

ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards



Join Ireland's biggest celebration of young people taking ECO-Action!

The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards programme has been running on an all-island basis for 13 years, with over 25,000 young people becoming involved over that time. Numbers have been growing each year, and in 2011 over 4,000 young people participated, many of them showcasing their projects at an exhibition held in the Mansion House, Dublin last May.

Teachers as ECO-Leaders

The aim of the programme is to empower young people to become active citizens, build awareness of environmental issues and promote simple lifestyle changes to improve the environment. This is done by young people carrying out environmental action projects done at school or community level. Each year ECO-UNESCO recognises and rewards the green achievements of these young people at the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards Showcase and Ceremony. Groups of young people aged 10 to 18, deal with issues in categories including Energy, Waste, Biodiversity, Water, Climate Change, Transport, Eco-Community Development, Eco-Enterprise, Eco-Art and Design and more. Teachers participate as ECO-Leaders: They facilitate and enable the projects but it is the students who take the initiative and lead their own projects, and in doing so learn skills such as teamwork, problem solving and creativity.

According to Mary Mullaghy of the Irish Science Teachers' Association and a teacher at Eureka Secondary School, Kells, Co Meath, *"I have had only positive experiences of working with students on the Young Environmentalist Awards. Although you have to be around to help out where needed and provide guidance, it's the students who do the action project. Initially, you may be cautious about allowing young people to take the lead but usually they thrive on it. I have been amazed by what the young people can do for themselves when given the chance"*.

Curriculum Links

The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards programme is designed to work with both Primary and Secondary curricula, and links well with Geography, Science, SPHE, CSPE, Mathematics and Art syllabi. The programme can be easily integrated into the Transition Year programme as it facilitates suitable cross-curricular learning experiences, supports a personal education programme and encourages active and participatory citizenship. It is also recognised as a suitable CSPE action project connecting to several CSPE concepts including; Stewardship, Interdependence and Rights and Responsibility. Projects can also be undertaken as part of the Gaisce Awards.

Regional ECO-Dens

In 2011, an innovative new element was introduced to the programme to bring the awards to a regional level: regional judging through *Dragon's Den* style ECO-Dens, where groups got the chance to make a pitch to a panel of experts, tell the judges how their project makes a difference to the local environment, and why they should make the final shortlist.

"Although it seemed nerve wracking at first, it turned out that the teachers were more nervous than the pupils, who enjoyed the whole thing immensely – it was great for their self-confidence and presentation skills" according to Jennifer McClelland, teacher at Banbridge High School, Co. Down.

Spreading the word through social media: The People's Choice Award

The 2011 awards also saw the introduction of the People's Choice Award, an online public vote for the best project. An incredible 30,000 votes were cast in the 6 week voting period before the national showcase. The people's choice award used social media to drive awareness of the projects, allowing young people to share profiles of their great work with friends, families, members of their community and beyond - increasing the profile of the schools involved and getting teachers and young people the recognition they deserve.

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Showcase and Awards Ceremony

The annual ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards Showcase and Awards Ceremony is **Ireland's biggest celebration of young people taking environmental action** and the 2011 showcase was one of the biggest yet, with over 500 young people from across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland shortlisted to display over 50 projects at the **Mansion House in Dublin**. The showcase 2011 was an awareness-raising extravaganza combining an exhibition area and dynamic interactive ECO-Zones - including a biodiversity sensory Garden, Creation Stations, an ECO-treasure trail and an ECO-Factor song contest. This created a fun carnival atmosphere for all young people involved, whilst also providing the perfect platform for them to showcase their innovative projects to the public and an expert judging panel.

Awards Ceremony

With ministers **Frances Fitzgerald** (Children and Youth Affairs) and **Phil Hogan** (Environment, Community and Local Government) presenting awards; RTE's Aidan Kelly as MC; former president **Mary Robinson**, now president of the Foundation for Climate Justice giving the keynote address; and great prizes and awards for participating groups, the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards Ceremony 2011 lived up to its reputation as a high profile event befitting the VIPs involved – the hundreds of young people in attendance!

Make sure your group doesn't miss out in 2012! You have until November to register your group's interest in taking part.

ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards 2012 Timeline:

Friday 25th November 2011 – project registration deadline

Friday 24th February 2012 – project submission deadline

May 2012 - ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards Showcase and Awards Ceremony 2011

GET INVOLVED!

For more information on ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards contact E: yea@ecounesco.ie T: 01 662 54 91 or visit www.ecounesco.ie

