

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
WFG 172
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill
Response from UK National Commission for the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)



Consultation on the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Bill

To: The Environment and Sustainability Committee, National Assembly for Wales

From: The UK National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

Date: 11.09.14

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into the Well-being of Future Generations Bill.

UNESCO understands the pivotal role of education, science and culture in promoting and achieving sustainable development. UNESCO spear-heads the Education for All goals and is a significant voice in the group developing the international Sustainable Development Goals. The UKNC provides policy advice on UNESCO to the Welsh government (along with the UK and devolved governments).

1. Overall comments

1.1 Sustainable development, which is a central organising principle for the Welsh Government, requires a long term approach in relation to decision-making, something which risks being overlooked in the face of pressing economic and political issues. Reflecting on the needs of future generations and considering their well-being is a practical way of retaining a long term perspective in current decision-making. It is also in keeping with the principles in the Rio+20 Declaration (2012) and with the current UN approach to sustainable development.

1.2 2015 has the potential to be a pivotal year for sustainable development for both Wales and the wider world as the Well-being of Future Generations Bill could come into force as the UN Sustainable Development Goals are adopted and the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development comes to a close. By adopting this Bill, Wales can be seen as a prominent contributor to and example of the global sustainable development agenda.

1.3 The Welsh Government’s actions to put sustainability and sustainable development at the heart of government and the wider public sector will not be achieved through compliance with legislation alone. It requires model leadership and a change of culture in the public sector based on education and participation in relation to sustainable development issues. The National Conversation on ‘The Wales We Want’ is a good example of participation that goes beyond the public sector and engages with the challenge of transformational change for the future.

2. Detailed comments on the goals of the Bill

Our more detailed comments focus on the area of the inquiry which reflects the UK National Commission for UNESCO’s unique perspective.

How effectively the Bill addresses Welsh international obligations in relation to sustainable development

2.1 Seeking to embed sustainable development in legislation fits well with the vision of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The six proposed goals in the Bill reflect the values that underpin the SDGs and Rio+20 *The Future We Want* declaration and are a positive interpretation for a developed economy.

2.2 The Bill itself focuses on implementation and makes little reference to Welsh international commitments to sustainable development. It might be possible and worthwhile considering cementing these links in the legislation, for example, linking the future generations report with the time-frame and reporting mechanisms for the SDGs.

2.3 The table below provides an analysis of how each of the proposed goals fits with Welsh commitments on sustainable development through the UK’s membership of UNESCO:

The Bill goal	The UNESCO convention / statement / current UN or UNESCO debate	Comment from UKNC
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<p>A prosperous Wales</p> <p><i>An innovative and productive, low carbon emission, economy that makes more efficient and proportionate use of resources; and which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities for a skilled and well-educated population.</i></p>	<p>The Future We Want – declaration from Rio+20 (June 2012)</p> <p>Proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.”</p> <p>UNESCO focus on Education for Sustainable Development</p> <p>Proposed SDG 8 on growth and employment.</p>	<p>Education for sustainable development must be central to any sustainable development programme if we are to change the way we think and act. A “well-educated” population must include all levels of education in all social contexts. UNESCO will continue to advocate for a stand-alone education goal in the SDGs.</p> <p>The proposed Framework for Action on Education post-2015 will provide guidance for all member-states on how to implement and measure the education goals and targets.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales</p> <p><i>A biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.</i></p>	<p>Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations (1997)</p> <p>Proposed SDG 7 on energy; 13 climate change; 14 on marine resources; 9 on sustainable industrialization and innovation and 15 on biodiversity.</p> <p>UNESCO, with other bodies, was successful in retaining a clear commitment to fostering scientific research and innovation in the latest draft of the SDGs.</p>	<p>Science has a vital role to play in researching, promoting and implementing sustainable development. The Commissioner is required in the Bill to consult with industry. The role of the scientific community could be enshrined in the Bill with representation on the Commissioner’s Advisory Panel or as bodies with whom the Commissioner should consult and on the Public Service Boards.</p> <p>UNESCO is advocating the establishment of National Science, Technology and Innovation Strategies (STIs) to help develop and foster a science-policy-society interface.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales</p> <p><i>A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</i></p>	<p>Proposed SDG 3 on health.</p>	<p>UNESCO advocated to retain clear commitments to scientific and technological research in the SDGs – these are vital components of delivering health benefits.</p>
<p>A more equal Wales</p> <p><i>A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.</i></p>	<p>Proposed SDG 1 on poverty; 8 on inequality, and 10 on growth.</p>	<p>UNESCO is advocating an inclusive social development and human rights based approach including a stronger recognition of youth as agents for change.</p> <p>This is reflected in the</p>

		mechanisms outlined in the Bill.
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p> <p><i>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.</i></p>	<p>Proposed SDGs 1 and 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies</p>	<p>The post-2015 agenda is being set at a time when many countries are undergoing profound social transformations. Participatory approaches to decision-making are key – in addition to strong linkages between social science research and public bodies. Their involvement in the Commissioner’s Advisory Panel and Public Service Bodies will be core to delivering safe and thriving communities.</p>
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</p> <p><i>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</i></p>	<p>Convention on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural expressions 2005 (UK ratified)</p> <p>Convention concerning the protection of the world Cultural and Natural heritage 1972 (UK ratified)</p> <p>Universal Declaration for Cultural Diversity (2001)</p> <p>Intangible Cultural Heritage (unsigned by UK)</p> <p>International Mother Languages Days</p> <p>UN Resolution on Culture and Development (December 2013)</p> <p>Culture is mentioned in several of the proposed SDGs including education and promoting equality.</p> <p>“by 2030 integrate relevant knowledge and skills in education curricula and training programs, including education for sustainable development and awareness raising on culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”</p>	<p>Culture is an enabler and driver for sustainable development which was not reflected in the MDGs. Culture enables sustainability – promoting social cohesion. It can also generate income, provide jobs and improve livelihoods.</p> <p>This goal is consistent with UNESCO Conventions ratified by the UK.</p> <p>There could be greater inclusion of representatives from cultural bodies and institutions in the mechanisms outlined in the Bill.</p>

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 The proposed legislation reads-across to a number of UNESCO Conventions which have been ratified by the UK.

3.2 Steps to develop sustainable development policy are in line with recommendations made by UNESCO – although it is for the Member State to decide which Conventions it will sign and ratify. The goals of the Bill are broadly in line with Welsh government international proposals, as part of the UK, on sustainable development.

3.3 It might be possible and worthwhile to consider cementing the links between the goals of this Bill and associated international obligations in the legislation; for example, linking the future generations report with the time-frame and reporting mechanisms for the SDGs.

3.4 The role of science and the scientific community in helping to deliver sustainable development is recognised in the draft SDGs. Their role could be enshrined in the Bill with representation on the Commissioner’s Advisory Panel or as bodies with whom the Commissioner could consult and as partners to the Public Service Boards.

3.5 Culture is a driver and enabler of sustainable development. In the Bill, some cultural bodies are identified as potential partners to the Public Service Boards. There could be greater consideration given to how cultural bodies could input to the Commissioner’s Advisory Panel to help embed the role of culture in delivering sustainable development.

3.6 Sustainable development is a huge, dynamic agenda. Strategic prioritisation is an essential component of any effective sustainable development policy.

3.7 Lack of understanding among the public sector and wider public about what sustainable development is and why it matters could significantly undermine the success of the Bill.

Professional development for key roles in the public sector and wider educational campaigns need to run parallel with the implementation of the legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to input to the inquiry. Please address any points of clarification or questions to:

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References:

[The proposed Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[UNESCO culture conventions](#)

[The Future We Want – declaration from Rio+20 \(June 2012\)](#)

[Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations \(1997\)](#)

[UN Resolution on Culture and Development \(Dec 2013\)](#)