

ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation



ENGAGE EDUCATE INSPIRE EMPOWER ACT

Affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Association (WFUCA)
Key Partner of UNESCO's Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development



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INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan will run from 2018-2021 and will support the development and growth of ECO-UNESCO over the next 3 years.

Since we were established in 1986 we have developed and grown into a vibrant, dynamic organisation. We have created a wide range of innovative programmes and services aimed at promoting the personal development of young people by building their confidence and self-esteem. This has enabled them to become active citizens whilst developing a knowledge and an understanding of our natural environment, which has protected the environment. This Strategic plan is building on the strengths of the organisation, focusing our work on what we do well.

We are a forerunner in innovative environmental education and youth programmes. We have worked with hundreds of thousands of young people promoting environmental protection through youth action and innovation will remain a key theme in our work. We work with young people, educators and youth leaders on environmental projects across Ireland, helping to protect and conserve the environment. Each year our programmes, workshops, events and trainings support and inspire environmental action at a local level among young people, their peer groups, communities and beyond. Through our innovative peer education programmes and youth-led events, ECO-UNESCO continuously strives to better achieve our mission of using environmental education as a means of empowering young people and supporting positive personal development.

These objectives and actions reflect our respect for young people and the natural environment. It encompasses our belief in creativity and innovation, youth-centred approaches, action based learning and fun as we work together to protect the environment and impact the lives of young people.

Over the course of this plan, all of our key actions will be carefully evaluated, measured and adjusted if necessary. Key Performance Indicators are developed for the delivery of this plan.

We will grow ECO-UNESCO to have a wider and broader impact in the lives of young people (age 10 – 25). We will do this by focusing on high impact programmes, training the trainer, forming collaborations, driving innovation, enhancing our digital platform and publicising our work.

We will have 3 main areas of work

- **Young people aged 10-18 through direct youth work**
- **Young people 18-25 including train the trainer**
- **Awards**

Background to strategic plan

We developed this strategic plan following consultations with a wide range of stakeholders including ECO-UNESCO young people, youth leaders, teachers, government departments and agencies, international agencies including UNESCO and key funders.

We want to have the maximum positive impact on the lives of the young people, who in turn will impact on safeguarding and protecting our natural environment.



CONTEXT

From small beginnings when a group of young people came together to start an ECO-Club to a National Organisation leading innovative environmental education and youth programmes, over our 30 year history we have educated and empowered hundreds of thousands of young people to take action to conserve and protect the environment, giving them the tools and supports to help them grow and develop their skills, their confidence and their experiences.

From early on, we linked to the international UNESCO Clubs movement and became affiliated to UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural organisation. In addition to recognising the importance of direct youth programmes and youth empowerment we also recognised the importance of supporting volunteers, teachers and youth workers providing practical assistance, giving them the tools, skills and supports to help achieve our mission. Governed by a voluntary National Council (Board of Directors) and managed by a multi-skilled team of staff and volunteers, we have developed into one of Ireland's leading environmental youth and education organisations.

There is a need to conserve and protect our environment and to engage young people in finding solutions for their present and future. Our Strategy is responding to this need.

It is also responding to the range of international and national policies including:

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – (UN SDG's) – 2015-2030
- UNESCO's Global framework on Education for Sustainable Development currently the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP ESD) – 2015-2020
- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures – 2014-2020
- National Youth Strategy – 2015-2020
- National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020

- Irish Aid Development Education Strategy – 2017-2023
- Our Sustainable Future
- The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan - 2018-2020
- National Mitigation and Adaptation Plans on Climate Change 2017 and 2018
- Healthy Ireland

Internationally with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN we now have a real opportunity to make the world a more sustainable place; alongside this UNESCO are taking a lead role in education for sustainable development globally and have identified young people as agents of change; ECO-UNESCO as a Key Partner of UNESCO can provide the opportunities for Ireland's young people to respond to this.

Nationally the National Youth Strategy highlights young people's key role as active citizens contributing to their world and the importance of engaging young people in practical environmental projects and initiatives. The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development highlights that along with formal education, non-formal and further education can play a key role in education for sustainable development.



BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

This strategy will build on ECO-UNESCO's strengths. Unique in Ireland, we combine the training and development of young people with the challenges facing our natural environment.

Working with young people aged between 10-25, we protect the environment and empower young people

We inspire, engage, educate and empower



Environmental Awareness



Environmental Protection



Youth Empowerment



Skills Development



Representation



Collaboration

We work all across the island of Ireland and work with partners in Europe and internationally; we are affiliated to UNESCO as a Key partner of its Global Action Programme in ESD.

We work with young people in formal and non-formal settings, in secondary schools, youth services and communities across Ireland through our Young Environmentalist Awards, workshops, trainings or one of our affiliated ECO-UNESCO Clubs. Currently our longer term youth programmes are concentrated in the larger population areas through Youth for Sustainable Development and ECO-Choices.

In non-formal youth settings, young people get involved through the Young Environmentalist Awards, workshops or in one of our longer youth programmes. In the secondary school system, we work particularly with Transition year which is an important focal

point for participation in the Young Environmentalist Awards where young people take part in team based environmental projects. With our Youth for Sustainable Development, our young people are engaged in longer term after schools youth programmes and many continue to connect with ECO-UNESCO in this voluntary capacity as they move and transition onto other areas in their life at college and work. ECO-UNESCO also seeks to engage harder to reach young people outside the schools system through youth services and projects.

For those who have left school there are opportunities through our Upskilling and Training programmes including our youth employment and employability initiatives (Green Pathways and Green Skills) which comprise QQI accredited training, work experience, ongoing employment supports and mentoring. There are also opportunities through our Volunteering and Internship programmes.

Our Passion

Our passion is in Ireland's young people- we want to empower them today while recognising their potential to be future leaders and ambassadors for the environment. We love working with a diverse group of young people and we are proud of the positive impact that our programmes have on our participants lives and on the environment. This is why we do what we do.

Our Approach

We take a youth centred approach and promote learning for, about and in the environment;

We develop leadership skills, confidence, self-belief and self-esteem

We provide an opportunity for young people to feel socially engaged and make new friends;

We include young peoples views – they decide, they plan, they act and they engage their peers.



OUR VALUES

1. Respect

Respect for young people, our participants, volunteers, employees and our stakeholders.

2. Passion

Passion for the environment and for our young people, and an acknowledgement that the natural environment plays an important role in all our lives and in the development and education of our young people.

3. Fun

We value youth-led approaches, creativity and innovation, action based learning, and fun as we work together to protect the environment and impact the lives of young people.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US...



Health & Happiness

Young people are happy and healthy



Making Friends

Making friends and meeting like-minded young people



Education

Environmental education and education for sustainable development and the role they play in environmental protection.

Providing in-formal and non-formal educational opportunities to young people.



Appreciation of nature

Promoting a deep understanding and appreciation of the natural environment



Positive mental and physical well-being

The natural environment plays an important role in positive mental & physical health and the well-being of young people



Youth development

Youth Development and the Principles and practices of Youth Work



Fun

Create a culture of fun



Active learning

Peer education, leadership development and learning by doing



Global links

Thinking globally, acting locally Promote the ideals of UNESCO and incorporate concepts and training from the Global Action Programme



Clean healthy environment

Young people have a clean and healthy present and future environment



Recognition

Recognising and valuing young peoples contribution



Innovation

Creativity and Innovation



Quality

Quality and evidence based programmes



Outdoors & Experiential Learning

Outdoor activities and outdoor education

VISION > MISSION > OBJECTIVES



VISION

Our Vision is a sustainable world where young people are actively engaged in protecting the environment

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to protect the natural environment and empower young people by developing **their knowledge, skills and confidence that channels their passion into positive and creative actions that helps create a sustainable planet.**

OUR OBJECTIVES:

We do this by:

- Raising awareness, understanding and knowledge of the natural environment among young people.
- Engaging, inspiring and empowering young people by facilitating their personal development and well-being through practical environmental projects, activities and skills development.
- Promoting the protection and conservation of the environment by empowering young people to lead in action oriented environmental projects and activities and by promoting positive and environmental behaviour.
- Advocating for environmental education, education for sustainable development, the natural environment and youth development.
- Promoting the ideals of UNESCO and working with likeminded organisations in Europe and globally.



OUR STRATEGY

Our Strategy is to grow ECO-UNESCO to have a wider and broader impact in the lives of young people (age 10 – 25). We will do this by focusing on high impact programs, training the trainer, forming collaborations, driving innovation, enhancing our digital platform and publicising our work.

We will have 3 main areas of work

- Young people 10-18 – Direct Youth Work
- Young people 18-25 – Upskilling and Training
- Awards

Strategic Work Areas

Young People (10-18)	Young People (18-25)	Awards:
Direct Youth	Training & Upskilling	Recognition and Reward
Provision of environmental programmes to young people	Upskilling and training young people and preparing those working with young people	Recognising and Rewarding the work of young people in environmental protection



HOW WE PLAN TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES:

We will achieve our objectives through:



Youth Engagement and Empowerment

Working directly with young people (ages 10 – 18), in formal and non-formal settings (schools, youth groups and communities), through experiential workshops, youth programmes, accredited trainings, events and action projects. Working directly with young people (ages 18-25) developing practical skills, training and experience to progress them in their lives which may for some include further and higher education, training or into the work force.



Reward and Recognition

Grow and develop our Young Environmentalist Awards.



Capacity Building

Up-skilling and training the trainers – volunteers, teachers and youth leaders and supporting them in their work.



Collaboration

Collaborating with like-minded organisations and partners in collaborations to achieve our objectives. Seeking out new collaborations to broaden the reach and impact of ECO-UNESCO.



Digital Development

Developing a digital platform that can provide information, training and knowledge in a scalable and eco-friendly manner.



Regional Growth

Developing an effective regional strategy and driving innovation.



Promoting Innovation

Leading in the field of environmental youth work, environmental education and education for sustainable development and driving innovation through our work



Advocacy

Being the voice and including the voice of young people on issues related to the environment.



Financial Resilience

Developing a more diverse funding base.

Key Actions

Youth Engagement and Empowerment



1. **Working directly with young people (ages 10 – 18), in formal and non-formal settings (schools, youth groups and communities), through experiential workshops, youth programmes, accredited trainings, and events; and for young people (ages 18 – 25) developing practical skills, training and experience to progress them in their lives which for some may include onto further / higher education, training or into the work force**
 1. Develop and champion youth programmes, training, workshops and action oriented projects that will have an increased impact in the lives of young people, which will then have a positive environmental and societal impact
 2. Focus our programmes to support the particular challenges our young people face, using environmental projects and initiatives to foster positive choices for young people.
 3. Develop a pathways journey for our young people as they grow and mature through ECO-UNESCO programmes, building a community with a shared goal of protecting the natural environment.
 4. Roll out integrated Environmental Youth Programmes to an increased number of participants. (i.e. ECO Clubs; Youth for Sustainable Development; ECO Choices; Workshops, Trainings; events).
 5. Review and enhance our accredited and unaccredited Environmental youth leadership programmes to improve their impact in developing current and future environmental leaders.
 6. Promote ECO Health and Well Being by using the natural environment and the outdoors as a recreational, developmental and educational tool leading to positive mental and physical health and well-being
 7. Provide accredited and non-accredited environmental and employability training programmes to young people.

Reward and Recognition



2. Grow and develop our Young Environmentalist Awards

1. Develop and implement a strategy to grow and build our Young Environmentalist Awards (in terms of young people involved, projects carried out, breadth of locations and the wider impact of the awards to further recognise and reward the work of young people (and organisations, through integrating the ECO Sustainability Awards).
2. Align Young Environmentalist Awards categories with the UN Sustainable Development Goals
3. Highlight the importance of young people engaging in the environment for positive physical and mental health and well-being and grow the ECO-Health and Well-being Category in Young Environmentalist Awards
4. Review and enhance our publicising and marketing of the YEA Awards to increase awareness and prestige of the annual showcase and awards event and regional judging events.



Capacity Building



3. **Build the capacity of volunteers, teachers and youth leaders to in addition to supporting them in their work**
 1. Provide quality, user-friendly, information, training and supports to those delivering our programmes and training. These supports will include both practical materials and engagement and be supported by an enhanced digital platform.
 2. Working with schools to further develop their capacity to deliver ESD through student council training, Transition Year, schools modules and extra-curricular initiatives
 3. Deliver accredited and non-accredited training to those working with and impacting on the lives of young people.
 4. Build leadership skills in young people through the delivery of focused peer education and youth leadership programmes including Youth for Sustainable Development and UNESCO Gap Training to those who progress through ECO-UNESCO

Collaboration



4. **Working with like-minded organisations and partners in collaboration to achieve our objectives. Seeking out new collaborations to broaden the reach and impact of ECO-UNESCO**
 1. Proactively engage with a cross section of like-minded organisations where young people can engage and learn and improve the natural environment.
 2. Develop collaborations and partnerships locally with ETB s & Youth Officers, secondary schools, youth services; local authorities EAO's.
 3. Further develop collaborations, partnerships and the exploration of strategic partnerships nationally with DCYA, DCCAE, DES, Irish Aid, EPA, ETBI, NCCA, and SOLAS and explore strategic opportunities
 4. Build further awareness of ECO-UNESCO with the Youth, Environmental, and Community & Voluntary Sector to explore mutual collaborations to achieve our objectives.
 5. Explore opportunities for a comprehensive ECO-Youth Health programme with the National Youth Health Strategy
 6. Build on our current partnership with UNESCO, as a GAP in ESD Key Partner, and explore further opportunities to strengthen our relationship, including as a recognised NGO partner and through other affiliated programmes e.g. UNESCO Biosphere and related programmes.
 7. Promote the ideals of UNESCO in Ireland

Digital Development



5. **Developing a digital platform that can provide information, training and knowledge in a scalable and environmentally friendly manner**
 1. Produce a range of accessible environmental education content based on key environment, environmental education and sustainability themes including the SDG's
 2. Develop a comprehensive and cost effective range of quality learning and educational resources (on and off-line)



Regional Growth



6. Developing a broader regional footprint

1. Work with regional partners to increase the locations in which our peer education and youth leadership programmes are delivered by creating Regional Activity Hubs to promote and roll out programmes (to include ECO-Clubs; YSD programmes and YEA; expanding the regional presence incl. development of a Regional ECO Den Showcase and building long term engagement in local areas.)
2. Redevelop our support structures around ECO-UNESCO registered groups and ECO-UNESCO Clubs, including between ECO Clubs in schools and in out-of-schools, to increase their activity and impact in their areas.

Promoting Innovation



7. Lead in the field of environmental youth work, environmental education and education for sustainable development and drive innovation through our work

1. Lead in the field of environmental education and environmental youth work and drive innovation through our work

Advocacy



8. Being the voice and including the voice of young people on issues related to the environment

1. Develop and implement a stakeholder plan, and seek to ensure the voice of young people is heard in the environmental debate.
2. Conduct a programme of regular engagement with key governmental bodies in education, environmental education and youth development.
3. Develop a Youth Advisory Network to support the work of ECO-UNESCO, including in developing a series of young people's policy and position papers on a range of key environmental issues.
4. Endeavour to engage young people in all aspects of the organisation's decision making and work to build long term engagement of young people (18-25) by developing a model of youth participation.
5. Explore the merits of developing an ECO-UNESCO's membership and affiliations, e.g. friend of ECO-UNESCO, ECO-UNESCO Clubs etc
6. Provide, promote and support opportunities for youth engagement with policy makers.

Financial Resilience



9. Developing a more diverse base of funding

1. Generate own income through a range of services incl. training courses, education resources, consultancy and our membership programme.
2. Work with other organisations to support a policy and funding environment that is more supportive of the practice of grant making as well as of private giving and philanthropy.
3. Build awareness with funders of the nature of funding required for ECO-UNESCO to thrive and have a greater impact on the lives of young people and the environment.
4. Build relationships and develop an ethical fund raising policy to attract appropriate partners to participate in ECO-UNESCO projects, either through directed funding, sponsorship, or opportunities for work experience in Eco friendly, CSR related projects.
5. Build on key strategic partnerships with government bodies including DCCAE; DCYA; Irish Aid; EPA
6. Promote financial agility responding to new opportunities

Supporting measures

- **ECO-UNESCO is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors (National Council) with a broad skill-set that help lead the organisation ensuring appropriate supporting measures and structures are in place to deliver this strategy.**
- **This Strategic plan will be delivered through a multi-skilled team of staff and volunteers in key strategic areas supported by an evidence-based approach with robust monitoring and evaluation systems ensuring quality of programmes, strong financial and accountability systems, innovative communications and marketing with continuous development and investment in our people.**

Supporting measures will include



"I enjoyed working as a team because we all got to share our opinions on the environmental issue we chose and discuss our ideas on how to approach it. It was very interesting and enjoyable."

YEA Participant

"I learned about the environment and what effects we have on it. I can see what kind of things I have to do to protect it."

Young person who completed Youth for Sustainable Development Programme

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

Over the last past 30 years thousands of young people have been inspired and empowered through the work of ECO-UNESCO. Many are now leading voices in the environmental awareness. Our participant's personal and skills development has contributed to their taking an active citizenship role in society.

Our work is based on evidence and over the years we have measured the impact and benefit of our work on the lives of young people and their impact on the natural environment. Our participants over the last 30 years are living examples of how ECO-UNESCO has impacted their lives and changed attitudes.

We gather evidence based on the real lives of our participants and the journeys they have made, what impact ECO-UNESCO has made on the pathways they followed and how it has supported them on this route.

We actively survey our participants, helping us to understand our impact, and how we can continuously improve and target our resources more effectively.

Being successful to us means impacting as many young lives as possible, helping them to grow as individuals and to have a positive impact on conserving and protecting our natural environment.

We review our impact from the perspective of:

- Building knowledge, understanding and awareness of our environment in young people
- Building confidence, self-esteem and skills in young people
- Encouraging action to protect our environment
- Changing attitudes and behaviours for the protection of our environment
- Encouraging young peoples voices on environmental issues



"It has given me more theory behind gardening which I hope to apply to growing my own food eventually"

Green Steps Participant

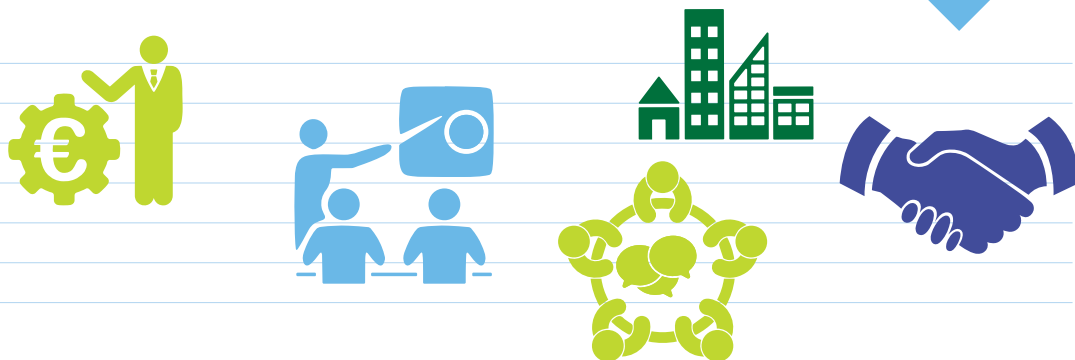
"I will use the skills in the future and I will also give others advice on my knowledge"

ECO-Clubs Participant

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

When appropriate resources are in place:

Staff
Finances
Programme
Design
Expertise
Premises
Facilities
Partnerships



We are enabled to deliver:

Youth development, peer education and leadership initiatives
Youth work methodologies and EE/ESD methodologies
Upskilling and training
Educating the educators
Advocacy
Recognising and rewarding
Innovation and research
Evaluation and impact Measurement



Which result in

Young people who are engaged in action for the environment and sustainable development
Capacity building those who work with young people and impact the lives of young people



"I learned about the environment and what effects we have on it. I can see what kind of things I have to do to protect it."

Young person who completed Youth for Sustainable Development Programme

"Thanks again for all the help and the great resources and ideas, I have no doubt we will be using them in the future."

L2C Teacher Programme

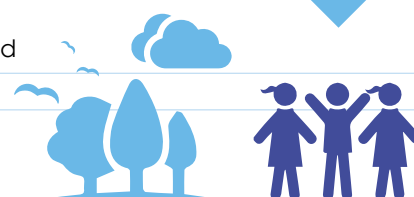
This results in

Improved self-esteem and increased resilience
 Changed behaviour in relation to the environment



This results in

Young people who are confident, healthier, happier, engaged and empowered
 Greater awareness of the natural environment
 Positive impacts on the natural environment



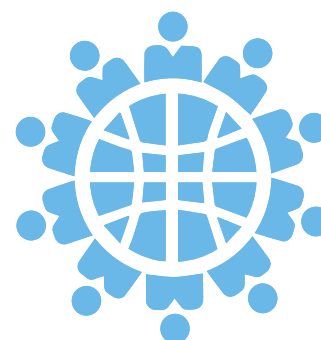
Which makes for the following long-term outcome

Engaged and empowered citizens who care for and protect the natural environment

Young people who are:

- Active and healthy with good physical and mental well-being
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Protected from harm
- Connected, respected and contributing to the world

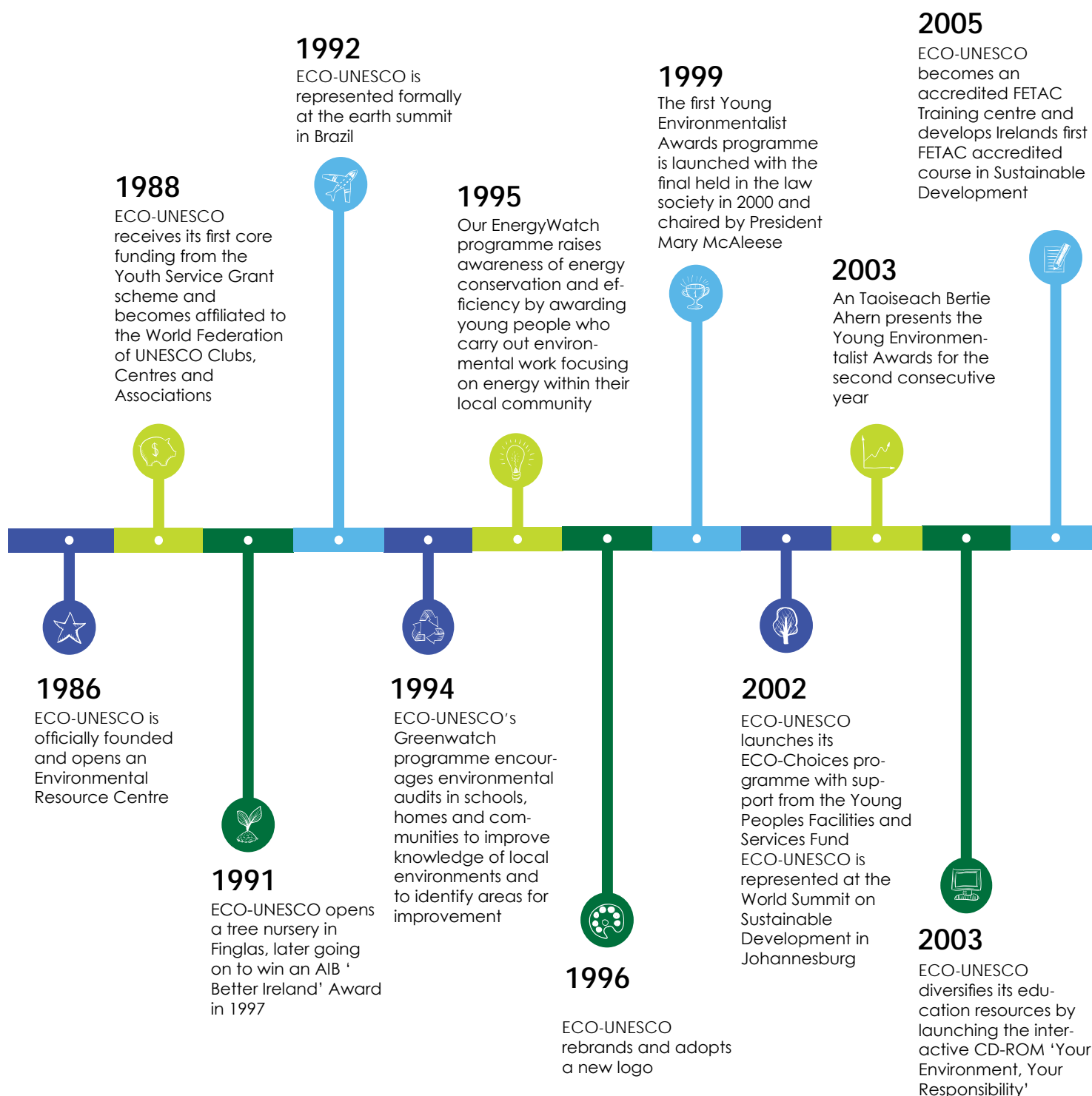
(from National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 Outcomes)

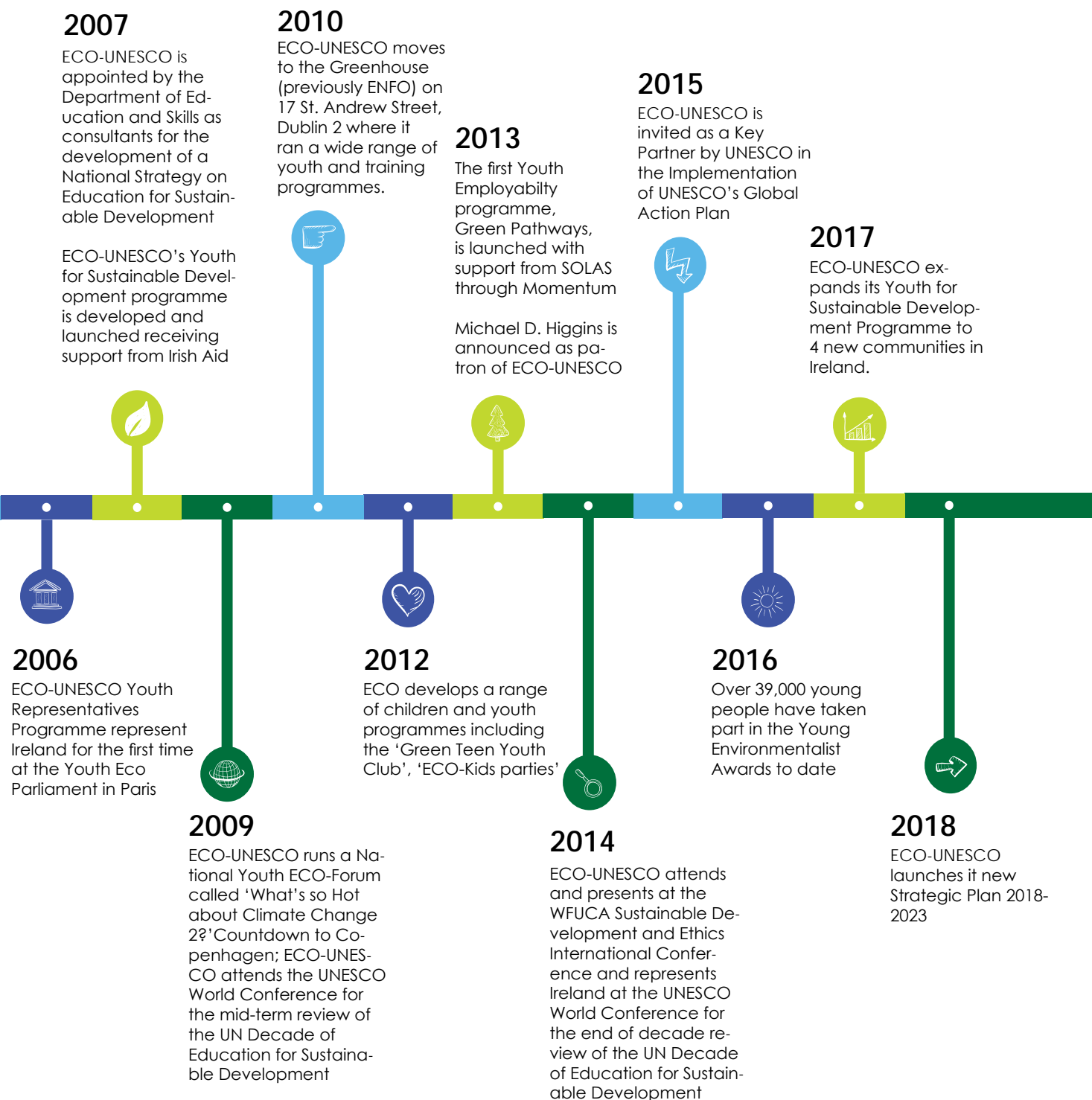


"ECO-UNESCO has made me aware of what's going on in the world and the issues surrounding global warming and climate change. It helped me gain confidence and gave me facilitating skills. I enjoy meeting and talking to new people"

Young person who completed Youth for Sustainable Development programme

OUR CURRENT WORK - OUR TIMELINE









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