

**BEST PRACTICES OF ECO-SCHOOLS
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME
IMPLEMENTATION FOR TERTIARY LEVEL
IN IRELAND AND RUSSIA**

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Eco-Schools international programme is one of five programmes of FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education). In each participating country it is run by a FEE-member NGO, In Ireland it is run by An Taisce and in Russia by Keep St. Petersburg Tidy NGO. Initially the programme was designed for schools. Since 2003 kindergartens and supplementary education centers joined the programme in Russia and in some other countries. In 2007-2008 the tertiary level institutions got interested in the programme in Ireland, Russia, Portugal, Iceland and Spain. This paper addresses the best practices from two of five countries running Eco-Schools for the tertiary level. It is important to note that in all five countries the initiative to join Eco-Schools programme came from students.

The Green-Campus Programme is an evolution of Green-Schools (known internationally as Eco-Schools). The Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce is the Irish National Operator for all programmes of FEE. The Green-Campus Programme has been in operation in Ireland since 2007. At present 18 Campuses are formally registered on the Programme and three have been awarded the Green Flag. The Programme encourages practical environmental education and the empowerment of campuses to become exemplar in environmental stewardship. Throughout the pilot research and subsequent work with tertiary education providers it was found that the environmental impact of the tertiary education sector is significant, yet rates of campus uptake of traditional environmental management systems are low. Stakeholder driven, bottom up approaches to environmental management as facilitated by Green-Campus has delivered benefits to the environment, campus management, students and learning, and to local and wider communities. It must be noted that the Green-Campus Programme does not reward specific environmental projects or implementation of a new technology instead it rewards long term commitment to continuous improvement from the campus community. The seven steps of the programme are: establishing a Green-Campus Committee incorporating student and staff representatives, undertaking an environmental review, implementing an action plan, monitoring and evaluating actions carried out, linking the programme to learning on campus, informing and involving the campus and wider community, and developing a campus Green Charter.

In Ireland, the assessment phase of the Green-Campus Programme culminates in both a written and demonstrative application. An assessment panel reviews the written and oral submissions of the applicant campuses, with the decision to award the Green Flag being made following the implementation of recommendations from the panel. The Green-Campus Programme is not stand alone; it compliments and is complimented by many additional environmental projects and programmes. Participant campuses have benefitted from using the

Green-Campus Programme as a method to amalgamate environmentally themed groups and projects to work towards common and shared goals.

In Ireland the Green-Campus Programme is open to all post secondary and third level educational institutions.

Campus	Year of award	Themes	Student Numbers
University College Cork	2010	Litter and Waste Energy Conservation Water Conservation and Protection	>16,000
Coláiste Dhúlaigh, Coolock Campus	2010	Litter and Waste	~500
Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Castlebar Campus	2011	Litter and Waste Energy Conservation Water Conservation and Protection	~1,000

In order for a Campus to participate in the Green-Campus Programme a committee representative of the campus community must be formed. This committee must then register its intent to implement the Green-Campus Programme with the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce. The Green-Campus Office then facilitates each registered campus through the programme. Depending on the structure of the college and the Green Campus Committee, a multi-themed or single themed approach can be adopted. The committee consult with the Green Campus Office before choosing an approach. Themes include: Litter and Waste Prevention and Management, Water Conservation and Protection, Energy Conservation, Travel and Transport, and Biodiversity.

In Russia the Eco-Schools programme for universities has the same name as that for all other educational establishments, i.e. Eco-Schools. At present 5 universities expressed interest to participation in the programme. One of them – East-Siberian State Academy of Education (ESSAE) – taking part in the programme since 2008 has been awarded with 3 Green Flags. ESSAE is situated in Irkutsk. In the Irkutsk Region and neighbouring areas the Eco-Schools programme is managed by Liudmila Koshkareva who is the regional representative of Keep St. Petersburg Tidy NGO for FEE programmes there.

So, for the first year the students of ESSAE decided to focus on the theme Waste&Litter. The driving force in the Eco-Schools programme implementation in the ESSAE was the Nature Sciences and Geography Faculty having the most active and committed students, teachers and the dean. During the first year the whole methodology of seven steps was implemented. More about the 7 steps methodology can be found at www.eco-schools.org. The Academy itself was chosen to be the main target area. The students investigated the use of paper in the Academy and drafted the plan for its improvement. Part of the practical activities was dealing with finding the company able to take away selectively collected paper for recycling and arranging collections of waste papers. During the first year about 2 tones of paper were sent for recycling. However, despite the fact that the initiative was mainly shown by the students, the responsibilities for

managing the programme activities and controlling them were mainly undertaken by the professors.

The second year the students widened the area of their activities to the local community. Besides, they made a survey to find out the attitude of local people to selective collection of waste and investigated the possibility of recycling plastic bottles locally. They also arranged several events for selective collection of waste papers and plastic bottles involving among others local population. One of the indicators of good progress was also sharing responsibilities in programme-related activities between professors and students.

During the third year of work in the programme the Eco-Council of the ESSAE worked in close cooperation with other educational establishments taking part in Eco-Schools programme in Irkutsk and the Irkutsk district. All together they communicated the issue of selective collection of waste to the city authorities and shared their findings with the latter. As the results of their fruitful common work the pilot system of selective collection of plastic bottles was initiated by the city government. Besides, the leaflet with complete information about the centers for selective collection of different kinds of waste was published by the city authorities and became also available via their website. In addition to that, during the third year large share of responsibility for the activities was given to students. The Eco-Council was also headed by a student.

It's also important to note that during all those three years ESSAE cooperated closely with other participants of the programme in its area, hosted sharing experience events, took part in the jury for a number of competitions and contests for school teachers and pupils as well as presented its experience at a number of relevant conferences and seminars.

The best practices from Ireland and Russia presented in this paper show different approaches but similar results in not only educating students taking into account international prospective but also upbringing them as active and responsible citizens prepared to informed decision making for sustainable development.

The implementation of Eco-Schools programme at tertiary level along with its implementation in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools and well as in supplementary education forms a firm background for action-oriented continuous education for sustainable development implementation worldwide.