



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# ESD to 2030: First Report on Progress

November 2023





# Contents

<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Key Achievements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Priority Action Areas</b>	
Priority Action Area 1 – <b>Advancing Policy</b>	6
Priority Action Area 2 – <b>Transforming Learning Environments</b>	17
Priority Action Area 3 – <b>Capacity Building of Educators</b>	39
Priority Action Area 4 – <b>Empowering and Mobilising Youth</b>	47
Priority Action Area 5 – <b>Accelerating Local Level Action</b>	58
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1 – <b>Acronyms</b>	66
Appendix 2 – <b>Summary Report on ESD to 2030 Funding Call 2022</b>	67
Appendix 3 – <b>Structures</b>	70
Appendix 4 – <b>Recently linked Strategies/Policies</b>	71

# Background

ESD to 2030 was published in June 2022 and is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (the Departments).

ESD to 2030 aims to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 target 4.7 as well as being a key enabler for the achievement of all other SDGs, that is “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development including among others, through:

- *education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles,*
- *human rights,*
- *gender equality,*
- *promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence,*
- *global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.*

The Strategy is aligned to the UNESCO Framework for ESD for 2030 and likewise has five priority areas that will contribute to the following outcomes:

- 1 **Advancing policy:** ESD is embedded in education and other relevant policies and frameworks as part of a lifelong learning approach.
- 2 **Transforming learning environments:** Learners have opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions needed to promote sustainable development and to experience sustainable development in action through a whole of institution approach to ESD.
- 3 **Building capacities of educators:** Educators have the opportunities to develop capacities to foster societal transformation for a sustainable future, with ESD integrated into the offerings of education and training providers.
- 4 **Empowering and mobilising young people:** Young people are supported to be agents of change for sustainable development.
- 5 **Accelerating local level actions:** Enhanced collaboration exists between education providers, local authorities, local communities, civil society organisations and enterprise in ESD as part of lifelong learning, towards achieving sustainability at a local level.

Implementation is overseen by an ESD Steering Group comprising representatives of relevant Government departments, education bodies, students, teacher unions and civil society organisations. Individual advisory groups comprising key stakeholders have been established for the different sectors under the Departments. Terms of Reference including membership is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

ESD to 2030 is accompanied by an Implementation Plan covering the period 2022 – 2026. This is broken down into short-term, medium-term and long-term actions. This first report is focused on the initial short-term achievements and ongoing actions for the period January 2022 – June 2023.

In July 2023, the Departments contacted relevant bodies identified as ‘Lead’ actors in the ESD to 2030 implementation plan seeking updates on progress towards short-term and ongoing actions for the first interim progress report of the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. Updates were requested covering the period from January 2022 to June 2023. A total of 31 Government Departments, organisations and agencies<sup>1</sup> and 17<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Institutions, provided updates. This qualitative information was synthesised and collated by Departmental officials and aligned with the overarching priority action areas and actions in the ESD Strategy and Implementation Plan. Broad themes and patterns were identified and illustrated with examples of action and impact across the range of bodies. Several examples were selected as case studies to highlight good ESD-related practices and showcase the rich, diverse and innovative approaches to ESD across different levels of the education system, with priority given to case studies involving multiple stakeholders and consideration of regional spread.

It should be noted that the report does not comprehensively capture all ESD-related activity that is underway across the system and rather provides a snapshot of progress and impact to end June 2023 against actions identified in the ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan.

1 DoE, DFHERIS, DCEDIY, DHLGH, DETE, DECC, DFA, DRCD, DAFM, EPA, SEAI, NCCA, Teaching Council, OIDE, PPLI, HEA, Leargas, QQI, SFI, IRC, Skillnet, SOLAS, ETBI, An Taisce, ISSU, ISSN, ESCI, LCANA, IPI, ECO UNESCO. Take 1 Programme.

2 ATU, DCU, DkIT, IADT, MIC, MTU, MU, NCAD, RCSI, SETU, TCD, TUD, TUS, UCC, UCD, UG, UL.

# Key Achievements

## January 2022 to June 2023

### 1 Advancing Policy

- Structures to support the strategy established
- Networking
  - EU Working Group for Schools, Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development – hosted peer learning exchange event
  - UNESCO – ESD-Net Regional events – Irish presentations included
  - ESD to 2030 – a UNESCO Country Initiative published
- Focus on Sustainability and Climate Action in funding calls for Research and inclusion of new principle on Research and Sustainability in updated HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research
- ESD to 2030 funding for schools and organisations
- National Forum SATLE funding for ESD in higher education institutions

### 2 Transforming Learning Environments

- School Sector Climate Action Mandate & Sustainability Toolkit
- Capital programme – Pathfinder projects
- New Leaving Certificate subject “Climate Action and Sustainable Development” for September 2025
- Strategic partnership for primary education established by DFA / Irish Aid – Global Village
- A range of new and updated further and higher education programmes and courses developing green skills and embedding ESD themes and competences

### 3 Capacity Building of Educators

- Mapping ESD related Continuing Professional Development exercise completed
- Inclusion of ESD as criteria for teacher summer course provision and Refund of Fees
- Increasing level of ESD related CPD provision across all levels of education
- Increased promotion of ESD related action orientated learning opportunities

#### 4 Empowering and Mobilising Youth

- Appointment of the ISSU to the NCCA Council
- Funding ISSU to support Youth led ESD related events
- Appointment of Youth Delegate to UNECE ESD Steering Group – Youth Platform
- Nomination of Youth Delegate for UNESCO Youth Forum November 2023
- National Youth Assembly on Climate

#### 5 Accelerating Local Level Action

- Initial engagement with all local authorities
- Little Library Initiative

#### Thanks!

We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the ESD Steering and Advisory Groups as well as members of the wider education community for their support of ESD to 2030 and for their input to this review report.

Priority Action Area 1  
**Advancing Policy**





# Priority Action Area 1

## – Advancing Policy

### 1 Collaboration

#### National Structures

A **National Steering Group for ESD to 2030** has been established comprising representatives of key government departments, education bodies, students, Teacher unions and civil society organisations, with a role to play in progressing the aims of the strategy. The Steering Group has met twice. Terms of Reference and minutes of meetings are available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

An **ESD Advisory Group for Schools** was established by the Department of Education (DoE) to progress implementation of actions set out in the Implementation Plan. The Advisory Group comprises key stakeholders. The Terms of Reference and minutes of meetings are available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

An **ESD Advisory Group for Further and Higher Education** was established by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) to support the coordination of new and existing institutional / sectoral initiatives in ESD and Sustainability, as well as providing a forum for collaboration, sharing good practice and for developing leadership capacity in ESD in further and higher education. The Advisory Group comprises key stakeholders. The Terms of Reference and minutes of meetings are available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

The Departments are represented on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Senior Officials Group and Interdepartmental Working Group**. The Senior Officials Group is chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach and the Interdepartmental Working Group is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Further information is available on the SDG Webpage: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/ff4201-17-sustainable-development-goals/#national-governance-structures>

Each Department has their own internal Climate Action Delivery Group to oversee progress on the Climate Action Plan and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

The DoE is represented on the Citizen Engagement and Climate Literacy Taskforce chaired by DECC.

The DoE and DFHERIS were represented on the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Grants Committee for 2023.

The above structures ensure a coordinated approach to policy.

#### International Structures

The DoE is represented on the **EU Working Group for Schools: Learning for Sustainability**. This Group was established in 2022 and has considered a range of ESD related topics during 2022/23 including: Whole School Approaches to Sustainability, Curriculum, Assessment, Capacity Building of Educators. Further information is available on the EU Commission website: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/first-meeting-of-eu-working-group-on-sustainability-in-school-education>

In June 2023, the Department was represented at a two day Peer Learning Activity for the working group in Madrid focused on greening school buildings. The Irish representative gave a presentation on the Irish Pathfinder Programme for retrofitting school buildings and how climate action is incorporated into the capital building programme.

The Commission provided an update on the work of the group to the **ESD Advisory Group for Schools** in May 2023.

DFHERIS is represented on the **EU Higher Education Working Group**. The Department and a UCC representative presented on Ireland's approach to ESD at a Peer Learning Activity hosted by Slovenia in December 2022, focused on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development.

The UN has established ESD-Net 2030, an international network for ESD. A DFHERIS representative contributed to a panel discussion on ESD Country initiatives as part of the Regional Europe/ North America webinar series in March 2023 and attended the first meeting of the network in the UNESCO HQ in Paris in June, alongside a DoE representative, delivering a presentation on how sustainability competencies are being integrated into programmes and curricula from primary to third level education in Ireland. A global meeting of ESD-Net will be held in Japan in December.

## Case Study

In May 2023, Ireland hosted a peer learning activity (PLA) under the theme of "Partnerships and Collaboration" for the EU Working group for schools: Learning for sustainability, in Kinsale, Co. Cork.

Delegates from 22 countries across Europe attended the PLA in Kinsale Community School and the two-day event saw input from a range of eminent speakers including a keynote address from Lord David Puttnam and a presentation on the Transforming Learning Summit by Professor Paul Walsh of UCD.

The School and its students informed the group of its achievements, its engagement with the local Further Education and Training College and the local community.

Representatives from Green Schools, ECO-UNESCO, Take 1 Programme, World Wise Global Schools and Global Education Network Europe (GENE) were involved in panel discussions on partnerships and collaboration. Representatives from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and University College Cork were also involved, representing the early years and higher education sectors.

The PLA concluded with a tree planting ceremony at Kinsale Community School.



## 2 Policy Alignment

### National Initiatives

The Digital Strategy for Schools has included reference to ESD to 2030 to ensure links between both the green/ ESD and digital transition agendas.

Actions associated with ESD to 2030 have been incorporated into the Climate Action Plan, the National Bioeconomy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan.

There was engagement with the chairperson of the **Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity** in terms of ESD and potential actions. As a result, two actions in the area of ESD and Biodiversity were recommended by the Assembly.

As part of actions outlined in the Creative Youth Plan, DCEDIY committed to the development of key principles underpinning young children's quality engagement with the arts in early learning and care settings. These key principles will help develop the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes promoted by ESD that enable everyone to take action for a sustainable future and planet.

Draft Principles for Engaging with the Arts in Early Learning and Care were published in October 2022. This consultation invites artists, early year's educators and all early learning and care stakeholders to use and explore these draft principles and test their validity in practice. While the draft principles were conceived from an early learning and care perspective, DCEDIY also wish to explore their relevance and the ways in which they may be adapted to better support engagement with the arts in school-age childcare. All school-age childcare stakeholders are invited to use and test these draft principles. Findings from this consultation will inform the finalised publication of the principles, the development of practice resource materials and accompanying CPD.

### International Initiatives

The Departments successfully submitted *ESD to 2030* to UNESCO as a **Country Initiative** in Education for Sustainable Development. Ireland and Spain are the first two countries in the Europe/ North America region to have successfully completed the application process. Read more about Country Initiatives here: <https://www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/country-initiatives#europe-and-north-america>

The Departments contributed to Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals: Voluntary National Review 2023, in particular Chapter 7.1: Education and Chapter 9.3: Ireland's Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the ESD Further and Higher Education Advisory Group.

The DoE has signed up to the **UNESCO – Greening Education Partnership** which aims to deliver strong, coordinated and comprehensive action that will prepare every learner to acquire the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to tackle climate change and to promote sustainable development. The Foundation of Environmental Education (FEE), is the international operator of Eco-Schools and focal point for Greening Schools. As the FEE Member for Ireland, An Taisce operates Green-Schools is leading on this initiative.

The Departments supported the Department of Foreign Affairs/ Irish Aid and the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) on the adoption of **the Dublin Declaration** at the Global Education Congress in Dublin Castle in November 2022. The Declaration commits governments across Europe to strengthening global citizenship education to help citizens understand their role in creating a better world. It was adopted following negotiations chaired by Minister for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora Colm Brophy and co-chair Minister Franz Fayot, Luxembourg's Minister of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs. Read the Dublin Declaration here: [Dublin Declaration – Press Release](#).

The European Year of Skills commenced in May 2023 with a focus on lifelong learning. A series of events has been delivered during the year, with many highlighting the need for upskilling and reskilling for the green transition. A full calendar of events can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/f66a7-european-year-of-skills/>.

The OECD Skills Strategy Report published on 9th May, 2023 concluded a 15 month project led by DFHERIS in partnership with the OECD, to comprehensively review Ireland's skills strategies, structures and approaches. The study highlights the green transition and green skills as a global megatrend that will have important implications for the types of skills required to participate fully in societies and economies in the future. One of the recommendations in the report includes the development of a Green Further Education and Skills Development Plan.

### 3 Communication

**ESD National Stakeholder Forum:** The first annual Forum under ESD to 2030 hosted collaboratively by the Departments was held on 1 December 2022 in the Printworks in Dublin Castle with over 200 participants. The Forum is designed to facilitate stakeholder engagement and to provide a platform for discussion, networking and sharing of ideas. Further details including the agenda and copies of presentations at the Forum are available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.



**ESD Newsletter:** The DoE published 4 ESD Newsletters during the 2022/23 academic year. The newsletter currently has just over 900 subscribers rising steadily. The Newsletter issues to all schools via the esinet system, to subscribers automatically and to the ESD networks and advisory groups. It is also available on a number of websites including the ESD to 2030 webpage, Scoilnet, ETBI, First 5 twitter account, DCEDIY and DFHERIS twitter accounts. The ESD Newsletter supports awareness raising and includes information on funding for ESD, ESD resources and programmes, CPD opportunities for educators, research reports, international developments and competitions. It also provides a platform for education settings from Early Years to Third Level to share the work they are doing on sustainability, best practice and practical tips. You can subscribe to the Newsletter here: [Subscribe](#).

The Departments promoted the first national **SDG Week** organized by DECC in September 2022. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Week celebrates and raises awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and forms part of the wider European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW). The DoE issued **SDG posters and an ESD information leaflet** to all primary and post primary schools as part of its awareness raising programme. Further SDG posters were circulated to schools via the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) at their 2023 Conference and at the ESD Forum in December 2022.

The DoE promoted *ESD to 2030* at both the BT Young Scientist Exhibition (BTYSE) in January 2023 and at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2022 as part of the GOV.IE stand.



The sixth Climate Action Week 2022, led by An Taisce, took place from 10–16 October 2022 and included a series of events over the week such as the launch at University of Galway, launch of the Primary Climate Ambassadors pilot programme, Lets Fix Fashion launch, Junior Primary Storytime, Secondary School Marine Film Club, Green Campus Changemakers, performance by the Community Climate Choir and many more. Climate Action Week 2023 will take place from 16–22 October 2023. A full programme of events will be published by An Taisce closer to the date.

## 4 Mapping and Monitoring

### General

UNESCO are in the process of establishing a Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on the SDG 4 indicators. The TCG provides a platform to discuss and develop the indicators used to monitor the Education 2030 Agenda in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner. Among other objectives, the TCG oversees the development of the SDG 4 global and thematic indicators and other policy relevant indicators; develops the methodological norms, standards, tools and guidelines; identifies needs at the national level and proposes means to develop country capacity and solutions to reduce barriers; coordinates global efforts to improve data availability and quality; collaborates with regional organisations, agencies and countries; and coordinates the harmonisation of regional monitoring frameworks with the global SDG framework. Ireland will be represented on this group and the ESD teams will coordinate in terms of SDG 4.7 as required.

The Departments met with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to discuss mapping and monitoring of SDG 4.7. CSO advise that individual countries are free to determine country appropriate targets for the SDGs/ ESD. The Departments intend to establish a working group to progress work on monitoring and evaluating progress on ESD in Ireland when work at an international level has progressed.

The Departments provided input to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Ireland review for the period since August 2022 at a session covering chapter NC8 on “Education, training and public awareness” providing a progress report on *ESD to 2030* at an in-person meeting hosted by DECC on 24 April 2023.

A thematic evaluation of provision for ESD in early learning and care settings, primary and post-primary schools has been conducted by the DoE Inspectorate and a report is due to be published before the end of 2023.

The DoE has participated in a **EURYDICE** survey on sustainability in schools for the first time. This should assist us in benchmarking how we are performing in terms of ESD in Ireland and help us to identify any gaps that need to be addressed.

### Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are making significant progress in developing existing and new frameworks and tools to monitor and evaluate progress on ESD and enhance accountability, with some examples of this outlined below:

- To test sustainability literacy, Atlantic Technological University (ATU), University of Galway, Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), and University College Cork (UCC) are currently piloting the Sulitest, a UN backed international sustainability literacy assessment method, with end of semester tests delivered to undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts. TU Dublin has been coordinating with UCC to develop an Ireland specific module for this project.

- Dublin City University (DCU) has identified Sustainability Literacy as one of 17 key transversal skills that will prepare students to be future-capable and thrive in an increasingly unscripted world defined by unprecedented technological and social change. These transversal skills are being mapped across 16 undergraduate programmes, which span all five faculties in the university. This will ensure that sustainability literacy is being both developed and evaluated in these programmes in a robust and authentic manner. In situations where the learning opportunities and outcomes associated with sustainability literacy are not evident, a collaborative strategy will be adopted to address any identified gaps.
- In 2021, a group of sustainability advocates from across UL came together to co-design and develop a shared vision for a sustainable university by 2030. This vision is articulated in UL's 2030 Framework, which provides a mission-based approach to sustainability for HEIs. One of the 21 missions in the framework seeks to support reporting on the SDGs. As a result, one of the first initiatives has seen the development of an open-source UL Sustainability Literacy LibGuide. UL is also currently working to develop a digital twin to capture and monitor its progress toward becoming a truly sustainable university. This tool that will enable the university to monitor progress in real-time and enhance accountability.
- Under seed funding from the HEA's Transform-EDU project, TU Dublin built an AI-based tool to analyse text contained in academic programme module descriptors to attribute modules with a sustainability scoring and a categorisation according to the international AASHE STARS framework. While further work is needed to upgrade the tool and embed it within academic programme module catalogue systems, it is currently being used, together with School and Faculty level sustainability champions, to assess,

develop and revise academic modules and programmes to understand and integrate sustainability into learning and programme outcomes. Presently approximately 17 academic programmes have been assessed under this pilot.

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings is a global performance table that assesses universities against the United Nations SDGs. The 2023 Impact Rankings is the fifth edition, and the overall ranking includes 1,705 Universities from 115 countries and regions: Four HEIs in Ireland scored in the top 100 in the overall rankings: University of Galway (34), University College Cork (58), Dublin City University (71) and University of Limerick (86). Full details are available here: Impact Rankings 2023 | Times Higher Education (THE)

## 5 Research

### Collaboration with Research Funders

To ensure that research that addresses ESD and the SDGs is included as a priority within future research funding calls, the HEA emphasises the importance of addressing the SDGs in research with the addition of a new principle on Research and Sustainability in the revised HEA Principles of Good Practice in Research, published in December 2022. This new principle encourages HEIs to recognise their responsibility to support the achievement of ESD and the SDGs.

The DoE and DCEDIY have joined forces with DFA to fund research projects under the Irish Research Council's (IRC) New Foundations funding call. The strand looks at Education for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development. It will support research, networking and collaboration for the purpose of increasing public awareness and understanding of issues such as climate change, hunger, global inequality and injustice. These awards will be 12 months in duration up to a maximum value of €10,000. Find out more here: <https://research.ie/funding/new-foundations/>

The IRC, building on the CAROLINE scheme, established the interdisciplinary programme, COALESCE (Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges), which is linked with the SDG framework. The outcome of the fourth cycle of COALESCE was announced in 2022 and it is planned to open a new call later this year. The IRC typically includes funding partnerships with government departments and agencies in the COALESCE programme, in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is operating a suite of funding calls, many of which specifically address ESD and the SDGs. These include a recent all island, large scale Research Centres Call, which targets the thematic areas of *Climate* and *Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems*. The SFI Challenge funding programmes suite has been developed to include a dedicated SDG Challenge. One of two National Challenge Fund themes is the Green Transition. The agency has recently launched a new Public Service Fellowship programme, which will offer researchers a unique opportunity to be temporarily seconded to Government Departments and Agencies, to work on specific projects where they can add value, resulting in mutually beneficial outcomes. Several of the projects will focus on areas relevant to ESD. SFI is currently developing a Climate Action Strategy, which will bring further opportunities to develop new initiatives in the funding and policy space.

### Engaged research and public policy

Sustainability and climate action are key drivers of research focus across many HEIs. This is increasing the visibility of research relating to ESD and the SDGs, and assisting in informing effective public policy decisions to address societal challenges. Many of the HEIs are working with Campus Engage and other similar stakeholders to promote and support civic and community engagement as a core function of Irish higher education. Some

illustrative examples of work that has been undertaken include:

- In 2022, UCC undertook a significant programme of research engagement in relation to the SDGs. A research support officer was hired for a period of nine months to undertake a mapping of UCC's research impact in terms of SDGs and to deliver workshops across all schools in the institution, outlining the importance of SDGs to research and how the research community can engage. The project uncovered over 5,000 publications from UCC researchers addressing SDG challenges over a three-year period.
- The University of Limerick (UL) has been nominated by the Young European Research University Network (YERUN) to lead the development of an EU-wide programme to support doctoral engagement with ESD. This programme is currently being co-designed and will run in 2024.
- TU Dublin recently appointed a new Head of Societal Engagement and team, which will focus on strengthening the university's civic engagements.
- In the realm of policy-shaping, UCD researchers have provided advice to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on expanding Ireland's network of Marine Protected Areas. UL's Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice Project (REPPP) saw the university work alongside the Department of Justice to improve the evidence base for youth crime policy making.

## Case Study

Launched in 2023, SDSN Ireland is an all-island chapter of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network functioning at local, regional, and global levels and is co-hosted by University College Cork and Queen's University Belfast. SDSN Ireland is a North-South cooperative network focused on developing context-specific solutions to sustainability challenges and mobilising local action for advancing the SDGs. Engaging universities, research centers, local authorities, NGOs, civil society organisations and policymakers, SDSN Ireland will generate knowledge to enable relevant solutions to SDG challenges and seeks to empower individuals and organisations to achieve positive societal impacts.

SDSN Ireland is currently defining priority areas under the pillars of solutions, education and engagement and there are currently 13 partner institutions in the network. As such, ESD is a core focus of SDSN Ireland which is currently engaged with SDSN Greece and partners in the Global South to repurpose the open-source Irish SDG Curriculum Toolkit and associated professional development for their local and regional context. SDSN Ireland is working with the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) programme in Ireland which includes 7 partners and is collaborating with the creation of the Climate Literacy training programme for Higher Education Leadership. SDSN Ireland will also support research-based teaching approaches focused on sustainability solutions across the island of Ireland.

## Citizen Science Initiatives

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is engaged in citizen science initiatives in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC) and An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit (EEU). This includes the GLOBE project, led by the EEU, where participating schools learn about air quality and the weather by making scientific measurements near their schools. This programme works with schools in every county and undertakes Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) measurements in an annual national campaign. GLOBE has been diversified in 2023 to look at carbon sinks and sources in school grounds, river water quality, microplastics in water and climate observations.

The EPA also operates the 'Clean Air Together' project. Over 1000 residents from across Dublin City and 700 in Cork City measured NO<sub>2</sub> levels, with the results published in March 2022 and February 2023 respectively. This project is moving to Galway, with recruitment of citizen scientists commencing in August 2023.

In relation to biodiversity, EPA is currently supporting the National Biodiversity Data Centre financially on two citizen science projects: 'Dragonfly Ireland', an all-Ireland Citizen Science survey of dragonflies and damselflies, and their habitats, and 'Explore Your Shore!', which is working to build knowledge of the distribution of marine species around the Irish coast.

SFI currently supports citizen science activity through its Challenge based funding programmes and the Discover Programme. Examples include Plastic Raiders (led by Professor Francesco Pila, UCD) under Challenge funding and Uiscope (led by the Tyndall National Institute) under the Discover programme. SFI has committed to trailing a new Citizen Science initiative under the agency's strategy, Shaping Our Future and scoping of this initiative is underway.



## Case Study

The Common Swift is a migratory bird species that spends the majority of its life in the air. They are true masters of the skies, landing only when it is time to breed. They nest in nooks and crannies in man-made structures, mainly old stone buildings in urban areas. The Swift is a red-listed bird of conservation concern in Ireland. This designation indicates that the species is experiencing a rapid decline in population. Several factors contribute to their decline, including building renovations, and changes in building construction practices.

In 2012, the Green Campus team at ATU Mayo initiated a nest box project that enabled in-nest video capture. Recordings from multiple breeding seasons provided valuable data to support advanced research on the breeding biology of the Common Swift, making it one of the most comprehensive studies in the world. Additionally, this project played a significant role in promoting swift conservation efforts locally, nationally, and internationally. Local communities were encouraged to participate in the research, including video analysis by ATU students and pupils from local secondary schools. This project served as an inspiration for numerous other communities to engage in citizen science, leading to an increase in the local population of this remarkable species.

To learn more about the Common Swift, please visit the Swift Conservation Ireland website and the ATU Save Our Swift webpage.

## Green Labs Initiative

Many Irish HEIs are involved in the Green Labs initiative, which provides a platform for institutions to share case studies and best practice in the operation and management of laboratories seeking to reduce their environmental impacts. This initiative helps to build a culture of sustainability in the lab, advances the SDGs and identifies opportunities for waste reduction. Several laboratories across multiple HEIs have been awarded the Green Lab certification, which has been recognised by the UN's Race to Zero campaign as a key measure of progress towards a zero-carbon future. It should be noted that a significant number of HEIs are currently working to encourage more of their laboratories to strive towards, and achieve, the Green Lab certification.

SFI also aims to roll out a national Green Lab certification programme. The agency has entered a procurement process to secure a suitable provider. It is anticipated that a pilot will be initiated before year end 2023.

## 6 Funding and Incentives

In September **2022**, the DoE issued a funding call to organisations and schools for projects supporting implementation of ESD to 2030. Circa €220,000 in funding was distributed among 9 organisations and 45 primary and post primary schools. Details on the grantees and projects is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage. A summary of the projects funded is available at Appendix 2 below.

In May **2023**, DoE issued a funding call for organisations with total funding of just over €267,000 allocated. Funding of between €1,000 and €25,000 was available to support projects and programmes delivering on the ESD to 2030 agenda in schools. A list of grantees is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

A funding call for schools issued in September 2023 with a total fund of circa. €500,000 available.

## Case Study

ESD to 2030 funding of €5,000 was provided to Bremore Educate Together Secondary School in October 2023 to facilitate the development by students of child friendly school policies.

Starting with an anti-bullying policy, students met frequently to develop a policy with inclusivity and approachability at its core, in line with Target 4a of Goal 4. The grant funded a trip to Belfast to meet Laura Lundy, Professor of Children's Rights, Queens University, Belfast and University College Cork. The student team received letters from the European Commission in recognition of the importance and strength of their work to create policies in line with EU Child and Digital Rights.

The student team plans to showcase their work in other schools in September 2023, to demonstrate how their success might be replicated.

In 2022, DFHERIS provided a €7.7m funding allocation through SATLE (the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Funding in Higher Education), to drive teaching and learning innovation and enhancement across the higher education sector. SATLE is administered by the National Forum in partnership with the HEA. Education for Sustainable Development is one of three priority areas for funding under SATLE. Reporting shows that 16 of 17 HEIs have used SATLE funding to support ESD projects in 2022. A further allocation of €6.1m in SATLE funding has been allocated to HEIs in August 2023.

Funding to support capacity building for ESD has also been provided under the N-TUTORR project, a €40m initiative across the Technological Higher Education sector aimed at transforming student and staff experiences through technology, informed by the SDGs. This project forms part of Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Programme funded by the European Commission.

The 2023 Department of Foreign Affairs/Irish Aid GCE budget is €7.14 million and €2.1 million in Education Grants was awarded to 33 organisations working across Ireland. The funds will be used for activities to build awareness and understanding of global issues such as climate change, hunger and injustice and to support the public to act individually and collectively in global solidarity.

## 7 Award Standards

In order to progress the inclusion of ESD in award standards, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) has developed a range of new qualification standards for lifelong learning at NFQ levels 1-4.

These qualification standards have been informed by the EU Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong learning which aims to promote knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by all for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. They have also been informed by Green Comp, the European sustainability competence framework, which acts as an agreed reference framework for sustainability competences.

Public consultation on these new qualification standards is complete and subject to internal governance it is anticipated that they will be made available to QQI accredited providers in 2024.

Priority Action Area 2

# Transforming Learning Environments



# Priority Action Area 2

## – Transforming Learning Environments

### 2.1 Leadership

#### Primary and Post-Primary Education

A Sustainability Toolkit for schools has been developed to support schools in assessing their sustainability progress and in adopting a Sustainability Policy Statement in accordance with the School Sector – Climate Action Mandate.

The DoE has continued to support the Take 1 Programme, which is focused on providing training for post primary teachers, middle and senior leaders, supporting them to embed ESD in learning and teaching as part of a whole-school curriculum. The Take 1 Programme is endorsed by the Centre for School Leadership (CSL).

Irish Aid's strategic partner at post-primary school level WorldWise Global Schools held their annual School Management Symposium in Iveagh House, Dublin (headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs) in November 2022. Over 60 principals and deputy principals from second level schools attended the event to share ideas on embedding a GCE focus in every aspect of their schools and to give principals a deeper understanding of Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

#### Further and Higher Education and Training

The majority of HEIs indicated a considerable effort to incorporate ESD/SDGs into their institution's overall strategic goals and objectives to include governance, strategy and structure. Examples of approaches adopted include the following:

- To stimulate discussion on how to embed the SDGs into their strategy, ATU facilitated a '17 Rooms' event as part of their Strategic Planning Process in January 2023. The identification of sustainability as a key value in their strategy will allow for greater integration of ESD/SDGs within university governance, management, structures and strategy.
- UL's new Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation (CSFI), is leading UL's transition to becoming a sustainable university. The Centre's role is to combine strategic foresight and sustainable development, with the intention of building collective capacity to co-create preferable futures and an innovation engine to drive action. UL's Mission Lab, which will lead on these actions, will be formally launched in September 2023. The CSFI has run a series of workshops with UL's Senior Teams to highlight the systemic challenges facing the university, explore alternative preferable futures, and to co-design and develop the university's approach to sustainable development.

In a bid to develop and support leadership for ESD, many new positions have been created across a selection of HEIs. For example:

- In the University of Galway, funding was recently approved to establish a new centralised Sustainability Office. The office will be led by a Director of Sustainability and will also include two new lectureship roles in ESD. The purpose of the lectureship roles is to support academic staff in developing ESD implantation roadmaps, resources, and materials to embed ESD into the curriculum.
- In 2021, TU Dublin's organisation design created the role of VP for Sustainability as a member of the University Executive Team, leading the PLANET pillar of the University Strategy, Strategic Intent 2030 and reporting to the President. In 2022/23 the VP for Sustainability established a team of experts and champions in the key impact areas of Sustainability Education, Decarbonisation, Reporting & Intelligence, and Societal Engagement to work across university functions to embed ESD into local action plans and decision making. The establishment of the TU Dublin University Sustainability Council will further advance this cross-cutting agenda to engage and monitor progress on national and TU Dublin strategy in relation to ESD.
- UCC has established a new sub-committee of the University Leadership Team, focused on Sustainability and Climate Action, chaired by the President. An Office of Sustainability and Climate Action has also been established within the President's Office and an Associate VP for Sustainability and Climate Action appointed.
- TCD created the post of VP for Biodiversity and Climate Action in 2021. A Sustainability Manager was appointed in 2022, to support the role of the Vice-President and drive the development of university policy and implementation plans and deliver key sustainability projects within the university.
- In April 2023, UCD appointed a VP for Sustainability, a new top level role placing sustainability at the heart of the University's education, research, governance, operations and engagement activities.
- SETU's Governing Body has endorsed its new Climate Action Roadmap, and as such the roles of Climate & Sustainability Champion, Energy Performance Officer and SETU Green Teams will be appointed. Moreover, The SETU Strategic Plan allows for the creation of an office for sustainable development within the university that will drive sustainable practices and thinking. Key members of staff have also attended training with ACCA Ireland in Sustainability Strategy, Risk and Reporting.

## 2.2 ESD Competencies and Transversal Skills

The Departments have been keeping abreast of developments internationally in relation to ESD/ Sustainability competency frameworks.

Green Comp, the EU Framework for competencies was published in January 2022 and has been referenced in the Sustainability Toolkit, guidelines document for Schools.

DFHERIS presented on Irish approaches to embedding Sustainability competencies in programmes and curricula at the ESD-Net Regional meeting in UNESCO HQ, June 2023.

## 2.3 ESD Pedagogies

DFHERIS funding provided through the National Forum's SATLE fund in 2022 and 2023 is being used by HEIs to promote the use of signature pedagogies for ESD among educators. SATLE Funding 2022–23 includes ESD as a priority area for funding. Aligned with the priority action areas of ESD to 2030, it sets out to:

- 1 Promote inclusive principles and practices, such as universal design for learning (UDL), across all educational levels to support more inclusive learning environments
- 2 Embed opportunities for collaboration and peer learning on ESD, with a particular focus on transformative pedagogies, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches
- 3 Support the development of Open Courses on ESD/SDGs for professional development of educators in higher education

The National Forum's 'Open Course on UDL' for Higher Education and FET staff was rolled out in Q3 2022 with 3,122 participants and 524 trained facilitators up to July 2023.

## 2.4 Embedding ESD

### Early Learning and Care

*Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is for all babies, toddlers and young children from birth to 6 years in Ireland. *Aistear* considers children's early experiences of active citizenship as foundational and promotes pedagogical approaches that harness children's innate sense of fairness, curiosity, and ability to understand and respect diversity. It promotes learning experiences that encourage children to demonstrate independence, make choices and decisions and to take the lead. It promotes a rights-based approach to early education that recognises and responds to children as active citizens and rights-holders, encouraging children's sense of self, others and wider society.

*Aistear* is currently being updated in consultation with stakeholders including babies, toddlers and young children, parents, and early childhood educators, to reflect changes in Irish society and the policy landscape of the early childhood sector.

Early childhood educators following the *Aistear* curriculum framework can benefit from ESD resources which have been developed by civil society organisations, including IDEA members Trocaire and Galway One World Centre, for example 'Good Neighbours: A Development Education Resource for Early Childhood' (Trocaire) and 'We Only Want the Earth: A Global Justice Infant Teaching Resource' (Dr. Triona Stokes for Galway One World Centre).

### Primary and Post-Primary Education

In 2023, the Minister for Education published a new Primary Curriculum Framework, which includes a new area of learning – "Social and Environmental Education". Find out more about this development here: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/social-and-environmental-education/> Social and Environmental Education helps children to develop an understanding of the human and natural environments and the relationship between them, and so acquiring the attitudes, concepts, dispositions, knowledge, skills, and values that motivate and empower them to become informed and active citizens who promote a more sustainable future.

A Strategic partnership for primary education was established by DFA / Irish Aid – Global Village in 2022 comprising Trócaire, UCD, INTO and IPPN. Global Village is a new Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme for primary schools in Ireland. It aims to support primary school pupils to become active global citizens committed to building a fairer and more sustainable world.

In 2022, the Minister for Education announced that a new Leaving Certificate curriculum on “Climate Change and Sustainable Development” would be developed. In a recent update, the Minister announced that under the Senior Cycle Reform programme, a range of new and revised subject curricula would be introduced in schools on a phased basis from September 2025. Work on the development of the Climate Change and Sustainable Development curriculum is underway by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Find out more here: <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/climate-action-and-sustainable-development/>. This new Leaving Certificate subject will enhance existing cross-curricular provision of ESD.

Ukrainian will be added as a non-curricular examinable subject at Leaving Certificate level from summer 2025 for heritage speakers. This will support the over 16,000 students from Ukraine who have enrolled in our schools since the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022.

Supports are being offered under Languages Connect to Leaving Certificate students taking heritage languages not yet available as curricular languages, but with a relatively significant number of speakers, including for example Romanian and Latvian. These supports include extra-curricular classes, summer camps and school grants for provision of classes.

The National Executive of the Leaving Certificate Applied National Association (LCANA) updated progress on ESD curriculum development and included information on ESD in their 2022/23 Newsletter. They are planning a workshop on ESD at their next National Conference.

## Further Education and Training

SOLAS promote and implement the Green Skills Action Programme through various actions, including:

- SOLAS' Green Skills unit is collaborating with all stakeholders to support the ongoing development, training and upskilling of all targeted learner cohorts with new or enhanced green skills.
- New Green Skills modules have been developed and made available to all learners. These include a level 4 microcredential blended learning offering in Environmental Sustainability Awareness; a level 5 microcredential blended learning offering in Environmental Sustainability in the Workplace for enterprise; and a wholly online green skills module, developed in partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and offered via the eCollege portal. Entitled Energy & You: Reduce Your Use, this provides learners with knowledge to promote sustainable practices at home and in the workplace.
- Successfully developed a certified programme targeted at semiskilled operatives for the Retrofitting Sector through a network of NZEB/Retrofit Centres of Excellence.
- SOLAS have successfully embedded NZEB skills across all electrical and plumbing apprenticeships.
- Kerry ETB has developed a new apprenticeship in Wind Turbine Maintenance to lead the way in developing skills for the renewable energy transition, while work is underway to roll out EV mechanic skills through motor mechanic apprenticeship programmes.



## Case Study

### NZEB/Retrofit Training

The Irish Government has an ambitious target to retrofit 500,000 homes by 2030. This policy necessitates the development of significant levels of relevant skills. The NZEB and retrofit training delivered through the ETB sector ensures that construction workers are equipped with the necessary green skills, and also provide an entry route for those seeking to move into this area.

SOLAS and the ETBs are developing an expanding network of NZEB/ Retrofit Centres of Excellence. Four Centres of Excellence are currently operated by Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board, Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board, Limerick Clare Education and Training Board, and Cork Education and Training Board. Two further Centres will be shortly be opened by Mayo-Sligo-Leitrim ETB and City of Dublin ETB.

Courses are available both to beginners and those who already have relevant experience and knowledge. Courses vary between 1 and 5 days, depending on the knowledge and skills required by the individual, and they are free and flexible for learners, with weekend and evening provision available.

Following the development of this national network of NZEB/ Retrofit Centres of Excellence, the number of workers availing of these opportunities has increased steadily. Numbers have risen from 363 to 793 enrolments in 2021 and to a record 2,034 enrolments in 2022. Enrolments from January to end July 2023 are 1,822.

In the future, NZEB/Retrofit training will be developed in line with evolving building standards. Measures are also planned to expand construction green skills among new target cohorts, without outreach activities to take place in secondary schools. A mobile NZEB training facility was launched in August 2023, which can be brought to schools to give students a taster of what a career in this sector would be like. A pilot project is also being planned with the Irish Prison Service, with NZEB/Retrofit training to be made available to inmates in selected prisons from Q4 2023.





**Skillnet Ireland** supported over 4,100 employees in the green transition through their Climate Ready Academy, Lean & Green Skillnet, Green Tech Skillnet, and Sustainable Finance Skillnet in 2022.

The Climate Ready Academy's 'Sustainability Pass' programme sets out to support staff of all disciplines and skill levels in understanding how their sustainable actions will play a vital role in the country's collective cultural and practical response, as we move to a more sustainable society. In 2022, 1,200 learners took part in the programme. The Sustainability Pass has not been developed as a Microcredential at this juncture. However, the Climate Ready Academy & Skillnet Ireland in partnership with UL, have launched three new micro-credential programmes, 'Energy Leaders', 'Waste and Circular Economy Leaders' and 'Sustainability Leaders'.

Skillnet Ireland is engaging widely with industry to develop the skills framework that will boost Ireland's capacity to accelerate the green transformation, build sustainable businesses and fuel sustainable innovation through its Skillnet Business Networks and its Climate Ready initiative.

ECO-UNESCO is a QQI accredited training centre, accredited to deliver a range of QQI courses ranging from Levels 3 to Levels 6. These include Level 3 Community Participation; Levels 5 Sustainable Development and Peer Education; Levels 6 Ecology and the Environment. ECO-UNESCO currently delivers the Level 3 module in Community Participation and Levels 5 in Peer Education. In addition it delivers a range of Green Youth Employability courses and is currently delivering a 2-year Green Steps programme with young asylum seekers.

## Higher Education

### *Lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling*

Springboard+ complements the core State-funded education and training system and provides free and subsidised upskilling and reskilling higher education opportunities in areas of identified skills need.

The Human Capital Initiative (HCI) forms a key part of the strategic response to a changing world of work and the challenges the economy will face in the period ahead. With a strong focus on innovation and agility, the programmes being supported will ensure that graduates and the education system as a whole, are in a position to respond positively to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Springboard+ and HCI Pillar 1 were launched in June 2023, and will play a vital role in the green transition by providing funding to Higher Education system in the areas of green skills.

Under green skills and green skills related areas, Springboard+ 2023 will provide over 600 places on 20 courses and HCI Pillar 1 will provide over 500 places on 22 courses for the academic year 2023/24, to be delivered by public and private higher education providers around the country.

Under Springboard+ 2022 and HCI Pillar 1 2022/23 there was a combined total of 724 places on 25 courses in construction and green skills areas.

HCI Pillar 3, received funding in 2020 over a five year period (2020 to 2024). Under HCI Pillar 3, there are 12 Projects related to Green Skills (SDG's or Climate Action, Sustainability and the Environment).

These projects include but are not limited to Sustainable Futures, Ireland's Knowledge Centre for Carbon, Climate and, Community Action, REEdI- Rethinking Engineering Education in Ireland, Digital Academy for Sustainable Built Environment (DASBE), Resilient Design Curricula for 21st Century. These projects are exceeding targets, and more places and courses are expected to be delivered and reported on within the lifetime of the project.

The Ubuntu Network, based at UL, supports the integration of ESD into post primary initial teacher education in 14 Higher Education Institutions across Ireland. It works with teacher educator faculty and management to embed ESD into teacher educator programmes. It also supports research in this area, particularly in relation to monitoring and effectiveness of pedagogical approaches.

### Core provision

Several HEIs expressed plans to integrate and mainstream ESD and SDGs across all of their programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in the near future.

Many programmes already have a strong focus on sustainability, embedding ESD into curricula and programmes to ensure learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to promote, advance and take action for sustainable development. Examples of this can be seen across the breadth of higher education institutions, with some illustrative examples detailed below:

- The ATU Department of Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences has created ‘Sustainability Leaders’ on each academic programme, to support integration and awareness of ESD on an ongoing basis and to share experiences across programmes. In 2023, ATU Mayo launched a part-time flexible delivery Masters in Outdoor Education, Sustainability & Wellbeing, with students from a range of disciplinary backgrounds completing a specific module on ESD and developing research projects. ATU Sligo have developed an online M.Sc. in Sustainable Food Systems, a bespoke programme developed for IBEC Food Drink Skillnet; this includes modules on sustainability and research dissertations targeting sustainability actions in the Food and Drink industry.
- To develop graduates who have the skills, knowledge and ways of thinking to address the sustainable development challenges advocated by the SDGs, MTU requires each programme to conduct a mapping exercise at the programme design stage to ensure that SDGs are addressed throughout the lifespan of the programme.
- Maynooth University are developing programmes in the Department of Computer Science, Department of Chemistry, and the Department of Biology to integrate ESD and SDGs into the core programmes. This can be seen in the sustainable electrochemistry embraced by the Chemistry Department, the combining of environmental and biological considerations in the BSc in Biological and Geographical Systems, and the move to green, low energy computing in Maths. Moreover, Maynooth Universities Department of Adult and Community Education and the School of Education conducted an all-staff survey on the SDGs to begin mapping SDGs to all of their modules and evaluate the importance of specific SDGs to individual disciplines and subjects. The dissemination of the results from this survey led to a successful award of an Maynooth University Centre for Teaching and Learning Fellowship to map all of the undergraduate, postgraduate and other courses in Maynooth University that contain content that addresses issues of sustainability and to propose how courses that do not address issues of sustainability and do not contribute to the achievement of the SDGs can be supported to address these topics. This fellowship is ongoing, but it is anticipated that the results and recommendations will lead to better integration of the SDGs across general curriculum design going forward.

- In 2021, UCC launched its SDG Toolkit which provided curated resources to support staff in integrating sustainability into learning and teaching. The Toolkit allows staff to self-assess their teaching against each of the 17 SDGs and on a 5-point scale ranging from zero-integration to using active learning pedagogies, including project-based learning, problem-based learning, and case studies. A Community of Interest emerged during the development and piloting of the toolkit which is currently being built on to encourage further knowledge exchange and transdisciplinary collaboration across the university.
- UL's Integrated Curriculum Development Framework puts ESD at the heart of the curriculum, in order to achieve the institution's ambition of producing global and active citizens. The university is working on a systems-wide change to enable all students with the opportunity to learn about ESD, not just in the classroom but by real example, and has integrated ESD into courses, modules and programme offerings. UL is also piloting the European-funded EULab, which attempts to model and co-design systemic interventions to ESD within its curriculum. In addition, UL is working to build a portfolio of industry-focused ESD programmes, and recently launched their professional Diploma in Climate Adaption and Sustainability, with a modular focus on climate hazards, urban ecosystems and sustainability.
- In IADT, newly validated and recently designed programmes have embedded ESD/SDG principles in place. An example includes the MA in Design for Change, co-developed and delivered with George Brown College in Toronto. The programme is affiliated with the Brookfield Sustainability Institute and includes Modules in Design Futures, Ecological Design and Social Design.

Many HEIs are developing **micro-credentials** on ESD-related topics to support upskilling and reskilling for a sustainable economy and society.

- ATU has developed a digital badge, 'Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals', a 5-hour self-directed online learning course aimed at Technological University (TU) and Institute of Technology students in Ireland as part of the N-TUTORR project. Pilot engagement with the course commenced in June 2023 with 100 student champions across the sector on [www.mydigitalbackpack.ie](http://www.mydigitalbackpack.ie). Following the pilot, this digital badge opportunity will be open to all learners in the TU sector to support embedding ESD in the curriculum.
- DCU's Graduate Certificate in Aviation Sustainability, Leadership and Innovation is aimed at developing practitioners in the aviation management space to enable them to lead sustainably, innovate and understand the regulatory environment in their organisations and beyond. This micro-credential-based programme is the only graduate programme of its kind in the world.
- DkIT offers a part-time micro-credential programme in Sustainable Agriculture, and their Programme Board is currently considering the development of micro-credentials within a number of other areas.

- University of Galway offer micro-credential courses on several ESD related topics. For example:
  - ‘Environmental Planning and Management for Organisations’ explores the roots and principles of environmental planning and management in practice, introducing students to a range of conceptual and practical approaches.
  - ‘Energy Management for Organisations’ prepares the graduate for managing energy in industry according to the energy management standards.
  - ‘Greenlabs Principles and Practices’ aims to provide a general overview of key environmental concepts such as climate change, plastic pollution, sustainability, and biodiversity.
- TUS, in partnership with N-TUTORR HEIs, is providing access to relevant micro-credential programmes for academic staff. TUS leads the Digital Academy for Sustainable Building Environment (DASBE) initiative, which is delivering flexible micro-credential programmes across the fields of sustainable building, renewables, circular economy and related fields.
- UCD also offer a wide selection of ESD related micro-credential courses, including, ‘Creativity for Sustainable Food Systems’, ‘Green care’, and ‘Sustainable Livestock Systems’. The university is currently developing additional micro-credential courses in this area.

A number of actions and initiatives are currently underway within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and its agencies to support the *ESD to 2030: Implementation Plan*, including sustainability and green awareness training to help enterprises better understand their impact on the environment, information sessions and workshops to learn about best practice in Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG), and grants to help enterprises begin their decarbonisation journey.

Initiatives include the Climate Toolkit 4 which helps enterprises to learn about their impact on the environment and provides practical and cost-effective actions that every business can take to support their transformation and build resilience. The Local Enterprise Offices continue to engage with businesses to support them on their decarbonisation journeys including through a series of webinars Enterprise Ireland Client Solutions Hub – Sustainability ([globalambition.ie](https://globalambition.ie)) and Sustainability Kickstarter half-day workshops for SME business leaders, The Green for Business programme, a Productivity & Competitiveness Campaign incorporating Sustainability – All in a Day’s Work; Skillnet Ireland and Enterprise Ireland partnership – 12 week Sustainability Leaders Programme and SOLAS Skills to Advance Partnership.

Built Heritage section of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Office of Public Works and The Heritage Council of Ireland are partners in the CHARTER – European Heritage Skills Alliance. This is a Erasmus+ project funded from 2021–2024. The mission of the CHARTER Project in short is to create a lasting, comprehensive skills strategy that will guarantee Europe has the necessary cultural heritage skills to support sustainable societies and economies.

## 2.5 ESD Resources

DoE funding for ESD to 2030 projects includes funding for the development of resources for schools including the creation of a series of video resources on gardening and resources associated with the Wise Water project. Details on funding granted is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage. A summary of ESD to 2030 funding in 2022 is available at Appendix 2.

DoE has, together with key stakeholders, developed a Sustainability Toolkit for schools to support them in developing their own Sustainability Policy Statement in accordance with the School Sector Climate Action Mandate. The Sustainability Toolkit also includes a self-assessment audit tool for schools to assist them in clearly identifying their level of engagement with ESD across all three strands – Environmental, Social and Economic.

In 2023, the City of Dublin ETB published a Tutor Handbook focused on 'Climate Justice Education in Practice'. The handbook offers creative approaches to building adult learners' critical understanding of climate change and climate justice. It aims to build tutors' confidence and capacity to engage learners in discussions and critical reflection on these issues. It is available at:  
<https://adulteducationcityofdublincity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/138530-CDETB-Climate-Justice-book-WEB-Version.pdf>

Libraries are incorporated into the government's National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022–2024, with a specific focus on awareness raising actions, including the holding of an annual SDG awareness week in September each year.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) has produced a series of resources, including videos, about planning and becoming a planner as part of its statutory functions – <https://www.opr.ie/public-awareness-2/>. The Irish Planning Institute is continuing to review opportunities to develop resources for post-primary and primary schools to support ESD.

Scoilnet, the DoE portal for education, provides detailed information on ESD resources for schools: Sustainable Development – Scoilnet.

DCEDIY funds a variety of support organisations including City/ County Childcare Community and Voluntary Childcare Organisations to provide resources and supports to Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) settings. During 2023/24 DCEDIY will progress the development of practice resource materials and accompanying CPD training to support SAC settings' implementation of the National Quality Guidelines, which will include a focus on outdoor play. DCEDIY are currently progressing plans to undertake research and policy development in relation to further supporting outdoor learning and play in ELC.

A key part of the work of Irish Aid partners is developing educational resources for formal (including early years) and non-formal education. In 2021/2022, Irish Aid partners produced or updated 288 resources including books, videos, journals and games. In addition, Irish Aid supports the website [www.developmeneducation.ie](http://www.developmeneducation.ie) which ensures new resources are promoted and shared widely.

Educators at both primary and post-primary level can access a wide range of resources which have been developed across civil society organisations to support the embedding of ESD into the curriculum framework. Some examples of these resources developed by member organizations of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) include:

- Global Action Plan: Workshops on Climate Action, Biodiversity, Waste Management, Water Usage, Fast Fashion, Global Citizenship Education, and Greenwashing; and Teacher resources such as Toolkits on the SDGs, Poverty, Development & Ecological Footprints

- Young Social Innovators: Social Innovation Actions programmes for both Junior and Senior Cycle at post-primary covering topics such as Climate Justice, Sustainable Living, Human Rights, and Plastic Pollution; and Design for Change programmes at primary level empowering students to engage on sustainability and social justice issues
- The Rediscovery Centre: Workshops for both primary and post-primary students on the Circular Economy, including themes such as sustainability, behavioural change, resource efficiency, and waste management
- Self-Help Africa: Workshops and teacher toolkits on topics such as Sustainable Agriculture, Climate Justice, Ethical Trade, Food Security, and Gender Equality
- Afri: Lessons plans and teaching resources on issues such as the SDGs, Biodiversity, and Global Citizenship Education

## Case Study

### Young Children's Participation at Bloom

DCEDIY commissioned a garden at the Bord Bia Bloom Garden Festival in June 2023. Funded by Dormant Accounts, the theme of the garden was the First 5 Garden of Wonder and Discovery. 20 children aged 3 and 4 years, from Creative Kids pre-school in Walkinstown Dublin, worked as garden consultants co-designing the garden with experienced garden designers over a period of 6 months. The resulting garden was extremely well received and won numerous awards at Bloom. A video of the process of and the story of the children's participation will be used as a learning tool for CPD for early year's educators.





## 2.6 Whole Institution Approaches

The School Sector Climate Action Mandate was published on 14 March 2023 following which the DoE established a working group to develop a **Sustainability Toolkit** for schools. The toolkit will assist schools in developing Sustainability Policy Statements in accordance with the Mandate. The Toolkit comprises a self-assessment audit, Sustainability Guidelines and a Sustainability Policy Statement template. Schools are expected to use a Whole School Approach in the development of their Sustainability Policy Statements, in particular by including students through the Green Team/ Sustainability Team/ Student Council.

DCEDIY's Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) was established to foster an inclusive and diverse learning environment in the ELC and SAC sector. The end of year three evaluation has been completed, is undergoing its final review and is due to be published in 2023. Planning enhancements to, and/or extensions of AIM is underway.

DCEDIY contributed to the development of **Embracing Ireland's Outdoors**: the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023–2027, which launched in November 2022. The strategy is a whole-of-government approach led by DRCD. Embracing Ireland's Outdoors aims to enable inclusive, safe and accessible opportunities to get outdoors and commits to promoting and supporting the delivery of outdoor play and learning by ELC providers over the course of the 5-year strategy.

The **Green-Campus Programme**, managed by An Taisce, encourages practical environmental education and the empowerment of campuses to become exemplars in environmental stewardship. At present fifty-two Campuses from across the further and higher education sector in Ireland are formally registered on the programme and twenty of these have been awarded the Green Flag.

Supporting whole of institution approaches is a key component of the work of **Irish Aid** Strategic Partners. In particular, Irish Aid's strategic partners in the post primary sector – World Wise Global Schools supports the Global Passport awards which award excellence in whole schools approaches to GCE in post-primary schools across the country.

In 2022 / 2023 58 schools were holders of Global Passport Awards. Strategic Partners in the Youth and Adult & Community Sectors are also building strategies to supporting whole of institution approaches as part of new programmes being developed.

## Biodiversity

In recent years, DCEDIY has had the opportunity to be involved in National Heritage Week by sponsoring the Wild Child Award. The Wild Child award is presented to the Heritage Week project that most successfully encouraged children and families to get out and explore the local heritage, biodiversity and sustainability.

The 2022 winner of the Wild Child Award was Myshall Community who ran the Family Biodiversity Day which was held at Tobar Bhríde Community Park, Myshall, County Carlow. This event showcased the rich biodiversity found within the beautiful heritage garden spaces of Myshall, County Carlow. They focused on family participation using a 'Dig a little', 'Plant a little' and 'Play a little' approach. Activities included biodiversity awareness sharing, flower bed planting, bird feeder crafting, tree trail and heritage trail scavenger hunting. Families were encouraged to bring their blankets and picnic baskets for a 'Wild Child Picnic' to finish off the day.

Wild Child embodies the sentiment of many of the Department's aims under the First 5 including to build strong and supportive communities, encourage optimum physical and mental health, and to promote positive play based and outdoor early learning.

The DoE and DFHERIS have both recently responded to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action, providing an update in respect of the two recommendations contained in the Citizens Assembly report on Biodiversity Loss specifically regarding the further embedding of opportunities for engagement with biodiversity across the curriculum and in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development programmes for teachers. Consideration is currently being given by the DoE to the second recommendation on basic biodiversity training for school staff, including maintenance and grounds staff.

A national recruitment campaign for specialists for the Heritage in Schools Panel (2024-2027) is currently underway with 'climate change and biodiversity loss' targeted as key gaps to be filled. In 2022 and 2023, the programme provided over 200 free visits to primary schools to raise awareness of biodiversity and associated topics during National Biodiversity Week. An estimated 15% of total visits for this period 2022 and 2023 (year to date) explored the links between climate change and biodiversity.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) provides support for the Biodiversity Strand of the Green Schools programme. Through this strand, Green Schools raise awareness of biodiversity loss in primary and secondary schools.

The Departments are engaging with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (D.HLGH) on the development of the National Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure relevant alignment with ESD to 2030.

The DHLGH, Marine Environment Section funds and supports the Green Schools Global Citizenship: Marine Environment Module. This programme has been showcased internationally as an example of best practice and it is considered a leading eco-schools module of its type. It is included as a key education and awareness raising measure in Ireland's formal Programme of Measures to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Ireland also formally committed to ongoing support of this Module under Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 14 – 'Life Below Water') at the 2017 "Our Oceans Conference" held in Malta.

### School Transport

A comprehensive review of the School Transport scheme involves an in-depth analysis of the scheme and its broader effectiveness and sustainability, and will build upon the commitments within the Programme for Government as they relate to school transport. This will include examining options to reduce car journeys and assessing how the School Transport Scheme can work in liaison with the Safe Routes to Schools Programme.

The recently published CSO 2022 Census Summary Report shows for the first time ever, a decrease in car usage for children being driven to school with 55% of primary and 42% of post primary students being driven or driving to school. This is a decrease from 59.8% since the 2016 census.

The report also showed an increase in the number of students walking and cycling to school and college since 2016. In 2022, there were 88% more primary school pupils and 79% more post primary students cycling to school than in 2016. The number of teenage girls cycling to school more than doubled in 2022 from 2016.

The Green-Schools and Green-Campus Travel Programme and the Safe Routes to School scheme all aim to further increase sustainable travel to our education institutions.



## Higher Education

The majority of HEIs are successfully accelerating sustainable mobility plans for education settings by providing **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure** across their campuses.

Examples of this can be found in DCU, University of Galway, MIC, MU, SETU, TUS, UCC and UCD. Many other HEIs, including those already providing EV charging points, expressed intentions to roll out the provision of EV charging points on their campuses. Several of these have already been provided funding to do this and have commenced the process.

**Smarter travel infrastructure** was listed as a priority for many of the HEIs.

- ATU Mayo have developed a car sharing App and launched a car-sharing scheme and associated booking website and App.
- MIC has replaced its Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) powered transportation van for Buildings & Estates operations with a Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV).
- University of Galway have committed to converting all campus operations vehicles to BEV-powered vehicles by the end of Q3 2023, with new electric buses on campus from September 2023, replacing the Park and Ride diesel buses.
- UCC are leading a programme of engagement with Further and Higher Education campuses across Cork and Kerry to develop a transport Pathfinder project for student and staff commuting in urban and rural areas.

While few campuses provide **charging infrastructure for e-bikes and powered personal transporters**, many expressed their intentions to incorporate charging infrastructure into their development plans.

- The University of Limerick has a number of initiatives designed to encourage increased usage of powered personal transporters on campus. An e-scooter pilot has been completed. Currently, the ISCycle project with the SEAI and Department of Transport offers e-bikes to staff members on loan for 6-12 weeks to trial. This project also involves researchers who are looking to track and understand behavioural and usage patterns among the university population.
- UCD currently offers 10 electric bike charging stations located in bike lockers on the Belfield Campus, and is considering the provision of further charging infrastructure.
- In 2019, UCC launched an innovative staff e-bike scheme whereby staff can avail of a free trial of one of the university's e-bikes for a 2-week period. This gives the staff member sufficient time to determine whether an e-bike is suitable for their commute.
- To support active mobility on campus, many HEIs prioritise the provision of bicycle routes on and around their campuses and are working with local authorities to develop better cycling infrastructure in the city. These campuses provide bike parking spaces and bike facilities to encourage cycling among students and staff. To illustrate these facilities, the University of Galway has created a detailed Cycling Facilities on Campus map.

## Education Buildings

### Schools

The DoE and the DECC established a jointly funded programme administered by the Planning and Building Unit in the DoE and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in partnership with devolved delivery support from Limerick and Clare Education Training Board. This Pathfinder programme is paving the way for, and informing, a much larger national decarbonisation school sector programme for schools built prior to 2008 as included in the National Development Plan. The pathfinder programme is targeting energy use and CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction by 51%, testing deep retrofit and low carbon heating solutions. The programme has retrofitted 41 schools across Ireland to date with work on an additional 15 schools currently at various stages of progress. The budget for the pathfinder programme of works from 2017 to 2023 is circa €110m. See more here: gov.ie – School Sector Technical Climate Action Roadmap 2023 to 2030 ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))



## Case Study

### St. Columba's Comprehensive School, Glenties, Donegal

This was one of the projects included in the School Energy Retrofit Pathfinder Programme in 2021. Principal of St. Columba's Comprehensive School in Glenties Frances Boner says "the day I knew the project was definitely a success was the winter's day I heard one boy going up the corridor complaining to his friend that "the school is wild warm now".

Frances notes "the school is delighted with the Pathfinder, this winter we had a comfortable school with zone control, reduced draughts on windy days from the new external doors and the icing on the cake is our new façade due to the new external insulation. Our school now looks like a new school and the community is delighted".

The Pathfinder Project is almost effortless for schools as all the work is managed by the Department of Education, SEAI and their partner organisations. We are delighted to have been given the opportunity and look forward to the energy savings as we move to biomass heating." The Department of Education and Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland jointly funded the deep retrofit refurbishment at St. Columba's Comprehensive under the Schools Energy Pathfinder Programme 2021-2022. The completed project has resulted in the building BER value improving from a C3 to a B1 Rating, which greatly improves the school's energy performance with a targeted building carbon emission reduction of approximately 90% with the new biomass heating system.

## Further and Higher Education

The HEA requires that all new education buildings within HEIs achieve Nearly Zero Emission Building (NZEB) requirements, in line with Building Regulations introduced in 2017. New Tertiary Education Buildings are to be used as a tool for education & learning, the data collected in the operational period is to be used as an interactive teaching tool, reporting on the evolving dialogue of the building with its environment.

Several HEIs have received HEA/SEAI Pathfinder Programme funding to retrofit buildings on their campuses, for example:

- ATU Galway retrofitted the ATU Creative Centre for Arts and Media Building under the Energy Efficient and Decarbonization Pathfinder Programme.
- DCU received €1m in Pathfinder funding towards a retrofit of the Marconi building at a total cost of €2.6m, which was completed in April 2023.
- SETU have one Pathfinder Project on site and due for completion in Q3 2023. A second Pathfinder Project is scheduled to commence in Q2 2024.
- UCC has successfully implemented its first pathfinder project on the O’Rahilly Building and has a second retrofit project currently underway in the Enterprise Centre.
- Several HEIs, including the RCSI, SETU, DCU, TCD and TUD, have submitted proposals to the Pathfinder Programme for retrofitting educational buildings and are currently awaiting a response on the outcome. A portfolio of other potential retrofit projects have been identified by HEIs across the sector.

The level of funding required to decarbonise and retrofit campuses across the country remains a challenge, in particular for campuses with heritage buildings.

A Pathfinder programme for the Further Education sector is currently being progressed between DFHERIS, SOLAS and SEAI.

## Early Learning and Care

A total of €69 million was allocated to the Early Learning and Childcare sector in the revised National Development Plan (NDP) allocation. This will enable significant capital investment in early learning and childcare across three pillars:

- 1 Building Blocks – Improvement Grant, which includes Strand A, the Green Energy Strand, which will support the Climate Action Agenda and the Programme for Government; and Strand B, the Retrofit Strand, will provide grants to existing services in need of upgrading
- 2 Building Blocks – Capacity Grant
- 3 Building Blocks – Innovation Grant

Funding will be awarded for a range of innovative initiatives such as outdoor ELC/SAC settings. DCEDIY is currently advancing plans and proposals in this regard.

First 5, the Whole-of-Government strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028) commits to considering outdoor space requirements as part of a review of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and accompanying Quality and Regulatory Framework. A review of the Regulations 2016 began in Q4 2021.

A comprehensive public consultation was conducted in 2022. The report on the public consultation was published in Q2 2023. While the public consultation was primarily focused on enforcement powers of the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, DCEDIY also took the opportunity to consult on other issues such as regulatory requirements for outdoor services and outdoor spaces.

The Government has given approval to draft the Child Care Act (Amendment) Bill and is expected to publish this in the coming months with enactment in 2024. Once these primary legislative amendments have been made DCEDIY will conduct a full review of the regulations governing early learning and care and school age childcare.

### Outdoor Learning

A review of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 commenced in Q4 2021. A comprehensive public consultation was conducted in 2022. The report on the public consultation was published in Q2 2023. While the public consultation was primarily focused on enforcement powers of the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, DCEDIY also took the opportunity to consult on other issues such as regulatory requirements for outdoor services and outdoor spaces.

DoE provided funding for schools and organisations in 2022 for ESD related projects including school gardens and outdoor learning facilities. The promotion of Outdoor learning features regularly through the quarterly ESD newsletter and in the Sustainability Toolkit for Schools.

### Waste Management

Schools across the country promote waste management and carry out activities for their students including aluminium can recycling, composting litter awareness and litter picking.

Litter and Waste is the first of seven themes under the Green Schools programme and some of the school activity under the Litter and Waste theme is available to view here: Litter and Waste – Green-Schools ([greenschoolsireland.org](https://greenschoolsireland.org)).

Kildare County Council introduced battery collection facilities in 125 primary and post primary schools, helping to prevent environmental damage and to educate young people about the need for careful waste disposal.

## Case Study

In 2022, Kinsale Community School was one of the schools to receive ESD to 2030 funding which was used to purchase and install a MyGug biodigester to deal with the problem of food waste at the school. Kinsale Community School told us that when food breaks down in landfill it emits methane gas – a more potent greenhouse gas than CO<sup>2</sup> – into the atmosphere. The MyGug on the other hand, converts food waste using a natural process called anaerobic digestion, turning it into a useable form of methane and a liquid fertiliser, thus eliminating the need to send food waste to landfill. The gas is pumped into one of the school's home economics rooms where it is used for cooking, and the liquid fertiliser will be used as a plant/soil feed in the school's greenhouse.

The MyGug has been designed and produced by Kieran Coffey in Co. Cork and comes in different sizes. In order to choose the right sized digester, the school's TY 'Waste Watchers' team weighed the food waste from the canteen over a period of a week to determine the quantity produced. Based on this evidence the appropriate size was selected, which is the 'Mini' MyGug which converts up to 5.5kg of food waste per day. Unlike a composter, it doesn't take garden waste, but most forms of raw and cooked food. It uses a macerator to reduce the food waste to smaller 'digestible' pieces, so large solid items such as heavy bones and avocado stones cannot be inserted.

The MyGug will be managed and operated by members of the KCS Staff Sustainability Team and the Green Schools committee.

For more information on MyGug, visit:  
<http://mygug.eu>





The majority of HEIs promote a range of **circular economy** principles and practices in their campus operations. Many innovative initiatives have been established to encourage circular economy practices. Examples of this are outlined below:

- DCU is currently undertaking an office upcycling project. Working with a local upcycling centre, two offices are being designed and refurbished with upcycled existing furniture and used as demonstration offices. Moreover, DCU Students Union operates a swap shop week during term time to encourage and promote the reusing of clothes. DCU is also piloting the first university roll-out of the Vytal app based reusable cup/bowl system, to enable the removal of all single-use containers in on campus catering outlets by the end of 2023.
- The RCSI Green Campus initiative has been established to enhance sustainability & promote the circular economy on campus. To date, RCSI has established a variety of initiatives across the areas of waste management, such as introducing a zero-landfill policy for all waste disposal. The university has also eliminated paper cups from the RCSI staff rooms saving over 200,000 cups/3.5 tonnes of waste, introduced discounts for using reusable cups and a 30c levy for those who do not use them, and ensures that all take-away food packaging on campus is compostable. The RCSI's EnviroSoc student society supports the circular economy through various annual events including clothes swaps, Christmas E-Card Campaign and College Book Pop-Ups.
- SETU are actively engaged in recycling and upcycling initiatives to minimise landfill waste. This is achieved by incentivising staff and students to bring their own beverage cup through initiatives such as their 'Coffee2go' scheme, offering discounts to those who bring reusable cups. Where possible, furniture is reused and repurposed or donated to local schools or community groups.
- In May 2022, UCC's Leadership Team approved the UCC Single-Use Plastics Policy to remove all single-use plastics from catering operations across the university. In January 2022, the university's caterer KSG went disposable cup and plastic bottle free across all of its operations. Within UCC's new Sustainability and Climate Action Plan, a target of Zero Waste by 2030 has been set.
- TUD, TUS and DCU are all adopting the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) processes to embed Green Public procurement practices progressively into their relevant procurement cycles.
- The ATU Galway-Mayo Centre for Sustainability will soon be advertising a funded Research Master's, which will focus on developing a Circular Campus Framework for the ATU. Moreover, the university's Department of Building and Civil Engineering offer a 3-year online M.Sc. on Circular Economy Leadership for the Built Environment.
- NCAD's 'Circular By Design' programme was developed as part of the HCI Pillar 3-funded Creative Futures Academy and is a first-of-its-kind professional training programme which supports textile and apparel designers, brands, and manufacturers to make the transition to circular practises in every step of their design practice, value chain and business model.

- UCD is a member of 'Warp It', a resource redistribution network where new uses can be found for old furniture. This is available to UCD staff and to charity/non-profit organisations in Ireland. UCD also promotes circular economy practices by reusing lab coats and other suitable materials, such as books, left by departing students in university lockers. Moreover, UCD Students Union runs an annual 'Great Donate' event, where second hand household items are donated by departing students for distribution to other students.

Several of the HEIs show their commitment to supporting innovative solutions to sustainability challenges by engaging in **Campus as Living Labs for Sustainability** initiatives.

## Case Study

The Campus Living Labs Sustainability Project (Campus Living Labs) project is a two-year partnership project between the Environmental Protection Agency and the Irish Universities Association. Recognising that university campuses are exemplary ecosystems to test and trial effective interventions for waste management and recycling, the ambition of this project is to deliver evidence to inform campus sustainability programmes and advance activities that will introduce systemic change in preventing waste and increasing recycling on campus. Through Campus Living Labs, several pilot schemes have been implemented to date including an online interactive "Waste Game", an e-cups reusable coffee cup trial, a measurement tool for food waste and campus workshops on bulky waste, bike and textile repair.

Examples of Campus as Living Labs initiatives that are being implemented include, but are not limited to:

- UCC's Green Campus Living Laboratory Programme was established in 2019 and in 2023 a third funding call was announced. The programme supports MSc by Research and demonstration projects that address one or more of the objectives within the university's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan. Previously funded projects included a Master's thesis on the behavioural aspects of going single-use plastic free, and a project to develop the University as an Open Arboretum.
- In RCSI, Living Labs are promoted as StEP (Student Engagement and Partnership) projects, but many incorporate the principals of Living Lab projects including solving a real-life problem, being framed around at least one of the SDGs, and are a partnership among key stakeholders, often crossing disciplinary and/or sectoral boundaries. Consequently, 45% of RCSI's research projects between 2018–2022 were aligned to at least one of the 17 SDGs.

## Energy Conservation

SEAI's Education & Youth Programme offers a range of curriculum-linked energy and climate action related teaching resources and facilitated workshops from Junior Infants to Transition Year. The teaching resources and workshops have been developed using an inquiry-based approach to ESD education. In 2020, an outdoor learning workshop was developed by SEAI that is available for schools as an alternative to the classroom-based workshop.

SEAI's school based workshop Programme that reaches approximately 18,000 pupils annually, has the potential to create a greater understanding of sustainable energy and its importance in combatting climate change and to encourage positive behavioral change across the youth population. SEAI recognise the need to significantly increase their workshop delivery volumes to achieve impact. They have hence put in place a capacity framework that will allow the program to grow significantly over the next 4 years, doubling its capacity by 2026 when they hope to be in position to reach every student twice during their primary education and once at the post primary level. SEAI are engaging with many stakeholders in order to raise awareness about their educational resources including through the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Programme.

Guidance is being developed by the SEAI on the Public Sector Roadmaps and will shortly be approved and circulated to stakeholders by Energy Link and via the SEAI website and DECC website.

DFHERIS & SEAI have established a Decarbonisation Group, comprising of representatives from the sector to create a Decarbonisation Plan for the sector. Sectoral bodies are developing building stock plans, in line with the EPBD, for retrofitting their building stock to meet CAP targets. SEAI are set to issue guidance on Building Stock Plans in Q3 2023.



Priority Action Area 3

## Building Capacities of Educators



# Priority Action Area 3

## – Building Capacities of Educators

### 3.1 Capacity Building

#### Primary and Post-Primary Education

The Department of Education commissioned a mapping exercise of ESD related continuous professional development (CPD) for primary and post primary teachers in 2023. The aim of the exercise was to develop a comprehensive list of all available CPD, which will inform any gaps and identify potential to increase teacher participation in ESD CPD and build capacity. The list is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage.

The ESD to 2030 funding call for schools enables schools to fund their teachers to undertake relevant ESD training. Funding provided to organisations in 2023 includes increased provision of CPD for teachers in a range of ESD related areas.

Summer Courses for teachers now includes ESD as a criteria. A range of approved courses were provided in summer 2023 including for example: Multimedia Projects on Climate and Sustainability; Steaming Through Dark Skies and Biodiversity; Development Education in the Primary Classroom; Discover Climate and Space; and A Better World.

Education in the area of sustainability is now a priority area under the Refund of Fees scheme for Teachers (Circular 0005/2023).

An Embracing Diversity training course is currently offered to school staff over two, two-hour sessions and is an invitation to all to reflect on cultural diversity, and the role schools play in supporting it and why cultural diversity matters. The content includes looking at cultural and linguistic diversity in Ireland today, the reasons why it is important to promote inclusive education, key psychological constructs such as bias, stereotyping and intersectionality, inclusive language and examples of good practice in schools.

At the end of the training attendees will be supported to identify key areas for an action plan using the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

The Teaching Council's **Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education** (ITE) was published in 2020 and includes seven core elements that must underpin all aspect of programme design. One of these elements is Global Citizenship Education, to include ESD, Wellbeing, Social Justice and Interculturalism. All existing and new programmes of ITE have been aligned with Céim for first year intakes since September 2022. The Teaching Council commenced an accreditation cycle for existing programmes in line with the Céim standards in November 2021, which will conclude in Q4 2023.

OIDE supports teachers across subjects to incorporate ESD in planning learning experiences for students. The focus is broad, incorporating a range of themes depending on subjects. Problem based learning, exploring data, debates, inquiry based learning, reflection, co-construction of knowledge, engaging with design thinking, collaborative activities form the pedagogical base across subjects, modelling classroom practice. Existing resources are shared and new resources are created, as required and as appropriate. Subject support is incorporated in core workshops and for type 2 resources. STE(A)M in Junior Cycle supports ESD through an elective programme.

OIDE collaborates with external CPD providers to provide elective professional development experiences for post-primary teachers. The initiative specifically aims to support teachers in exploring societal issues with their students, including sustainable development, while focusing on solution-based engagements. Some of the themes explored in recent years include Biodiversity,

Climate Resilience, Energy Creation & Conservation, Urbanisation, Population Growth, and Innovation in Research & Technology. This year, 9 elective online events open to all teachers and 3 Community of Practice Events for the teachers selected for the STE(A)M in Action in School.

OIDE CPD opportunities offers support and alignment to the adjustments to Looking at Our School (LAOS): for Primary and Post Primary. It particularly supports schools as they strive to enact effective and highly effective practice to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of learners so that they can recognise, understand and discuss the connections between environmental, social and economic issues; what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts, acting responsibly for a more sustainable world.

OIDE have included **green guidance** in their work plan for academic year 2023/4. They will run a webinar in Term 2 (approx. March 2024) as part of their 'World of Work' webinar series. This will support guidance counsellors in schools to deliver green guidance.

The **Take 1 Programme** provides training for post primary teacher, middle and senior leaders, supporting them to embed Education for Sustainable Development in learning and teaching as part of a whole-school curriculum. Through mapping the learning outcomes of subject specifications to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Take 1 Programme not only raises awareness of the SDGs for students but also highlights "the implications of these goals for their individual and group lives, including the responsibilities individuals and institutions have to assume to help achieve them". Take 1 Programme training is aligned to LAOS and School Self Evaluation (SSE). The DoE is funding the continued expansion of the Take 1 programme to schools outside the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector where it originated.

The Ubuntu Network works with second level teacher educators in third level institutions in Ireland. Their Dialogue Day in January 2023 explored teaching practices to integrate GCE into initial teacher education. Ubuntu provide a range of resources and supports to teacher educators in Ireland, and hosted a Research Meet in August 2023 exploring ways to communicate GCE/ ESD research in initial teacher education.

Over 100 teachers attended WorldWise Global Schools' National Teacher Conference in February 2023. The theme this year was Under the Surface; Encouraging a Critical Exploration of Global Justice Themes. WWGS held CPD events for teachers throughout the year including an Irish language event in December 2022 and regional Teach-Meets where educators share best practice.

In 2022/2023, Global Village engaged with 147 primary school teachers and 16 primary school leaders through a variety of GCE CPD events including webinars and in-person workshops.

ECO-UNESCO delivers a range of CPD courses and trainings to teachers and youth leaders which supports them to embed sustainability into their practice including into their subject areas and on mentoring action projects with the young people they work with and has worked with over 200 teachers and educators in 2022.

## Early Learning and Care

First 5, the Whole-of-Government strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028) commits to improving access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles. First 5 Building Block 3 aims to have an appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Nurturing Skills (published in December 2021) sets out plans for the further development of CPD through a 'whole system' approach, coordinated by one agency, to integrate and align current structures and any newly developed structures. Implementation of CPD actions within Nurturing Skills commenced in 2022.

Under Nurturing Skills leadership training will be provided for pedagogical practice within an ELC setting, including implementation of the curriculum in line with Aistear (the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework), mentoring colleagues, and developing and leading effective approaches to support children's learning. All Lead Educators have responsibilities for pedagogical leadership.

A key learning goal of Aistear is learning about the natural environment and its features, materials, animals, and plants, and children's own responsibility as carers. We know that children need time and positive experiences with nature to develop a connection to, awareness of, and respect for the environment and biodiversity. Nurturing Skills commits to the full roll out of the National Siolta Aistear Initiative by 2028.

Additionally, DCEDIY supports the meaningful participation of young children and parents of young children in the development of policy, programmes and practice that concern them, including seldom heard groups. Hub na nÓg's Every Day Checklist provides tips and guidance on how those working with children and young people are actively involved in decisions that affect them and that their voices are heard. In 2023, DCEDIY incorporated learnings from the pilot of a training programme on the Everyday Checklist of the National Participation Framework into a train the trainer programme especially for young children. Additionally, we have also developed case studies showing children's participation in everyday practice.

## Further and Higher Education and Training

Several HEIs are currently exploring the development of ESD/SDG training for educators, and have included this as an action in their strategic plans. A number of HEIs have collaborated to develop **Open Courses on ESD/SDGs** for the professional development of their staff or are encouraging their staff to access existing open courses. The NFTL's National Resource Hub serves as a platform that can host Open Courses on ESD and other topics.

- The N-TUTORR project, is a sectoral initiative involving the Technological Universities and Institutes of Technology. As part of this project, a Sustainable Higher Education Framework Steering Group/Community of Practice has been established. It will determine baseline activity across the sector in terms of staff capability to inform and support the transformation of learning, teaching and assessment against a sustainable education framework and scope out and advise on a toolkit to support staff transformation. It will implement a team of Sustainable Higher Education Futures Champions across the sector and design, develop, implement and support accredited provision for staff through a digital badging system.

- ATU are currently developing modules for staff focused on climate leadership and the SDGs.
- UCC launched a 'Teaching and Learning with the SDGs' Digital Badge course for teaching staff. The course introduces staff to the SDGs and provides examples of how peers have integrated SDGs into their teaching from their own disciplinary perspectives.
- UL provide ESD/SDG related training for their staff through a new staff mobility programme that the university co-designed. This blended programme enables staff to meet counterparts from across the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) of EU universities, engage in ESD and identify sustainability projects in their own universities. The Kemmy Business School at UL are also providing Climate Fresk training for all staff in the Business School. These sessions help to both educate and provide practical steps that staff can take to reduce their carbon footprints.
- MU encourages their staff to undertake the NFTL's 'Education for Sustainability' Open Course.

## Case Study

### Education for Sustainability Digital Badge

A sectoral collaboration between Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Dublin City University (DCU), Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), and University College Cork (UCC) developed the '**Introduction to Education for Sustainability**' Digital Badge (25 hours), an introductory course exploring the basic concepts and practical steps on how to embed sustainability across the curriculum.

It is funded by Ireland's National Forum for the Enhancement in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and encompasses the EU Green Competency Framework focusing on embodying sustainability values, embracing complexity, envisioning sustainable futures, and acting for sustainability. This course was facilitated online between February and April 2023 with 13 participants and 8 trained facilitators.

The potential to widen participation in this course to educators in the FET sector is currently being examined.

## Leadership Training

Under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, public sector bodies are required to incorporate appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) into learning and development strategies for staff and organise staff workshops, at least annually, to engage on climate issues, including a focus on decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint. A specific requirement is in place to ensure all senior management (PO equivalent level or above) complete a climate action leadership training course in 2023.

Many HEIs are already providing sustainability and climate action training to senior management and wider staff.

- The University of Galway offers a course in 'Sustainability and the SDGs' as part of their New Staff Induction programme. Moreover, over half of the university's management team attended a Climate Action Training Day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2023, with more training days scheduled for senior leaders.
- Senior members of staff at RCSI completed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Reporting and Energy Management training in 2023.
- In IADT, the President has completed the Institute of Director's Leading for Sustainability programme and the Executive will undertake similar programmes with the IPA and others in the coming months.
- TU Dublin has delivered workshops in sustainability leadership training to over 250 staff members to date, and are in the process of rolling these out across all faculties and schools. Moreover, there is a sustainability module in the Leadership Development programme which is delivered to TU Dublin staff at PO level and above. Four workshops on sustainability have been delivered to the TU Dublin Executive team since 2022.

A selection of HEIs have plans to roll-out ESD/SDG related training to senior staff members in the near future:

- NCAD will be commencing ESD training in the first trimester of 2023/24 for all staff members.
- DCU has commissioned tailored climate action training for its senior staff and this is scheduled for delivery in October 2023. DCU will investigate the development of a short online course to communicate simply the requirement and implication of Irish National Climate Change Legislation for delivery in Q4 2023.
- MTU, in national collaboration with other HEIs, FE providers, and national organisations, is currently developing an open-source self-paced 60-minute course

on 'Universal Design Training for Senior Leaders in Tertiary Education', which will include a specific focus on ESD and SDGs. This is set to be launched in Q1 2024.

- Several universities are involved in the development of cross-sectoral Climate Leadership Training across higher education, as set out in the public sector mandate of the Climate Action legislation. TU Dublin is currently leading on this cross-sectoral proposal. This indicates a widespread awareness for the importance of ESD/SDG leadership training for senior management in HEIs.

Among those HEIs who are not yet providing specific ESD/SDG training to senior management, all expressed their intention to develop training in these areas for senior staff.

### 3.2 Peer Learning

One of the criteria for DoE's *ESD to 2030* funding is that projects should include opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

ESD to 2030 funding in 2022 was provided to Irish Second-level Students Union (ISSU) to facilitate student led events e.g. Debate my Decision Maker in January 2023 and ISSU Women's Day Conference in March 2023.

In order to promote the take-up of opportunities for staff exchanges across HEIs under **Erasmus+**, with a focus on ESD/SDGs, the HEA has allocated an Erasmus+ budget to HEIs to fund 270 staff training mobilities and 281 staff teaching mobilities in Europe, as part of the 2023/24 Erasmus+ KA131 programme. This represents an increase of 85 mobilities since the 2022/23 academic year.

ECO-UNESCO promotes peer to peer learning and peer education through its programmes with young people. It runs a Youth for Sustainable Development programme, funded by Irish Aid, which trains young people up as peer educators to lead and work with other young people. Through this programme it delivers the QQI accredited Level 5 course in Peer Education for Sustainable Development.



## Case Study

With funding provided through ESD to 2030, students at Castletroy College in Newtown, Co. Limerick had the opportunity to learn global citizenship skills through the World Wise programme, which places an emphasis on peer to peer learning. They were then able to put those skills to practical use through a variety of programmes that involved the local community.

In Term 1, the school held an ethical Christmas market, where only sustainable sourced products were sold, the proceeds going to a good cause. Students and local community members volunteered to run stalls at the market.

In Term 2, the school had a Fairtrade Fortnight event, such as a table quiz on sustainability terms with eco-friendly prizes.

In Term 3, TY students held a swap shop with the assistance of Primark Cares, an initiative by Primark to promote ethical fashion choices. The School community also held a sustainable summer picnic and was awarded with a Fair Trade Flag for their school in recognition of their efforts.

### 3.3 Rewards

Competitions are a regular feature of the ESD Newsletter. Each edition has a competition where a school can win either a garden planter or an insect hotel for the school yard. Schools are encouraged to share their ESD related work, and articles selected for inclusion in the newsletter are rewarded with a €500 One for All voucher. Other competitions aimed at raising awareness about ESD have included for example, nature books for Junior Infant classes.

## Competitions

The DoE funds an ESD to 2030 Special Award at the **BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition** and the 2023 winner was Ava Conerney from St. Brigids College in Galway for her project “G.E.T. together – girls in STEM”. G.E.T. together is a statistical analysis of the factors impacting girls choosing Engineering & Technology subjects in secondary schools and a plan to improve female participation in these areas.

The Irish Aid Our World Awards are open to senior primary school classes across Ireland and provide lessons, activities and games to enable students to learn about the work of Irish Aid and the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2022/23-theme was *Equality for All*. 62 schools entered the competition with 14 schools winning prizes at the National Final Ceremony in June.

In 2022, the DoE co-sponsored the Dublin Gazette primary and post primary schools competitions – “Making Dublin Greener”. The winning primary schools were Scoile Mhuire CBS, Marino; St Killian’s Deutsche School, Clonskeagh and Taney Parish Primary School in Dundrum while Mercy College, Coolock took the title as the overall winners at post primary level with their project titled ‘Green Uniform’. The project focussed on up-cycling old clothes as well as making various items, including draught proofers and hairbands, with materials already available to them.

## Higher Education Awards

In order to incentivise research related to the SDGs, TU Dublin’s Research Awards scheme has established new award categories for SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 13 Climate Action, along with Research Engagement and Innovation Impact.

## Case Study

**ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA)** promotes youth led action and recognises and rewards the work of young people who protect the environment through local environmental action projects. Since 1999, ECO-UNESCO has run the YEA programme to honour the work of young people to protect, conserve and enhance the environment through local environmental projects, making a difference to their lives and the lives of others both locally and globally. Over 50,000 young people have taken part in the YEA since it began, bringing about lasting change to the environment, and reaching countless others with awareness-raising campaigns in schools and communities throughout Ireland.

In 2023, over 5000 young people participated, 279 projects were registered from 28 counties, 104 reached the finals with over 45000 people strongly impacted through the YEA local environmental action projects.

Young people (10-18) carried out projects in a wide range of environmental categories with 70% of projects coming from young people aged 15-18; 23% from those 12-14 and 7% from those 10-12. Out of the 279 projects registered, 20% of projects came under the Biodiversity category, 17% in Waste, 10% on Food, 10% in ECO Art & Design, 8% Climate Change, 6% Water, 6% Community Development; 6% ECO Health and Well-being; 5% Energy, 4% Marine Life, 3% ECO-Innovation and the rest in Transport, Local to Global and Further Growth.

Details on the 2023 winners of the ECO UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards are available here: [Winners 23 – ECO-UNESCO \(ecounesco.ie\)](https://www.ecounesco.ie/winners-23).

Priority Action Area 4

## Empowering and Mobilising Youth



# Priority Action Area 4

## – Empowering and Mobilising Youth

### 4.1 Young People's Role

**Aistear: The Early Childhood Framework** is being updated. Crucially, NCCA is interested in hearing from those who benefit from the framework and so commissioned a consultation with babies, toddlers and young children to ensure their voices are included. This consultation with babies, toddlers and young children is happening in two phases and being undertaken by a consortium from Maynooth University, Early Childhood Ireland and Stranmillis University College. The Phase 1 Consultation Report reaffirmed the importance of respecting all children as citizens with rights and responsibilities. Phase 2 will begin in Autumn 2023.

**Primary:** As part of the development of draft curriculum specifications for consultation in 2024, NCCA is currently working in collaboration with Hub na nÓg to hear the views of primary school children on their views for learning in: Social and Environmental Education (History and Geography) and; Wellbeing (SPHE and PE). This consultation is ongoing across 2023. Two reports were published by NCCA in 2023: Arts Education and the Primary School Curriculum and STEM Education and the Primary School Curriculum. Both reports detail consultation with children, parents and teachers in school communities who met with NCCA in October and November 2023 to share their views on the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum.

**Post Primary:** Student voice is an integral part of the NCCA consultative processes at post-primary. In 2022, the NCCA undertook student voice consultations on the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development (LC CASD). The findings of the consultation informed the development of the Draft Specification.

In 2023, the NCCA are planning their consultation process on the Draft Specification for LC CASD. In 2022 and 2023 student consultation was also engaged with in other relevant areas of the curriculum such as Junior Cycle SPHE, Senior Cycle SPHE (Consultation Report), Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Business and the Draft Transition Year (TY) Programme Statement (TY Consultation Report).

In April 2022, ISSU were included on the NCCA Council, placing the student at the center of curriculum and assessment development. ISSU are also members of the ESD Steering Group and the ESD Advisory Group for Schools.

As part of its Learning2Change programme, ECO-UNESCO delivers Student Council Trainings which upskill young people in sustainability, leadership and peer education, encouraging young people to build awareness and develop initiatives with their peers in post primary settings.

**Higher Education:** A range of initiatives are supported in higher education institutions that recognise the crucial role that young people play in advancing our sustainable future.

- The vast majority of HEIs mentioned Green Campus committees or initiatives as a means to encourage student engagement in a range of sustainability activities across campus. These HEIs include MTU, TCD, TUS and UCC.
- A new Sustainability Society has recently been established by students at UCD as a point of focus for student-led initiatives. These initiatives recognise young people as key contributors to ESD and permit students the opportunity to feed into their universities' sustainability policies and programmes.
- To create an awareness of sustainability issues among young people, ATU Mayo have created a poetry competition to highlight the role of humanities in communicating these issues in a creative way. The 'Poetry Pillar' competition run in 2022 and 2023, is open to staff and students, with a separate competition for second-level Transition Year (TY) students. ATU hosted the second Galway Climate Assembly with ten local secondary schools in March 2023, and is looking to host a similar event in Sligo as part of the Power to Change project. Other elements of this project include TY students working on a SDG project in collaboration with ATU Sligo and Sligo County Council, with the aim of contributing to the local Climate Action Plan. The university is also developing a SDG activity workbook focused on biodiversity as a vehicle to engage with local primary schools in Sligo. Minister Eamon Ryan was hosted at ATU in May 2023 for a Question and Answer session on Climate Change and the Environment. Students from Environmental programmes at ATU were invited to ask the Minister questions.
- TU Dublin offers a selection of programmes to support students to become sustainability advocates, including Climate Ambassador, COPDrop, NTA Smarter Travel, and the ECO UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards. The university also encourages students to participate as members on the Green Campus Committee and the University Sustainability Council. From September 2023, all incoming students will participate in a Sustainability and Climate Action Challenge during their Orientation. TU Dublin student representatives are integrated in the TU Dublin and EU+ Governing Board and Steering Committee, allowing students to contribute to the university's policies related to ESD.
- UL has established several programmes to encourage young people to engage with sustainability challenges and practices. The university has appointed a full-time Student Sustainability Coordinator to foster student engagement and tackle sustainability challenges. The 'UL Student Sustainability' programme was launched to provide learning, engagement, and experience in sustainability for UL students. Moreover, student brainstorming sessions were conducted to understand student sentiment toward sustainability across academia, extracurricular activities, and everyday life. UL brings ESD to children and youth through various programme such as OTTER, MY-Psy, the UL Academy for Children, and the FabLab, which is focused on tackling environmental, economic, and social sustainability issues.
- RCSI's #RCSIPulseCheck Challenge, relates to SDG 3 'Good Health and Well-Being'. This programme, which was operated under the university's Student Engagement and Partnership (StEP) programme, aimed to raise an awareness of the importance and health and well-being among local youth communities. In 2021, given COVID-19 restrictions, a 'virtual' initiative was co-created by students and staff to provide clinical skills

(PulseCheck) and physical education within local schools. The team created an evidence-based educational resource for teachers. Each morning a physical activity challenge, demonstrated by students, was posted on social media for children to complete, recording their pulse before and after each activity. A total of 150 primary school pupils from three DEIS schools benefited.

The Departments nominated Eimear Manning as Ireland's representative on the UNECE ESD Steering Group – Youth Platform. The Departments also nominated Peter O'Neill to attend the 13<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris in November 2023. Peter represents the National Youth Assembly of Ireland. The Department of Education provided funding to UNESCO to facilitate attendance at the Youth Forum by participants from Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

## Case Study

DCEDIY work with DECC on the National Youth Assembly on Climate, supporting implementation of the National Dialogue on Climate Action under the Climate Action Plan, embedding climate action in education and promoting climate literacy.

The **National Youth Assembly on Climate** took place on 11th March 2023 at Miesian Plaza, Dublin 2. The Assembly was hosted by DCEDIY and DECC in partnership with the National Participation Office.

The Assembly consisted of 50 young people, aged 12–24 years from across Ireland. Young delegates to the Assembly came from Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils), youth organisations and climate organisations. The Assembly's recommendations will be considered by Government for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan 2024. The report on the National Youth Assembly on Climate was launched by DECC, at a National Youth Assembly of Ireland meeting on 2nd September 2023, hosted by DCEDIY: gov.ie – Report of the National Youth Assembly on Climate 2023 ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)).





## 4.2 Training and Development

Six training events were held by An Taisce/ Green Schools in Q1 for new **Climate Ambassadors** regionally with one offered online. A further 20 Network Gatherings were held in Q1 and Q2 for Climate Ambassadors with a mix of in-person and online events. An Taisce/ Green Schools have participated in 10 public outreach events in Q1 and Q2.

10 podcast episodes have been completed with over 10,000 listenership. The Climate Ambassadors Awards will take place in Q4.

### Values-based, social action projects

The majority of HEIs provide multiple training and development opportunities and tools for empowering young people to engage at local, national and global levels by enhancing their knowledge, skills, confidence, values and dispositions to make themselves heard. Many HEIs do this by providing opportunities for young people to participate in values-based social action projects. For example:

- Students in their final year of ATU Mayo's Outdoor Education and Applied Social Care course organised a community event entitled 'Food for Thought'. The students were supported by their lecturers and the human rights organisation, AFRI Ireland. The event supported learning in the areas of research, marketing, event management, change processes, the natural environment and interrogating the SDGs. The aim was to create a dialogue with multiple people around the issues and challenges facing the world at present thought discussion, music, food-sharing and workshops.
- MU hosts an annual Social Justice Week in March. This includes events for the general public, including young people. An example of such events was a talk given on 'The Economics of Inequality', aimed at Leaving Cert Students.
- UL has co-designed and prototyped an inter-faculty sustainability competition, targeting students at all levels who have an interest in tackling the climate crisis. The competition calls on students to submit ideas to make the environment more sustainable at multiple levels: their campus, their city, their region, their country, and their world. This year a sustainability agriculture project in Uganda won the sustainability challenge. The competition will run annually.
- MIC provides opportunities for young people, focusing particularly on those most-distanced from socio-economic and quality educational participation to partake in values-based social action projects linked to ESD/SDGs. The college has introduced a new, well-resourced 'maker-space' linked to its CRAFT project (Creative Arts / Future Technologies), which integrates the SDG principles and targets participation of children from immigrant communities and backgrounds of relative deprivation. This stream will be expanded under the Campus Engage strategy.

## Case Study

RCSI's REACH Programme is a community engagement and access programme that facilitates access to further and higher education through the promotion of recreation, education and community health. Students are encouraged to participate in various initiatives throughout the year, including the Junior and Leaving Certificate Grinds Club, STEMM workshops, and health education workshops, in an effort to enhance the life chances for those traditionally underrepresented in higher education, particularly those from Dublin's south inner city.

Participation in community engagement through volunteering and as part of the curriculum instils skills and civic values in our future healthcare leaders, and the participants interact with positive role models while taking part in health and educational activities aligned with primary and post-primary curricula.

In 2022/23, REACH RCSI developed a 'UNSDG Engaged Learning' project, which invited TY students from the university's linked second-level DEIS schools to explore the SDGs together with RCSI students. The project culminated with an SDG focused event at RCSI in April 2023, where nine teams of RCSI students researched and prepared presentations focused on the theme of the SDGs with content targeted at an audience of TY students. The TY students also presented on the topic "Our school and the UNSDGs".



## Case Study

The N-TUTORR programme (National Technological University Transformation for Recovery and Resilience) is a major transformative national programme currently underway across the seven technological HEIs in Ireland, funded by the European Union #NextGenerationEU through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) of the Irish Government.

The N-TUTORR programme of work is guided by six core themes, one of which is Education for Sustainability, and organised under three connecting work streams: Student Empowerment; Staff Capabilities; and Digital Ecosystems.

Under the Student Empowerment stream, 131 projects from across the sector have been awarded funding grants up to the value of €5,000 each under the N-TUTORR Students as Partners in Innovation and Change fellowships programme. The funded projects involve collaboration between learners and staff, and focus on enhancing the experience of students at technological universities across all of N-TUTORR's core themes.

The fellowship scheme is supporting a diverse range of initiatives under the theme of Education for Sustainability, from curricular reforms to healthy campus projects and student gardens, campus-based events and development of special interest groups and communities. A small number of proposals were selected as national N-TUTORR projects, including a citizen science project, which aims to improve the water quality and to enhance the environmental and amenity value of local streams on or near the TU Dublin Tallaght Campus. Led by Dr Phil Mulvaney at TU Dublin, the project aligns with the Tallaght Village Tidy Towns project and the TU Dublin Green Campus application for Green Flag status.

In all cases, students are core to the activities and scaffolded to bring their ideas and vision to life, empowering them to make active changes.

## Non-formal and action-oriented ESD learning

In order to empower young people to be active agents of change and to equip them with the necessary skills to tackle the complex sustainability challenges facing society, the majority of HEIs provide non-formal and action-oriented ESD learning.

- This can be seen in DCU's Centre for Talented Youth, which offers ongoing, informal opportunities for primary and post-primary students to develop knowledge and competencies in numerous areas, including around ESD.
- University of Galway's Ryan Institute hosted Climathon 2022, which brought together students, staff, community partners and citizens to collaborate to tackle local climate challenges.
- Promoting experiential learning, MU encourages students to gain hands-on experience and reflect and engage in research on important societal themes like sustainability through a range of programmes such as the Summer Programme for Undergraduate Research, Project Live, and Research Live. MU's Student Experience Awards acknowledge students' active and verified participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities related to sustainability. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, share their knowledge, and deepen their understanding of societal issues such as sustainability. These awards are officially recognised on students' transcripts.
- For over 10 years RCSI students have been working as volunteers in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, for the Christina Noble Children's Foundation. Students from the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, over the age of 21, can apply for RCSI sponsorship to participate in this volunteering opportunity. For successful applicants, the programme runs over eight weeks in August and students must organise a fundraiser in advance of their departure for the Social and Medical Centre in Ho Chi Minh.

- In TUS Thurles, two researchers are running workshops for primary school children connecting the themes of ICT and Sustainable Development. Over 150 children have been involved in the workshops, which focus on identifying technology solutions to address specific SDGs.
- In 2023, UCC launched the 'Green Shoots' programme to promote student engagement in green spaces. The programme aims to get students involved with campus food growing initiatives and link with the local community to enhance mental wellbeing and engagement with broader sustainability issues.
- In UL, the university's library has introduced a new programme called 'Bibliotherapy', where books are used as a treatment for mental health issues. The library has created a pop-up reading room, and illustrates the university's commitment to student well-being which, in turn, builds students' confidence and empowers them to make themselves heard.

ECO-UNESCO's youth programmes including its Young Environmentalist Awards, Youth for Sustainable Development, ECO-Choices Health and Well-being take a non-formal and action-oriented approach and worked with over 6000 young people in 2022.

ECO-UNESCO delivers online courses for young people on how to take action through our 6 steps action project framework <https://learn.ecounesco.ie/> as well as our new course on youth eco activism <https://learn.ecounesco.ie/courses/toolkit-for-youth-eco-activism/>

ECO-UNESCO led a new Strategic Partnership project Youth Action for Nature and Well-being, with 5 organisations from across Europe including Gaia Education Scotland, Slovakian Youth Parliament, YouthforSmile Latvia, Resilience Earth Spain and Eco Wellness Ireland. The project was funded under the Erasmus+ programme and involved the co-creation and design of a Toolkit, a Case Study, a Pedagogical Design Guide, an E-learning Course and an Evaluation Tool over the course of 2.5 years through youth events, exchanges and meetings. The project outputs were co-designed with over 100 young people and can be found on [www.yafnaw.eu](http://www.yafnaw.eu).

### 4.3 Youth-Led Initiatives

ISSU received ESD to 2030 funding in 2022 and again in 2023 to support youth led initiatives including the “Debate your Decision Makers” event in January 2023 and ISSU’s International Women’s Day Conference in March 2023.

DCEDIY supports the delivery of a variety of ESD and GCE initiatives in youth services, through a strategic partnership approach and other initiatives including through a Youth Climate Justice Fund. A new Action Plan for Youth Services is currently being developed and this work will include consideration of the most effective approach to supporting services to address emerging priority themes, including ESD and GCE.

DCEDIY provides money to local authorities to run effective Comhairle na nÓg. Each of the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg are coordinated and run by a local coordinator and supported by the Local Authority and the National Participation Office team. The National Executive has a term of office of two years and meets once a month. The Executive is facilitated and supported by the DCEDIY who ensure that they get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

ECO-UNESCO leads a consortium project, Youth Climate Justice Advocate programme, which is funded under the DCEDIY’s Youth Climate Justice fund. Working with National Youth Organisations No Name Club, Feachtas and Young Irish Filmmakers, the project has built knowledge, leadership and advocacy skills in young people and promotes and supports youth led action which culminates in an annual Earth Gala each year.

Since 2007, ECO-UNESCO’s Youth for Sustainable Development programme has supported young people (14-18) to become global youth leaders for change. The programme is supported by Irish Aid and upskills young people (14-18) in sustainability, the SDG’s and peer education through after schools clubs in various locations around Ireland. The programme comprises an initial 12-week foundation programme, an action phase, a QQI accredited training in peer education for sustainability and a Youth Action Network phase.

ECO-UNESCO has run an annual Youth Climate Voices survey since 2020, which is carried out by SpunOut, with over 1000 young people (15-25) participating. The survey allows young people to voice their concerns on environmental and climate change and climate justice issues, provides insights into barriers to their engagement, skills they need and would like to develop.

## 4.4 Volunteering

ESD to 2030 aims to increase student participation in Volunteering opportunities both in their local communities and more globally.

Opportunities for volunteering is one of the criteria included in calls for ESD to 2030 funding from DoE. One of the organisations that was provided with ESD to 2030 funding in 2022/23. was Picker Pals who run a litter picking programme in primary schools across the country.

### European Solidarity Corps

Léargas' Yearly Report to the European Commission on 2022 programme performance in the European Solidarity Corps Programme reveals the following information:

Type of Action	Planned	Achieved
Volunteering	210	156
Solidarity Projects	40	60

While the total number of volunteers was significantly lower than the planned goal, the number of young people participating in Solidarity Projects exceeded its target by 50%. It should be noted that these figures are from 2022 performance only. To demonstrate an increase or decrease, Léargas will use 2023 data when it is available to provide a comparative analysis.

Léargas has established a Green Team and also has a staff member acting as a Green Contact Point within the National Agency network for the Green priority in the organisation's programmes.

In 2022 in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, a new climate indicator was included in Léargas' targets and reporting mechanism:

- E07 Erasmus+: % of projects addressing climate objectives under Key Action 2.
- ESC04 European Solidarity Corps: Share of activities that address climate objectives.

The following was the state of play of Léargas' performance against the Erasmus+ climate indicator in 2022:

	Schools Education		Adult Education		Vocational Education Training		Youth	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
E07 % of projects addressing climate objectives under Key Action 2	10	9.09	10	10	15	13.33	20	18.18

The following was the state of play of Léargas' performance against the European Solidarity Corps climate indicator in 2022:

	Volunteering Projects		Solidarity Projects	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
ESC04 Share of activities that address climate objectives	20	64	n/a	n/a

## Student engagement in the National Volunteering Strategy

Half of the HEIs actively support students in taking up ESD and SDG related volunteering opportunities, which take place at local, national and European levels.

- ATU recognise volunteering through the Thrive Award, which was developed to acknowledge the valuable contributions students make to their various communities.
- The UCC Graduate Attributes Programme promotes volunteering through its EmployAgility award. The is a professional skills development programme, and demonstrates that students have engaged in, and developed professional skills through extra-curricular activities and work experience. A specific volunteering pathway within the EmployAgility programme requires students to complete at least 20 hours of unpaid volunteering in an on or off-campus organisation, and write a reflective report. UCC students volunteer with a wide variety of causes through the student volunteer portal or a volunteering in Cork website, both of which are signposted on the EmployAgility website. UL acknowledges students who are involved in SDG related volunteering via its Presidents Volunteering Award.
- DCU Volunteering uses social media platforms to promote any volunteering opportunities, the majority of which are SDG related. A new Volunteering Strategy document, which is currently being updated, is primarily focused on DCU Volunteering needs and takes into account the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025. DCU Volunteering has been running a Volunteer Hub since April 2023, which aims to build closer relationships, help local communities with their volunteering needs, and open the university to the local community stakeholders.
- The MU Green Campus Initiative (MGC) involves student engagement in a range of sustainability activities which includes volunteering at the local level. Through MGC, students and staff are encouraged to engage and support local and national organisations, join the Green Forum and to collaborate with other HEI's Environmental Societies. MU students have volunteered at local clean-ups, with Eco-UNESCO, and have participated in national and international sustainability competitions.
- RCSI Engage has a dedicated student Volunteer Working Group, which supports and promotes volunteering in our local, national, and international communities and an array of SDG contributions. In 2022, a team from the Volunteer Working Group conducted the first internal student volunteering survey to learn from students' experiences and to identify areas of interest in future volunteering and are currently creating opportunities to renew partnerships and volunteer opportunities that were disrupted during the COVID-19 restrictions. RCSI students are also encouraged to partake in The Olive Branch for Children (TOBFC) volunteer programme. TOBFC helps remote communities in Tanzania assess their primary needs and establishes programmes that target the most vulnerable in those communities. RCSI students volunteer with the Olive Branch for Children Mobile Medical Clinic, which operates in the most remote communities in the catchment area. The clinic provides baseline healthcare, focusing on child and maternal health, HIV testing and care, malaria testing and treatment, diagnosis and treatment of basic medical issues, wound care, family planning, blood pressure monitoring and emergency referrals to permanent health facilities.



## Case Study

During the 14th meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development in 2019 a particular focus was given on the importance of engaging youth for the achievement of the SDGs, including through ESD. A permanent UNECE ESD Steering Committee Youth Platform was established to cement youth participation within the work of the committee.

Ireland were invited to nominate a member to the Youth Platform and the three co-sponsoring Government Departments of ESD to 2030, Ireland's 2<sup>nd</sup> National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and UNESCO Country Initiative, nominated Eimear Manning, a Youth and Climate Development Officer with the National Youth Council of Ireland. Eimear has considerable experience in representing the voice of young people having previously served as an All Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassador and Youth Mentor with the European Commission and as an Environmental Education and Youth Coordinator with ECO UNESCO. She has a B.A. in Geographical Science and English and an M.S. in Environmental Sustainability.

Eimear's appointment is in line with ESD to 2030 priority actions a). To advance policy by enhancing international collaboration and co-operation on ESD and b). By empowering and mobilising young people, recognising young people as key contributors to our sustainable future and creating participation opportunities to engage, upskill and use their voice for sustainable development.

Ultimately, the meaningful participation of members of the Youth Platform in the work of the Steering Committee results in a deeper understanding of the synergies between various ESD approaches, as well as the ways in which youth can play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable education.

Recommendations and insights gathered will contribute to the discussions and outcomes of future Education Summits, such as the 'Transforming Education Summit' and the 'Summit of the Future', ensuring that youth perspectives and collaborative approaches are integrated into the educational transformation agenda.

Priority Action Area 5

## Accelerating Local Level Action



# Priority Area 5

## – Accelerating Local Level Action

### 5.1 Community Linking and Collaboration

Building on the success of the **Creative Youth (CY) Plan 2017-2022**, the new CY Plan 2023-2027 was launched on the 28th March 2023. The DoE and DFHERIS have a number of actions in the Plan on which they are leading and DoE is a key stakeholder in a number of actions that will be delivered over the next 5 years of the new Plan.

DoE Programmes such as Creative Clusters, BLAST and Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYP) are central actions in the CY Plan 2023-2027 and will provide opportunities for children and young people, schools and Communities all over the country to be creative, to learn different skills and have different experiences and networks that support and enhance personal and social development, including in the area of ESD. To date 590 schools have participated in the Creative Clusters Programme and 1,543 schools have participated in the BLAST Programme, while a new LCYP has been established recently that will bring the number to 7 LCYPS across the country.

DCEDIY worked with DRCD for two years on the Little Library Initiative. This First 5 Trial is currently being evaluated. It consists of a number of strands to encourage and support library membership. One of the aims of Little Library is to make local libraries central spaces for young children and their families within any local community. A key shared action in the new National Library Strategy and the Little Library Initiative is that all children aged 5 and under become members of their local library. Also, the new national public libraries, “The Library is the Place”, has a specific strategic objective on Sustainability and Climate Action, with seven associated targets. The strategy is mapped to the SDGs themselves, and will contribute to 15/17 SDGs and 32 SDG targets.

Organisations supported by DFA/ Irish Aid under the 2023 Global Citizen Education Grants scheme included AkiDwA, the national network of migrant women living in Ireland, Lourdes Youth and Community Services, a community development organisation in Dublin’s North Inner City and Educate Together, a patron body for multi-denominational schools. This funding also included an Innovation Challenge Fund, which encourages fresh thinking on how to engage the public on global themes. Funding was allocated to 13 projects, ranging from using the creative arts to promote global citizenship education and supporting links between primary schools in Ireland, South Africa and Kenya.

Strengthening engagement with communities, and building local level collaboration around ESD, is essential to achieving SDG 4.7. Specialist organisations comprise approximately 25% of IDEA’s (Irish Development Education Association) membership, and deliver lifelong learning initiatives within the communities in which they are based. Often working with marginalised and hard-to-reach groups, their work is instrumental in delivering ESD to 2030 at grassroots level in the non-formal space, focussing as they do on social justice, global citizenship, sustainable development, human rights and inequality. Some examples include Afri, which engages in community development education on poverty, climate change, and food sovereignty; Meath Partnership which supports integration activities with people living in Direct Provision through environmental volunteering opportunities; the Inishowen Development Partnership, which works on adult learning initiatives supporting social inclusion,

community sustainable development projects, and collaboration with SMEs on the SDGs; and the Waterford Sustainable Living Initiative, which develops resources for community and youth educators on sustainability, ethical consumerism, and the SDGs.

IDEA, the national network for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland, provides support to these specialist organisations, and to all civil society entities involved in lifelong, quality ESD/GCE across formal, non-formal and informal settings. IDEA provides capacity development for members, advocates on their behalf towards policy-makers for strategic prioritisation and policy coherence on ESD/GCE, shares resources, innovative approaches, and best practices; and provides guidance and standards across the sector through our community of practice and Code membership. IDEA's member organisations all contribute towards ESD to 2030 objectives through facilitating communities to become agents of change, empowered to act for a more equitable and sustainable world.



## Case Study

### First 5 Little Libraries

In June 2023, Roderic O' Gorman, Minister for Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), together with Heather Humphreys, Minister for Rural and Community Development (DRCD) launched Little Libraries 2023. This initiative, funded through Dormant Accounts Funding, offers a free book bag with storybooks for children and supportive information for parents for all children starting school in September 2023.

As well as aiming to foster a genuine love of reading, Little Libraries aspires to make local libraries central spaces for young children and their families within any local community. DCEDIY provided input on the above mentioned national library strategy, "The Library is the Place" which commits us to partnering with DRCD to fully develop the First 5 Little Library initiative supporting all children aged five and under to become library members, informed by evidence-based assessment. "The Library is the Place", has a specific strategic objective on Sustainability and Climate Action, with seven associated targets.

The goal of the Little Libraries initiative is that all children will start school with storybooks in their homes and as members of their local library. This year's initiative builds on the success of My Little Library 2022 when over 46,000 book bags were distributed to children starting school, in their local library. The initiative resulted in over 37,000, 4 and 5-year-old children joining the library.

Engagement is a key pillar of the social mission of Higher Education Institutions and the majority of HEIs foster, support and expand links with their local communities, NGOs, and local authorities to educate, raise awareness and understanding of the need for action and engagement on sustainable development. One of the ways in which HEIs achieve this is by engaging with **UNESCO Learning City**, an international policy-oriented network which provides inspiration, know-how and best practice.

- MIC is a founder member and active participant in the City of Learning initiative in Limerick, which has UNESCO Learning City status. As such, the college mobilises its intellectual and capital resources towards the advancement of ESD in the wider community.
- TUS is also involved in the Limerick Lifelong Learning initiative and works with multi partners to promote ESD across the city. Similarly, UL's recently launched Citizen Assembly was designed to create a safe and respectful space for citizens to come together and discuss SDG-focused actions for Limerick. This project provides a means to strengthen democracy and involve citizens in meaningful decision-making, and an opportunity for collective learning and experimentation.
- UCC is a key partner in Cork's UNESCO Learning City Initiative. Cork has been a learning City since 2015, and hosted the International Learning Cities festival in 2017. In recent years, Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at UCC has been part of a citywide partnership of active leadership that promotes lifelong learning within the university city of Cork. UCC, through the establishment of Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Ireland, intends to build deeper collaborations with Cork Learning City, Cork Healthy City and the broader Cork community through the development of projects focused on specific SDGs.
- RCSI is co-chair of the Dublin Learning City Initiative & provides free access to online and in person workshop on some topics such as Youth Mental Health, Science of Health & Happiness, and Patient & Public Involvement in Research.
- RCSI, TCD, UCD, NCAD, IADT and Marino Institute of Education are members of the HEA funded Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Leinster Pillar 1 Cluster, which aims to promote and advance equality of access to higher education for under-represented groups. This collaborative approach facilitates the sharing of learning and experience among HEIs to address issues of educational inequality and community engagement. An example of a PATH initiative is the Dublin Learning City (DLC), which is a partnership with the six partner HEIs, Dublin City Council, Dublin City ETB and Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB and has achieved the UNESCO Learning City Award for Dublin in 2021. DLC focuses on promoting lifelong learning for all and access to higher education, effectively mobilising resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education, encouraging learning in families and communities with a specific focus on access target groups. The fifth DLC Festival took place in April 2023, with the partners providing a diverse programme of over 120 in-person and online events across the city of Dublin.
- SETU was part of the steering group that submitted an application in May 2023 to UNESCO For the designation of Waterford as Learning City, with a view in time to designating the Southern Region as a Learning Region. This will form the platform for the further advancement of ESD in the wider community in the South-East.

- ATU builds capacity within community groups on climate action through its Power to Change project, in partnership with the Sligo Public Participation Network, which is funded under the Community Climate Action Programme. The project facilitates connection and reconnection with nature and builds capacity within community groups to lead on change. A key focus of the project is to engage with groups that have been under-represented in the Climate Conversations and will be guided by the principles of Universal Design for research to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. A repository of case studies, good practice guides, and a virtual learning environment will be developed to aid capacity building within community groups, and ultimately establish lasting connections and networks.
- DCU is also committed to collaborating with local communities to raise awareness and understanding of the need for action and engagement on sustainable development. Through DCU in the Community and the DCU Centre for Engaged Research, the university runs various open events and workshops, as well as attending local organisations' events and assisting if needed. DCU's recent PPN Summer School consisted of various workshops which aimed to empower community organisations free of charge. Workshops included introduction to public policy and advocacy in the Irish system; equality diversity and inclusion; moving from purpose to impact; and a session on public speaking. The summer school had over 70 registrants from local community organisations, including the Dublin City PPN Disability Thematic Group, The Africa Centre, Carmichael House, The Independent Living Movement, and the CamFoot migrant community group. This summer school strengthens the university's relationship with local communities and facilitates engagement in sustainable development discussions and, subsequently, action.

The new national public libraries, "**The Library is the Place**", has a specific strategic objective on Sustainability and Climate Action, with seven associated targets. The strategy is mapped to the SDGs themselves, and will contribute to 15/17 SDGs and 32 SDG targets

Organisations supported by DFA/ Irish Aid under the 2023 Global Citizen Education Grants scheme included AkiDwA, the national network of migrant women living in Ireland, Lourdes Youth and Community Services, a community development organisation in Dublin's North Inner City and Educate Together, a patron body for multi-denominational schools. This funding also included an Innovation Challenge Fund, which encourages fresh thinking on how to engage the public on global themes. Funding was allocated to 13 projects, ranging from using the creative arts to promote global citizenship education and supporting links between primary schools in Ireland, South Africa and Kenya.



## 5.2 Local Authority Engagement

All Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) were engaged with following the publication of the ESD strategy in terms of integrating the SDGs and ESD into their Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). Further engagement is needed in this area to create links with LCDCs, Local Authorities and County Councils in collaboration with DRCD and DHLGH. A workshop at the ESD Forum in 2022 focused on Local level action and partnerships. Engagement with the Local Authorities is ongoing and examples of collaborations between Local Authorities and education are regularly highlighted in the ESD Newsletter.

DRCD published revised **LECP Guidelines** in November 2021. Full consideration of the SDGs in the LECP feature in the guidelines, thus supporting the adoption and implementation of SDGs at a local and community level. In 2022 DRCD hosted a series of Information webinars for LCDCs. One of these webinars was focused on Climate Action/Environment. DRCD engages on an ongoing basis with the LCDC Chief Officers including attending the regular meetings of the network of regional groupings and plan to host an LCDC networking event on 7th September 2023.

**Broadband Connection Points (BCPs)** as spaces for community learning on ESD are being included as part of the BCP Development Strategy which is scheduled to be released in Q3 2023.

The Local Biodiversity Action Fund, administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, provides funding for Local Authorities to implement actions in the National Biodiversity Action Plan, including funding for raising awareness of biodiversity issues and for nature restoration projects. €1.2m for 110 projects was granted in 2022 and over €2.7m has been awarded for 202 projects in 2023 to date.

SEAI's **Energy Academy** platform that is designed with Ireland's leading energy and e-learning experts, have several modules on climate change and sustainability.

The most recent course SEAI launched in 2023 called 'Ireland's Renewable Energy Transition', covers topics such as renewable fuels/transport, renewable heat, renewable electricity, and Ireland's Renewable Energy transition. SEAI also have modules such as 'Energy and Climate change', 'Ireland's Journey to net zero' and 'Leading Sustainable change.'

SEAI is working with a number of local authorities to assist finance local community energy master plans. There is also a pilot under development to work with libraries to deliver information on sustainability and retrofit grants in libraries. The SEAI Schools Climate SOS book classroom sets are also available free of charge to all libraries and it is expected that the student workshops will also be hosted by libraries as part of the pilot.

The Climate Toolkit for better business is being promoted by Enterprise Ireland on an ongoing basis to enterprise. The toolkit is also embedded in funding supports such as green start.

Enterprise Ireland Sustainability team has been working with the Leadership and Scaling team (formally know as Client Management Development) to embed new content and modules relating to climate and sustainability into their training and development programmes, work is ongoing.

## Case Study

The Donegal Town Green Hub pilot was launched on Tuesday 28 February in The Abbey Hotel in Donegal Town. This initiative is led by Donegal County Council in partnership with the Regional Waste Management Planning Offices supported by the Local Enterprise Office, Donegal ETB, Donegal Town Community Chamber and the Donegal Town Business Focus Group. Over 30 businesses and organisations were represented at the launch, showing an incredible interest in learning about sustainability actions for business. Through the support of the Donegal ETB the Abbey Vocational School, Donegal Town, the Further Education & Training Centre, Drumcliff, Donegal Town and the Donegal ETB, Further Education & Training (FET) Services, Ard Scoil na gCeithre Máistir Tir Chonaill St., Donegal Town are all involved in the initiative.

The Green Hub Pilot Project is aimed at encouraging businesses and organisations to implement good waste management practices, particularly in the areas of waste segregation and recycling. Currently, 70% of the material found in commercial general waste bins could be diverted to the food and recycling waste streams. It is hoped that this pilot will showcase with improved practices in the workplace, that this figure can be greatly reduced, and whilst not only increasing recycling rates, will also aid Ireland's transition towards a Circular Economy.

This initiative delivered by the Regional Waste Management Offices and funded by the Department of Climate Action, Communications and the Environment.



# Appendices



# Appendix 1

## – Acronyms

AIM	Access and Inclusion Model	LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
ATU	Atlantic Technological University	LCYP	Local Creative Youth Partnerships
BCP	Broadband Connection Point	MIC	Mary immaculate College, Limerick
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	MTU	Munster Technological University
CSL	Centre for School Leadership	MU	Maynooth University
CY Plan	Creative Youth Plan 2020–2025	NCAD	National College of Art and Design
DoE	Department of Education	NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	N-TUTORR	National Technological University Transformation for Resilience and Recovery
DCU	Dublin City University	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4	Quarter 1 (January – March), Quarter 2 (April – June), Quarter 3 (July – September), Quarter 4 (October – December)
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs	RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
DkIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology	SAC	School Age Childcare
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development	SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
ELC	Early Learning and Care	SETU	South East Technological University
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development	SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
ESD to 2030	2 <sup>nd</sup> National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development	SSE	School Self-Evaluation
ETB	Education and Training Board	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland	TCD	Trinity College Dublin
FET	Further Education and Training	TCG	Technical Cooperation Group (UN)
GCE	Global Citizenship Education	TU Dublin	Technological University Dublin
GENE	Global Education Network Europe	TUS	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands – Midwest
HEA	Higher Education Authority	UCC	University College Cork
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions	UCD	University College Dublin
IADT	Institute of Art Design and Technology	UL	University of Limerick
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation	UN	United Nations
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ISSN	Irish Schools Sustainability Network	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ISSU	Irish Second Level Students Union	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ITE	Initial Teacher Education		
LAOS	Looking at Our School: A quality framework for Post Primary Schools		
LC CASD	Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development		
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee		
			University of Galway – Ollscoil na Gaillimhe

## Appendix 2

# – Summary Report on ESD to 2030 Funding Call 2022

In September 2022, the Department of Education published a call for funding for projects supporting the implementation of ESD to 2030 in the school sector. 9 organisations and 45 schools were awarded funding totaling €220k for a range of projects. The grants awarded facilitated a broad range of projects across the three key areas of Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability. A representative selection of these projects is outlined below.

The grants awarded to schools and organisations in 2022/23 under ESD to 2030 facilitated a broad range of effective projects across the three key areas of Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability. A representative selection of these projects is outlined below.

### Organisations

#### An Taisce

With the help of the grant, An Taisce was able to expand their Green-Schools Global Citizenship Food and Biodiversity programme, providing sustainability-informed cookery classes to a total of 15,836 students across 64 schools nationwide.

#### ECO-UNESCO

The grant awarded to ECO-UNESCO facilitated fourteen environmental training sessions for student unions in seven schools around Ireland. The training allows students to think critically on improving their school community's contribution to Sustainable Development. The programme provided training to over 400 students.

### Education for Sustainability

The grant allowed Education for Sustainability to develop a climate literacy course for primary schools. This course allows the facilitator to teach the class and train teaching staff in course delivery simultaneously, allowing the teacher to deliver the course in subsequent years. This allows the course to be delivered in future at no financial cost to the school, increasing the economic sustainability of the programme.

### Global Citizenship School (GCS)

GCS was awarded funding for the creation of a new website, which now provides a wealth of lesson plans and other teacher resources. The funding enabled GCS to perform a survey of primary school teachers who used the new website. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 94% of participants rating the site as "Very Good" to "Excellent".

### Green Roots

Green Roots' *Grow Your Green Cloak* seeks to increase students' awareness of nature, biodiversity, and the environment through a variety of activities that encourage children to interact with nature and then reflect on their experiences through art, crafting, and writing. The grant enabled the development of video resources and illustrations to enhance the program and facilitated the translation of materials into Irish.

### Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN)

The ISSN provides opportunities for teachers and students to connect and share best practice and provide training and resources in ESD and GCE for teachers and principals. The funding provided allowed the ISSN to effectively communicate with teachers and students through mailing accounts and provide resources through their website. As of May 2023, 240 schools are registered with the network.

### Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)

*Debate Your Decision Makers* gives students the opportunity to learn about Sustainable Development through workshops and online resources. The ISSU then hosts an event where students and public representative engage in informed discussions and debates on sustainability. This then informs the ISSU's Sustainable Development advocacy. The grant allowed the ISSU to host the event and provide materials to the participants.

### VOICE Ireland

VOICE Ireland's *Picker Pals* is a programme for primary schools created to raise awareness of environmental issues and promote socially and environmentally sustainable action through a litter-picking adventure. Funding allowed for the development of the programme and the drafting and design of materials for the planned rollout in 23/24.

### Sustainable Fashion Education

Sustainable Fashion Education's *Sustainable Fashion in the Classroom* is an online training course for teaching staff. Following completion, teachers will have the skills and tools to teach children about fashion and sustainability.

### Schools

Note: Given the considerable number of projects granted funding under ESD to 2030 in schools in 22/23, the below is a general overview of the types of projects involved. A full list of grantees is available on the ESD to 2030 webpage: [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) – National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)) and further information on individual projects is available in the quarterly ESD Newsletter.

### Natural Spaces

Projects that gave students space to experience nature on school grounds were particularly popular with primary schools.

Schools engaged in a variety of activities to improve their surroundings: they planted vegetable gardens (Rathcoffey NS) and orchards; installed polytunnels (Mol an Óige CNS); created native wildflower meadows to promote biodiversity; installed rainwater harvesters (Kilglass NS); and built bee boxes to support pollinators (Knockmore JNS).

These projects allowed students to understand the importance of Environmental Sustainability at a deeper level through hands-on experience, reinforcing the conceptual understanding gained in the classroom.

Social sustainability was a strong theme in these projects. An emphasis was placed on inclusion, with many schools ensuring natural spaces could also cater to neurodiverse students as sensory gardens (St. Raphaela's; Lisvernane N.S.). Community engagement with local organisations such as Tidy Towns, Men's Sheds, played a key role in project delivery in many schools (Glenbrohane NS; Howth Primary School). This highlights the broad positive impact these projects can have on communities.

Feedback from student bodies on the projects was universally positive, with staff reporting high levels of engagement and participation from students in these projects. Schools that installed sensory gardens reported a marked positive effect on neurodiverse students in particular.

### Sustainable Consumption

Several school projects on changing their school's relationship with consumption: from the installation of water fountains to reduce plastic bottle waste (De La Salle College; Errigal College); to the creation of swap shops where students could exchange unwanted clothes with each other (Lucan Community College; Castletroy College); to the installation of a biodigester to turn food waste into biogas at Kinsale Community School.

Promoting sustainable travel was another common element of several projects. Both Colaiste Bhaile Chlair and De la Salle College used a portion of their grants to purchase cycling supplies. Students were given training in road safety and safe cycling. These projects presented another practical step that students could take to reduce their consumption.

### Social Sustainability

The funding provided to Bremore ETSS facilitated the development of child friendly school policies by students. Starting with an anti-bullying policy, students met frequently to develop a policy with inclusivity and approachability at its core, in line with Target 4a of Goal 4. The grant funded a trip to Belfast to meet Laura Lundy, Prof of Children's Rights, Queens and UCC. The student team received letters from the European Commission in recognition of the importance and strength of their work to create policies in line with EU Child and Digital Rights. The student team plans to showcase their work in other schools in September 2023, to demonstrate how their success might be replicated.



## Appendix 3

### – Structures

#### National Group

#### Lead

ESD to 2030 Steering Group	Co-sponsoring Departments
ESD to 2030 Advisory Group for Schools	DoE
ESD to 2030 Advisory Group for Further and Higher Education	DFHERIS
Climate Action Delivery Group	DoE – Internal group
SDGs – Senior Officials Group	D.Taoiseach
SDGs – Interdepartmental Working Group	DECC
Citizen Engagement and Climate Literacy Taskforce	DECC
High Level BioEconomy Action Plan Implementation and Development Group	D.AFM/DECC
Heritage Ireland 2030 Senior Officials Group	DHLGH

#### International Group

EU Working Group for Schools: Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development	EU Council
UN – ESD Net – Europe and North America	UNESCO
Greening Education Partnership	UNESCO/ An Taisce – Green Schools

## Appendix 4

### – Recently Related Strategies/Policies

- BCP Development Strategy
- National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023–2027
- Embracing Ireland's Outdoors: the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023–2027
- 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030
- Heritage Ireland 2030
- First 5 Implementation Plan 2023–2025

**Website:**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/02952d-national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development-in-ireland/>

**ESD Newsletter:** Subscribe to the ESD Newsletter [HERE](#).

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## Notes

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Government of Ireland