



Updating *Aistear* Phase 2 Consultation

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals

This template is intended to help you (and your colleagues) develop a written submission in relation to Updating *Aistear*. Please e-mail your completed submission to updatingaistear@ncca.ie.

The template is structured according to the Principles, Themes and Supporting *Aistear*. Each section is briefly summarised as a support for working on the submission. Before completing the template, please read the draft updated *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* at this link: <https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/early-childhood-education-developments/updating-aistear/consultation/>.

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*If you are contributing your views as an **individual**, please provide details below*

| | |
|--|--------|
| Name: | |
| E-mail address: | |
| Do you wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website? | Yes/No |
| Do you wish to have your written submission published on the NCCA website? | Yes/No |

*If you are contributing your views on behalf of an **organisation or group**, please provide details below*

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Yes/No

Key Messages of the Proposals

Phase 1 indicated that *Aistear* has stood the test of time and remains broadly relevant. However, it was indicated that some areas could be updated. This section seeks to understand your views on the proposed updates.

To what extent do the proposals keep the structure of *Aistear* but update individual sections?

Do the proposals draw greater attention to the importance of interactions and relationships between babies, toddlers, young children, parents, educators and other important people in their lives?

All families, all parents, and other family members do not always have the same capacities, not all children have their birth parents as carers. It is important to recognise that many families have challenges and this needs to be referred to in the framework. We suggest the family/families is used throughout, as more inclusive than ‘parents’.

Do the proposals emphasise babies, toddlers and young children as citizens with rights to meaningfully participate and exercise influence on decisions that affect them?

Children need to learn about their rights but also the limited rights of others. Children often experience negative reactions because of their background, ethnicity, identity and this needs to be stated explicitly in the framework.



There is a need for further analysis of concepts and terminology, especially new concepts such as agentic and equity. These need to be critically addressed to ensure they are accurately defined and understood comprehensively.

This is important however there is a need for minoritised children and families to be recognised throughout the document.

The inclusion of the Irish language is interesting (along with traditional Irish sayings). Cant/Gammon is a traditional language spoken by Irish Travellers. We recommend that consideration be given to including some reference to Traveller language.

We recommend that there is a clear explanation about the use of Irish in the document, for example as the first language but also why it is being included and how it might be used.

The sector has a very diverse workforce, many of whom will not be familiar with the Irish language and/or its pronunciation. We recommend that there is explicit explanation and also a link to the pronunciation and the significance of the meaning of the words and phrases.

Do the proposals embed the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Yes, but could go further.

‘Our’ culture is mentioned (as in Irish culture). This could be framed differently, there are many cultures within Ireland’s cultural landscape now. Also, Ireland’s indigenous community: Irish Travellers are recognised as an ethnic group by the state. This should be weaved into the document (and reference made to Traveller ethnicity in the glossary) so there is awareness among staff in terms of the status of Irish Travellers. Intersectionality, Racism, and discrimination need to be named and explained along with ‘bias’, ‘unconscious bias’, and anti-bias. Children will repeat words that they hear in the domestic environment, through the media or their peers and will take that language into a ECEC setting. Words or name-



calling impact greatly on a child's capacity to be happy and to celebrate their identity and feel included in the ECEC setting.

Diversity needs to be embedded across Aistear and not only in Identity and Belonging The other themes especially communication and exploring and thinking can make reference to multilingual learning and identities. For example, the Traveller community and their language could be included and named.

The terminology of diversity is limited in the framework when it comes to exclusion and discrimination. These are issues that some families and children face on a daily basis. It is important that educators have it in their consciousness and therefore should be threaded throughout the framework. If you do a word search there is very limited reference to stereotyping, prejudice discrimination. There is no mention of 'race' racism sexism, ableism classism homophobia all relevant to children's lives. The minority child and majority child need to engage with these challenging issues with educators to challenge stigmatising in Irish society, All at the child's level of course.

Barrier in children's lives need to be named across the document. No one size fits all and children are not living the same lives or experiences. If barriers are not mentioned it becomes part of the silencing of these discussions at staff and practice levels.

Do the proposals emphasise and reaffirm the centrality of learning through play and hands-on experiences?

Do the proposals support greater continuity of experience and progression of learning for babies, toddlers, and young children?



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Principles of *Aistear*

The number of Principles has been revised from 12 to 9 and reframed. Additionally, the proposals aim to integrate the Themes of *Aistear* in a seamless manner across the Principles. We are interested in receiving your feedback about these changes.

Please insert your feedback on the Principles of *Aistear* here:

Sustainability Goals need to be more explicit throughout the framework

The document reads as if there is one universal child. Children come from a diverse range of places and situations. This needs to be addressed throughout the framework and made more explicit.

Equality has been replaced by equity. This needs to be explained further than the current explanation in the Glossary. There is also some inconsistency in the document in terms of use.

The framework needs to be explicit in the principles in relation to children's experience of prejudice, discrimination, racism, sexism, ableism and homophobia. Young children may not always experience direct discrimination however they indirectly experience all the above through attitudes and observing how their families or other families are treated in a multitude of situations. For example:

Children who deny their home language because of their experience

Traveller and Roma children and families hiding their identity

For example include: Children should be protected from unfair comments and/or behaviours.

Themes of *Aistear*

Aistear is underpinned by four Themes of learning and development. It is proposed that the Learning Goals within each Theme remain broad, but observable statements that support babies, toddlers and young children's learning and development. It is also proposed that the Principles of *Aistear* be interwoven and visible throughout *Aistear*'s Themes.

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This section seeks your detailed feedback as to whether these key changes are visible within the draft proposals. The draft proposals are available [here](#) for your information.

Please give specific feedback in relation to each of the Themes of Aistear.

Theme: Wellbeing

Theme: Identity and Belonging

There is ample evidence to suggest that Traveller and Roma identity provokes negative responses at all levels in Irish society. It is their lived experience, discrimination, racism and marginalization. They also experience poverty and access to opportunities. There is an opportunity here to replace a negative narrative with a positive one of inclusion and visibility for Travellers and Roma. One way of enhancing Traveller and Roma visibility in Aistear is to have images that Traveller and Roma relate to. This could be something as simple as including an image of a Caravan/Trailer in the Aistear framework.

In addition, the use of Traveller and Roma specific materials in Early Years will enhance a strong sense of belonging among Travellers and Roma in Early Years Education. Materials such as jigsaws that depict a Traveller or Roma ways of life, and books that depict Traveller and Roma culture. In order for young children to embrace and engage fully in learning, links need to be made between their lived experience and the ECEC setting. Their Identity needs to be acknowledged, understood and celebrated. A sense of belonging will follow. Every child, irrespective of their background and culture, needs to be valued, respected, nurtured and valued. Recognising individuality and the variety of cultural diversity (which is growing in Ireland) should also include a recognition and celebration of all backgrounds and cultures, which could be incorporated into the updated Aistear.

<https://www.pavepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/EthnicityLeaflet.pdf>

The list of seven grounds appear in DEI and elsewhere. Another set of grounds appear elsewhere. We recommend that the list is consistent. Also list explained in the front of the framework to ensure accuracy, inclusion and clarity. Socio-economic background should be included. What is understood by 'Worldview' should be clearly explained.

There remains a strong focus on celebrations. We recommend a stronger focus on a social justice approach and culturally responsive pedagogy. There is still a focus on equality of opportunity rather than a broader equality of condition (Baker et al, 2001) response which

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reflects the challenges in many children's lives in relation to poverty, direct provision, homelessness, discrimination. There is a need to demonstrate a focus on funds of knowledge. The framework should link directly to the DEI Charter and Guidelines to support joined up thinking and continuity. In fact, reference to anti-bias education should be made.

It is important to think about the phrasing of some of the points and make them more explicit especially in relation to responding to discrimination and racism for example. Important to address the why and how of some of the phrases.

SDG's should be imbedded here

Theme: Communicating

DEI should be woven into the theme of communication and could have a greater focus on multilingualism. There is a need to be inclusive of multilingualism therefore reference to Gaeilge in this section needs to be thought through. There are also other cultural heritage languages in Ireland such as Traveller Cant and Gammon.

Include SDG's here.

Theme: Exploring and Thinking

Travellers have been involved in sustainability for generations. This could be made explicit and used as an example when addressing Sustainability under this theme. This will demonstrate the positive contribution and also support the identity of the Traveller community.



In your reading of the proposals, are the Principles of *Aistear* interwoven and visible throughout *Aistear*'s Themes?

This could be improved.

Please insert any additional feedback that you would like to share with us about the proposals here:

Recommendations

- Recognise family rather than parents through the framework.
- Address diversity concepts terminology more fully and explicitly within the framework and in the glossary
- List of grounds need to be consistent throughout the document and socio-economic ground included.
- Address the inclusion of Gaeilge more robustly in the beginning of the framework and consider the recognition of Cant and Gammon



- Ensure the inclusion of Gaeilge is explained and there is access to pronunciation in a link.
- Include links to DECDIY Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines (2016). It is disappointing to note it's absence. We consider that Aistear, Síolta and DEI Charter and Guidelines are a trio of professional frameworks that complement each other and support educators engagement with implementation of Aistear.
- Explicitly name Anti-bias education in the framework
- Ensure the Framework and Practice Guide has images of Traveller and Roma life.
- What is not made explicit in the document is silenced or invisible. The Framework needs to be explicit about the different lives' and experiences of children.
- Glossary of terms is important. Some terms need to reflect current knowledge. The glossary needs to be proofed to ensure the messages are consistent and accurate. We recommend that the equality terms are revisited and also that Travellers are included in the Glossary.



Supporting Aistear

Part 1: Guidance for Good Practice

Pages 27 to 33 describe the Guidance for Good Practice. The Guidance for Good Practice expands on some of the important ideas introduced in the Principles and Themes. It also reflects other important messages, or big ideas, from Phase 1 of the consultation to update Aistear, as well as from research and wider societal and policy changes. The big ideas are organised according to Aistear's original Guidelines for Good Practice.

- [Partnerships between Parents and Practitioners](#)
- [Learning and Developing through Interactions](#)
- [Learning and Developing through Play](#)
- [Supporting Learning and Development through Assessment.](#)

It is proposed that these will be extended and supplemented through resources developed for the online Aistear Toolkit. Sample resources are available in [Appendix 1 of the draft proposals](#).

Please give your overall feedback in relation to the Guidance for Good Practice.

Terminology needs to be grounded through explanations and citations. Shared understandings exist and should be used in the Framework.

We strongly recommend referring as well (or instead) to the *Anti-bias education* which has a history of presence in Irish practice literature (see 'éist', DEI Charter and Guidelines from 2006, 2016, Murray and Urban, 2012).

Creating inclusive learning environments (pg. 33) are essential for implementing DEI in practice. A stronger focus on equality proofing the ECEC setting is necessary. This piece should be developed further and be more visible.

Appendix 1, Example 2, (pg 42) refers to *Slow relational pedagogy in practice*:

We welcome the inclusion of this example with reference to Travellers however we see it as a missed opportunity to name some of the challenges for Travellers in accessing ECEC.

The comments capture the challenge of separation for Sadie and her mother, as her mother pursues further education. It is also worth noting that the family may also be nervous of this new experience because of their fear of discrimination for themselves and in particular for their baby.

Important to have images of Traveller and Roma children in the practice guide.



There is a need to have example from practice throughout on how to support the inclusion of Traveller and Roma.

Part 2: Supporting Educators

Page 34 of the proposals explains how this consultation is an opportunity to gather information on the nature of supports required to support the early childhood educators in working with the curriculum framework.

Please provide feedback on how early childhood educators can be supported in working with the curriculum framework. For example, what resources would be helpful to include in the Guidance for Good Practice?



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