Transformation of education for sustainable development (ESD) programmes to meaningful action within society presents significant challenges including systemic integration, consistency of methods, and ensuring relevance and quality. Programmes like Eco-Schools, intended initially as an international environmental educational initiative, have developed, through thematic implementation processes and extensive collaboration with governmental agencies and NGOs, to embrace both development education and ESD. The Eco-Schools Programme, developed from the Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas, is coordinated at an international level by the Foundation for Environmental Education. The Programme has operated in Ireland since 1997 with over 93% of all primary and second level schools currently participating. Students from Eco-Schools progressing further through the education system demanded ESD action on reaching university, which lead to the development of the Green-Campus Programme. All Irish Universities and more than half of Institutes of Technology are registered on the programme with many awarded Green-Campus status, meaning that these sites engaged with the Eco-Schools programme, committed to continual improvement and elected for verification through detailed assessment processes. The Green-Campus Programme has been successfully implemented in Cork University Hospital, Ireland’s largest teaching hospital. Likewise, early years educators used relevant aspects of the Green-Schools Programme in the kindergarten. Evolution and progression of the Eco-Schools Programme in Ireland was largely an organic process, however, evaluation of this case study reveals a flexible, dynamic framework which international policy makers and NGOs can imitate in order to champion enduring ESD programmes that are responsive as well as responsible.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, Eco-Schools, Green Healthcare, Green Universities