

ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Leading Environmental Education Youth Organisation



YEA Report 2024

Marking 25 years of the
Young Environmentalist Awards

CONTENTS

Young Environmentalist Award 2024.....	1
What People Say.....	2
The Impact of YEA 2024.....	3
Project Breakdown.....	4
ECO-Week.....	7
Supports & Training.....	8
ECO-Dens.....	9
Showcase & Awards Ceremony.....	10
Project Profiles.....	11
Feedback.....	13
YEA Communications.....	14
Thank You to Funders & Sponsors.....	15

YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST AWARDS 2024

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA) is an all-Ireland environmental awards programme that celebrates and rewards young people for their efforts in raising environmental awareness and improving the environment. Since 1999, ECO-UNESCO has been running the YEA programme to recognise the contributions of young individuals in protecting, conserving, and enhancing the environment through local projects. These efforts have made a significant impact on their lives and the lives of others both locally and globally.

Since its inception, YEA has engaged over 65,000 young people, leading to lasting environmental changes and awareness raising in homes, schools, youth groups and communities across Ireland. YEA provides a fun and exciting platform for empowering young people to become better citizens, increase environmental awareness in their communities, and promote local actions and lifestyle changes that benefit the environment.

Now in its 25th year, the programme aims to honour the work of young people who collaborate to protect, conserve, and enhance the environment through local environmental projects, making a difference in their lives and the lives of others.



WHAT PEOPLE SAY



It is greatly encouraging to know that we have, in this country, so many young citizens who strive to develop new visions for our shared future. As President of Ireland I am very proud of those citizens.

Michael D. Higgins



The YEA competition serves as a catalyst for transformative behaviour change, inspiring individuals, and groups to become proactive agents of environmental conservation and advocates for a more sustainable future.

YEA Team Impact of Unsustainable Pair Trawling in Kenmare Bay



Our school had a fantastic time, and we were thrilled with our victory (bringing an All-Ireland title to Mayo!). The experience has truly motivated our students to focus more on environmental issues and take pride in themselves and their school community. It has significantly boosted their confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Mentor Sarah Corcoran from Creating a Biodiversity Garden



Working on the YEA has shown the whole team that they shouldn't be afraid to speak up about climate issues such as biodiversity loss, because these issues are a big problem in our world today.

YEA Team Flora & Fauna LK



As a mentor, I was genuinely impressed by the Young Environmentalists Awards Project. These kids didn't just build robots; they harnessed their imagination and creativity to tackle real-world problems.

Mentor Cathal Foley from Combatting Environmental Issues



THE IMPACT OF YEA 2024



108,935
Strongly
Impacted*



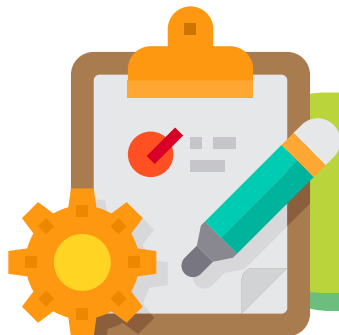
30
Counties
Represented



5,500
Young People
Participated



42
Awards



271
Registered
Projects



110
Finalists

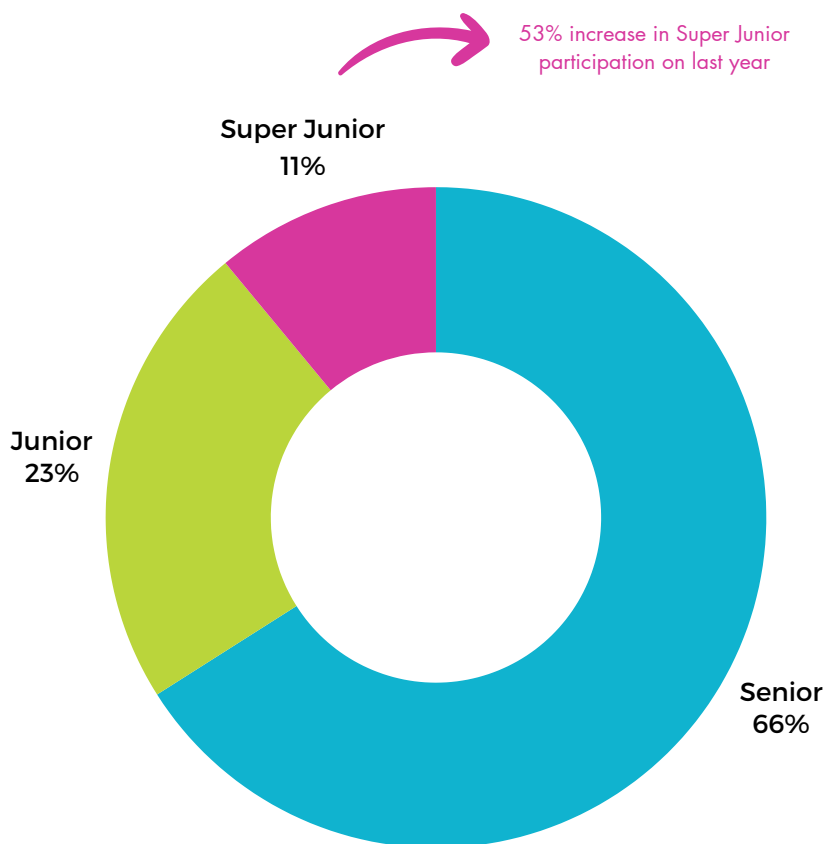
PROJECT BREAKDOWN

In total, 271 projects registered to the Young Environmentalist Awards 2024. These included projects from different age groups (Super Junior, Junior and Senior).

Projects were diverse in nature, with most registering to the Biodiversity and Waste categories. This year there was a broad geographic spread, with projects from 30 counties across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

By Age Group

As in previous years, most projects were registered as Senior groups (15-18) with a total of 178 projects. Participation in the Junior Category (12-15) represented 23% of all of the projects, remaining unchanged from last year. This year Super Junior (10-12) participation increased by 53% on last year, with a total of 31 projects being registered to this category.

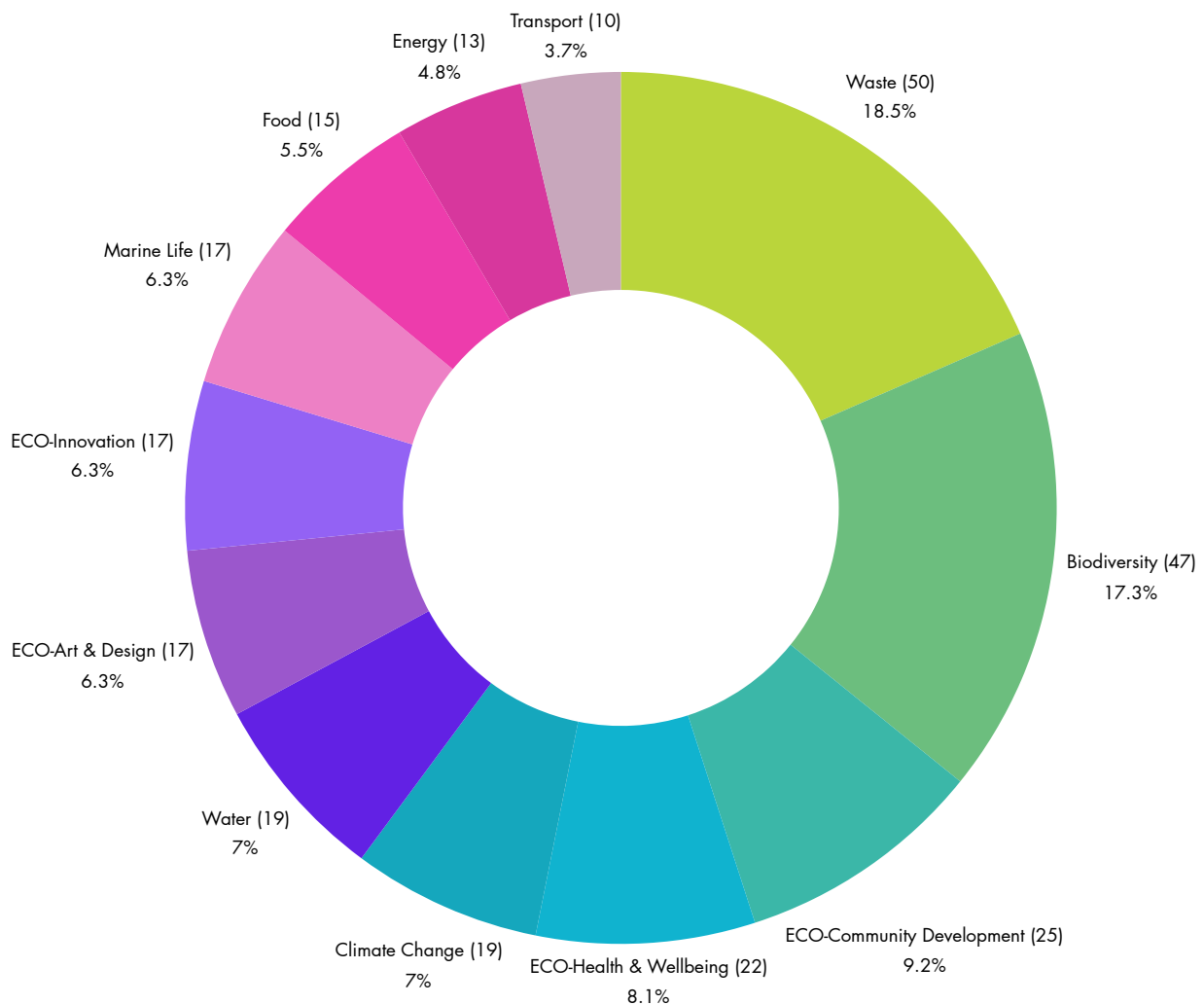


PROJECT BREAKDOWN

By Award Category

This year Waste and Biodiversity have been the most popular award categories, with 50 and 47 projects submitted, respectively. This reflects the strong interest young people have in these topics and their high visibility in society. Issues related to waste production remain significant, highlighted by the introduction of reverse vending machines and new attached cap features. In particular this year, vapes and their environmental impact were a popular topic in YEA projects. Similarly, biodiversity remains a significant topic, with initiatives like the EU Nature Restoration Law and the increase in community gardens reflecting its importance.

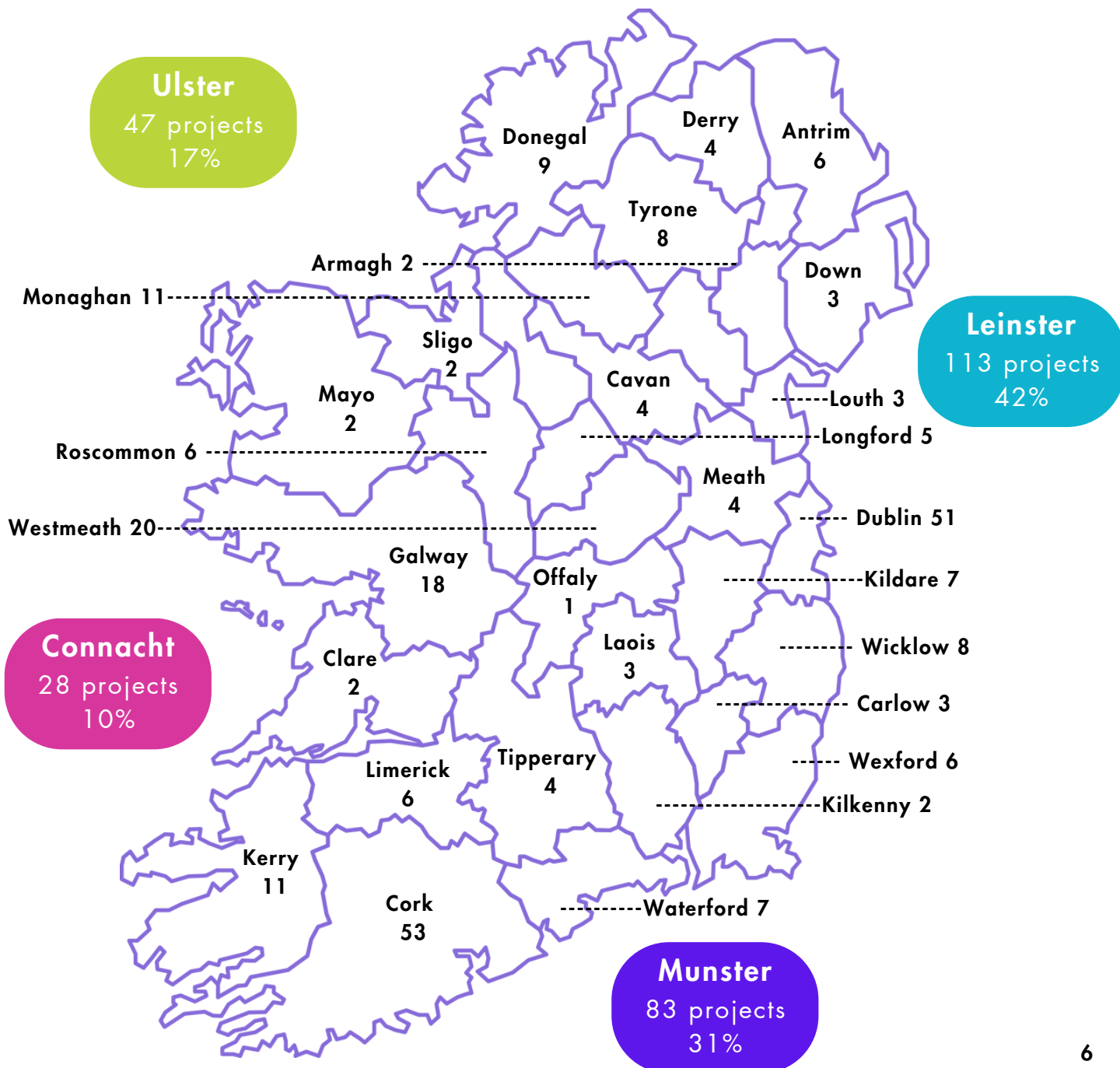
Additionally, there was an increase in projects entered in the ECO-Community Development and ECO-Health & Wellbeing categories. These categories address current global issues, and it's encouraging to see young people engaging with practical solutions that positively impact local environmental issues, promote sustainable societies, and address the connections between our environment, mental health, and inclusivity.



PROJECT BREAKDOWN

By County

This year, the 271 submitted projects spanned over 30 counties, surpassing the 28 counties represented last year. Most counties experienced a slight variation in submissions, ranging from 1 to 6 projects between 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, the most striking changes were seen in Kerry, Dublin, and Meath. Meath saw a 87% decrease in project submissions, from 31 projects in 2023 to just 4 this year. Dublin and Kerry each experienced a 26% decrease in submissions. Conversely, Galway and Westmeath saw a remarkable surge, with project submissions increasing by 400%. Notably, Fermanagh was the only county from which we did not receive any project submissions between 2023 and 2024. For the last two years, we have received the most submissions from Cork and Dublin.



ECO-WEEK

This year, the ECO-Week of the Young Environmentalist Awards took place during Science Week, from Monday the 13th to Friday the 17th of November 2023. ECO-Week is a series of short, snappy sustainability sessions held online, aimed at providing young people aged 10-18 with an opportunity to learn more about the environment, the Sustainable Development Goals, how to take environmental action, and to support them in entering the Young Environmentalist Awards 2024. All the workshop topics were aligned with the specific project categories in the Young Environmentalist Awards 2024 to help provide further support to participants to create environmental and sustainability action projects in their schools or local communities.

Workshop slots had a duration of 45 minutes. With 3,476 registrations, 2,000 young people, from 105 organisations took part in 10 online sustainability workshops based around the 12 YEA categories. Recordings of all the sessions can be found on ECO-UNESCO's YouTube Channel [here](#).



2,000
Attendees across
ECO-Week



10
ECO-Week
Sessions



105
Organisations attended
ECO-Week Sessions



100%
Reported increased
environmental awareness*

13th-17th November				
ECO-WEEK 2023				
Celebrating Young Environmentalists taking action				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9am - 10am	9am - 10am	9am - 10am	9am - 10am	9am - 10am
SDG & ME	CLIMATE CHANGE 101	FOOD, FAIRNESS AND THE FUTURE	THE SUSTAINABLE ROLE OF FORESTRY	WHEN CREATIVITY MEETS SUSTAINABILITY
2pm - 3pm	2pm - 3pm	2pm - 3pm	2pm - 3pm	2pm - 3pm
PROTECTING AND CONSERVING LIFE BELOW WATER	CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS: SPREADING THE WORD	ALL ABOUT BIODIVERSITY	WASTE-FREE LIVING	FOOD SUSTAINABILITY AND REDUCING FOOD WASTE

*Based on feedback received from attending groups

SUPPORTS & TRAINING

In addition to ECO Week, other supports and training opportunities were offered as part of YEA 2024. These included the YEA Manual [here](#), 6-Steps to Success Online Course for both mentors and young people, as well as live online mentor sessions.

6-Steps to Success Course

Throughout the year YEA teams were encouraged to complete ECO-UNESCO's 6-Steps to Success Training which can be found online [here](#). This training consists of easily digestible videos, which guides learners through the 6-Steps Framework used in YEA; Getting a Team together, Choosing and Researching an Environmental Issue, Creating an Action Plan, Taking Action, Raising Awareness and finally, Reflection.



50
Completed 6-Steps
to Success Course

Online Mentor Sessions

In addition to the course, live online mentor sessions were held at various points in the year.



Mentoring Action Projects in School; Facilitating Young Environmentalists with ESCI
11th October 2023



Registering and Getting Your Group Started
22nd November 2023



Developing and Carrying Out an Action Plan
13th December 2023



Communications and Awareness Raising
17th January 2024



The Submission Process
7th February 2024



5
Live online mentor
support sessions



86
Attendees for
Online Mentor
Support Sessions

ECO-DENS

ECO-UNESCO held its ECO-Dens Semi-Finals, regional “Dragon’s Den” style events, in March and April 2024. Across nine days and five different locations, semi-finalist groups pitched their environmental action project to an expert judging panel, providing them with a sense of empowerment and a valuable opportunity to receive feedback. Judging panels were made up of academics, researchers, members of local and national authorities and ECO-UNESCO management. In total 42 judges participated, representing organisations such as Environmental Protection, Community Foundation for Ireland, Department of Education, Department of Environment, and Irish Aid. In 2024, a total of 176 projects were shortlisted and invited to ECO-Dens. Across nine days of ECO-Dens, 737 young people from 95 organisations across Ireland attended to pitch their environmental action projects.

14th March & 12th April
Online



176
Projects Shortlisted



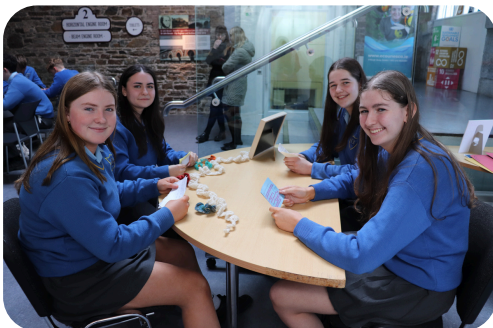
737
Young people attended



9
Days of ECO-Dens in 5 different locations



4.6
Rating of ECO-Den experience out of 5*



SHOWCASE & AWARDS CEREMONY

YEA's Final Showcase and Awards Ceremony took place on Wednesday 15th May in the Dublin Royal Convention Centre. The event was a grand celebration of the work of this year's young environmentalists, attended by over 1,000 guests, including 110 finalist projects and esteemed guests such as Councillor Michael Pidgeon, Minister Pippa Hackett, and Robert Mooney from the Department of Education.

The day began with an impressive showcase of finalist projects at display stands, featuring a 25 Years of YEA Panel Exhibition and a range of engaging talks and activities. Speakers included Ceara Carney from the Book of Leaves Podcast, Jim Scheer from SEAI, Sadhbh Horan from ECO-UNESCO, and Mary Fleming from Change Clothes Crumlin. A panel of 15 judges interacted with YEA teams, exploring their innovative environmental projects and exchanging ideas. In the afternoon, MC Clara Murray hosted the awards ceremony, honouring the hard work of the young environmentalists and announced the award winners of YEA 2024. An overview of the day and summary of all finalist projects can be found in our Finalist Booklet [here](#).



110

Finalists invited to the showcase



1,010

Guests attended the YEA 2024 Showcase and Awards Ceremony



42

Awards presented to young people



PROJECT PROFILES

Overall Junior Award 2024

SustainApple Future, Scoil Ruáin, Co. Tipperary

SustainApple Future aimed to raise awareness about local and global food issues. Learning about food production's problems, such as high carbon emissions, unsustainable practices, and the fact that one-third of food is wasted, ignited their passion for addressing food inequalities. Their project focused on growing an apple orchard on school grounds, leveraging Ireland's ideal climate for apples and the trees' carbon-absorbing benefits. They engaged the school community through presentations, mini documentaries, and an apple recipe book. By inviting the local primary school to view their documentaries and hosting events, they involved the local community in discussions about food production issues. They hope that by next year, their 30 apple trees will be in full bloom, symbolising their commitment to sustainability.



SustainApple Future, Scoil Ruain



The Langan Trail, St. Catherine's College

The Langan Trail, St. Catherine's College, Armagh

Reviving an old historical farm trail on their school grounds inspired "The Langan Trail" project. The young people discovered the trail's historical significance and aimed to reopen it to honour its past while fostering biodiversity. They designed an engaging outdoor learning space with informative signs and interactive games. Their collaborative efforts included working with the school's technology department and consulting with nature trail experts. To raise awareness, they used various methods, such as school assemblies, an information stall at the school's open night, a press release in the local newspaper, and a tweet from a BBC weatherman. The team successfully created an engaging outdoor learning space that promotes biodiversity at St. Catherine's College.

PROJECT PROFILES

Overall Super Junior Award 2024

Creating a Biodiversity Garden, Kinaffe National School, Co. Mayo

Kinaffe National School focused on educating themselves and raising community awareness about biodiversity, waste reduction, and sustainable practices. They were motivated by the shocking amount of litter around their school and the lack of biodiverse habitats. To address these issues, they promoted waste segregation and assigned bin inspectors to each class, encouraged turning off lights and minimising water use, and planted trees and maintained a garden to enhance biodiversity. Their project also empowered their refugee students to actively shape the school environment and contribute to positive change. By involving the whole school and local community, Kinaffe National School fostered a collective effort toward a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.



Creating a Biodiversity Garden, Kinaffe National School



The Impact of Unsustainable Pair Trawling in Kenmare Bay, Pobalscoil Inbhear Sceine

Overall Senior Award 2024

The Impact of Unsustainable Pair Trawling in Kenmare Bay, Pobailscoil Inbhear Sceine, Co. Kerry

This project emerged from the close connection young people have with Kenmare Bay, through recreational fishing and tourism. They were shocked to discover the devastating impact of pair trawling, which causes significant yearly destruction. Research revealed that pair trawling is both a local and global issue, affecting all levels of the food chain and damaging marine ecosystems. The team hosted workshops and engaged with the local fishing and scientific community, gathering valuable information. Their determination shone through their efforts to raise awareness by creating petitions, a factual website, and lobbying in the Dáil. The most important outcome was increased awareness of pair trawling in Kenmare Bay, gaining school and local support, and fostering lasting behavioral change towards sustainable fishing practices.

FEEDBACK

This year feedback was gathered from participating young people and mentors at three points throughout the year; after ECO-Week in November, after ECO-Dens in April and after the Showcase in May to get overall feedback.

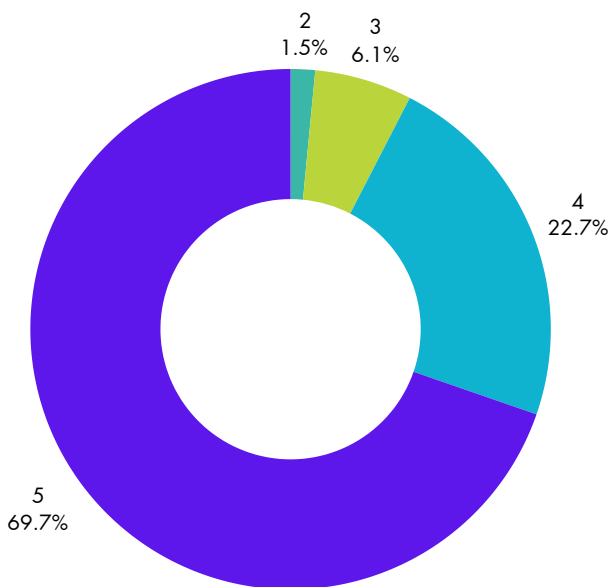
ECO-Week Feedback

100%
Enjoyed
ECO-Week

4.4
Average rating
of ECO-Week

100%
Reported increased
environmental awareness

ECO-Dens Feedback



Out of 5, how would you rate your ECO-Dens Experience?



92%
Would recommend
ECO-Dens to a friend

“

What young people liked most

Being able to present and talk about our action project

Everyone was very kind

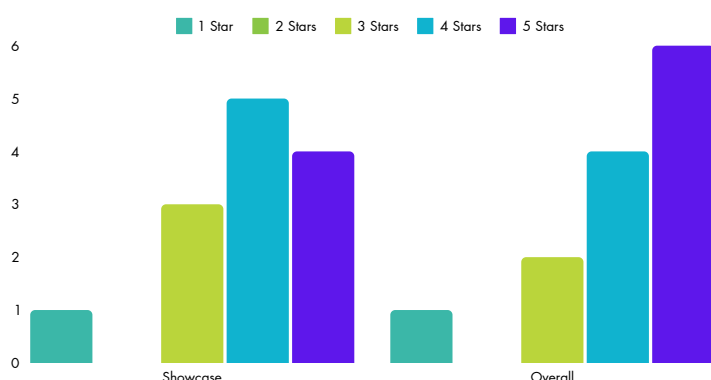
The learning experience

We could talk to people genuinely interested in our project

How encouraging judges were

”

Overall Feedback



“

Organised
Educational
Challenging
Engaging **FUN**
Interesting
Collaborative

”

YEA COMMUNICATIONS

Online Media Coverage



Number of engagements channel breakdown:

 **10,480**

 **1,030**

 **201**

Local and National Media Coverage

YEA 2024 garnered widespread attention through national and regional media coverage. People across the country were reached through a variety of platforms, including print, radio, and online articles. This extensive coverage highlighted the projects and achievements of young environmentalists, bringing their inspiring stories and passion to a broad audience. See below for some examples.

- [Irish Examiner](#)
- [Ireland Live](#)
- [Connacht Tribune](#)
- [Dublin People](#)
- [Kerry's Eye](#)
- [The Echo](#)
- [Donegal Daily](#)
- [Tullamore Tribune](#)
- [Leinster Express](#)
- [Westmeath Independent](#)
- [RTE 2 - News2Day](#)
- [Irish Independent](#)
- [Galway Bay FM](#)
- [Connaught Telegraph](#)
- [Southern Star](#)
- [Western People](#)
- [Mayo Live](#)
- [The Kerryman](#)
- [Wicklow People](#)
- [Meath Chronicle](#)
- [Clare Herald](#)



ECO-UNESCO'S YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST AWARDS FUNDERS & SPONSORS

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of our funders and sponsors



**An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide**
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications



**An Roinn Leanáí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



The Scheme to Support National Organisations is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development



Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council





9 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. Ireland
T: +353 (0)1 662 5491 E: info@ecounesco.ie W: www.ecounesco.ie

ECO-UNESCO is a registered charity in the Republic of Ireland Charity Regulatory Authority Number:

20015145 Revenue Number: CHY 7225 Company Number: 106860