

# ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation

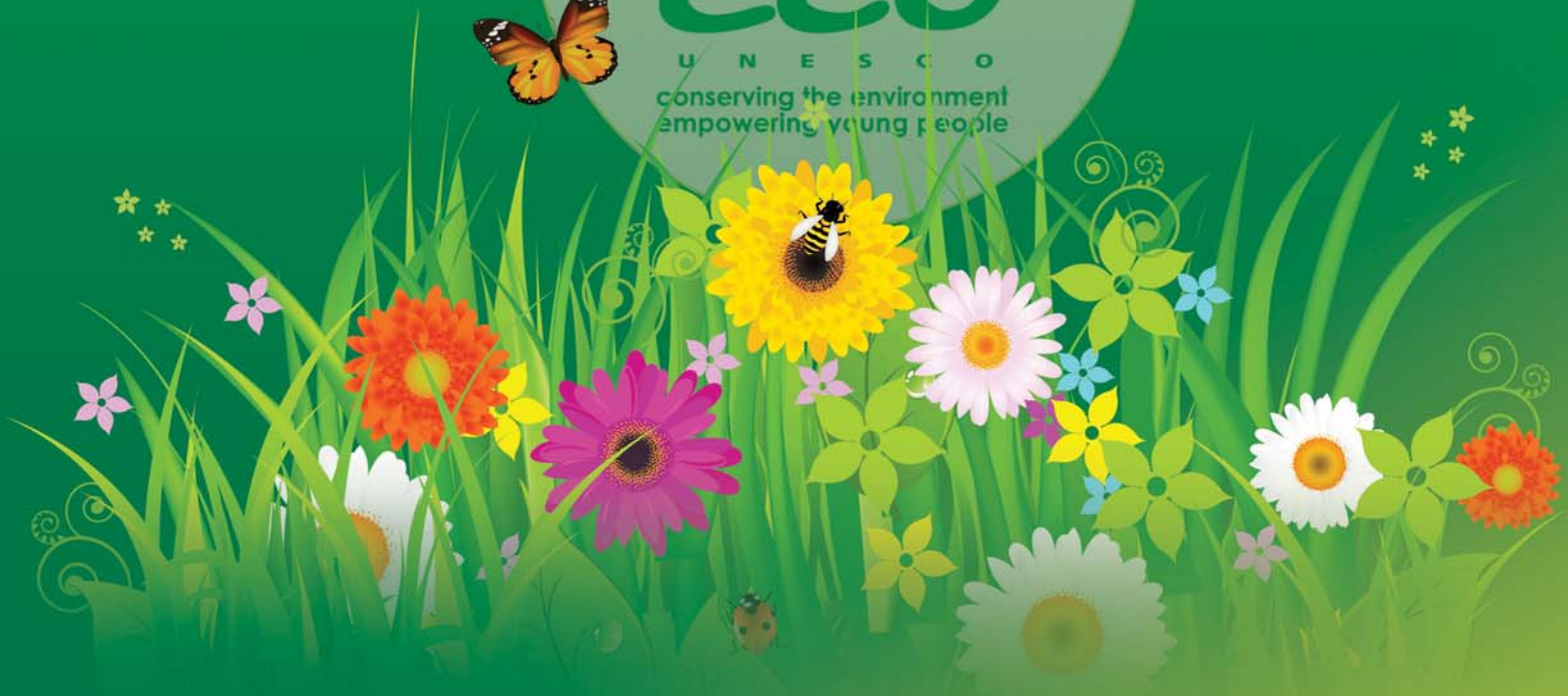
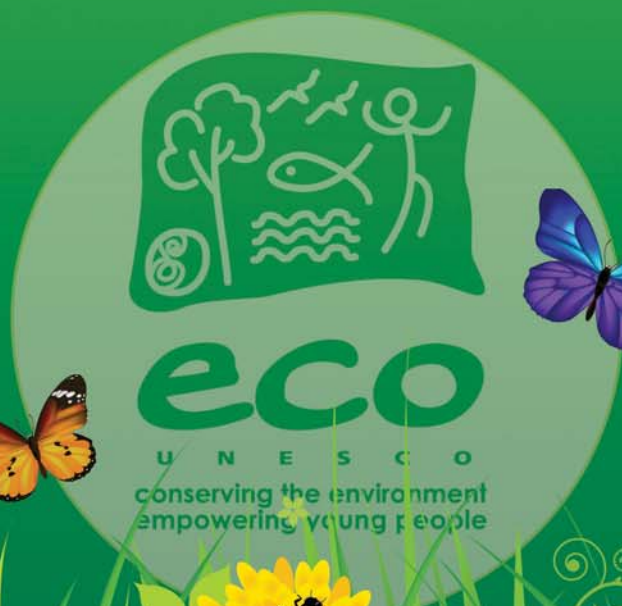


# 2015



# ANNUAL REPORT

ECO-UNESCO is affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA)





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# Chairperson's and Director's Message

## Dear friends of ECO-UNESCO,

2015 has once again been a year of positive growth and development for ECO-UNESCO and we are delighted to present you with this Annual Report outlining our successes over the past 12 months. This year has been an important year for young people in Ireland with the development of the first National Youth Strategy and education reforms in second level education. Internationally the Paris Climate Agreement was agreed, the Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD were launched. In Ireland, through our wide range of programmes ECO-UNESCO is engaged in these national and international policies and programmes.

Throughout 2015, ECO-UNESCO remained committed to our remit of youth empowerment through environmental education and action to protect the natural environment. Through our work we engaged with non-formal and formal education bringing a specialist environmental youth work approach and we continued to focus on youth empowerment and youth action. The breadth and depth of our work has engaged with all 32 counties in Ireland; our programmes and services including our youth peer education, youth meetings, events, a National Youth ECO Forum, kids' camps, the Young Environmentalist Awards programme, accredited and non-accredited trainings, educational resources and facilities; as well as environmental education outreach programmes and youth employment programmes. This report reflects our achievements during the year and provides an overview of our innovative programmes and services.

Our flagship programme, the Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA) continued to grow with our largest showcase and awards ceremony to date held in the Mansion House. We were delighted to welcome UNESCO Representative, Professor Patrick McKeever, Chief of Section, Earth Sciences and Geohazard Risk Reduction and Secretary of the IGCP, at the Final Showcase and Award ceremony, and Minister Sean Sherlock. As Ireland's biggest ECO-action initiative, it is important to share the powerful impact that these eco-action projects are having on a local and global scale.

Along with engaging young people in environmental action projects and peer education programmes, we also continued to up skill and train a number of people of all ages in community gardening, sustainable development, environmental education and more. In 2015 we continued to deliver our green employment programmes which saw over 70 participants engage in a specialist training and development programme which included accredited and non-accredited trainings, work experience, mentoring and which helped them to progress onto further education and employment. In 2015 we were delighted to be supported by Accenture through their Skills to Succeed programme for the delivery of a Green Skills youth employment and employability programmes across Ireland.

Youth empowerment remains central to our work, and our Youth for Sustainable Development (YSD) programme continued to provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to become peer educators and advocates for sustainable development. We continued to run our ECO-choices programme and worked with young people across Dublin through peer education, outdoor environmental activities and action project work. In 2015 we continued to work with Local Authorities delivering a range of specialist workshops and trainings including a fashion focused programme, a global responsibilities programme along with community gardening and more.

Throughout 2015 we strengthened our international links in particular with UNESCO through the Global Action Programme and attended UNESCO GAP meetings and COP21 in Paris. Through UNESCO's GAP we are committed to scaling up and developing our YEA and YSD programmes. At a European level; we ran a Transnational Youth meeting with the support of Erasmus+ where over 70 young people from across Europe met with policy makers on Climate change providing a youth voice prior to the negotiations at COP21 in Paris.

ECO-UNESCO has remained resourceful and innovative in delivering its programmes. We are very proud of our work; providing highly effective programmes for young people, leaders and teachers which are empowering young people throughout Ireland to take environmental action and make a difference among their peers, in their communities and beyond.

We would like to acknowledge all of the people who are involved with ECO-UNESCO; our members, our young people, our board, our staff, interns and our volunteers who continue to deliver on programmes.

We look forward to the future and to celebrating 30 years of ECO-UNESCO. We look forward to continuing this innovative work and making a real difference in the lives of many young people. We will continue to provide high quality, non-formal, specialist environmental youth programmes in a fun and safe environment and will continue to innovate and use our resources in the most effective and efficient ways possible. We will continue to go from strength to strength to benefit young people and the environment.



Karen Furlong  
Chairperson  
ECO-UNESCO



Elaine Nevin  
National Director  
ECO-UNESCO

# Highlights of the year

# 2015



**10,340**

Making a positive change to **10,340** young people

**300**  
ECO-Clubs



ECO-Clubs and affiliated groups

**32**  
counties

Active in **32** counties in Ireland

Trained **445** youth leaders and teachers



**445**

**500+**



500+ events, activities and workshops held in Ireland and Northern Ireland



**74**

74 participated in a Transnational Youth Forum



**4,000**

Over 4,000 young people participated in the Young Environmentalist Awards



**317**

young people gained QQI/FETAC qualifications



**499**

'at-risk' young people empowered to make healthy life choices





# The Year in Quotes

"It is heartening to witness the levels of interest and passion exhibited by so many young people in the future of the environment that we all share... I would like to commend the work that you are doing and I would also like to acknowledge the work that is done quietly in the background to encourage and promote this powerful concept, looking towards our shared future and the conservation of our environment." **Michael D Higgins, ECO-UNESCO Patron.**

"The YEA was a very positive experience for our school as a whole."

**YEA participant**

"I feel the knowledge and skills I have gained in the YEA is very helpful and this will help with any other action projects in the future"

**YEA young person participant**

"I really enjoy coming every week making new friends and getting to express ideas is really beneficial"

**Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education participant**

"Very enjoyable, very hands on and interactive. Children enjoyed it very much."

**DSPM teacher evaluation**

"The support was fantastic and the children and the community really got involved, it connected really well with the sense of community spirit that is so much at the heart of what we do... We hope to take part again next year."

**YEA Project Leader**

'You've done a great job – such a perfect kid oriented camp – lots of outdoor play and freedom and a good mix of chill time and make and do all the while bringing great learning via your ethics. So brilliant that they were immersed in so much nature based activity. PS staff are wonderful!'

**ECO-Explorers Summer camp attendee's parent**

"I can certainly say that I have grown in confidence and have gained several new skills ranging from communication skills, presentation skills, interview skills to team work skills; all of which will make me more employable".

**Green Pathways participant**

"Green Pathways and the ECO-UNESCO team have done more than help me get a job, they allowed me to start my own pathway to a professional career, and for that I will always be grateful"

**Green Pathways participant**

"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"

**Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education participant**





## About ECO-UNESCO

ECO-UNESCO is Ireland's environmental education and youth organisation that works to empower young people and conserve the environment. ECO-UNESCO is affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA).

### ECO-UNESCO's aims are to:

- Raise awareness, understanding and knowledge of the environment among young people
- Promote the protection and conservation of the environment
- Promote the personal development of young people through practical environmental projects and activities
- Promote the ideals of UNESCO

### Protecting the Environment

ECO-UNESCO works 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 training programmes inspire environmental action at a local level among young people, their peer groups, communities and beyond.

### Empowering Young People

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.

### ECO-UNESCO's Key Activities 2015

ECO-UNESCO's programmes continue to empower and support young people to take action to protect and conserve the environment. Key highlights of our core programmes in 2015 include:

#### ECO-Youth

- ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards Programme
- Youth for Sustainable Development and Peer Education Programme
- Environmental youth events, activities and workshops across Ireland and Northern Ireland
- ECO-UNESCO Clubs Programme
- ECO-Youth Choices (positive health and well-being)
- Transition Year and Internship Work Placement Programme
- Green Trails of Dublin City Centre
- 'What's So Hot About Climate Change', International Youth Forum
- ECO-Explorer Holiday Camps for Kids





## About ECO-UNESCO

### Education and training

- Delivered Green Pathways training and employment programmes for young jobseekers
- Information and support provided to educators, youth leaders and young people
- Discovery Primary Science and Maths accredited organisation with outreach workshops available
- Training including FETAC accredited courses delivered to a wide audience
- Key partner on UNESCO Global Action Programme
- Key partner on University Educators for Sustainable Development international project

### Other activities

- UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (Key Partner)
- ECO-Sustainability Award for organisations
- Representation and advocacy for environmental education and education for sustainable development
- Development of environmental education resources

ECO-UNESCO is affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA). The UNESCO Clubs movement started in Japan in 1947 with the aim of providing a means for individuals to become involved in promoting the goals of UNESCO, namely cooperation and collaboration for peace. Founded in 1981, WFUCA is responsible for informing, coordinating and mobilising its members with UNESCO's support and cooperation. ECO-UNESCO is the WFUCA affiliate in Ireland and supports and coordinates an all-island network of ECO-UNESCO environmental youth clubs.

### Acknowledgements

ECO-UNESCO would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of the organisation in 2015, especially all of our dedicated members and funders as well as our hardworking staff, interns and volunteers. During the year, 40 people completed ECO-UNESCO's internship and volunteer programmes.

**Board Members:** Mark Bennett; Karen Furlong; Ann Marie Kilshaw; Tom Mc Govern; Liz Carroll; Jamie Cudden

**National Director:** Elaine Nevin

**Staff:** Roberta Bellini; Anthony Burrowes; Samantha Byrne; Laura Cahill; Jenna Cains; Tom Dermody; Niamh Hand; Ji Hyun Ki; Dunchadh Kinane; Ann Kinsella; Laura Madden; Feidhlim Ó Seasnáin; Carlos Perez; Sandra Strugar; Deirdre Walsh; Sarah Walsh

### Link to UNESCO



ECO-UNESCO is a Key Strategic Partner of UNESCO for the implementation of the UNESCO Global Action Programme in Education for Sustainable Development.

**Members & Participants:** All ECO-UNESCO members and participants help to support the vision of the organisation.



# Environmental Youth Programmes

ECO-UNESCO raised awareness on a broad range of environmental issues through our range of Youth programmes in schools, youth organisations, community groups, and local authorities. The programmes, which include the Young Environmentalist Awards, Youth for Sustainable Development, ECO-Clubs, Learning2Change Our World, ECO-Choices, and Environmental events and workshops, provide an opportunity for young people to learn about the environment, develop sensitivity towards nature, and empower them to carry out action projects which benefit the young person, their peers and the community.



4,000

Over 4,000 young people participated in the Young Environmentalist Awards



1,124

1124 young people have participated in over 145 workshops



76

76 Environmental workshops



1,569

people engaged in Learning2Change



30 counties

300  
ECO-Clubs

ECO-Clubs and affiliated groups

## Celebrating our Environment

ECO-UNESCO made use of key environmental dates to raise awareness and celebrate what is being done to protect our environment. In 2015 we celebrated:

- **World Water Day** – 50 young people celebrated with an event in the Greenhouse, which was facilitated by the Youth for Sustainable Development group.
- **National Tree Week** – celebrated by a group of 25 children at Edward's Primary school, Castlederg by meeting the trees and taking photos in the school grounds .
- **Biodiversity week** – marked by Green Trails of Dublin with 26 young people, and also a group went on outdoor excursions to the Phoenix Park & Bull Island.
- **World Environment Day** – celebrated in an environmental workshop at Scoil Mhuire, Swanlinbar with a group of 44 children.
- **ECO Week** – 58 children from St Lorcan's Boys National School, Palmerstown, got creative in creative recycling workshops.
- **Science Week** – celebrated with 74 children from Educate Together Mullingar, Mercy College Coolock and All Saints National School, Mullingar.



# Environmental Youth Programmes

## Young Environmentalist Awards



**35,000+** Young people involved since 1999



**Over 4,000** Young people participated in 2015



**302** Projects registered



**3,836** online votes cast in the People's Choice Awards

**ECO-Dens**

**108** groups pitched their projects in the ECO-Dens



**79** projects shortlisted for the Gala Showcase & Awards Ceremony



**46** 6 Steps to Success Training workshops delivered to 1000+ young people

**15 CATs**

**15** Categories



**5** Regional semi-final ECO-Dens



**The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA) aims to empower young people (aged 10-18) to become better citizens, build awareness of environmental issues and promote simple lifestyle changes to improve the environment. Since it began in 1999, over 35,000 young people have participated.**

The YEA 2015 maintained a high level of participation of young people from 31 counties across Ireland. In 2015, over 4,000 young people participated in the YEA directly, and countless more reached through the awareness-raising element of the action projects. The YEA encourages young people to act as multipliers and promote their learning outcomes among their peers and wider communities.

302 groups registered their eco-action projects for YEA 2015, almost 25% were new entrants. This demonstrates that past participants continue to successfully submit projects and that the programme is continuously reaching groups previously unaware of the YEA.

The YEA saw strong participation from the non-formal youth sector with 13 quality projects submitted. Youth Reach Carlow won the Senior ECO-Health and Wellbeing

for their project 'Paws for a Moment'; Youth Reach Listowel won Senior ECO-Art and Design Award; and Youth for Sustainable Development; Global Youth Leaders for Change from Dublin won the Local to Global Award with their project on World Water Day.

### 6-Steps to Success Training

Participants were supported by ECO-UNESCO to implement the '6 Steps to Success' framework to help them complete an environmental action project on their selected theme including Climate Change, Biodiversity, Energy, Waste, Water and more. **46 YEA training workshops were delivered in 2015. Training was delivered to approximately 1,000 students nationally.** The onsite free training sessions were reflected in increasingly high quality projects.

## ECO-Dens

The ECO-Dens proved again to be very popular with young people, teachers, youth leaders and local representatives. The ECO-Dens are regional 'Dragon's Den' style judging events where YEA groups are given the opportunity of pitching their project to a panel of expert regional judges.

108 groups attended the ECO-Dens in March 2015 which took place in Munster (Lifetime Lab in Cork); Ulster (Lough Neagh Discovery Centre in Armagh); Connaught (Claregalway Hotel in Galway); and Leinster (ECO-UNESCO Headquarters in Dublin). Groups presented their project to the panel of judges and had to respond to judges questions and received valuable feedback from the experts. The ECO-Dens were supported by 14 local authorities from in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

## Showcase and Awards Ceremony

The YEA Showcase and Ceremony was held on May 13th in the Round Room of the Mansion House, Dublin. In attendance were over 700 young people, teachers, youth leaders, and members of the public as well as high profile guests including Minister Sean Sherlock, Professor Patrick McKeever, Chief of Section, Earth Sciences and Geohazard Risk Reduction and Secretary of the IGCP for UNESCO, Cllr Claire Byrne, and RTÉ Presenter Aidan Power as Master of Ceremonies.

During the Showcase, the 79 finalist projects were on display and an expert panel of judges visited each group and discussed their project. With an opportunity to voice their achievements, opinions and concerns with regards to their environmental projects, young people gained confidence and furthered various skills such as communication skills, planning and research skills.

## Exhibition & Video

The wonderful achievements of all the finalists were highlighted in a specially produced YEA video which was made available on the ECO-UNESCO website and YouTube channel. Further showcasing the talent of the YEA winners, an exhibition of their projects took place in the European Union House throughout the summer of 2015, allowing members of the public to view finalists' projects and learn more about their local action endeavours.

## Funders & Sponsors

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards 2015 was supported by, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, National Development Plan, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Environmental Protection Agency, Dublin City Council, Alupro Ireland, Concern Worldwide. The ECO-Dens were supported by 13 local councils in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

# ECO-Clubs and Affiliated Groups

ECO-UNESCO Clubs and affiliated groups are groups of young people who are in an existing club who undertake environmental action, or come together to form an ECO-Club and affiliate to ECO-UNESCO. There are 301 ECO-UNESCO affiliated Clubs and groups in Ireland who have taken action to support their local environment. In 2015 new Clubs were established directly through other ECO-UNESCO programmes including the YEA, the Youth for Sustainable Development programme and ECO-Choices.

Ongoing support, mentoring and training was available to Clubs to support them. The following was undertaken in 2015: 1 day workshop delivered in Dublin in October on establishing an ECO-UNESCO Club; Information sessions; emails to registered ECO-UNESCO Clubs to offer support and ideas for action and activities, subscription to E-bulletin. The NQSF for Clubs is being piloted with the

Youth for Sustainable development, with training provided to the leaders.

Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Awareness Grant 2015 funding from DunLaoghaire/Rathdown County Council has funded a programme entitled the DLR Club Hub. This programme ran on a weekly basis in St. Teirnan's Community School in Dundrum, which began in December 2015 and ran until the end of term in May 2016. The young people explored a range of environmental issues important to them. The programme supported the young people to write, design, and create five children's books aimed at primary school children to increase their awareness on environmental issues including: waste, litter, water conservation, energy, and sustainable living.





## Environmental Youth Programmes

# Youth for Sustainable Development

**The Youth for Sustainable Development (YSD) programme provides opportunities for young people to engage in quality development education/education for sustainable development activities, and strengthen their capacity to take action on global justice issues by empowering them to act as youth leaders and peer development educators. This is achieved through a structured peer education programme and accredited trainings for young people (15-18) where they develop knowledge & skills to work with their peers on global justice issues by undertaking local action projects and events and by measuring their impact.**

### Youth for Sustainable Development Global Youth Leaders for Change

In 2015, 119 young people engaged with ECO-UNESCO's Youth for Sustainable Development Global Youth Leaders for Change Programme which ran every Wednesday 5-7pm. Young people were trained as peer educators during a 12 week structured programme and went on to develop and carry out local action projects which were submitted to the Young Environmentalist Awards. In addition the young people were involved in many activities throughout 2015 outside of the weekly workshops.

### External events

- The young people participated and presented at the NYCI Roundtable events on Development Education in Dublin Castle.
- The young people met with UN special Adviser, Amina Mohammad, in Jan 2015 and participated in the youth Consultations for the New Youth Strategy in Croke Park.
- Young people participated and contributed to the UNICEF and CRA report on the Future young people want (February - March 2015), and met with TDs in Buswells to discuss upcoming Climate legislation in February 2015.
- Young people participated in Concern's 'Gender and Development Day'.
- Young people participated in 'Stop Climate Chaos' 'Heads in the Sand' campaign to engage politicians with climate change.
- Young people participated in Trocaire's weekend of action in September 2015.
- Young people participated in a climate mapping with UNICEF in the run up to the COP21 negotiations.
- Two young people from the programme participated in the 'UNESCO Youth Summit' as the Irish representatives and ECO-UNESCO representatives which took place in Paris ahead of COP21.
- Young people presented and participated in the National Youth Council's 'One World Week' event on the theme of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Internal events

- Young people celebrated and peer facilitated workshops for International World Water day.
- 20 young people cycled from the Dublin to Howth head to highlight the inequality of the public bike system on young people.
- YSD groups won 4 awards at the YEA 2015.
- Over 50 young people were active in ECO-UNESCO's launch of the SDGs.
- Planned and organised a camping trip in Larch Hill Scout Centre.

### YSD programme expanding

In 2015 the YSD regionalisation saw the establishment of an ECO-UNESCO club at Slane Youth Café. An info session was held in August 2015 for 8 participants and then Peer Education Training was delivered in September 2015 over two days. 10 youth leaders were given intensive two-day ECO-UNESCO training to begin the support of the regionalisation programme.

### QQI Accredited Training

25 young people completed QQI level 5 accredited training in Peer Education for Sustainable Development. This training was delivered at ECO-UNESCO and was free to young people on the Youth for Sustainable Development programme.



# Learning2Change Our World



students engaged

1,230



teachers trained

134



schools engaged

20+



class workshops

60

The Learning2Change Our World Programme promotes Education for Sustainable Development in secondary schools in Ireland. It is funded by Irish Aid's WorldWise Global Schools programme and encourages principals, teachers and young people to engage with the Whole School Approach to Development Education/ Education for Sustainable Development (DE/ESD) through teacher training; curriculum work; active learning and action project work.

Training workshops were delivered throughout 2015 to teachers and young people where they explored DE/ESD and focused on themes of sustainable development, local and global connections and strengthening peer to peer learning techniques and local action project work. They went on to develop possible ways to integrate DE/ESD into their school with broader focus on their home and community life.

Over 20 schools participated in the Learning2Change programme; 14 specifically participated in local action projects and a week of action, with 19 different awareness raising action projects on global justice and sustainable development related issues. Coinciding with Earth Day, the schools were encouraged to tweet and Facebook what they were doing for their action project and action week using the #L2C2015.

These were retweeted with view to 1797 followers and posted on Facebook with 2076 likes and 983 friends. Ten of these projects went on to become finalists in the Young Environmentalist Awards, with three gaining an award.



## An insight into activities

Pobalscoil Neasáin, Baldoyle, Dublin, organised a campaign to visibly clean up the school grounds and surrounding neighbourhood of Moyclare. They highlighted the significance of both water and waste management school and the wider community utilizing slogans and promoting their activities.

Millstreet Community School, Cork set up a collection point for WEEE waste, creatively upcycling bins to be used for recycling waste, ran an upcycled fashion show and poster completion to help reduce waste.

St. Louis Community School, Co. Mayo wanted to raise awareness of water shortages worldwide. During their Week of Action they did peer education workshops in their school and in the local national school. Teachers discussed and debated global issues during this week and they undertook a 'Walk for Water' initiative where they carried water for 8km to raise awareness and increase solidarity.

## What the teachers said:

*"We're glad that there will be people from ECO-UNESCO who will come out to the schools for training", "very insightful, interactive, thought-provoking workshop".*

Teachers also commented that they felt equipped to use active learning methodologies in their classrooms having seen them in action and were keen to "get the whole school involved".



Funded by the Irish Aid WorldWise Global Schools Programme

## Environmental Youth Programmes

# Youth Events & Workshops

ECO-UNESCO's wide range of workshops and programmes for young people continued to be delivered across Ireland throughout 2015.

### Eco-Workshops

ECO-UNESCO's flagship series of ECO workshops for young people continues to be a favourite for schools and youth groups across Ireland. This includes our ECO-Watchers and ECO-Action series, as well as ECO-Discovery. Workshop topics include Water, Energy, Waste, Climate Change and Biodiversity, all with the underlying principal of Sustainable Development at their core. Workshops are highly flexible, meaning they can be enjoyed by secondary level young peoples all the way down to junior infants.

The following workshops were delivered as ad-hoc sessions or in conjunction with Local Authorities:

2 x Gardening workshops to 59 young people

3 x Discover Primary Science and Maths workshops to 83 children

3 x Green Teen Anti-litter litter workshops to 92 young people

5 x BiodiverCity workshops to 87 young people

7 x Global Responsibilities Media & Sustainability workshops to 97 young people

7 x week-long ECO-Explorers seasonal children's camps to 113 young people

10 x Global Responsibilities Fashion Focus workshops to 242 young people

11 x ECO-Action workshops on Biodiversity and Water to 244 young people

13 x ECO-Watchers workshops on topics of Water, Energy, Waste, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Coastal Awareness to 300 young people

15 x North West Healthy Living workshops to 289 young people



### ECO-Explorers children's camps and teen camps

The ECO-Explorers Easter camp took place in The Greenhouse, Dublin 2, 7-10 April with 14 children aged 5-10 years, with daily outings to Merrion Square. In June 2015, 12 young people attended ECO-UNESCO's Teen camp in Dublin. For the ECO-Explorers summer camps in July ECO-UNESCO had a new venue with daily outings to the Phoenix Park. Five week-long camps were held over July-August 2015 with a total of 90 children taking part. In October the ECO-Explorers Halloween camp had nine children attended this camp with outings to Phoenix Park.

### What's So Hot About Climate Change: Road to Paris, Transnational Youth Eco-Forum

ECO-UNESCO's Transnational Youth ECO Forum took place in Dublin over October 21st-23rd 2015 with 74 participants from five countries (Ireland, Norway, Czech Republic, Italy and Albania). The Forum funded through Erasmus+ was entitled 'What's So Hot About Climate Change: Road to Paris' and aimed to engage environmentally-minded young people in structured dialogue with experts and politicians on the approach to the UN COP 21 Climate Change meeting in Paris 2015.

The three day Forum visited topics such as youth participation, climate change, sustainability and taking action, and featured a mock COP 21 to allow the participants a real hands-on understanding of the complicated COP 21 process. Participants were supported to create a set of 'recommendations' for policy makers and experts who would be engaging and contributing to the COP 21 process.

These recommendations were distributed to 140 relevant parties in advance of COP 21 including MEPs, Ministers, Councillors, Environmental Awareness Officers, experts, Environment groups, NGOs and other stakeholders. The action plans created by the participants were implemented in their own countries and included public discussions, campaigning and further research into climate change and how we can lessen our own environmental impact.





## Environmental Youth Programmes

# ECO-Choices

The ECO-Choices programme is an innovative health and well-being programme that utilises environmental education, education for sustainable development and peer education methods as a resource for positive personal development in young people to prevent the misuse of drugs. In 2015, 499 young people participated in the programme through 347 workshops, trainings & events that ECO-UNESCO delivered.

### ECO-Youth Choices Foundation Programme

The programme encourages the positive physical and mental wellbeing of young people, building the capacity of young people to make positive life choices and to live a more sustainable and positive lifestyle. It aims to channel the energy of young people into positive action; empowering them to improve and protect themselves, others and their environment. ECO-UNESCO delivered this 10-12 week programme to young people across the Dublin area.

### Peer Education

The ECO-Youth Choices Peer Education training works to empower young people to become peer educators for change in their communities. In 2015 a group from Drimnagh Castle focused on Energy and looked to reduce the amount of energy in their school through peer education workshops. Kilmore Youthreach felt that water usage was the biggest issue in their community, so they took on the task of developing a garden that would retain water from rain fall and then use this water in the future to water the plants.

### Outdoor Education

Through the ECO-choices programme, ECO-UNESCO offers young people the opportunity to explore their natural environment and to develop their own

potential through educational, fun and interactive activities in outdoor settings such as woodlands and beaches. Outdoor education is used as a tool to empower young people by connecting them with their natural environment. 12 outdoor education days were delivered to 188 young people including excursions to the Barnaslingan Wood, Bull Island, Howth Head and Bray Head.

### Accredited Training

In 2015 ECO-UNESCO delivered two ECO-Youth Choices Community Participation FETAC L3 modules to 39 young people from communities along the Long Mile Road and Darndale. Through this course, participants gained knowledge of local community development both in theory and practice. Through the workshops they further developed their practical life skills including problem solving, critical and relational thinking, decision making/ consequence learning and self-awareness. They also gained facilitation skills and confidence through the peer education training and facilitation aspect of the programme.



Supported by Young Peoples Facilities & Services Fund (CDYSB) and Department for Children and Youth Affairs

# Education and Training



more than 500 people attended our training courses



3x Ecology and the Environment Level 6:  
**72 participants**



3x Work Experience Level 5:  
**72 participants**



2x Peer Education for Sustainable Development Level 5  
**38 participants**



2x Sustainable Development Level 5:  
**47 participants**



3x Community Development Level 3:  
**66 young people**



4x Outdoor Vegetable Production Level 3:  
**48 participants**



3x Growing Vegetables Level 4:  
**31 participants**

As Ireland's leading provider of environmental, sustainability and youth training, ECO-UNESCO provides personal and continuous professional development to a wide range of stakeholders. In 2015 a series of training courses have been delivered throughout the year, from accredited training on different topics such as Sustainable Development and Growing Vegetables, to teacher and leaders training and courses for young people.

## QQI Accredited Training provider

In 2015 the delivery of the North West Healthy Living Programme was also completed, by delivering a number of courses in Outdoor Vegetable Crop Production (Level 3) and Growing Vegetables (Level 4) in different locations in Donegal and Tyrone. Participants of these courses acquired practical skills on how to grow vegetables as well as knowledge and understanding of links between growing methods and environmental impacts.

Training courses aimed at providing youth leaders, teachers and volunteers working with young people were also run on a number of occasions. The courses enabled participants to encourage critical thinking and broader environmental awareness with young people and provided them with increased understanding of the importance of the natural environment as a platform for empowering young people.

Training courses aimed specifically to young people were also facilitated in 2015. These include Community Development (FETAC Level 3) which was completed by more than 60 young people from Drimnagh Castle school and Kylemore Youthreach; and Peer Education for Sustainable Development (FETAC Level 5).

## ECO-Sustainability Award

The ECO-Sustainability Award aims to encourage youth and community organisations to become more sustainable by providing organisations with training, on-going support and a practical toolkit based on the Sustainable Development Goals and Comhar's Principles of Sustainable Development.

The ECO-Sustainability Award Programme is a great opportunity for youth and community organisations to be recognised for not only their environmental initiatives but all the positive actions they take around celebrating diversity, respecting cultural heritage, building global connections and promoting democratic decision-making.

In 2015 six organisations enrolled in the programme in 2015, including: Rehab Care Bray; Rehab Care Stillorgan; Finglas Youth Service; Donabate Youth Café; Scouting Ireland; The Grow Dome Project. Rehab Care Stillorgan was awarded the Silver Award in May 2015 and the remaining 5 organisations are progressing to achieve awards in the future.

## Education and Training

# Youth Employability Programme

ECO-UNESCO continued to build on the success of the Green Pathways I programme, with 3 Green Pathways II programmes running during 2015. The Green Pathways programme, funded by the Momentum Initiative, is an integrated employability programme which comprises QQI/FETAC accredited training courses, ongoing employment support, work experience and one-to-one mentoring. The Green Pathways programme helps to tackle youth unemployment by providing a stepping stone to employment or higher education.

### Pathway to Employment

Green Pathways is a 27 week full-time programme with FETAC accredited training; a hands on work placement providing a 'foot in the door' to potential employers; an applied learning project; 1-to-1 mentoring; ongoing and post-delivery supports including jobs clubs. Accredited Training modules include: Work Experience (FETAC L5); Sustainable Development (FETAC L5); Ecology in the Environment (FETAC L6); and motivational training provided.

### Improving employability

In 2015 72 job-seeking young people, primarily from socially and economically disadvantaged areas with many being early school leavers, have attended three modules: Ecology and the Environment (FETAC Level 6), Sustainable Development (FETAC Level 5); and Work Experience (FETAC Level 5).

At the end of the three modules participants gained skills in critical thinking, team work and increased their knowledge and understanding of current global issues and sustainability. Furthermore, they have grown in confidence and have raised self-esteem, for many the programme has proved key in their own personal development and guiding them towards the next step in their career. 64% completed the programme and to date 38% of participants progressed onto either employment or further education.

The Green and Circular Economy is an increasingly important and emerging job space which is opening up employment opportunities in a number of areas. The training provided will allow participants take up employment in positions such as gardeners, horticulturists, ecologists, environmental consultants, project officers as well as other specialists in the green economy.

### Empowering young people

One young person (24) who completed Green Pathways in 2015 had been seeking employment since 2009 prior to the course. As a result of the course they secured an Internship at an organisation they had dreamed of working at, but previously had no relevant skills that would have secured a job there. When the Internship came to an end after 6 months they were delighted to be offered a full-time paid contract by the employer.

*"Green Pathways and the ECO-UNESCO team has done more than help me get a job, they allowed me to start my own pathway to a professional career, and for that I will always be grateful"*





# Communications & Representation



## Publications

In 2015, ECO-UNESCO continued to develop its range of publications. Many of these were free and were made available to young people, educators and youth leaders via the ECO-UNESCO website. Some of the published highlights from 2015 include:

- YEA 2015 Finalist booklet contains the summaries of the top 80 youth environmental projects.
- ECO-UNESCO Newsletter 2015-16 was published and distributed to ECO-UNESCO members, schools, youth centres and libraries across the country, providing information on ECO-UNESCO.
- ECO-UNESCO also produced and distributed a range of information and marketing material to accompany our programmes and services and raise awareness of environmental and sustainability issues in our work.

## Media & Public Relations

ECO-UNESCO continued to have a strong media presence in 2015. ECO-UNESCO events received substantial coverage in both regional and national media including, print, TV and radio. RTÉ Young People's Programming continued its link with ECO-UNESCO covering a piece on the Young Environmentalist Awards. ECO-UNESCO's work was further promoted through a wide range of magazines, e-newsletters, external websites and event guides throughout the year with a focus on the environmental, youth and education sectors.

## Newsletter and E-bulletin

ECO-UNESCO continued to keep our Members, programme users, schools, funders, volunteers, Clubs, and other external stakeholders up to date with key events and activities through the production of our Annual Newsletter 2015, which is disseminated in the annual mailshot and all

external events. We also produce a monthly database to go out to our database of Supporters.

## Events

As part of the 2015 outreach programme, ECO-UNESCO attended a number of events and conferences including; Bloom, Body and Soul, Electric Picnic, One World Week, Ploughing Championships, Teachers Association and Association Conference; NYCI Conference; IDEA Conference; UNESCO Global Action Programme Meetings.

## Representation & Advocacy

In 2015, ECO-UNESCO continued its engagement with a range of national and international bodies. In particular in 2015 it took part in the GENE review of Development education in Ireland and in the subsequent IDEA run task groups on Formal education, non-formal education and adult and community education.

ECO-UNESCO was represented on a number of committees and boards including;

- The Environmental Protection Agency Advisory Committee;
- The National Advisory Committee on ESD (Department of Education and Skills);
- The National Quality Standards Training Task Group (Department of Children and Youth Affairs);
- National Youth Council of Ireland;
- NYCI Board;
- NYCI Special Organisation Network (Chair of Network);
- National Youth Development Education Programme (NYDEP) Youth Advisory Group;
- Stop Climate Chaos Coalition Membership;
- Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) task groups;
- UBUNTU Network Members (Steering committee);
- SWAN Board

# UNESCO and International Work

## UNESCO Global Action Programme

In 2015, ECO-UNESCO was invited to be a Key Strategic Partner of UNESCO for the implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) in ESD in Key Priority Action 4 – Empowering and Mobilising young people. This was alongside 80 other organisations internationally and 13 within the Priority Action 4 Network. The GAP has been identified as a key mechanism for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ECO-UNESCO attended a partner meeting in Paris to discuss and elaborate an initial workplan for each Partner Network, including key implementation milestones; and define within each Partner Network responsibilities, coordination and working methods. ECO-UNESCO has committed to the achievement of the GAP goals through its Young Environmentalist Awards and Youth for Sustainable Development programmes.

## Event to celebrate GAP and the launch of the SDGs

On October 1st 2015, the Youth for Sustainable Development Group helped to organise ECO-UNESCO's event to celebrate the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's new Global Action Programme in Education for Sustainable Development. Five of the Sustainable Development Goals that most impact the environment and biodiversity of the world were discussed. Over 60 young people attended and were guided through this exploration using various methodologies, which empowered the participants to take action on these goals.

## Northern Ireland

ECO-UNESCO is committed to working with young people across the island of Ireland. In 2015 ECO-UNESCO worked closely with environmental and youth organisations to deliver workshops and trainings as well as shared strategies for providing environmental education in Northern Ireland.

In YEA 2015, 235 young people from four counties in Northern Ireland participated in the programme and 17 Adult Leaders were trained. The Ulster ECO-Den was supported by Craigavon Borough Council, Co. Antrim.

There is also a network of active ECO-Clubs in Northern Ireland – 13 in Antrim, 5 in Armagh; 11 in Derry; 2 in Down, and 4 in Tyrone.

## University Educators for Sustainable Development

ECO-UNESCO continued to work with universities across Europe on the University Educators for Sustainable Development (UE4SD). In 2015, the focus of UE4SD is to develop resources on ESD and professional development in higher education. The publication showcased case studies identified as leading practice during the mapping exercise and the online platform including key information and materials from ECO-UNESCO and all UE4SD partner institutions as well as resources developed by external organisations.



UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development



Elaine Nevin, National Director, attending UNESCO Global Action Programme meeting



# Collaborative Work

Throughout 2015, ECO-UNESCO continued to develop links and partnerships with agencies, organisations and businesses to provide environmental education, youth programmes and teacher and leader trainings in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. ECO-UNESCO actively engaged on an ongoing basis with young people, youth leaders, educators, external organisations and other key target groups. This engagement included collaborative work, focus groups and surveys to ensure that all ECO-UNESCO programmes remained responsive to the needs of young people in particular, as well as the general environmental, educational and youth sectors.

A sample of our collaborative work from 2015 includes:

- Collaborative work with institutions including Local Authorities, National Libraries and schools throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Youthreach Centres, Youth Groups and Youth officers.
- ECO-UNESCO continued to have a presence with young people in schools throughout Ireland in a non-formal capacity through extra-curricular activities and project work. In 2015 ECO-UNESCO projects included the YEA, DPSM, a range of environmental workshops, ECO-UNESCO Clubs and National Youth meetings.

## National Youth Council Ireland (NYCI)

ECO-UNESCO is represented at NYCI on a formal level including the board; ECO-UNESCO is Chair of the specialist organisation network and other formal advisory groups.

## Youthreach

ECO-UNESCO further developed its links with Youthreach in 2015 in order to provide training to early school leavers. In particular ECO-UNESCO provided the 'Introduction to Sustainable Development' (FETAC L5) to at risk young people who completed fourteen training sessions held over a three-month period.

## National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work

ECO-UNESCO continues to implement the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQS) developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The NQS is primarily a support, development and assessment tool which ECO-UNESCO will be using to further develop and to articulate through a common language, our youth work practice. Through the NQS ECO-UNESCO will work to enhance our capacity to address the development needs of young people to a greater extent and in a more cost effective manner.

## Local Authorities

ECO-UNESCO works with Local Authorities nationwide through funding from the Environmental Partnership Fund. The fund allows ECO-UNESCO to work with communities, fulfilling important aspects of the Local Agenda 21 remit. ECO-UNESCO builds the capacity of young people, teachers and leaders to address environmental issues. In addition, through the YEA a number of Local Authorities supported the regional ECO-Dens through sponsorship, venue sponsorship as well as representation on the judging panels.



Creative Recycling workshop with South Dublin County Council, October 2015



ECO-Dens supported by Local Authorities



# Funding

ECO-UNESCO is funded by a variety of agencies contributing to both the overall development of the organisation and project specific work. In 2015, ECO-UNESCO continued to increase funding by collaborating with national and European funding bodies. ECO-UNESCO also acknowledges the support of all members and participants.

## ECO-UNESCO's main core funding comes from:



## ECO-UNESCO received funding from:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Local Authorities nationwide under the Environmental Partnership Fund, Anti-Litter fund and ECO-Dens support.
- Solas
- Irish Aid
- ECO-UNESCO also receives funding through membership fees, consultancy, resource sales and ECO-services.
- Erasmus+ through Leargas
- Accenture
- Irish Aid WorldWise Global Schools

**Our Audited Accounts for 2015 are available to download from our website [www.ecounesco.ie](http://www.ecounesco.ie)**

# Governance

ECO-UNESCO is governed by a voluntary board of Directors made up of members to ensure a good gender balance, good diversity and appropriate skills in adopted areas to assist with policy development. In 2015, ECO-UNESCO elected a new Chairperson. There were 7 Board meetings with special committee meetings held of the Audit, Risk and Finance sub-committee and the HR sub-committee. The AGM took place in September 2015. The organisation also signed up to implement the Governance Code and is working to implement this. ECO-UNESCO are signed up to the Dochás Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. Appropriate financial policies and procedures complying with statutory requirements are in place and ECO-UNESCO's audited accounts are available on our website.

Chair: Mark Bennett up to September 23rd 2015; Karen Furlong from 23rd September; Treasurer: Tom McGovern; Company Secretary: Jamie Cudden; Chair of Audit, Risk and Finance Sub-Committee: Tom McGovern; Chair of HR Subcommittee: Jamie Cudden. CEO: Elaine Nevin



Green Pathways students



Victoria College Belfast at the Ulster ECO-Den



Youth for Sustainable Development group at Climate march, October 2015

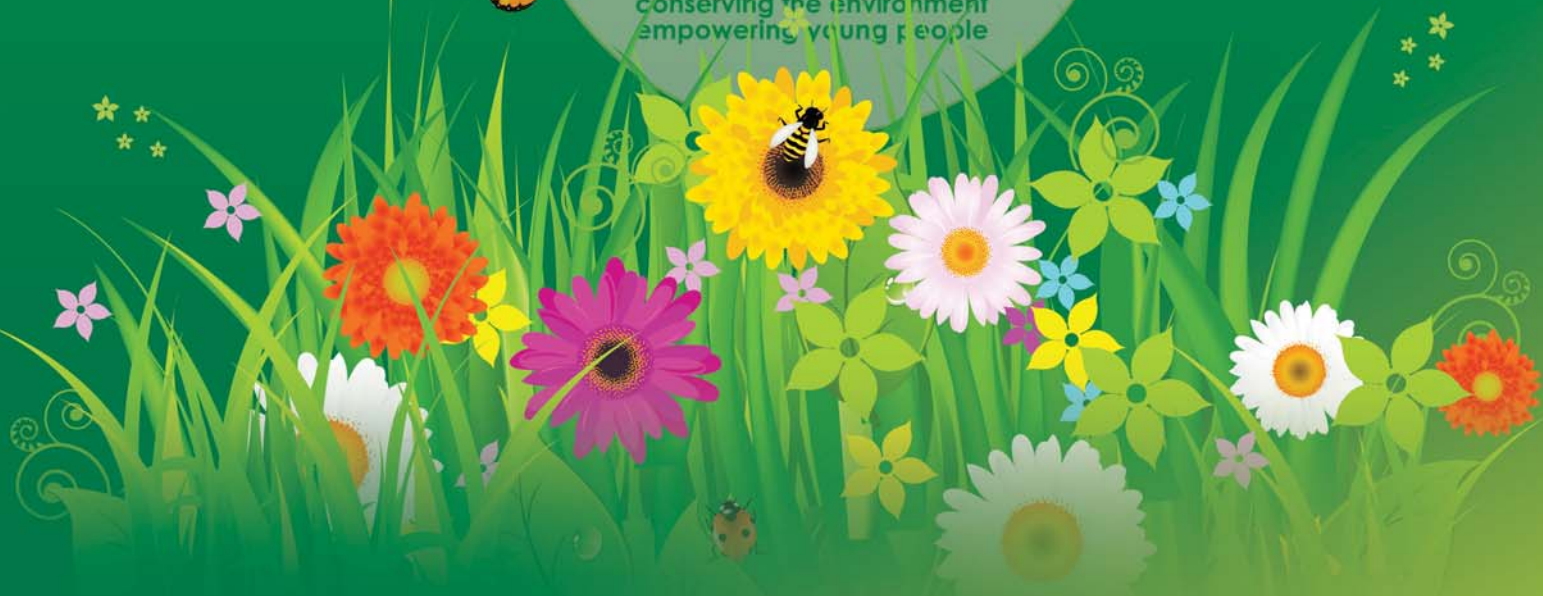


Youth for Sustainable Development group taking part in a mock COP21 event



Young Environmentalist Awards 2015 Overall Junior Winners: Young people from Scoil Mhuire gan Smál for their project "Blarney Bats Babes". Award presented by: Elaine Nevin (National Director of ECO-UNESCO), Professor Patrick McKeever (UNESCO Paris) and Mark Bennett (Chairperson of ECO-UNESCO)







# ECO-UNESCO

9 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2, Ireland

T: +353 (0)1 662 5491 F: +353 (0)1 6625493 E: [info@ecounesco.ie](mailto:info@ecounesco.ie) W: [www.ecounesco.ie](http://www.ecounesco.ie)



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Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government

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