



ECO-UNESCO

*Ireland's Environmental Education
and Youth Organisation*

Submission on the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development

By

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1. Introduction

ECO-UNESCO is Ireland's environmental education and youth organisation focused on empowering young people and protecting the environment. It is a leader in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and environmental education (EE) in Ireland and in promoting environmental awareness, youth development and youth led environmental action.

ECO-UNESCO recognises the key role of environmental education and education for sustainable development in achieving sustainability. Education for Sustainable Development and environmental education are critically important to our understanding of our world, the interconnectedness of systems and to upskilling and empowering people to identify positive solutions and to act at a personal level as well as more broadly in communities, regionally, nationally and internationally.

ECO-UNESCO's approach to ESD involves the building of knowledge on key environmental issues such as biodiversity, climate change, our global systems; Interdependencies and relationships that exist in nature and between nature, society and the economy at a local and global level. It incorporates the development of skills of critical thinking, systems thinking, reflection, decision-making, problem-solving, self-awareness, planning for action, collaboration and futures thinking. It explores attitudes and values developing a respect for ecological systems, respect for others, an appreciation of diversity, encouraging a commitment to action at a personal level, community, national and international level.

ECO-UNESCO's approach highlights the importance of Education For, About and In the Environment. 'For' – providing the necessary knowledge, skills and values to help people make choices in favour of sustainable development; 'about' – providing adequate knowledge of systems and natural ecosystems and an understanding of interconnectedness and interdependencies and 'in' providing opportunity for people to experience nature and develop a sensitivity towards the natural environment.

With over 600,000 young people in Ireland between the ages of 10 to 19 (CSO 2016) young people are a key stakeholders in ensuring we achieve sustainability; they are not only citizens of the present they will also be the ones most affected by changes in our world into the future. For this reason, ECO-UNESCO acts to empower young people to take action through a variety of methods, including training, peer education, action plans and youth conferences.

This submission is based on ECO-UNESCO's role as a leader in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), environmental education and environmental youth work in Ireland since 1986, its role as an international partner of UNESCO for the implementation of the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP) between 2015 and 2020 and on consultations done with young people. It is also based on submissions from organisations of which we are members including IDEA and the Ubuntu Network.

In this submission, we have provided some key recommendations and actions answering the questions posed by the consultation. We have also provided a number of appendices including consultations with young people which we carried out, a Youth Climate Justice Survey which we completed and further details on two of our programmes the Youth for Sustainable Development programme and the Young Environmentalist Awards.

ECO-UNESCO runs a range of tried and tested ESD programme which have the potential to have even greater impact through strategic engagement with the Department of Education and adequate resourcing.

2. Key actions & recommendations

Our key recommendations and actions include:

There is a need for a paradigm shift in education towards ESD: ESD requires systemic change; this is one of the most effective long-term ways to achieve increased environmental awareness, social transformation and economic transition and a strategy that needs to be prioritised at a national level over the coming years. ESD should be a core and fundamental element of education provision. ESD has to respond to many global challenges including the climate crisis, the biodiversity emergency, as well as social inequalities and consumption patterns (habits, behaviours, and lifestyles). ESD has to continue to build knowledge on key environmental issues such as biodiversity, climate change, consumption, our global systems; Interdependencies and relationships that exist in nature and between nature, our society and our economy at a local and global level. It should include the development of skills of critical thinking, systems thinking, reflection, decision making, problem solving, self-awareness, planning for action, collaboration and futures thinking and explore attitudes & values developing a respect for ecological systems, respect for others, an appreciation of diversity, encouraging a commitment to action at a personal level, community, national and international level.

A paradigm shift in education (Sterling 2001; Rest 2002; Wals and Jickling 2002; Wals 2011) requires a move away from a focus on economic growth and competitive individualism, and a move towards care for planet and people where individuals are supported to lead sustainable lives and be agents of change for sustainability (Leicht et al., 2018). It requires a reorientation of education to focus on the key challenges of our time, adopting an interdisciplinary approach, and a change in pedagogy that goes beyond the “simple rearranging or altering of current curricula” (Eilks 2015, p.151). Values of sustainability should be at the centre of culture and practice in educational provision. These values should be reflected in all aspects of education. Educators should embody these values in the work and professional practice. Education institutions should reflect them in their ethos and culture. All stakeholders have an important role to play in ESD, regardless of disciplinary area. **It is important to recognise and support the key role of education and in particular values education. We need systemic change. The paradigm shift must take place at all levels.**

- **The Strategy should promote innovate practice, pedagogies and methodologies.** It is important to recognise the importance of innovative approaches and practices to engage people in ESD. Approaches such as peer education and the development of participatory skills that empower young people to act should be recognised, enhanced and integrated. ECO-UNESCO supports the promotion of active learning approaches and ESD methods which empower learners to be action oriented to help ensure a better world, care for the environment, and a more just society. Along with other innovative methodologies, ECO-UNESCO recommends the use of peer education as a method for engaging young people in sustainability. Peer education is a powerful tool for change. For example, ECO-UNESCO’s Youth for Sustainable Development-Global leaders for change is a programme running to up skill and empower young people aged 16-18 and the ECO-Choices programme promoting health and well-being through peer education and environmental education. Young people we work with have identified peer education as an effective tool for working with young people and for engaging in ESD. **The Strategy should seek to scale up the delivery of tested peer education programmes including the ECO-UNESCO Youth for Sustainable Development programme.**
- **The Strategy should seek to scale up the delivery of tried and tested programmes which promote youth led action.** Local Environmental Action projects are a powerful tool for engaging young people in youth

led sustainability. Groups of young people come together in schools, youth groups or community settings, scope out local issues, and develop **solutions focused actions** to counter these challenges. ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards programme provides a 6-steps action project framework, supports and trains young people to carry out action projects, provides capacity building for educators and provides a recognition and rewards structure for their work. The YEA spans formal, non-formal and informal education, as well as the primary and secondary education, promoting action-based learning in young people, supporting and promoting the Sustainable Development goals and developing key competencies. It is also an opportunity to showcase young people's actions and project work across Ireland and provides an opportunity for young people to develop solutions to issues of concern to them. **ECO-UNESCO recommends that the Young Environmentalist Awards is scaled up, is mainstreamed to all schools and groups in Ireland and is embedded into schools, youth groups and non-formal settings.**

- **The Strategy should continue to have a focus on youth engagement, empowerment and mobilisation.** As outlined in the UNESCO Global Action programme on Education for Sustainable Development and ESDfor2030- young people are key players and have a key role as change agents for sustainable development through ESD, as young people today are increasingly drivers of education in informal and non-formal settings. Approaches to ESD should not only seek out the youth voice, but also responding to it, and as such empower young people to explore issues and take action. Young people should be provided with opportunities to become actively engaged in sustainability to ensure they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to make positive contributions to society; young people involved in our Youth Climate Voices Survey in 2020 highlighted building knowledge and skills as barriers to them taking climate action. Young people involved in our Youth for Sustainable Development programme also highlighted that they wanted opportunities to liaise with decision makers and policy makers. **ECO-UNESCO recommends that youth engagement, empowerment and mobilisation initiatives are prioritised and that successful initiatives are scaled up e.g., ECO-UNESCO's YSD and YEA programmes.**
- **The Strategy should focus on the importance of the youth voice** – as highlighted in recent surveys and consultations, young people are very concerned about global and environmental issues. They have outlined high levels of eco-anxiety and concerns for their future. It is important that young people have spaces to voice their opinions. We therefore recommend that spaces are provided for young peoples' voices to be heard such as a National Youth ECO Forum (ECO-UNESCO has run a range of Youth Summits and Forum) to bring young people together to provide opportunity to highlight issues, concerns and solutions. Young people have highlighted to us the importance of feeling you can take action and the importance of providing solutions to environmental issues to counter the feelings of anxiety they feel about their futures. In addition, ECO-UNESCO is proposing to develop a mentoring system and scheme between young people and decision makers (local, regional, national and international) who can provide advice and support to young people taking on local project work; it would also act as a key opportunity to highlight young people's concerns.
- **The Strategy should strive for closer links between formal and non-formal education sectors including schools, youth sector and community sectors to be encouraged and supported to ensure a more holistic cross sectoral approach to ESD.** ESD needs to engage people in a wide range of educational settings through a wide range of educational initiatives including formal, non-formal and informal education, reaching people in a variety of settings and through a variety of media. All aspects of education should reflect and promote ESD, and facilitate the learner to build the relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development and become sustainability

change-makers (UNESCO, Competencies). ESD requires learner-centred and interactive approaches such as critical thinking, value-based learning, participatory decision-making and multi-method approaches supporting transformative educational approaches. There are a wide range of actors in ESD including Civil Society organisations who have in many cases led the way bringing ESD and non-formal approaches to formal settings, complementing initiatives already in existence. For example, ECO-UNESCO's range of youth programmes have brought a non-formal approach to a formal setting through our YEA programme as well as workshops and our Learning2Change programme. In 2018 we ran an initiative in conjunction with the EPA. The programme aimed to work with young people in a school and out of schools' settings; we developed and ran the programme through the delivery of a specially developed Transition Year module in secondary schools with an option for engagement in an after-schools youth club in the local community. The initiative proved to be very popular with young people; there was a high degree of uptake for the TY module and the after-schools programme. Young people engaged voluntarily, carried out action projects through the Young Environmentalist Awards programme and developed closer relationships with young people from other schools in their local area (many of these new connections) building greater community cohesion. **Such cross disciplinary initiatives should be further promoted and supported.**

- **The strategy must demonstrate commitment from the government that ESD is at the heart of quality education. The strategy must be funded.** Appropriate and adequate funds should be made available to support a wide range of education and empowerment initiatives incl. those across civil society and those who work to support young people to be agents of change. The visibility and its status in education should be heightened. Government departments must demonstrate the value that they put on ESD by dedicating resources to it. Funding for the National Strategy on ESD would support the delivery of innovative programmes, publications, public events, online platforms and dedicated personnel. The future strategy needs to be resourced and not only draw upon existing work. **The strategy should also consider providing prestigious awards for young people, youth groups and education institutions such as an alignment with the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards.**
- **The strategy should promote capacity building of educators in ESD.** Capacity building of educators is crucial in order to mainstream ESD. Educators should be given in-service opportunities to explore ESD and transformational education and provided with opportunities to integrate environmental and sustainability issues into their work. Many civil society organisations have provided a range of ESD professional opportunities for educators through training courses and workshops. These initiatives should be resourced and mainstreamed to reach greater numbers of educators. For example, ECO-UNESCO's range of QQI accredited training courses are available to all educators and youth leaders providing opportunities to receive a qualification in sustainable development (including ESD methods) (Level 5); peer education for sustainable development (Level 5), ecology and the environment (Level 6) among others.
- **The Strategy should align closely with UNESCO's ESDfor2030 international framework and its five priority action areas.** The UNESCO framework provides an important opportunity to engage with international best practice in ESD. UNESCO is the lead agency for ESD globally. ESDfor2030 continues to have a strong focus on the breadth of education provision from the formal sectors across youth and community engagement as well as continuing a focus on action for sustainability and transformational education. It is crucial that this strategy maintain this broad framework recognising the holistic nature of ESD, the breadth of education provision whilst recognising the need for in-depth provision and systemic change. Internationally UNESCO is rolling out its international framework for Education for Sustainable Development ESDfor2030. ECO-UNESCO supports the objectives and 5 priority actions of the programme as a follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development which has outlined that the overall goal is to generate and scale –up in all levels and areas of education and learning in order to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

UNESCO Five priority action areas identified are;

1. Advancing Policy
2. Transforming Learning Environments
3. Building Capacities of educators
4. **Empowering and mobilising young people**
5. Accelerating local level actions

<https://en.unesco.org/news/esd-2030-whats-next-education-sustainable-development>

[Education for sustainable development for 2030 Toolbox \(unesco.org\)](#)

- **The Strategy should recognise the role of civil society organisations and NGO's as recognised practitioners, educators and thought leaders in the field of alternative and innovative forms of teaching and learning.** NGO's role in ESD and in the delivery of the National Strategy on ESD should be strengthened and should be enhanced and resourced.
- **The Strategy should strive to achieve policy coherence between different government departments as ESD is multidisciplinary.** There is a need for coordination between key policies and plans including the Climate Action Plan, National Biodiversity Action Plan, the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, the SDG National Implementation Plan, the National Youth Strategy, the Irish Aid Strategy on Development and Global Citizenship Education, FET Strategy and other key environmental policies etc. There is a need for Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland to be active in lifelong learning reaching many parts of Irish society. As a result, it should be an important element of many different government policy areas, including environmental, education, international development, climate action, youth, community development and more.
- **Outdoor education and experiential learning spaces are developed. There should be a focus on outdoor experiential learning which** brings a range of benefits which are now widely evidenced, acknowledged and accepted, particularly in relation to ESD and mental and physical well-being. Outdoor and experiential learning offers an approach for young people to engage with the world around them & provides a stimulating context to explore how we can all contribute to a more environmentally friendly and sustainable present and future. **Education 'in' the environment provides opportunities for people to experience nature and develop a sensitivity towards the natural environment.**
- An Additional key priority area that may warrant consideration is Culture: Changing attitudes, values and behaviours/transformational action

Appendix 1 About ECO-UNESCO



We engage, educate, inspire, empower and act!

- We **ENGAGE** young people 10-25 every year in our youth, education & training programmes and workshops, and awards.
- We **EDUCATE** young people, so they develop leadership skills, confidence, and self-esteem.
- We **INSPIRE** with solutions and action projects.
- We **EMPOWER** young people to be active citizens.
- We **ACT** with young people to protect the environment.

ECO-UNESCO is Ireland's environmental education and youth organisation focused on empowering young people and protecting the environment. It is a leader in the field of Education for Sustainable Development and environmental education in Ireland and in promoting environmental awareness, youth development and youth led environmental action.

ECO-UNESCO works with over 10,000 young people annually through a range of environmental youth, education and training programmes. Through the provision of a wide range of environmental programmes, services and resources, ECO-UNESCO develops and channels the passion that young people feel about the environment into positive and creative actions to protect the natural world.

ECO-UNESCO is recognised by UNESCO as leaders in the field of ESD and has been one of UNESCO's international Key strategic partners for their Global Action Programme under their Key Priority Action 4 – Empowering and Mobilising young people. Founded in 1986, ECO-UNESCO promotes the protection of the environment, raises environmental awareness, understanding and knowledge of the environment among young people, encourages the personal development of young people through practical environmental projects and activities, advocates for environmental education and education for sustainable development and promotes the ideals of UNESCO.

ECO-UNESCO is a QQI-Accredited training centre and runs a range of accredited and non-accredited training courses open to those with an interest in Sustainable Development including: teachers, youth workers, community and business leaders, and the public and private sector.



- **Young Environmentalist Awards Programme:** this is an All-Ireland of Ireland annual programme that recognises and rewards the work of young people who raise environmental awareness and make a positive contribution in their community. Groups of young people, aged between 10 and 18, design and implement their own environmental projects that raise awareness of environmental issues including Climate Change, sustainability, pollution, and biodiversity.
- **Youth for Sustainable Development:** this programme aims to engage young people in sustainable development at a local and global level. The programme inspires, challenges and motivates young people to act locally to promote sustainable development, dealing with issues related to Climate Change. Young people explore the knowledge and values of Education for Sustainable Development so they can become Global Youth Leaders for Sustainable Development. The action projects that are carried out by youth groups are entered into the Young Environmentalist Awards Programme
- **ECO-Choices** – ECO-UNESCO runs ECO-Choices – a drugs prevention programme for at risk young people and carries out a range of trainings and workshops around Ireland.
- **Green upskilling and Training:** ECO-UNESCO offers a range of QQI-Accredited and non-accredited training courses in areas related to sustainable development, ecology and the environment, vegetable growing and gardening, community development among others. ECO-UNESCO has run a range of Green Youth Employment programmes since 2012 including Green Pathways, Green Skills and Green Works.

Our impact



+55,000

young people involved in the
Young Environmentalist Awards
since 1999



+10,000

young people we have
worked with annually



+13,000

engaging with us
on social media

OUR APPROACH



Appendix 2: Young Peoples' Perspectives – Consultations with young people on ESD

In June 2021, ECO-UNESCO carried out a consultation with young people on the National Strategy on ESD. In particular we focused on Key Priority area 4 on Empowering and Mobilising Young people. Young peoples responses are outlined below:

For young people they felt that

1. They learn from and listen to their peers
2. They want more opportunity to speak with politicians and decision makers
3. They value real consultation when they are being listened to
4. Schools councils are an effective way of being heard
5. They value youth organisations such as ECO-UNESCO and learnt most about sustainability
6. They highlighted the importance of the non-formal approach
7. The importance of social media

Below are detailed responses from the consultation

Q.1 How can we multiply ESD actions among our youth?

Make these type of workshops and courses [Youth for Sustainable Development programme & Young Environmentalist Awards] more accessible- nationwide instead of just Dublin

Promote dialogue between peers surrounding the environment and sustainability.

Make it more normal to talk about sustainability

Contacting schools with events and workshops about ESD or admission for YSD programmes will help increase youth attendance and increase visibility. I heard about ECO-UNESCO through my school

Don't get enough about sustainable solutions at home

More emphasis on eco anxiety and how it's normal to be too overwhelmed due to your self-awareness and how to navigate through it

Informal conversations with peers

Classes on eco actions young people can easily take. community gardens/ gardening classes for young people

Formal education implemented into both primary and secondary school curriculum will encourage conversation and allow people to be more educated on sustainability

Give young people positive, attainable solutions to environmental issues

More workshops and more accessible – online

How can we empower young people to use online platforms and other channels of communication to share messages on the urgency of sustainability

Environmental influencers on tiktok - can distil information into short snappy pieces

Give students councils more power to make change

*A lot of young ppl are doing this already but - reels on instagram/tiktok is an easy & accessible way to share info
- theres a "sustainable things I do at home" challenge*

Improve government info websites

Need more correct content on sustainability so young people can share

*I think politicians and state bodies should be putting information and content on social media rather than relying
young people to spread and post info. I also feel this way the information will be more trustworthy*

Social media makes you more informed so you make more informed choices

National news is important. I think seeing local news on sustainability will encourage young people to share.

Get politicians and state bodies and news outlets to promote and invite sustainable influencers

Good social media presence is important

Make a teen government website made by teens for teen where teens can find solid, easily digestible info

If more influencers promoted sustainability, then more people would be more sustainable

Different influencers have different audiences

A lot of young people doing this already - but there is a lot of misinformation

Online platforms e.g. emails

*Have politicians be more contactable, to listen more, and to respond to feelings of concern around sustainability
will encourage young people to use their voice if they feel like they are being listened to*

How can we create opportunities for youth-led and youth-oriented groups, organisations and networks to equip young people with transformational knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to promote and encourage their participation in awareness raising and sustainable development action?

I think in ECO-UNESCO expanding the YSD programme online to reach more students across the country is a good option

Guidance for action projects is good, as it cultivates teamwork skills, and creates a network and contacts in the environmental field. After the first action project it is easier to take action yourself or create your own action so that initial guidance really helps

Forming partnerships or support systems with schools or other environmental organisations to spread awareness about ECO-UNESCO, like talks at school or advertising the YSD or YEA programmes and spreading the groups around Ireland more

Youth summit - training in media skills, communications skills, motivating people

Encourage peer mentoring and training

We could expand our communications to other groups

More funding into youth groups! so you can reach more people.

We could expand our YSD groups more - run also online - would like to be involved after YSD/YAN

How can we ensure that young people are recognised as key contributors in all efforts to promote sustainable development, including in the design, delivery and monitoring of policies and programmes on education for sustainable development?

Having youth on committees/ make sure local councillors and TDs continuously consult young people

Learning skills on how to talk to politicians

Partnership with ECO-UNESCO & young people & politicians

Some teens have a very good understanding of sustainability issues

Youth council to feed into ESD strategy

Run a YSD peer education programme for young people

Idea of a consultation group that gathers youth's opinions and actually use their ideas for the creation of legislation as opposed to consulting young people just to maintain a good image that they 'care' about young people. show us that you value our input as often our ideas are brushed off to the side because we are 'too young'

Partnership with ECO-UNESCO & young people & politicians

We could expand our YSD groups more - run also online - would like to be involved after YSD/YAN

Is there a way to connect young people to councillors and local /regional / national decision makers?

How can educational institutions be encouraged to foster the development of their learners' capacities as agents of change?

Create space for young people to organise their own events (e.g. within their own youth group, they can organise beach clean-ups/facilitate calls)

Partnership with ECO-UNESCO and school (some members in group the school don't know about it sometimes) - came to school and did announcement etc. - came during assembly

Put young people in contact with people who can further the projects

Offer more opportunities to do the programmes and action projects

Implement education about SD, action projects, and communication with policy makers into Irish systems. this way, teachers and students are being taught language they can use and actions they partake in.

ECO-UNESCO facilitator came to the school, or if you educated teachers and they pass that information onto the students, that would cause more discussion surrounding environmentalism.

How can we encourage all people in communities to take an active interest in sustainability?

Community Garden; recycling classes for older people; make all activities available

Bring in speakers to schools and youth groups so people can see the practical environmental solutions instead of just earning the theory of environmental issues

Partner with local youth groups. often in my town, kids attend the youth group to socialise

Help connecting younger people with older people - incl. intergenerational

If each neighbourhood had some sort of communication and shared a compost system or a food garden, or had a system of clothes swapping

In March 2020 we carried out a consultation with Young people (15-18) involved in ECO-UNESCO's Youth for Sustainable Development Programme on their views on global citizenship education and education for sustainable development

They highlighted the importance of environmental education in both formal and non-formal settings.

Some of their comments include:

'Teach students all the way up no matter the year; have ongoing workshops with them. Teach teachers how to make these kind of lesson fun and interactive. To make lessons like we learn in [ECO-UNESCO's] YSD subjects in school compulsory.'

'...continue and to create programs like [ECO-UNESCO] YSD all-round Ireland'

'I think promoting in schools, particularly TY students is the best way. That's at least how I found out about it.'

'Personally, I find workshops particularly helpful as they're interactive and you have to think on the spot, webinars and social media campaigns are great options too'

'I said ... that [ECO-UNESCO's] YSD should visit schools, because that is where all children learn and develop, where they have access to information. A programme needs to be drawn up to include learning about sustainability and environmentalism in the Irish curriculum, because there is next to nothing. Personally I learned my knowledge independently and through [ECO-UNESCO's] YSD. This is something that the government should care about, and they should agree with. Schools are the place where the most change can be done. Informal education was great for me, but was only accessible during TY. I would love to see an all year round course that people can be a part of. Implementing parts of YSD into youth groups can also help. Public engagement is something I'm less sure of. Maybe Irish Aid can try and broadcast their previous achievements, while exposing their current plans. I'm sure if enough people heard about the change to Irish formal education there would be a big support base. Older people often listen to the radio or read the newspaper, while all ages watch TV. I think RTÉ news and Nationwide could help.'

'I think promoting the SDGs is the first step. I know they are a big focus already, but they are very important. Trying to provide solutions for these one step at a time can really help. Equality is the most important one to me, namely gender equality among others. Also empowering young children/people, telling them that they can make a difference, because they are the future, yet at times they are made to feel hopeless or inferior.'

Appendix 3: Young Peoples' Perspectives – Youth Climate Justice Survey 2020

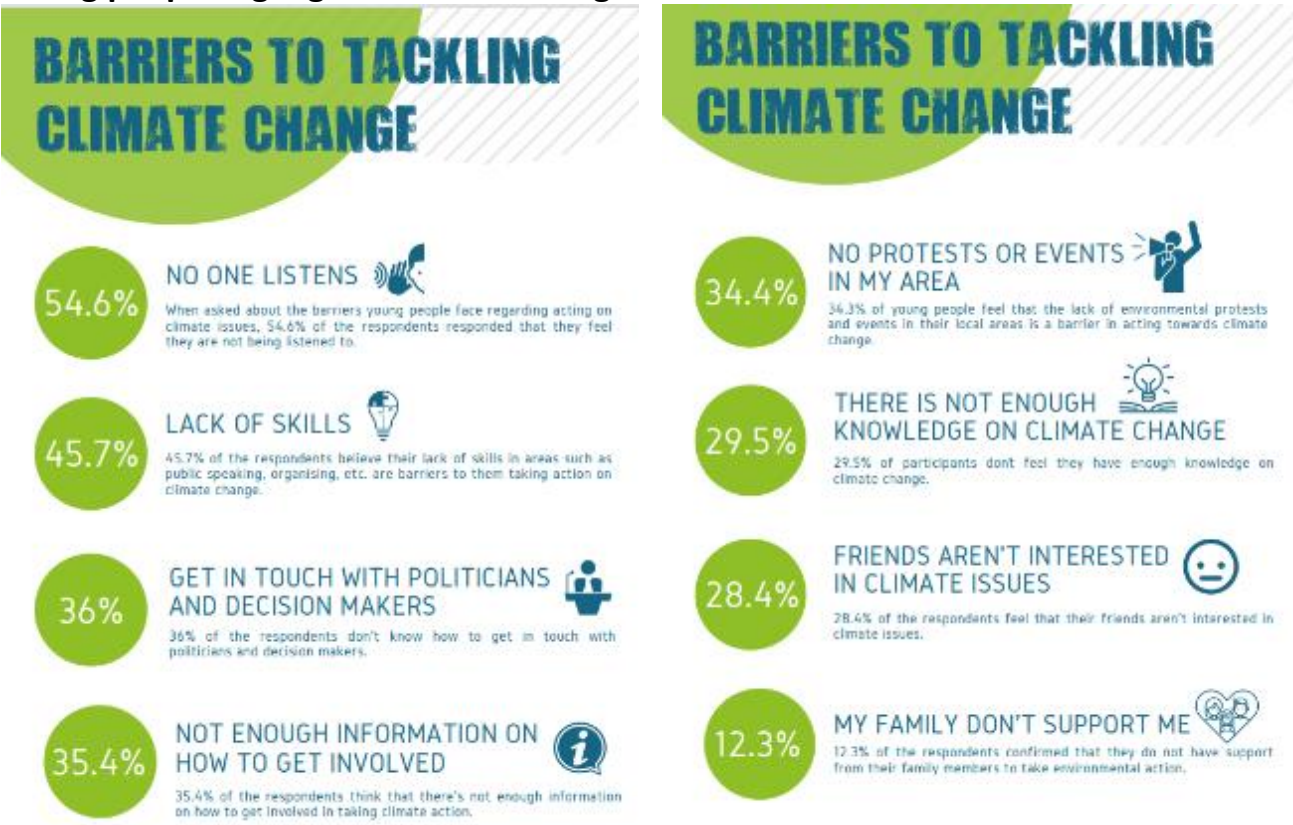
In October 2020, ECO-UNESCO in conjunction with SpunOut.ie ran a Youth Climate Survey which highlighted young peoples concerns on climate issues. Over 1100 young people between the ages of 15 and 25 responded.

Some of the key points that were raised by young people who took part in the Youth Climate Justice Survey were:

- 77% of young people are very concerned or extremely concerned about climate change.
- 55% of respondents feel as though they are not listened to when they discuss climate change and climate justice issues.
- 58% of young people want more local opportunities to get involved in climate-based issues.
- 52% of young people want more knowledge and information on how to take climate action.
- Climate Justice was the third most popular topic that young people wanted to learn more about (55%).
- 46% of young people feel that their lack of skills in areas such as communication and project organisation hold them back from getting involved in climate action initiatives.
- One third of all participants mentioned that they are dealing with eco-anxiety, or fear for their future.
- 28% indicated their friends not being interested in climate issues was a blocker to action.

<https://ecounesco.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CJ-2020-Survey-Report-March.pdf>

Young people highlighted the following:



They identified the following solutions:



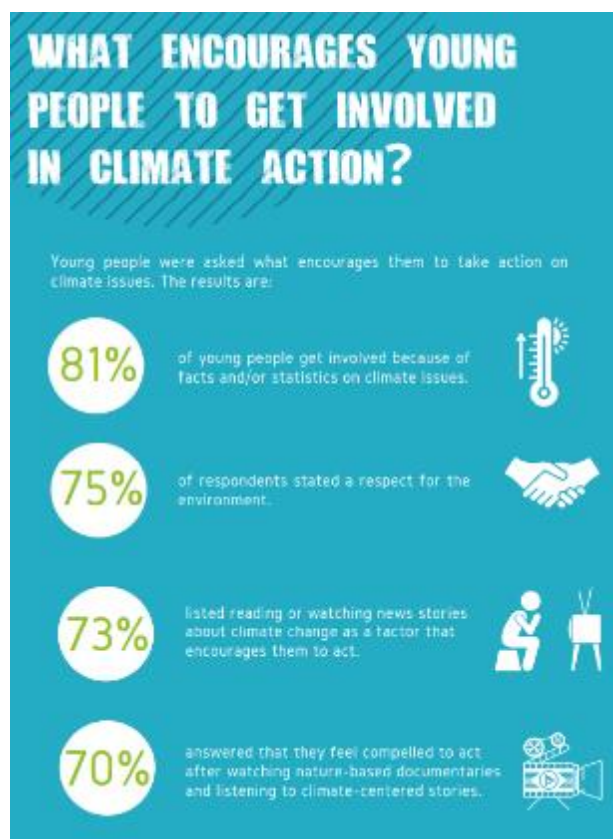
They highlighted the importance of increased environmental education



They highlighted that young people are taking action both individually and collectively



And they highlighted that knowledge, facts and statistics on climate are important



Appendix 4 - Young Environmentalist Awards Programme



The **Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA)** is an all-Ireland environmental awards scheme aimed at recognising and rewarding the work of young people (10-18), who carry out local action projects in environmental protection and conservation. The programme promotes youth led environmental action in a range of areas including Climate Change, Biodiversity, Energy, Waste, Water, ECO-Enterprise among others and builds awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It encourages young people to protect environment whilst also promoting confidence building, critical thinking, and active citizenship. It promotes the global perspective. It reaches over 4000 young people annually directly with potential to reach thousands of others through indirect contact with others locally.

The Young Environmentalist Awards has worked with over 55000 young people since its inception with young people taking action on a range of environmental issues.

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards follows a 6-steps to success framework to guide young people in communities and schools to carry out action projects which have a positive impact.

Young Environmentalist Awards Impact



Appendix 4 - Youth for Sustainable Development Programme

Youth For Sustainable Development (YSD) programme - background

First developed in 2008
Programme funded by Irish Aid

Aim build knowledge, awareness and understanding of sustainability and global justice in young people and develop their skills

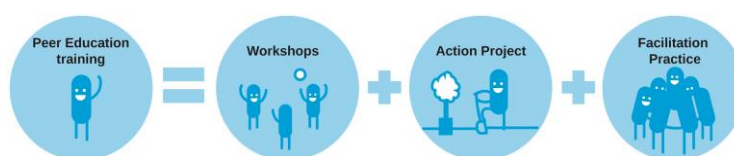
Uses a peer education model

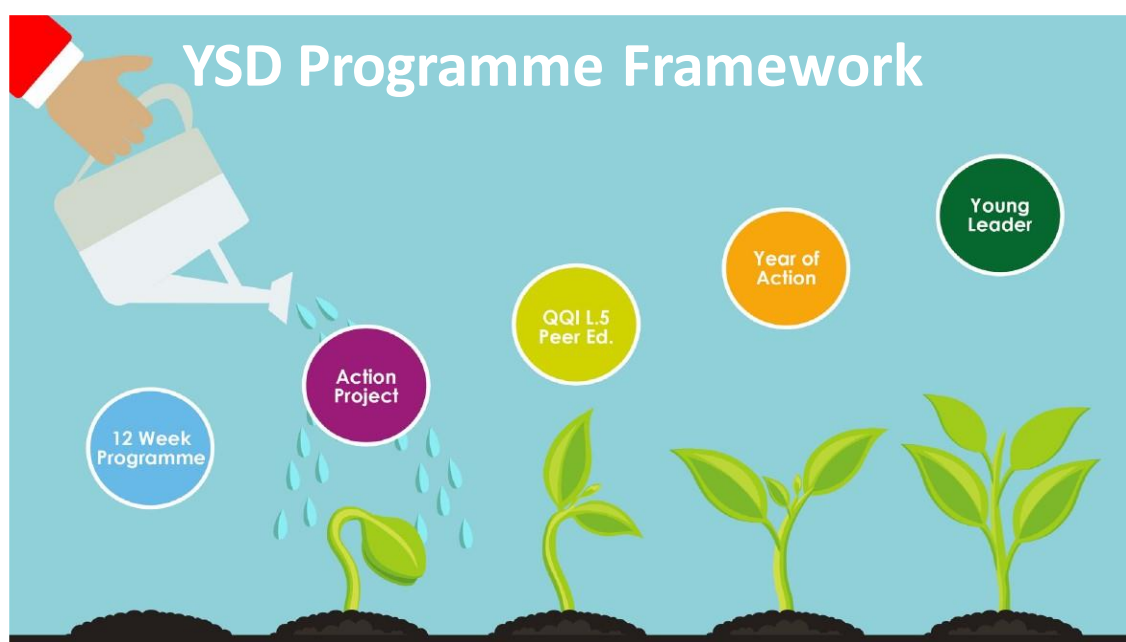
Ongoing after-schools youth group model



ECO-UNESCO's Youth for Sustainable Development (YSD) programme is an innovative programme based on **peer-to-peer education**, where young people gain the skills needed to pass on their knowledge to their peers and support each other to take action for a better world. We have been running the programme in Ireland since 2007 and are in the process of expanding. The project is innovative in that it trains the young participants to work with their own peer group on sustainable development through training, peer education and action project work. Young people use a wide range of creative and participatory learning methods including arts and crafts, drama, role-playing and different forms of media. The programme has a range of elements which are interconnected and build on the previous learning thus contributing to the coherence of the initiative.

The YSD programme comprises a **12-week training programme, building knowledge, skills and confidence in young people around key themes related to the Sustainable Development Goals**; young people then apply this learning to through facilitation practice with their peers and a local action project thus reinforcing learning through action work. Following the 12-week programme young people engage in a year of action where they further develop their skills; they then engage in a **QQI Level 5-Accredited training in Peer Education for Sustainable Development** which provides them with a valuable qualification and continues their work as Global youth leaders for change where they continue to engage with ECO-UNESCO and their peers as youth leaders.





There is also a special focus on the Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 13 Climate Action. Following this 12-week programme young people undertake various Local to Global Action projects to be entered into the Young Environmentalist Awards. Young people involved with the programme not only gain practical experience but also receive a QQI Level 5 Award in Peer Education for Sustainable Development. Other opportunities arise which the young people are encouraged to participate in including national youth forums and events, seminars, transnational forums, international visits trips and the opportunities to represent ECO-UNESCO at various events.

The programme reaches over 200 young people (aged between 15-18) directly on an annual basis through the youth peer education programme and over 2000 young people indirectly through action project work. Since its inception it has worked with over 1600 young people directly and over 18,000 young people indirectly and has trained up over 800 youth and community leaders. The programme encourages the participation of young people from all backgrounds including those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and from ethnic minority backgrounds



ECO-UNESCO's YSD youth delegates attending the UN ECO Soc youth meeting in New York March 2019