



Quarterly report:
Actions and Initiatives





OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



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Quarterly Update 2 (July – September 2023)

Name of organisation/group: University of Galway

Date: July – September 2023

Please provide an update on the initiatives and activities your organisation/group has undertaken to promote, make use of and contribute to the SDGs in the last quarter:

Introduction and Report Format

The University of Galway's approach to embedding the SDGs centres on a [Learn-Live-Lead](#) model. The focus of **learn** is to continue to embed SDG literacy into all aspects of University learning and research. The focus of **live** is to implement the principles of the SDGs through campus operations and engagement activities. From a **lead** perspective, the aim is to play a central and transformative role in attaining the SDGs by 2030. Our *Learn-Live-Lead* model is organised around six key themes: Research & Learning; Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Nature & Ecosystems; Health & Wellbeing; Built Environment; and Governance & Leadership.

We recognise that reporting is an important part of assessing our progress towards achieving the SDGs. As SDG Champion, we publish a quarterly report showcasing our activities and work. The reports are structured on our Learn-Live-Lead model and each initiative highlighted, details the SDGs that initiative is seeking to progress. This is our second SDG quarterly report, capturing the time frame July– September 2023.

LEARN

University of Galway offers 26 Universities of Sanctuary scholarships for academic year 2023-24

The University of Galway is offering 24 [Universities of Sanctuary Scholarships](#) for the academic year 2023 – 24. Open to International Protection Applicants, refugees, Irish Travellers and vulnerable immigrant groups, the scholarships are available for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses across all four colleges. The scholarships include a full fee waiver, an annual stipend of €3,300, and ongoing support and academic mentoring. These scholarships are part of the university's wider [University of Sanctuary](#) designation which aims to broaden participation among underrepresented groups challenge discrimination in education. Alongside the University of Sanctuary scholarship, University of Galway will offer two refugee students Master's degree in College of Science and Engineering as part of the [EU-PASSWORLD project](#), which aims to create new, safe and legal routes for displaced people to secure education scholarships in Ireland.



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New Business and Science scholarships

University of Galway has announced a [new partnership with Hygeia](#), an Irish gardening, agriculture and veterinary production company. The partnership will provide Access scholarships and bursaries to students who are experiencing financial barriers to accessing third-level education. The ten-year partnership will be open to students across the University and will support student services to award funding to students experiencing hardship. The Hygeia Scholarship will include mentorship by Hygeia employees, supporting students through their academic and personal development as well as opportunities for work placements and internships so that students gain valuable skills and insight for their future careers.



Discovering previously unrealised health and climate impacts from domestic firefighters

[Research](#) led by University Galway exposes previously unrealised health and climate impacts from the use of domestic firefighters. The research was published in the July 2023 edition of the scientific journal *npj Climate and Atmospheric Science – Nature*. The study found that firefighters used for open fires and stoves in the home - even if used in small quantities and for a short period of time - emit more black carbon than all biomass fuels put together. Black carbon is one of the main pollutants that affect air quality, acting as a climate forcer or driver, second only to carbon dioxide. The research team describe the impact of firefighter use in home heating and the release of black carbon as a significant and previously overlooked source of air pollution. They noted that there are an estimated 70 million wood burning stoves, open fires, and other solid fuel heating appliances in homes across Europe alone, and that black carbon, not only affect people's health but play a significant role in climate change and uncertainty of climate predictions. This research is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and aims to supports climate and air pollution policies in Ireland.



Strategic Cancer Research Collaboration

Cancer researchers at University of Galway and Notre Dame's Harper Cancer Research Institute have come together to establish the [Biseach Initiative](#), a strategic cancer research collaboration, which aims to build on the ideas, talent and infrastructure of both universities for global cancer impact. Director of the University of Notre Dame Harper

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Cancer Research Institute, and Director of the Saolta-University of Galway Cancer Centre, signed a memorandum of understanding at University of Galway to build interdisciplinary cancer research collaborations and strengthen links between both institutions through student and faculty exchange programmes. To date there have been collaborative successes with joint *Naughton Fellowships* in the areas of bone metastasis and kidney cancer. Further research collaborations are planned with researchers in the Lambe Institute, Centre for Chromosome Biology, and the Apoptosis Research Centre at University of Galway.



Assessing the evidence: Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Ireland

A new report published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with the Ryan Institute at the University of Galway has found that the increasing frequency and severity of extreme storms, flooding, and sea level rise, means that some communities in Ireland are becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate change, due to much of Ireland's population residing in coastal zones. The IOM report, [Assessing the Evidence: Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Ireland](#), also includes advantages and opportunities for Ireland to strengthen climate resilience, including by better supporting vulnerable communities and improving understanding of the advantages of human mobility and of people on the move. The IOM Country Profile for Ireland encourages government and relevant stakeholders to consider key challenges and opportunities arising from the migration, environment, and climate change nexus. SDG target 10.7 calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The IOM Country Profile contributes to the realisation of SDG target 10.7 in Ireland, the EU and globally.



Leading action on consent research and education

University of Galway has recently been awarded a special €1.3million fund in respect of efforts to develop research, education, and awareness around consent. The €1.3million fund was secured following the submission of a case study which outlines the pioneering and innovative work of the [Active* Consent](#) programme, from its inception in 2013 as a consent education and research initiative, through to it being scaled up from 2019-2022, and its place as a national programme promoting healthy relationships and fostering a culture of respect. The programme has worked with

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nearly all Irish higher education institutions, addressing student needs on consent, sexual violence, and harassment, and upskilling the staff who support them. Active* Consent is now acknowledged as the sectoral standard and leading national programme for consent, with a wide range of stakeholder partnerships including Union of Students Ireland, Galway RCC and Rape Crisis Network Ireland, and SOLAS/Education & Training Boards Ireland.



LIVE

Launch of new SDG Trail

In September 2023, University of Galway launched a new [SDG trail](#) for the campus to showcase, share and promote our efforts at developing the campus as a living lab for best practice in embedding the SDGs. By walking the trail participants can learn about the 17 SDGs and gain insights into the scale and breadth of projects and initiatives taking place across the University that are progressing the SDGs. The SDG Trail demonstrates that action is needed at local, national, and international levels to achieve the SDGs. Stop-off's along the trail include, for example, Áras na Mac Léinn, home to the [ALIVE programme](#), the University of Galway's flagship volunteering programme; the Geofit borehole, a new geothermal heat pump system that forms part of our climate action strategy; and the Irish Centre of Human Rights, Irelands leading academic humans rights institution.



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Free period product initiative launched at University of Galway

University of Galway and University of Galway Students' Union (SU) have launched a pilot programme distributing free period products across campus to tackle the issue of period poverty among students and staff. The high cost of period products and the societal stigma which can still be attached to menstruation can lead to exclusion, mental health impacts and the use of unsuitable alternatives by those who menstruate. This programme aims to combat these issues and foster an inclusive, open campus with access for all. The pilot stems from an initiative that was launched by the Students' Union in 2017 to address the serious financial pressures and taboos faced by students who menstruate. At the launch of the pilot the Students Union Welfare Officer called on the Government to act on the [Period Poverty in Ireland Report](#) from February 2021.



University of Galway scores top marks in the Irish Business Against Litter survey

University of Galway achieved a Grade A for the standards of cleanliness and upkeep of the campus as part of the Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) survey 2023. Carried out by An Taisce, the IBAL review takes place each year with spot checks across the country and towns and cities are ranked for their appearance, the presence of litter and the impression created for visitors and tourists. The IBAL report scored University of Galway's campus a Grade A, noting: *'A beautiful environment which was not just excellent regarding litter but lovingly tended and maintained. All aspects within the campus were in very good order e.g. picnic tables, bicycle parking, paving, planted areas etc. It was great to see the opportunity to recycle with recycling bins incorporated into regular litter bins. Clearly this is a very well-respected environment.'* The Galway City Council, Director of Services, has written to the University to share the appreciation of the local authority for supporting the city to achieve an enhanced IBAL rating and positive publicity for the city as a location for business and leisure.



New Multi-Sensory Room launched to make campus more inclusive

Recognising that Universities can be a crowded and noisy environment, which can impact learning and work, especially for neurodiverse students, University of Galway has opened a new Multi-Sensory Room. The aim of the Multi-Sensory Room is to provide a safe space where users can relax and stimulate their senses in a controlled manner. The Multi-Sensory Room was designed in consultation with students and specialist staff and is equipped with interactive and integrated lighting, visual, vibroacoustic and sound effects that create an immersive and customisable sensory experience for students. The Multi-Sensory Room is designed to be a safe space for students to self-regulate by adjusting their sensory environment. Users will be able to choose from a range of calming or stimulating, integrated

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lighting, sound and vibroacoustic arrangements, to suit their sensory needs, and unwind on comfortable furniture. Soft furnishings and sensory stress-relieving items complete the experience. The opening of the multi-sensory room forms part of University of Galway's suite of indoor and outdoor initiatives designed to provide sensory friendly spaces enabling students to feel regulated and supporting their engagement in college life.



LEAD

ENLIGHT University Alliance successfully secures funding of €14.4 million

[ENLIGHT](#), a European University now consisting of 10 universities from 10 European countries including the University of Galway, has secured [€14.4 million in funding](#) over the next four years by the European Commission as part of the 2023 Erasmus+ call for proposals for European Universities. ENLIGHT has introduced new elements as part of its strategic direction, including the launch of bottom-up calls for interdisciplinary thematic networks, starter grants to promote the development of future-proof education and an expansion of its focus areas, including the addition of 'culture and creativity' to ENLIGHT's current focus areas: health and well-being; digitalization; climate change; energy, circular economy, and equity.



Galway International Arts Festival and University of Galway announce five-year partnership

Following 13 years of partnership, the University of Galway have announced a new [five-year partnership with Galway International Arts Festival](#) (GIAF) which will see even closer collaboration between the organizations. Galway International Arts Festival is a cultural organization that holds an annual arts festival in Galway, Ireland. The new partnership will see the introduction of a new course in creative arts management; the development of SELECTED, the professional development programme for emerging artists, theatre makers, curators and producers studying at University of Galway, and the Festival Volunteer Programme. Additionally, the partnership will see development of the First Thought Talks programme; further development of the GIAF archive housed in the University library; an exploration of how the partnership can help to develop the creative industries in the West; and further development of GIAF's volunteer programme.

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Launch of new mental health art exhibition

An exhibition focused on mental health, [Mindscapes](#), took place at the University of Galway between July 12th and August 2nd. The *Mindscapes* initiative is the first project from the Scientific Arts Lab at the University of Galway. *Mindscapes* featured artwork centred on the topic of mental health and mental health expression from 10 artists. Artists collaborated with 14 academic researchers from the Universities of Galway, Oxford, Edinburgh, Birmingham, and London. Artists selected a mental health topic ranging from wellbeing and bipolar disorder to sleep and emotions, and then collaborated with academics to create informed art pieces on their topic of choice.



University of Galway ranked in top 100 in inaugural QS European rankings

University of Galway has been named as one of the top Universities in Europe, according to the QS World University Rankings: Europe 2024.; published in September 2023. The first Europe-wide rankings have placed University of Galway 98th in Europe out of 690 institutions across 42 locations. University of Galway was also ranked in the QS European ranking's Top 50 for Sustainability, building on the announcement that the University was named number one university in Ireland, and in the world's top 50, for progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings earlier this year.



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University of Galway SDG focused podcast series

To increase awareness of the SDGs, University of Galway has launched a new SDG focused podcast series University of Galway's Sustainability Podcast. The podcast is available across a variety of platforms, including YouTube, Spotify, Soundcloud and Apple Podcasts, allowing a wide range of listeners to tune in. This new podcast series centres around the University of Galway's progress on the SDGs. Listeners can gain insights into the importance of the SDGs, as well as the contribution educational institutes such as the University of Galway are making to achieve the SDGs. The first podcast episode featured Sustainability Officer Michelle O'Dowd Lohan discussing how sustainability is one of University of Galway's core values and what the SDG Champion designation means to the campus community. The [second podcast episode](#) features Michael Curran, Head of Building Services, Energy and Utilities at University of Galway. Michael talks about how he became interested in sustainability, about the ambitions and amazing achievements of University of Galway in conserving energy and why he finds his role so rewarding.



University of Galway and county libraries encouraging young people to engage with STEM

The University of Galway based STEM programme [ReeLIFE SCIENCE](#) has presented six libraries around Ireland with audiovisual equipment to help young people in schools and youth groups take part in an innovative science video competition. ReeLIFE SCIENCE challenges young science enthusiasts and filmmakers across the island of Ireland, north and south, to produce fun, 3-minute science videos to educate and entertain the public. The videos can communicate any aspect of STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), including topics like: Climate Action, How Things Work, Emerging Technology and Marvels of Medicine. With a prize fund of more than €5000, the best videos from primary schools, secondary schools and youth organisations will be screened for the public at the Galway Science and Technology Festival at University of Galway in November 2023. ReeLIFE SCIENCE is supported by Science Foundation Ireland's Discover Programme, University of Galway's College of Science and Engineering, the CÚRAM SFI Research Centre for Medical Devices, and the Cell EXPLORERS science outreach programme.



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University of Galway hosts inaugural SDG Week

In September 2023, University of Galway hosted its first [SDG week](#) to increase awareness, engagement, and action to help achieve the SDGs. SDG Week was organised on the back of the Government of Ireland designating University of Galway as a national SDG Champion. SDG Week formed part of the wider European Sustainable Development Week, which this year ran from September 18 to 23. Over [25 events](#) took place throughout the week, including a mix of student and staff-led events, from seminars to seed sowing, an environmental summit, poster presentations, workshops, a quiz night, a guided walk and a community recycling day. SDG week was developed to raise awareness of the SDGs and share our learnings and experiences with others so we can all make a difference by integrating them into our work and daily activities. SDG week was open to all including students' staff and community partners.



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SDG Week

18-23 September 2023

Celebrating the UN's Sustainable Development Goals across campus.

www.universityofgalway.ie/sdgweek

Monday 18 September

- 11.30am: SDG Poster Presentation by Business & Economics
- 3pm: Action for the SDGs - ALIVE workshop
- 4pm: UN Webinar: Implementation of the SDGs in Higher Education
- 5pm: EcoSprint: Designing a Sustainable Campus for your Future with the IdeasLab

Tuesday 19 September

- 11am: Sustainable Food Systems & the SDGs
- 12.30pm: How Data Science is making an impact on the SDGs
- 1pm: Land, Housing & the SDGs
- 1pm: SDGs at First Year Socs Day
- 5.30pm: ROAMing Citizen Science Workshop
- 7pm: Students' Union SDG Quiz Night

Wednesday 20 September

- 12pm: SDGs @ Clubs' Day
- 1pm: Enter Net Zero with Deloitte: Employer workshop
- 3pm: Spotlight on the SDGs: Commerce Students as Change Makers
- 5pm: LIFT Leadership Facilitator Training

Thursday 21 September

- 9am: 2-day PEI Summit: Prevention & Early Intervention
- 10am: Free WEEE Recycling Days
- 11am: The SDGs & My Volunteer Work Experience
- 11.30am: Seed Collection & Sowing event



Full event listing, venues and registration at:
www.universityofgalway.ie/sdgweek

Friday 22 September

- 11am: Student-led Environmental Summit
- 2pm: Speech & Language Therapy & the SDGs: Community & University collaborations

Saturday 23 September

- 10am: 'Just 3 x SDG' Pledge
- 11am: Guided Biodiversity and Heritage Walk of the Campus



Launch of University of Galway's first SDG week. Credit – Dr John Caulfield





Josephine Walsh, Dean Kenny, Izzy Tiernan and Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh at the launch of a free period product initiative at University of Galway



Shane and Joan from libraries in Co Offaly receiving two audiovisual kits from ReelLIFE SCIENCE



As part of University of Galway's SDG week, Dr Anne Muller, Sustainable World Section, School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, leading a panel discussion on the challenges contemporary food systems pose to human and planetary health. Credit – Martina Regan



Adam Harris, AslAm CEO, Izzy Tiernan, University of Galway SU Vice-President, and Helen Maher, University of Galway Vice-President EDI launch the new Multi-Sensory Room. Credit - Martina Regan