New AI Project for Young People and Youth Workers (https://www.activelink.ie/node/114336)

New AI and Emerging Technologies Project Launched to Empower Young People and Youth Workers

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), in partnership with Insight, Dublin City University (DCU), and the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO), has launched a groundbreaking initiative to equip young people—especially those from marginalised backgrounds— and youth workers with essential knowledge and skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI), data, and emerging technologies.

Speaking at the launch, Tomás Ward, Professor of Data Analytics at DCU and Site Director of Insight, Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics, highlighted the importance of this initiative:

"Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies are reshaping the world around us before our very eyes. It is essential that young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills to engage with these developments and that their voices are heard. This initiative is about ensuring that all young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, have the opportunity to understand, question, and shape the future of AI. At DCU and Insight, we are committed to fostering inclusive AI education and empowering youth workers with the tools they need to make AI accessible and part of their practice."

Dr Shirley Coyle, Assistant Professor at DCU's School of Electronic Engineering, emphasised the importance of cross-sector collaboration:

"I am especially excited to collaborate with the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Ombudsman for Children's Office on this transformative project. Their leadership in youth advocacy and engagement ensures that young voices will be at the heart of Ireland's AI future. Together, we have the opportunity to create meaningful change, bridging the digital divide and empowering the next generation to take an active role in shaping the AI-driven world they will inherit."

Aoife Carragher, Head of Communications at the OCO said:

"The Ombudsman for Children's Office is delighted to partner with NYCI, DCU and Insight Research Ireland Centre on this AI project which will raise awareness and educate young people particularly those from marginalised groups and the youth work sector on skills surrounding artificial intelligence (AI). The OCO will offer a children's rights perspective in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and support the participation of children in this project. Ensuring that children's rights are considered in AI is vital as AI is already affecting children's lives and its impact will continue to grow as the technology develops.

The OCO is committed to building knowledge and expertise on current and emerging issues affecting children. We use our powers as an independent statutory body to influence, educate and challenge to ensure that decision making is informed by children's rights. AI is an area where this insight is very much needed, as AI brings with it opportunities for children's rights but also many risks, and we look forward to working together with our partners on this exciting initiative."

Project highlights include:

- A national consultation with young people to explore their perspectives on AI and data, culminating in a report and awareness campaign.
- Pilot Projects with Marginalised Young People – Collaborations with organisations including Crosscare, Finglas, and Familibase Ballyfermot to explore AI and data in youth work with 'hard-to-reach' young people.
- AI Skills Guide for Youth Workers – A practical guide and training course to help youth workers understand AI and apply it in their work.
- AI Education Programme for Young People – In partnership with Microsoft Dream Space, NYCI will develop an AI curriculum based on UNESCO's framework, tailored for youth work settings.

NYCI CEO Mary Cunningham welcomed the initiative, stating:

"AI is shaping every aspect of our lives, yet many young people and youth workers feel unprepared to engage with it. Low representation of young voices in AI policy-making poses a risk that AI systems and regulations will not reflect their needs and concerns.

Young people must not be passive observers but active contributors to the technological world they are inheriting. This project ensures their perspectives shape Ireland's AI landscape while also equipping youth workers with the knowledge and tools to support them," concluded Ms Cunningham.

This project is funded by the Research Ireland Discover Programme.

Notes:

- The project is supported by NYCI, Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics at DCU, the Ombudsman for Children's Office, and Microsoft Dream Space.
- The initiative is part of Ireland's AI strategy and follows recommendations from the National Youth Assembly on AI in 2022.
- This project is funded by the Research Ireland Discover Programme.
- More information is available on NYCI's STEAM Engagement Programme. (https://www.youth.ie/programmes/steam-engagement-programme/)

About the National Youth Council of Ireland

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is a membership-led umbrella organisation that represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact young people. Youth.ie

About the Project Partners

Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics

The Insight SFI Research Centre for Data Analytics is Ireland's leading research centre for data science, focusing on AI, machine learning, and data analytics. Based at Dublin City University and other partner institutions, Insight collaborates with industry, government, and civil society to drive innovation and ensure responsible, inclusive AI development.

Dublin City University (DCU)

Dublin City University (DCU) is a globally recognised university known for its research excellence in AI, computing, and engineering. With a strong focus on innovation and societal impact, DCU is committed to advancing knowledge in AI and emerging technologies while fostering opportunities for young people to engage with digital skills and data literacy.

Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is an independent statutory body that promotes and protects the rights of children and young people in Ireland. Through advocacy, research, and engagement, the OCO ensures that young people's voices are heard in policy and decision-making processes, including those related to AI and emerging technologies.

Microsoft Dream Space

Microsoft Dream Space is an innovative digital learning initiative by Microsoft Ireland, designed to inspire and empower young people through STEM and digital education. Dream Space provides hands-on experiences in AI, coding, and data science, helping young people develop the skills needed for the future workforce. Through this collaboration, Dream Space will support the development of a tailored AI curriculum for the youth work sector.

Region
Nationwide

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