1,2,3 of Policy

Linking your Erasmus+ School Education Project to National and European Policy
What is policy?

Policy is the set of values and objectives that guide the work of organisations and bodies. This includes for example, the Irish Government and the European Union.

Why is policy important?

Policy is important because it tells us what certain organisations and bodies plan to achieve and how they will be guided in their work.

Take Government policy for example: Government policy tells us what the Government’s priorities are and what it plans to accomplish. It sets out the commitments it is making on a range of different issues.

For example: education and training, employment, mental health, the rights of people with disabilities, migration and so forth.
National Education Policy

Our Government has a number of important policy documents that set out the Government’s plans on education in Ireland. The main policy documents are:

**Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020)** is the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy standards among children and young people in the education system. The strategy aims to achieve improvements in:

- Attitudes towards literacy and numeracy
- Outcomes at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels.

It addresses and sets out objectives on:

- The roles of parents and teachers
- The need to build capacity of school leadership
- Improving the curriculum and learning experience
- Helping students with additional learning needs to achieve their potential
- Improving assessment and evaluation to support better learning, literacy and numeracy.

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**The National Skills Strategy 2025 - Ireland’s Future** sets out the Government’s plans for improving and using skills for sustainable economic growth. It aims to ensure increased access to high quality and relevant education and training and skills development opportunities.

Objectives of the strategy include but are not limited to:

- Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy
School Education

- The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated
- People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning
- There will be active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.

The Action Plan for Education (2016-2019) outlines the Government’s plan to achieve the best Education and Training system in Europe over ten years. It sets out a number of goals:

- Improving the learning experience and success of learners
- Improving the progress of learners at risk of education disadvantage or learners with special education needs
- Helping those delivering education services to continuously improve
- Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community
- Improving national planning and support services.

The Action Plan sets out objectives and key actions to achieve these goals. The Government has published the Action Plan for Education 2018 drawing on the overarching plan and setting out key themes and projects for 2018.

Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education (2017-2026) is a key policy measure to prepare Ireland for Brexit and sets out a roadmap to put Ireland in the top ten countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The Strategy sets out 100 actions in order to achieve the objectives within it. A number of measures in the Strategy also link directly to Erasmus+ including:

- Increasing the number of participants in Erasmus+ by 50%
- Doubling the number of teachers participating in teacher mobility programmes.
The Digital Strategy for Schools (2015-2020) supports the integration of digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment in Irish education so that students can participate fully in society by becoming engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens.

The Strategy sets out a number of actions to be achieved between 2015 and 2020 and has four key themes:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Leadership, Research and Policy
- ICT Infrastructure.

In 2017, the Department of Education and Skills published The Digital Strategy for Schools Action Plan 2017 to review progress made and set out concrete actions. The Plan specifically mentions the use of eTwinning.

eTwinning, which is part of Erasmus+, is an online community for schools to communicate, collaborate and develop projects together.

www.etwinning.net

National Youth Policy

Other policy documents on young people include:

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People (2014-2020) is the framework that sets out the Government’s agenda and priorities regarding children and young people under the age of 25. It provides for the development and implementation of policies and services with the aim of achieving the following outcomes for young people:

- Active and healthy with physical and mental well-being (includes healthy lifestyle, taking part in youth work, arts, sports)
• Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development (includes enhancing skills, competencies and attributes through formal and non-formal education)

• Safe and protected from harm (particularly vulnerable and marginalised young people)

• Economic security and opportunity (including participating in the labour market, enhancing employability skills, training, entrepreneurship, social inclusion and combatting poverty)

• Connected, respected and contributing to the world (including active citizenship, political, social and civic engagement).

The National Youth Strategy (2015 - 2020) aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential with regard to the outcomes set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. This includes: strengthening formal and non-formal education and learning opportunities; improving transition supports as young people move through the education system; enhancing employability skills; social inclusion; and active citizenship.

The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making (2015-2020) outlines strategies to ensure that children and young people have a voice in decisions made about them as individuals or their collective lives in their communities, in education, on their health and well-being and the other outcomes listed in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. The strategy aims to mainstream the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research. It is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
The projects and activities that take place as part of Erasmus+ can help to achieve national policy objectives in School Education. For example:

- Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects provide opportunities for those in the education system to exchange practice and experiences with peers (in person and/or online) that can contribute to improving how schools integrate digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment (The Digital Strategy for Schools (2015-2020))

- Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects can develop new and innovative ways for the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy (Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020)

- Erasmus+ prioritises projects that promote inclusion (The National Skills Strategy 2025)

- Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects provide an opportunity for those in the education system to exchange practice and experiences with peers that can contribute to improving quality of teaching and learning (The National Skills Strategy 2025; Action Plan on Education 2016-2019)

- Erasmus+ provides many opportunities to spend time abroad and build partnerships with schools in other European countries which can contribute to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. eTwinning provides a safe online space for students and teachers to practise and develop foreign language skills (Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026).
European Education Policy

Similar to our own Government, the EU also has a number of important policy documents relevant to the field of School Education. These documents set out the EU’s priorities and commitments on School Education in Europe. Some of the main policy documents are:

**Europe 2020** is the EU’s plan to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It sets targets for employment, research and development, climate/energy, education, social inclusion, and poverty reduction.

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**Education and Training 2020** is the EU’s plan on education and training. It aims to achieve different objectives including: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

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**European Youth Policy**

**EU Youth Strategy** is the EU’s plan for young people. It has two main aims: providing more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market; and encouraging young people to actively take part in society.

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The projects and activities that take place as part of Erasmus+ are an important way of helping to achieve the aims and objectives of the EU policies listed above. Just some examples:

- Erasmus+ prioritises projects that address the issue of inclusion (Europe 2020)
- Erasmus+ supports people to spend time abroad to volunteer, train, upskill etc. (Education and Training 2020)
- Erasmus+ funds projects that support young people to have their voices heard and to take part in policy discussions with decision makers about issues that affect their lives (EU Youth Strategy).
Connections between national and European policy

We can see that our own Government and the EU want to realise similar things. For example:

- Provide mobility opportunities for those in School Education
- Improve the quality and relevance of education
- Lifelong learning
- Enhance employability and other skills
- Equality of opportunity for all young people
- Active citizenship
- Social inclusion
- Reduce poverty.

Your Erasmus+ Schools project can play a role in achieving these aims and help to make positive changes in School Education, be that at a local, national or international level.

Get in touch

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