

# Young Academy Ireland

## Strategic Plan 2024–28



Acadamh Óg na hÉireann  
Young Academy Ireland

# Young Academy Ireland (YAI) is an interdisciplinary organisation of early-career researchers and innovators (ECRIs) that brings together individuals who will work collaboratively for the benefit of society.

Globally, Young Academies provide a multidisciplinary platform allowing their members to exchange diverse views and experiences. YAI represents early-career researchers on the island of Ireland and contributes to societal change through interdisciplinary dialogue and public engagement. YAI will, in addition, facilitate its members to contribute effectively to the development of all-island research and cultural life, to ensure that ECRIs are adequately represented and can actively participate in discussions that address global issues.

YAI strives for a membership that embodies equality, diversity and inclusion, as is also reflected in the variety of disciplines its membership is drawn from. It is a dynamic forum for early-career researchers, providing an inspiring and creative environment for the exchange and development of innovative ideas.



# YAI Strategic Plan

This strategic plan sets out the Young Academy Ireland mission and ‘grand challenges’ for the years 2024–28. It establishes the priorities of YAI and outlines the contribution we aim to make to the research and cultural life of the island of Ireland.

## Mission

The initial mission of YAI is:

- to provide a cross-disciplinary platform that can allow early-career researchers and innovators (ECRIs) to contribute effectively to the development of all-island research and cultural life;
- to ensure that ECRIs are represented and actively participate in discussions that address global issues among ECRIs;
- to bring ECRIs together to work collaboratively on major challenges for the benefit of society.

# Grand challenges

We have identified five ‘grand challenges’ that we believe are key issues to tackle in supporting and enhancing the research and cultural life of the island of Ireland:

- 01 achieving sustainability**
- 02 creating a fair and inclusive society**
- 03 securing the future of academia**
- 04 supporting public involvement and engagement with research**
- 05 providing transdisciplinary expertise for public policy**

We will leverage the expertise of our members to identify and deliver transdisciplinary efforts related to our ‘grand challenges’. Through our activities, we will seek both short- and long-term benefit, through public and stakeholder engagement and academic output. The activities of YAI will serve as an example of how inclusive, transdisciplinary efforts can deliver concrete, lasting impact on the island.

## 01 Sustainability

We believe a sustainable society is a key enabler of a vibrant and thriving research and cultural life on the island of Ireland. We face many challenges, including climate change, environmental pollution, and biological invasions. The implications of these sustainability challenges will be considered under a 'One Health' framework that will apply equally to humans, wildlife and the environment.

In addition to offering discipline-specific expertise, we aim to identify channels that discipline-specific investigations may overlook, with a view to engaging policymakers and citizens. The YAI network will promote the sharing of knowledge across multiple sustainability challenges, to collectively overcome barriers to communication towards stakeholders, decision makers and the public.

## 02 A fair and inclusive society

Fairness and inclusivity should be at the core of the activities of YAI and of society. Globally, and on the island of Ireland, social inequality poses an immense challenge to peace, the flourishing of human life, and the wellbeing of our shared communities and environment. At the same time, diversity is increasingly conceived of as antithetical to social cohesion and used as a weapon by those seeking to undermine, distract from and disable resistance to the causes of inequality.

We believe that scholarly research on cultural and social diversity and its dissemination can contribute to our ability to respond to the present-day challenges of inequality. We aim to encourage cutting-edge research on cultural diversity, and to amplify such research in public debate. We envisage collaboration among scholars, organisations and individuals who engage with challenges at the intersection of social inequality and diversity, with a view to influencing public knowledge, discussion and policy.

## 03 The future of academia

Academia should provide a stable, supportive environment for ECRIs and evolve with societal needs. We will revisit and reimagine the role of universities, innovation and research. We will focus on engagement, awareness and establishing best practices.

Engagement will involve building a collaborative network among higher education institutions, academic associations and students. We will seek to understand and address the current and acute challenges the academic community faces, particularly in relation to precarity, academic freedom and workload.

Awareness involves facilitating conversations about the current state of academia. Issues of concern that we will consider include pathways into the profession, the stakes and realities of precarity, the pressures of grant capture, and the challenges experienced by international students and ECRIs. We will also focus on the potential for good in academia, such as its advancement of knowledge, its societal impact and its potential as a source of effective policy.

Particular issues to be considered include open science and replicability; the decline of trust in expertise; and research practices in the era of artificial intelligence (AI).

Establishing *Best practices* requires improving inclusivity and fairness of treatment, especially among emerging ECRI leaders. We express solidarity with precarious ECRIs and will offer guidance for productive, generative practices of mentorship and career support, both within academia and in non-academic career paths. The goal is to establish a standard that encourages academic excellence, innovation and contribution to society.

## 04 Public involvement and engagement with research

We are keen to contribute to knowledge creation and public debate, but we are aware that public involvement in, and engagement with, research has the potential to greatly enhance the impact of research. Substantive public involvement in research through interactions across disciplines and sectors, and by incorporating experiences and viewpoints that are less recognised in mainstream research and cultural life, can promote transdisciplinarity.

Our focus will be on methods and avenues by which our members can disseminate their research. We will also pay particular attention to obtaining input into academic research from under-used and under-represented constituencies. This theme further supports our members, through encouraging collaboration with each other and across disciplinary boundaries, to influence public policy.

## 05 Transdisciplinary expertise for public policy

We believe it is of critical importance that the best available evidence is used to inform decisions that impact our lives. While evidence can play a transformative role in improving the world we live in, there are challenges that must be faced when translating evidence into policy. We believe that to best inform policy, we need to develop and harness our research and skills in transdisciplinary collaboration, communication and knowledge translation.

We believe that YAI is uniquely placed to examine the factors that support or undermine effective transdisciplinary collaboration. As a collective, we will seek to act as role models for best practices in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, and use our activities to reflect on and refine the state-of-the-art. We will convene to collate our expertise on selected topics, work together to develop a dynamic action plan, and use best practice to communicate key messages to policymakers. Our goal is to enhance the skills and capacities of our members and other ECRIs on the island.



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