somewhere to live. The number of properties available to rent in Dublin in 2014 has almost halved since 2012 (Daft, 2014). Charities working with children from low income families are seriously concerned about the scale of the housing crisis now facing many families, particularly those reliant on social welfare (www.barnardos.ie/housingcrisis).

Healthcare

A recent EU survey (Eurofound, 2014) examined young people’s reasons for difficulties in accessing healthcare. The main reason young Irish people had difficulty in accessing healthcare was cost, with just over half (51%) stating this was a factor. The next most common barrier to young people accessing healthcare in Ireland was ‘waiting times’ (43%), followed by ‘finding time’ (30%), ‘delay in getting an appointment’ (21%) and ‘distance’ (12%).

Health literacy is also crucial to empowerment as it improves people’s access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively. Health literacy is defined as:

'The degree to which people are able to access, understand, appraise and communicate information to engage with the demands of different health contexts in order to promote and maintain good health across the life-course' (National Youth Health Programme, 2013:21) .


How to promote youth autonomy

In order to promote youth autonomy, young people should be provided with access to long-term jobs which are fairly paid with secure working conditions, equal working rights and protected against precarious contracts as well as access to income support, pension schemes and other services such as childcare facilities, housing and transportation. Decreasing the rate of early school leaving and rethinking educational systems would also promote better autonomy for young people (Spanish Presidency EU Youth Conference, 2010).

While factors such as income, housing and transport are important features of autonomy, a more holistic understanding of young people's autonomy should include their ability to make decisions in a wide range of areas in their lives (NYCI, 2011). NYCI (2011) argue that promoting autonomy should be about empowering young people and autonomy should be considered a right, not just a demand.



Youth autonomy can also be promoted through youth work. Effective youth work can build young people's self-esteem and self-confidence, develop their ability to manage personal and social relationships, provide learning opportunities to enable young people to gain knowledge and develop new skills, build young people's capacity to consider risks and consequences, make informed decisions and take responsibility and enhance young people's role as active citizens (<http://www.youth.ie/nyci/what-youth-work>).

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**Section 6:
Analysis of
previous
consultations**

Introduction

This section looks at what young people said about youth empowerment in previous consultations which were part of the 'Structured Dialogue' process and other relevant consultations with young people in Ireland.

Structured Dialogue consultations

'Young Voices- Have Your Say' were a series of consultations with young people aged 15-30 on how you can be more fully included in society. 'Being included in society' means feeling like you are an important part of and involved in the world around you, e.g. with your family and friends or in your school, area or clubs.

Three reports were produced as part of the 'Young Voices- Have Your Say' series of consultations:

- ◆ The first report gave an overview of social inclusion by young people and presented their views on how youth work contributes to social inclusion.
- ◆ The second report reported what young people suggested as possible actions for social inclusion and how to include young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in society.
- ◆ The third report looks at what young people had to say about youth entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

Key themes from Structured Dialogue consultations:

Empowerment through involvement in groups

One of the main themes arising from the Structured Dialogue consultations was young people's empowerment as a result of their involvement in group structures such as Comhairle na nÓg, Youth Advisory groups, advocacy and social activism groups and interest groups, including bullying, LGBT, mental health, migrant rights and Traveller groups. Young people discussed how involvement in these groups resulted in empowerment on a personal, community and national level.

- On a personal level, young people said involvement in these groups increased their self-confidence and self-acceptance, made them feel included and respected, and improved their leadership, interpersonal, problem-solving and communication skills such as public speaking. They also gained practical skills and experience such as how to represent other people, take responsibility for decisions and run a committee;
- On a community level, young people felt that involvement in these groups meant they had a say in their area, were listened to and respected, had their ideas acted upon, helped build relationships with peers and adult leaders and broke down social barriers between young people, for example between young people from different cultural backgrounds;
- On a national level, involvement in these groups meant young people felt they had their voices heard and were making a difference, achieving something positive and helping others.



Political participation

As regards political participation, the report suggested there should be a young elected representative in local government, for example in city or county councils, to help young people network and develop and improve youth enterprise and social entrepreneurship in schools and colleges and outside of education in settings such as youth clubs and Comhairle na nÓg.

Access to rights

Young people involved in the Structured Dialogue consultations discussed the key rights that would make them feel more included in society and the supports needed in order to access these rights. This included the following:

- ◆ **Education:** young people felt access to free education, grants, career guidance would support them to access this right.
- ◆ **Employment:** to help young people gain employment, they felt access to interview and CV preparation courses, work placements and more jobs for graduates were important. In terms of young people in employment, the most important supports were considered to be strong employment rights for young people, better working conditions and contracts, an increase in the minimum wage, trade unions aimed at young people, stricter laws, regulations and supervision for internships, education on employment rights in schools and introduction of the Youth Guarantee. The Youth Guarantee would offer a young person aged 18 to 24 a job, work experience, apprenticeship, training or combined work and training within a defined period of time after leaving school or becoming unemployed.
- ◆ **Housing:** young people said supports such as grants, cheap rent, information about living on your own, social/life skills education in school and college and support from family, friends and your community would help them access housing. Additional housing supports should be provided for young people with no family to support them, such as young people in care, according to those consulted.



Better access to services was also highlighted as an area that could be improved to help young people access their rights. Recommendations in this area included ensuring there is up-to-date information aimed at young people on how to access services, e.g. websites, leaflets and walk-in information services as well as better advertisement and sharing of information on how to access services, e.g. through social media and more youth friendly government services.

Negative effects of lack of access to rights

Some of the negative effects of young people's lack of access to rights such as employment, education, training, healthcare and housing were highlighted in the report. These included an increase in poverty, relationships breaking down, mental health problems, drink and drug problems, immigration, homelessness, crime, early school leaving and teenage pregnancy.

Key themes from other consultations:

Inequalities and stereotyping of young people

An Irish study on inequalities and stereotyping of young people detailed how young people are disempowered through negative stereotyping and portrayal. The report (Devlin, 2006:3) was commissioned by the Equality Authority and the National Youth Council of Ireland who both had *“identified a shared concern with the stereotyping of young people by a range of different institutions and groups in society and with the manner in which such stereotyping disempowers and contributes to inequalities for young people.”* In general, young people consulted in the study perceived themselves as being seen in a very negative light by adults, and perceived their treatment by adults as unequal and unfair. Stereotyping of young people by adults was central to the majority of young people’s negative experiences discussed in the study. Young people spoke about experiencing stereotyping from adults in different sectors of Irish society including the media, the local community, the Gardaí, shopping centres and security guards, politicians, and teachers and school.

Children and young people’s participation in decision-making

A review of children and young people’s participation in decision-making (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011), documents the involvement and impact of young people in decision-making in Comhairle na nÓg, youth organisations, HSE and HSE funded organisations and Students Councils. Almost nine out of ten (88.8%) Comhairle na nÓg and other organisations consulted in the study had involved children and young people in decision-making at some stage. Organisations most typically involved young people in the development of new or existing policies and services. Policy development involving children and young people was considered to be having the most significant impact at a local and national level and in the area of developing youth-targeted services and programmes.

The study found that three-quarters of Student Councils (75%) consulted felt they had a high impact in their school. Almost three-quarters (73%) of Student Councils said they had impacted changes in school policies and 62% had impacted changes in rules and regulations. Overall, 57% of Student Councils felt their views were always taken seriously by school management. A further 38% felt their views were sometimes taken serious and 5% felt they were rarely or never taken seriously.



Conclusion

This report explores youth empowerment in Ireland today, focusing on young people's political participation and how access to rights can increase young people's autonomy. Youth empowerment is a broad and complex area but it is mainly related to the outcome of young people gaining skills to change and impact their own lives and lives of other individuals, organisations and communities.

While young people's interest in politics and political participation has been questioned in the past, there are positive signs of increased interest and participation among young people in Ireland today. Young people are voting in higher numbers in recent years and are participating in political practices through government structures such as Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg, youth organisations, student councils, student unions, youth advisory groups and political parties.

Young people in Ireland are currently experiencing relatively high levels of unemployment and are having difficulties accessing rights such as housing and healthcare which are essential to achieving autonomy. The number of young people in Ireland who are not in employment, education or training is currently well above the European average. Better access to essential rights which are fundamental to youth autonomy such education, employment, social inclusion, housing and healthcare will help young people in Ireland to gain independence, and as a result, become more empowered.

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Appendix 1: Summary of policies relating to youth empowerment in Ireland

Please note that this is not a fully comprehensive list but an overview.

Policy	What is it?	How does it relate to youth empowerment?	Comments
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	An internationally agreed set of standards and obligations that most countries in the world have signed up to including Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ireland has not incorporated all aspects of the Convention into law
Our Children-Their Lives: The National Children's Strategy (2000)	10 year plan which was a framework for improving the lives of all children in Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34 Comhairle na nÓg were established as a result of Goal 1 of the Strategy which says 'Children will have a voice in matters which affect them' 	
Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 – 2020)	Sets out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people under -25 and provides the overarching framework for the development and implementation of policy and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Listening to and involving children and young people' is a transformational goal <i>Policy Framework</i> commits to the development and implementation of a National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making. Commits to the establishment of a Children and Young People's Participation Hub by the DCYA to become the national centre for excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making. Children and young people from the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group have a formal and direct engagement with the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in identifying issues of importance to their peers and act as consultative groups on issues that need the views of children/ young people or childproofing. 	

Policy	What is it?	How does it relate to youth empowerment?	Comments
Children Act (2001)	Act that makes provision in relation to the care, protection and control of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for the established of the Garda Diversion Programme on a statutory basis. The aim of the programme is to prevent young offenders in Ireland from entering into the full criminal justice system by offering them a second chance. 	
Youth Work Act (2001)	Provides a statutory framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services by the Minister for Education and Skills, VECs and by the National and Regional Youth Organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for the provision of youth work programmes and services that empower young people. 	
National Youth Work Development Plan (2003-2007)	Sets out a strategy for the first five-year plan for the development of youth work in Ireland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly connects participation in youth work to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the view of young people as citizens: <i>"The emphasis in youth work on the importance of the active and critical participation of young people is in keeping with the view that young people have rights as citizens"</i> 	
Children First (2011)	A set of National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out a number of key messages relating to the duty to protect children including mandatory reporting of child protection concerns. 	
Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act (1996)	Act to protect young workers under the age of 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects the health of young workers and ensures that work carried out during school years does not put young people's education at risk. Sets minimum age limits for employment, breaks and maximum working hours and prohibits the employment of anyone under 18 on late night work. 	

Policy	What is it?	How does it relate to youth empowerment?	Comments
Education Act (1998)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasises the rights of children with disabilities and with other special educational needs. Requires School Boards to “encourage”, “facilitate” and “give all reasonable assistance to” students wishing to establish Student Councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Student Councils are more effective and receive better support from school management and teachers than others.
Education and Training Boards Act (2013)	Act that dissolved VECs and replaced them with Education and Training Boards (ETBs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Training Boards have responsibility for education, training and youth work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people are not represented on Education and Training Boards
Education (Welfare) Act (2000)	Act that aims to ensure all children of school going age attend school or receive a certain minimum education otherwise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the rights of children to welfare and education. Education Welfare Officers offer advice, support and guidance to young people and their parents in relation to attending school regularly. Act has an obligation to help early school leavers to avail of educational opportunities like Youthreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still high numbers of early school leavers. In 2013 8.4% young adults aged 18-24 left school early before finishing their secondary education.
Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)	Act that deals with special needs education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides that children are to be educated in an inclusive setting unless this would not be in the best interests of the child or the effective provision of education for other children in mainstream education. 	

Policy	What is it?	How does it relate to youth empowerment?	Comments
Ombudsman for Children Act (2002)	Act that outlines the role of the Ombudsman for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ombudsman for Children's role is to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of children and young people under the age of 18. ■ Set up Youth Advisory Panel which was involved in interviewing for the post of Ombudsman for Children and activities such as development of their website. ■ Consult directly with different groups of children and young people. ■ Receive/look into complaints made by young people/ by adults on young people's behalf. 	
National Minimum Wage Act (2000)	Act that sets out the national minimum wage in Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Details the entitlement of young people under the age of 18 in terms of the minimum wage. 	
Employment Equality Act (1998)	Act that deals with discrimination within employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deals with discrimination related to the following grounds: gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community. 	
Equal Status Act (2000)	Act that deals with discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deals with discrimination based on gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Act allows discrimination of young people under 18 on the basis of age, e.g. shopping centres can legally exclude young people under 18 from the premises.
Social Welfare and Pensions Act (2014)	Act that implements social welfare changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides for the introduction of the Youth Guarantee where Government will be empowered to positively discriminate in favour of young people under 25 re employment supports. 	

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