

## Youth – Actor of Social Change

### “Gaisce”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
<b>Title of programme/ practice</b>	Gaisce, The President’s Award
<b>Location</b>	Country Ireland, all regions
<b>Main theme</b>	Civic participation
<b>Practice/Programme-related keywords</b>	Community Involvement, Personal Skills development and Physical recreation
<b>Summary of programme/ practice</b>	<p>The President’s Award is Ireland’s National Challenge Award. The system works on the basis of a personal challenge set by the young person and agreed with a President’s Award leader. The young participants are not competing with other participants, as each challenge is completely individual. There are three different types of award- bronze, silver and gold. The minimum age for the bronze award is 15. It is earned over a minimum period of 6 months. The minimum age for the silver award is 16. It is earned over a minimum period of 12 months and for the gold award with the most demanding challenge the minimum age is 17. It is earned over a minimum period of 18 months. There are four different challenge areas. To earn an award young people have to participate in each of the challenge areas. They may well decide to build on an activity tried in the past. Each participant must participate in at least one new activity to earn an award. The four challenge areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Involvement</li> <li>2. Personal Skill</li> <li>3. Physical Recreation</li> <li>4. Adventure Journey</li> </ol>

	<i>A <b>Residential Project</b> is required for the Gold Award. The Award programme is open to all young people between the ages of 15 and 25.</i>
<b>Target</b>	All young people aged between 15 and 25. Of note is that in 2007 a gold award was achieved by a young person in prison.
<b>Objectives of programme/ practice</b>	Personal achievement, personal and social development and community participation.
<b>Content of programme/ practice</b>	The programme is completely flexible; the young person negotiates challenges with a President's Award Leader (PAL). Typical activities include; skills development (such as learning a musical instrument), outdoor activities, assisting pre-schools and so forth.
<b>Time scale</b>	The three award levels have time-scales ranging from six to eighteen months.
<b>Programme/ practice design</b>	1) Development of programme/practice: Gaisce has been in existence for 25 years and is a state sponsored initiative.
	2) Decision-making actors and process: At the interaction level between young people and the programme decision making is very much in the hands of the young people.
	3) Management and leadership of programme: The programme is led and managed by a board of management drawn from various sectors in Irish society. The Head of State (President MacAleese) is nominally the overall programme chief.
	4) Implementation: Gaisce has a chief executive, Barney Callaghan.
	5) Legal framework: The organisation is an independent entity with charitable status although state sponsored.
<b>Resources involved</b>	Alongside a grant from the Department of Education Gaisce has to actively fundraise. The organisation runs events such as a golf classic and receives corporate sponsorship from commercial actors.  Gaisce is actively linked to a variety of cultural, statutory and voluntary bodies that assist in providing opportunities for the various challenge events.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<p>1) Evaluation process:  Gaisce is quality assured by the International Award Association and is fully compliant with all aspects of the criteria. The programme is evaluated on an regular basis and the views of the young people feature strongly in this process.</p>
	<p>2) Results / impact of programme:  The benefits for the individual young people are evident in the positive comments from participants. The use of voluntary PALs is a further positive in terms of enhanced inter-generational contact. The involvement of the voluntary-n</p>