

SERVICE LEARNING

IRELAND STATUS REPORT

14%

OF THE
POPULATION
VOLUNTEERED
IN 2022

 Highest participation in
rural areas

Most popular
volunteer
activities:

 Sports
clubs

 Community
and
environmental
work

Recent Developments

- National policies (2014–2025), like the **National Skills Strategy** and **Education for Sustainable Development**, emphasized volunteering to build leadership, sustainability, and civic skills.
- **StudentVolunteer.ie** (2015–2017) connected students to opportunities nationwide.
- By 2021, volunteering was active across all higher education institutions.
- Youth volunteering centres on Transition Year; no national service-learning beyond that.
- COVID-19 caused a sharp drop in youth volunteering.

Areas for Improvement

Although strong progress has been made, feedback from stakeholders and research point to several areas to strengthen service-learning in Ireland.

1. Integration with Academic Curriculum

Many students want volunteering to align with their studies, yet many courses lack this link. Expanding credit-earning, service-learning and involving community partners can help bridge the gap.

2. Broaden School Engagement

Youth volunteering is mostly in Transition Year. Integrating service learning into Junior Cycle CSPE, offering certifications, and partnering with local NGOs could encourage earlier and more meaningful civic engagement.

3. Raise Awareness and Recognition

Boosting student volunteering needs better promotion, formal recognition, national awards, as well as stronger data and research on service-learning outcomes.

4. Address Access and Equity

The 2016 I-VOL data showed low youth volunteering and wide regional gaps—targeted support, flexible programs, and sustained funding for Volunteer Ireland can help include rural youth, immigrants, and smaller NGOs.

What is it?

“SERVICE LEARNING IS A TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODOLOGY WHICH FOSTERS CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND APPLIES CLASSROOM LEARNING THROUGH MEANINGFUL SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY.”

VALIDATION OF LEARNING

IRELAND STATUS REPORT

What is it?

“THE PROCESS OF FORMALLY RECOGNISING AND DOCUMENTING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING, MAKING THEM VISIBLE AND VALUABLE FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.”

Strategic Recommendations

- 1. Integrate volunteering into the school curriculum.**
By embedding service learning into the national curriculum, we can create a shift in mind set from casual or informal volunteering to a more formal structure.
- 2. Improve VIO's ability to clearly communicate skills**
Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are key to helping volunteers recognise and communicate the value of their experience. Our survey shows clear demand for this, with 78% of volunteers knowing how to communicate their skills, but only 57% having received support to do so.

Key Developments in Validation of Learning - Ireland



RPL National Conference

Over 12,000 learners recognized across 14 higher education institutions; showcased successful industry-partnered RPL pathways.



Strategic Talent Development Micro-Credential

Launch of a Level 9 (5 ECTS) accredited qualification for professionals in IDA client companies.



QQI Validation Process Update

Introduced streamlined validation procedures, with a focus on micro-credentials and flexible learning formats.



EQF Advisory Group Participation

Ireland reaffirmed commitment to European validation frameworks, strengthening cross-border recognition and EQF alignment.