



REF: UNESCO/UNESCO Chair Submission (JCM-I-1063)

Ms Niamh Smyth
Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism
Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
TD for Cavan Monaghan and North Meath

Dear Ms Smyth,

Thank you for the opportunity to input on social outcome contracts in Irish Sport as they relate to UNESCO. UNESCO is the lead United Nations agency for physical education and sport, which play a key catalytic role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recognising that sport can help build more resilient, sustainable and inclusive societies, UNESCO launched our flagship global alliance Fit for Life in November 2021. It aims to empower sport ministries to connect sport with these development outcomes and scale up funding in sport through innovative partnerships and financial tools. Social outcomes contracting has emerged as a leading innovation in this space, promising lower-risk, data-based investments that finally show the multi-sectoral impact that sport can have on the community.

In connection with this programme, the UNESCO Chair at Munster Technological University works closely with us to advance inclusive policy actions through strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships in Ireland and globally. This submission outlines written evidence of relevance to social outcome contracts in Irish sport as it relates to UNESCO.

Kind Regards

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Part II UNESCO/UNESCO Chair Submission

1. The work of UNESCO's Sport Section is guided and supported by the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) and collective action initiated via the World Conferences of Sport Ministers (MINEPS). The last edition, MINEPS VI, adopted the Kazan Action Plan (KAP), which became the global reference for fostering coherence in sport policy development, aligned with the SDGs¹ and a pivotal component of the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace.² Following MINEPS VI, the UNESCO Chair at Munster Technological University (MTU) was charged with advancing inclusive policy actions, which they did through a series of human rights-based actions. The Chair also supported efforts relating to the Sustainable Development Goals while purposefully aligning their human rights work. The TRUST Ireland project undertaken by the Chair with funding from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission represents one action relevant to advancing the KAP. This submission reflects on the findings and recommendations of the TRUST Ireland work as they dovetail with UNESCO's ongoing work in sport for development, especially the emergence of innovative impact investment strategies, such as social outcome contracts (SOCs).

2. Through its Fit for Life Initiative, UNESCO is mobilising KAP and addressing inequalities and other outcomes using novel outcomes-based financial instruments such as social outcomes contracts (SOCs).³ In brief, SOCs allow the government to act as an 'outcome payer' in funding a development programme. Instead of paying for sport implementation directly, the programme is funded by a social investor, such as a development bank. An agreement is developed based on the cost-benefit of sport participation. The government will only have to pay for the implementation after it has taken place and after the beneficiaries have experienced specific outcomes. These could include improvements in health, well-being, inclusion, or empowerment (among others). SOCs lower the risk of investing in sport, and align implementations with clear impacts, symbiotically building and using data.

3. [The TRUST Ireland \(2021-2023\)](#) report and recommendation are is being finalised. TRUST Ireland partners include the UNESCO Chair MTU, the Federation of Irish Sport, Sport Ireland, the GAA, Sport Against Racism Ireland, the Central Statistics Office, and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (advisory partner). A broad range of sport stakeholders and rightsholder groups were consulted. Rightsholder groups included women and girls, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the LGBTI+ community, people with disabilities, people with intellectual disabilities, and Travellers. Findings show that marginalised groups in Ireland experience barriers to accessing sport resulting in lower participation.

4. Aligned with UNESCO's policy priorities, increasing participation is a primary objective of the Irish National Sports Policy. One of the core values of the National Sports Policy is the promotion of inclusion: *"Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our*

¹ The Kazan Action Plan and its MINEPS sport policy follow up framework prioritize 10 SDGs and 36 associated targets: SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (global partnerships for sustainable development).

² Cf. United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/160 on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace (2018), and the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on strengthening the global framework for leveraging sport for development and peace (A/73/325)

³ These contracts are variously known as Social Outcomes Contracts, Social Impact Bonds (UK), Social Impact Partnerships (Europe), Pay-for-Success Schemes (United States), and Social Benefit Bonds (Australia).

desired outcomes focusing on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients."⁴ In keeping with the KAP inclusive policy actions, Fit for Life and the UN Agenda 2030 principle of no one left behind, TRUST seeks to level the participant gradients seen in sport in Ireland. Traditional approaches to the design and delivery of sport programmes and policies did not have human rights at their core. By reorienting sport to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and aligning sport funding with data on its concrete development impact, we can improve social outcomes and help deliver system change. Because of their clear and transparent alignment with outcomes, SOCs represent a strong opportunity to address the needs of marginalised cohorts, such as the participant gradients seen among marginalised groups in Ireland.

5. TRUST Ireland identified the main concerns of rightsholder groups regarding the issues they face in accessing sport in Ireland and the changes needed from the sport sector and the State. Issues spanned the following themes: governance, financial, environmental, educational, attitudinal, and programmatic. Recommendations emerging from TRUST Ireland align with UNESCO's current priorities leading into MINEPS VII, which will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, June 26-29 2023⁵. Those most relevant to social outcome contracts in Irish Sport include:

- a) Prioritise **#FurthestBehindFirst in all sports related planning**, including the National Sports Policy, its action plans, and all other policy areas that use sport from now to 2030. Ensure rights-based and outcomes-driven approaches to sport provision at all levels in line with Public Sector Duty and Equality legislation.
- b) Invest in robust, **outcome oriented disaggregated data** to inform evidence-based policymaking, advocacy, and impact assessment across the multiple policies in Ireland that focus on or use sport, physical activity, health, education, and inclusion of specific groups. This will help orient sports investments as an enabler of sustainable development. Convergence with cross-cutting data developments on SDGs, Well-being Index and Equality should be examined.^{6,7}
- c) Establish **participatory approaches to cross-sector sports policy and planning** at all levels of sport. Ensure broad representation of underserved groups (consider quota systems) and diversify stakeholders involved in the process to reflect the diverse impact of sport across the sustainable development goals.
- d) **Prioritise capacity building and workforce development** and call on the Department of Further and Higher Education and education and training providers to deliver a skilled workforce for equality and social outcome-based approaches to sport delivery.
- e) Expand cross-sectoral funding access and allocations (beyond capital and equipment emphasis) to support the elimination of barriers for marginalised and underserved groups. **Examine social outcomes contracts to access capital, accelerate action, and grow necessary capacity in the sector to deliver broader grassroots opportunities** to diverse stakeholder groups.

⁴ Government of Ireland (2018) National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027. <https://assets.gov.ie/15979/04e0f52cee5f47ee9c01003cf559e98d.pdf> pg. 19

⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382686>

⁶ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022) Minister O’Gorman announces the development of a National Equality Data Strategy <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/5a7f4-minister-ogorman-announces-the-development-of-a-national-equality-data-strategy/>

⁷ Central Statistics Office, UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/unsustainabledevelopmentgoals/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-well-being-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/>

- f) Invest in **public awareness and education campaign** on the TRUST Ireland strapline *Sport As It Should Be Fun Fair Clean, Safe and Accessible to All* to increase public awareness on the value and role of sport in society. Consider building capacity and awareness among volunteers extensively involved in delivering experiences and outcomes in Sport in Ireland.

6. Ireland's sports sector faced concurrent crises presented by the war in Ukraine. Energy costs, Covid19, and Brexit. These necessitated pivotal responses, and timely, agile and flexible work across the sector to respond to demand. The sector responds well and has proven its capacity to transform as the situation demands. Agenda 2030 has called for transformative change. It has created a new common language that the varied stakeholders using sport to advance social and development outcomes can leverage to advance cross-cutting collective action. Novel financial instruments such as social outcome contracts are timely and can be used to accelerate action within and beyond the sport sector. Furthermore, engagement with Fit for Life during this innovation stage presents an opportunity for Ireland to be a champion in developing democratised international data and tools to replicate outcomes-based investments internationally.

7. UNESCO and the MTU Chair are wholly convinced of the merits of examining the potential of SOCs in driving multiple policy priorities related to sport. The UNESCO Sport Section is developing and aggregating evidence of the effectiveness of these contracts through Fit for Life pilot projects, through leadership in the development banks Coalition for Sustainable Development through Sport, through UNESCO Chair research on development bank investment in sport and through ongoing cooperation with UEFA, whose Social Return on Investment Model has begun to show the billions of dollars of impact sport has on social and economic parameters.⁹ As the TRUST initiative and other work of the UNESCO Chair affirms, the needs in Ireland align with, and would benefit from, closer synergies to the work agenda being advanced by UNESCO through MINEPS VII and Fit for Life. Central to this is piloting SOCs. In this regard we support further exploration, investment, and piloting of SOCs in Ireland and remain available to support this work through Fit for life.

⁹ See: [The UEFA GROW SROI Model: Valuing the Impact of Football Participation in Europe](#)