

**Project acronym:** SAVES 2  
**Project title:** Students Achieving Valuable Energy Savings 2  
**Contract number:** 754203  
**Project duration:** 42 months

Deliverable reference number and title:

## D2.4 Annual student engagement report 2018-19: IRELAND

June 2019

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 754203

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# 1. Introduction to SAVES 2

The SAVES 2 project ([www.saves-project.eu](http://www.saves-project.eu)) brings together the Student Switch Off (SSO) and Student Switch Off + (SSO+) campaigns in universities across seven European countries; Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania and the United Kingdom. This report provides a detailed overview of the student engagement activities performed as part of the Student Switch Off and Student Switch Off+ campaigns in Ireland.

The SSO campaign is an inter-dormitory energy-saving competition, that focuses on a predefined set of activities, encouraging students to save energy in their university dormitories. The dormitory that saves the most energy on each campus, is announced winner and rewarded for their efforts. Energy savings are determined by comparing pre-intervention electricity consumption, with post intervention electricity consumption, in each dormitory. We aim to reach 38,000 students living in dormitories across Europe every academic year between 2017-2020.

The SSO+ campaign aims to raise awareness amongst students living in the private rented sector helping them reduce their energy costs. It focuses on making students aware of energy performance certificates (EPC), smart meters and energy efficiency, thus helping reduce their exposure to energy poverty. Across Europe, we aim to reach 43,000 students living in the private rented sector in the 2018-19 academic year.

Each country has a dedicated staff member to deliver SSO and SSO+ activities.

Chapter 2 describes the activities undertaken as part of the SSO campaign and Chapter 3 describes activities undertaken as part of SSO+. Chapter 4 draws out conclusions.

## 2. The Student Switch Off campaign in Ireland

### 2.1 Universities taking part

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is an external organization which represents 30 third level institution on the island of Ireland. Currently there are four members of USI taking part in Student Switch Off: Maynooth University (MU), Dublin City University (DCU), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), an University College Cork (UCC). USI coordinates and delivers the campaign at the four universities.

| Name of University                     | Number of dormitories at the university | Number of dormitories taking part in SAVES 2 | Number of students living in dormitories that are taking part in SAVES 2 |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dublin City University                 | 4 Dormitories                           | 3 Dormitories                                | 940                                                                      |
| National University of Ireland, Galway | 2 Dormitories (252 apartments)          | 2 Dormitories (252 apartments)               | 1,193                                                                    |
| Maynooth University                    | 9 Dormitories (238 apartments)          | 9 Dormitories (238 apartments)               | 1,250                                                                    |
| University College Cork                | 5 Dormitories (301 apartments)          | 5 Dormitories (301 apartments)               | 1,278                                                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                           | 20 Dormitories                          | 19 Dormitories                               | 4,661                                                                    |

Table 1. Irish universities taking part in SAVES 2

### 2.2 Engagement activities

Throughout the 2018-19 academic year, a number of activities took place in the dormitories in Ireland to raise awareness about energy saving. These included photo competitions, dormitory visits, ambassadors training sessions, freshers stands, on campus activations, environmental actions and social media campaign distribution. The sections below describe these in more detail and what engagement levels were reached.

### 2.2.1 Launch of the campaign

The Union of Students in Ireland launched the Student Switch Off campaign through online and offline activities. All four universities taking part in the campaign (Maynooth University (MU), University College Cork (UCC), Dublin City University (DCU), and National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)) sent out an email on behalf of USI in October 2018, which marked the beginning of the academic year, to those students living on campus which informed them of the campaign and how they could get involved.

USI also had freshers stands in three of the four universities (NUIG, UCC, DCU), where they distributed information on SAVES 2 and asked students to follow them on social media so they could be continually updated throughout the year. As two freshers' days clashed USI were unable to make freshers in Maynooth University. The Freshers days took place on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in NUIG, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 in DCU, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 in UCC.

### 2.2.2 Ambassador training sessions and ambassador engagement

Student Switch Off ambassadors play a key role in making the SSO campaign a success. Their role is to engage their peers in the dormitories, by raising awareness on SSO and encouraging them to save energy.

The first training session for SSO ambassadors took place at the University College Cork on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018, which lasted two hours; ambassadors were provided with food, jumpers and T-shirts. USI found it a challenge to recruit SSO ambassadors at the other three universities this year and to save on resources held a joint training session in the USI head office attended by two ambassadors from MU, two from DCU and two from NUIG. This took place over two hours in early November 2018. Both training sessions included background on the project, aims and objectives, quizzes, review on last year's activities, tips on energy saving, overview of planned activities for the year ahead. The second training also provided information on SSO+.

Ambassadors helped USI promote the campaign on campus by joining on campus visits, helping run competitions, getting people to follow their social media accounts, and handing out promotional information on the campaign. They also helped USI with running face to face quizzes. Three of the ambassadors wrote articles for a youth website '[SPUNOUT](#)'. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 one ambassador went on the local radio (Flirt FM) to talk about the campaign and encouraged more students to get involved.

The ambassadors also got involved in other environmental activities on and off their campus, such as plastic free days, climate case Ireland, climate conference, climate marches etc.

| Name of University                             | Number of training sessions ran | Number of students attending |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| UCC                                            | 1                               | 3                            |
| USI head office (attendees from DCU, MU, NUIG) | 1                               | 6                            |

Table 2. Number of students attending ambassador training sessions at Ireland SAVES 2 universities

### 2.2.3 Dormitory visits/on campus face-to-face activities

Due to health and safety reasons USI were not allowed to enter dormitories on Irish campuses, therefore relied on face to face campus visits. These consisted of setting up a table/stand in an area within the colleges which had massive footfall. In some cases, this was outside the Library, whilst in others it was in the students' union building. Most of the time the stands were ran from 11-4pm and incentives such as vouchers, power banks, and branded SAVES 2 pens were provided. In the second semester USI also handed out stickers with energy saving tips. The stands were decorated with information and posters on the project. The main goal of these visits was to get students to follow USI SSO on Instagram (@switchoff.ie), so they could continue to communicate with them and encourage them to take part in future photo competitions, as well as, raising the awareness of the project on campus. Twice a year USI ran a climate quiz (more details in section 2.2.5) for students as part of the visits.

The main challenge was the inability to target just students living on campus (as many students USI spoke to were living off-campus), therefore for efficiency and as a practical measure USI often talked both about SSO and SSO+. In the case of DCU, the accommodation department decided to focus on waste and no longer sent

emails on USI's behalf after October 2018 or allowed USI to set up a stand within the accommodation buildings. Furthermore, the college year has gotten shorter, freshers weeks tend to be in October and classes finish up in April, and the first semester exams take place in January. This results in a six-month period for engagement activities, added to that NUIG is a five-hour return journey and UCC is six hours.

| <b>Name of University</b> | <b>Number of onsite engagement visits</b> | <b>Description of Activities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NUIG                      | 4                                         | <p>USI attended the societies day in September 2018 and ran a stand in the students' union building in November 2018. During the November visit one of the ambassadors went on the local radio to talk about the project.</p> <p>In February 2019 USI ran a relaunch in NUIG, as they gained access to a new accommodation block, as part of this they hand delivered a letter which outlined the project, along with a sticker. These were distributed to every apartment in the building.</p> <p>USI also visited for the end of year activity where they handed out the prizes and set up a photo opt.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| MU                        | 4                                         | <p>USI were unable to make the freshers day in MU as it conflicted with another university's. Therefore, their first engagement activity was an on-site activation with the Ben &amp; Jerrys van in November 2018. USI asked students to take a quiz and to follow them on Instagram as they lined up to get free ice cream.</p> <p>USI had a stand on another day in November 2018, during which they handed out pens, information and promoted their social media accounts.</p> <p>In February 2019 USI ran another stand and also put stickers in key areas around the campus, such as students' union building, the bar, the common areas. USI also placed SSO posters in accommodation building, laundry rooms, doors etc. Additionally, USI gave each apartment a letter and stickers which informed them they were in a competition and provided them with energy saving tips.</p> <p>In March 2019 USI had another stand and helped the students' union with their sustainability policy ensuring the SAVES 2 project was cemented in it.</p> <p>In April 2019 USI ran a stand for half a day and a focus group the second half.</p> |
| UCC                       | 4                                         | <p>In September 2018 USI had an activation day during which they went on campus alongside the Ben &amp; Jerrys van and handed out free ice cream to students. As they were in the line, USI asked students to follow their Instagram page and informed them about the project.</p> <p>In October 2018 USI ran an information stand outside the library and visited the dormitories to hand out the prizes for this first month. Additionally, USI gathered content (videos, pictures) for a plastic free day that SSO ambassadors were helping to run.</p> <p>In February 2019, USI ran another information stand on campus. They dropped a letter and sticker informing them</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|     |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |   | <p>about SSO competition into each apartment taking part in SSO.</p> <p>In March 2019 USI ran a similar information stand.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| DCU | 7 | <p>DCU societies/fresher's week took place in October 2018 and USI attended two of the days, handing out information and asking people to follow them on social media.</p> <p>USI also attended the 'welcome dinner' for all those living on campus, here they asked people to follow them on Instagram as they lined up for food. USI also informed them about the competition and how they can get involved and handed out some lollipops.</p> <p>In November 2018 USI set up a table in the student common area where they asked students to take a quiz and informed them about the campaign. Ben and Jerrys and Irish Rail vouchers were provided as prizes. Similarly, USI had a stand in February 2019 as part of the colleges 'Green Week'. They also handed out their energy saving stickers to students as they passed by.</p> <p>In March 2019 USI did a half day with a stand and then filmed some videos with ambassadors for their social media. USI also had a stand for two hours in April 2019, the same day they conducted a focus group.</p> |

Table 3. Face-to-face engagement activities on Irish university campuses (excluding ambassador training)

## 2.2.4 Social media competitions

USI ran a monthly photo competition focusing on energy saving actions; this was included in each monthly email sent by accommodation departments and through USI's social media accounts. In 2018 the prizes were Irish Rail and Ben & Jerrys vouchers. From April 2019 onwards USI secured SSE sponsorship and started to offer tickets to games, concerts and Dublin zoo.

USI had an agreement that they gave prizes to those apartments who saved the most energy each month in each university which meant that they didn't have enough prizes to run individual photo competitions for both SSO and SSO+ (more details on SSO+ in chapter 3). To ensure they still ran enough photo competitions to keep students' commitment to the project, each photo competition was open to students involved in SSO and SSO+. Therefore, the numbers reflected in the table below will be same as SSO+.

| Month    | Competition type and theme                | Number of entries | Platform used (Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat etc)                         |
|----------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October  | Eco Brew                                  | 7                 | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, snapchat |
| November | Layer up                                  | 10                | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, snapchat |
| December | Turning off standby                       | 2                 | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram           |
| January  | Energy Efficient while studying for exams | 2                 | 5 Facebook pages, Instagram,                                            |
| February | Energy saving during valentines           | 4                 | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, s        |

|              |                                           |           |                                                                         |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March        | Cooking with Lid On                       | 6         | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, snapchat |
|              | Earth hour                                | 0         |                                                                         |
| April        | Favourite energy saving activity          | 6         | Monthly emails in 3 universities, 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, snapchat |
| May          | Energy Efficient while studying for exams | 6         | 5 Facebook pages, Instagram, snapchat                                   |
| June         | How are you saving energy?                | 3         | 5 Facebook pages, Instagram                                             |
| <b>Total</b> |                                           | <b>46</b> |                                                                         |

Table 4. Photo competitions at Irish SAVES 2 universities

### 2.2.5 Climate change quizzes

A [climate change quiz](#) was run throughout November 2018 and March 2019, that was sent to students living in campus accommodation via monthly emails. The aim of the quiz was to provide a 'shock factor' which would encourage students to take more positive steps towards climate action. USI also used it as an opening to chat to students about the project in general and how they can get involved and the steps they can take every day to effect change.

As part of face-to-face visits to three of the universities, USI asked students to take the quiz face to face. Prizes offered included power banks and ice-cream vouchers, provided by Ben & Jerrys, to those who scored 5 out of 6 in the quiz. Student who took the quiz received a pen with SSO snapchat information. Furthermore, the quiz was promoted on USI social media sites; Facebook and Twitter. USI also sent a link to the quiz to some societies that they work close with in universities requesting that they take the quiz and promote it through their outlets.

In total 786 students took the quiz online, and further face-to-face. Unfortunately, face-to-face numbers weren't counted, but this will be done for the next academic year.

### 2.2.6 End of year event

The set up in Ireland was different this academic year compared to 2017-18. USI agreed with three universities to provide monthly prizes to keep students motivated, rather than offering an end of year prize. In UCC and MU, each month the winner of each building was announced via their monthly emails and they would get their prize which was delivered by accommodation staff. In DCU, USI could no longer run monthly prizes as they were not given access to emails or building once management decided to focus on waste. USI have a meeting with the management in summer 2019 to agree on a more productive arrangement for the upcoming year.

NUIG was the only institution which kept the original format; as an end of year prize USI provided '[One4all](#)' multistore vouchers to students. USI set a time and date (10<sup>th</sup> of April 2019) and asked the winners to meet them at the dormitory reception to collect prizes and meet for a photo. Unfortunately, not everyone could make it but those who did took a photo and an [article](#) was produced for USI and NUIG website and the accommodation main page.

### 2.2.7 Other miscellaneous activities

SSO ambassadors were involved in the Climate Case Ireland movement, a group taking the Irish government to court over their inaction on climate change, where they attended court case to show support and raise awareness. Most of USI member institutions took part in USI Plastic Free day.

USI staff presented the project at conferences, including Green Campus & SEAI event. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) held an event on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019, titled 'Staff engagement programs in the Public Sector'. The audience was mainly those working on energy projects in public bodies such as county councils. The Green Campus conference brought together staff & students from third level institutions and public bodies, such as hospitals, who are working towards receiving a Green flag, an award given to those who demonstrate

the implementation of a 7-step program of environmental managements on campus. Both presentations outlined USI's work with on SSO & SSO plus within third level institutions.

USI held a lobby day in July 2019 during which they campaigned national politicians for more action on climate change.

Finally, USI presented the project at two National Council meetings where they gave an overview of the project, updates and how students' union could get their institution involved. NB, National Council is the National Executive of the Union of Students in Ireland. It oversees the management of the National Union and hears reports on the activities of the officer board in between Congresses of the Union. It is composed of one member from each member students' union (usually the President or their delegate).

## 2.2.8 Summary of SSO engagement statistics

Table 5 below gives an overview of the SSO engagement achievements in Ireland.

| <b>Name of University</b> | No. students living in dormitories taking part in SSO | No. students signed up to the campaign | % students signed up to the campaign | Number attending the Ambassador training | Online climate quiz entries* | Photo/online competition entries* | Number of SSO social media followers          | % energy saved |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| NUIG                      | 1,193                                                 | 1,193                                  | 100                                  | 2                                        | 197                          | 11                                | NUIG SSO Facebook: 68                         |                |
| UCC                       | 1,278                                                 | 1,278                                  | 100                                  | 3                                        | 197                          | 11                                | UCC SSO Facebook: 110                         | 13.11          |
| MU                        | 1,250                                                 | 1,250                                  | 100                                  | 2                                        | 197                          | 12                                | MU SSO Facebook: 76                           | 4.20           |
| DCU                       | 940                                                   | 940                                    | 100                                  | 2                                        | 197                          | 12                                | DCU SSO Facebook: 94<br><br>DCU Facebook: 940 | 16.13          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>4,661</b>                                          | <b>4,661</b>                           | <b>100</b>                           | <b>9</b>                                 | <b>786</b>                   | <b>46</b>                         |                                               | <b>11.5</b>    |

Table 5. Overall student engagement statistics in Irish Universities, it includes the extra apartments we got in January 2019

NUIG/UCC/MU: The students in the accommodation managed by the universities are deemed signed up to the campaign as they receive monthly emails. There are other student accommodation buildings, but these are owned by private companies, therefore are not included in SSO communication.

Social media: USI are unable to track how many students from each university follow them on social media as they just get 'followers' or likes. That said USI did set up four separate Facebook accounts for each university involved in SSO, however the numbers are low as they focused on advertising their SSO Instagram and snapchat accounts.

\*The online climate quizzes were open to all students from the four participating universities. In total 786 students participated, however not all students submitted the optional information in relation to which university they studied at, therefore the 786 entries were divided between the four universities equally for the purposes of Table 5. Social media competition entries were also recorded overall, not per institution. Forty-six entries were received in total, so this was attributed equally to the four universities. For next year USI will record data per university.



## 2.3 Communication with students

The first point of contact with students about SSO was via emails sent by university accommodation departments on USI's behalf. These were done on a monthly basis in MU, UCC and NUIG. Although DCU sent the first email, they stopped after as they wanted to focus on waste reduction and limit the amount of emails students were receiving. USI gained access to more student apartments in January 2019 in NUIG and MU. This was a new step this year and USI found that it kept staff in the accommodation department more involved. That said, USI don't have the open rates of the emails and didn't receive many entries into the photo competitions from them. USI were told in a focus group that many students don't open university emails.

USI found that social media was the most effective way of communicating with students as it allowed them to reach a wide and diverse number of students in a cost-efficient manner. Additionally, USI could use various mediums to get their message across, including videos, images, text. It allowed them to utilize peer to peer involvement as they retweeted and shared stories, videos, posts made by other students which related to their project, such as photos from competitions. Each social medium account has its own purpose and strength. Facebook was used to promote events and articles. It was great for the surveys as it allowed USI to boost a post and reach students that we would have had never been able to access.

List of SSO Facebook accounts:

- <https://www.facebook.com/USI.ie>
- <https://www.facebook.com/DCUSSO/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/SSOMSU/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/UCCSSO/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/nuigsso/>

Instagram (@switchoff.ie, @usi.ie) was used for the first time in the SAVES 2 project in 2018-19 (the USI account was already in existence and the SSO account was specifically set up for the project); this was found to be very effective. The accounts contained short videos, images and quick tips. It allowed USI to reach out to other societies via the '@', and 'tagging' functions. The additional followers of 450 lead to greater engagement in the project, as well as, engagement from USI main account followers (2,109 followers).

Twitter (@usi.ie) allowed USI to communicate with more formal organisations. The account wasn't used as much compared to other accounts as it wasn't SAVES 2 specific; tweets had to be pre-booked within the organisation.

Snapchat was the best platform for photo competitions. USI had moved away from it slightly at the beginning of the year but on seeing a drop-in photo entries reverted back to it as students were more likely to post photos there.

Social media accounts were updated a few times a week, depending on the time of year and in some cases, Instagram was used a few times a day.

## 2.4 Engagement materials

USI continued to use the t-shirts, jumpers and SSO branded pens which were purchased in the last academic year. Additionally, targeted posters were created which were placed in common accommodation areas in the four universities, such as laundry rooms. Stickers were designed and placed around campus and in campus apartments.

The majority of new content was videos with energy saving tips and tips when searching for accommodation to reduce exposure fuel poverty, such as searching for mould. These videos can be accessed via USI's Instagram account (@switchoff.ie) and via a youtube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeh0ebP7mo2EPM1oFKdyk3A?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeh0ebP7mo2EPM1oFKdyk3A?view_as=subscriber))

Sponsorship came in the form of vouchers from both Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and Irish Rail. Ben & Jerrys also supplied USI with some powerbanks. SSE Airtricity provided tickets to concerts, football games Dublin zoo.

## 2.5 The energy dashboard

The energy leadership dashboard which shows the ranking of halls in the competition, was promoted in universities where it provided useful data and incentivization; the link was sent via monthly emails encouraging students to visit the dashboard embedding it the main Irish SAVES website. It was also promoted at the national council of USI, which brings together student leaders from each university in Ireland.

Whilst excellent when supplied with timely and regular data, the dashboard was not especially useful in two (UIG and UCC) of the four universities in Ireland, primarily due to the infrequency of the data and the lag between use of energy and collection of data. None of the participating universities in Ireland can automatically populate the dashboard, and hence it must be done manually.

In all cases, data supplied by colleges was collected at end of month and supplied to the project at that point.

Below are links to the dashboard competitions:

DCU: <https://switchoff.nus.org.uk/dcu/competition/209>

UCC: <https://switchoff.nus.org.uk/ucc>

MU: <https://switchoff.nus.org.uk/nuim/competition/208>

NUIG: <https://switchoff.nus.org.uk/nuig/competition/207>

## 2.6 Embedding SSO into wider university initiatives

USI started to offer energy audits to their members and as part of the feedback they highlight where they can save energy and how the Student Switch Off campaign feeds into this. USI also helped some members with their sustainable policies and ensured the project is referenced in them. USI have links to staff who work on the [Green Campus](#) programme and collaborate with them on the energy sector of that program. Additionally, USI have presented the project to individual Green Campus committees and to the organization which runs the country program.

The Green Campus programme encourages a partnership approach to environmental education, management and action in third level institutions. It rewards long term commitment (via a Green Flag) to continuous improvement from the campus community.

## 2.7 Successes and challenges

The overall engagement was the main success to date. USI found that more students were accessing their information via social media, furthermore more of their member organizations, along with outside organizations were seeking their advice and involvement in activities. USI were invited to consult with students' unions on sustainability and energy policies, were asked to brief the Minister of Education on two separate occasions, got involved in Green Weeks, presented at SEAI conference and were asked to lead student engagement in climate case. Via the focus groups USI found that more students were aware of the campaign and energy tips due to the stickers and their videos.

Recruitment of ambassadors was a challenge this year and USI are hoping to redesign the recruitment and promotion process next year to rectify this.

Whilst population of the dashboard with energy data was much smoother this year, the problem with infrequent data being supplied manually means that promotion of the dashboard remains on a university-by-university basis and will probably never be useful in NUI Galway. The technical challenges on processing of the data from last year have now been overcome.

## 2.8 Photos from the SSO campaign



Figure 1: Activation day on Maynooth University Campus. The local partnership with Ben & Jerry's created an incentive for students to come and talk about climate change, saving energy and the power of students to effect change.



Figure 2: Entry by a student into a photo competition, showing both the desirability of a cup of tea and the need to heat only the required quantity of water in the kettle.



Figure 3: SSO ambassador at one of SSO information stands. A strength of the campaign in Ireland is the willingness of student activists to engage in education of their peers.



Figure 4: End of Year event at National University of Ireland, Galway, celebrating the efforts of students to reduce their energy wastage

## 2.9 Social media and email examples



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**Subject Line:** Battle of the dorm, monthly winners

**WINNER WINNER** 🏆🏆🏆🏆

Did you all remember you were in an energy competition?! Well I am happy you announce the winner of each block below. These students had the most energy saving compared to last month. You will all receive FREE BEN&JERRYS ICE CREAM 🍦. Pop down to your reception to collect.

Keep an eye your apartment progress via our [leader board](#).

University Hall is Apartment 30  
Victoria Mills B7  
Castle white: Apartment 1  
Victoria lodge Apartment 33

You still have a chance to win next month so start saving energy now! To get energy saving tips add us on snapchat: [switchoff.ie](#) or Instagram: [switchoff.ie](#)

**COMPETITION TIME!**

For an EXTRA CHANCE to win prizes, enter our monthly competition:

**LAYER UP!**

**Top tip! putting on extra layers not only is the quickest way to warm up but also adds 3 degrees Celsius to your body!**

Send us your snaps/videos of how you are staying warm while conserving energy ,to [switchoff.ie](#) on Instagram or snapchat ,along with the name of your University . The best ones win **OPEN IRISH RAIL TICKETS**, which means you get a return ticket to ANYWHERE in Ireland, ANYTIME, including xmas period. Competition ends Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>.



**QUIZ TIME !**

Test your knowledge on Climate change by answering these [6 questions](#). If you get 6/6 let us know, there may be a prize!!!!

*This project is brought to you by Union of Student of Ireland and UCC Residences funded under Horizon 2020 framework program of the European Union.*

Figure 5: Copy of the newsletter sent to UCC dorms in November 2018



### WINNER WINNER 🏆🏆🏆🏆

Did you get a bag of goodies delivered to your apartment?? These students below did because had the most energy saving compared to last month.

*Hargadon Apartment 11*

*Riordan Apartment 12*

*Leavey Apartment 10*

*Mullin Apartment 6*

You still have a chance to win next month so start saving energy now! To get energy saving tips add us on Instagram : [switchoff.ie](https://www.instagram.com/switchoff.ie) or add us on Snapchat: [switchoff.ie](https://www.snapchat.com/add/switchoff.ie) .Keep an eye your apartment progress via our [leader board](#).

### QUIZ TIME!

Test your knowledge on Climate change by answering these [6 questions](#). If you get 6/6 let us know, there may be a open return Irish Rail ticket for you !:)

### ENERGY TIP OF THE MONTH!

Tis the season for soups, stews and anything hot!! Put a lid on when your cooking to speed up the

### ENERGY TIP OF THE MONTH!

Tis the season for soups, stews and anything hot!! Put a lid on when your cooking to speed up the process and SAVE ENERGY. We are giving away [FREE](#) [Iarnód Éireann](#) vouchers 🚆🚆 for the best photos/snaps/ videos of you putting the lid on.

Send 📷📷📷📷 to our Instagram account: [switchoff.ie](https://www.instagram.com/switchoff.ie) or on Snapchat: [switch off.ie](https://www.snapchat.com/add/switchoff.ie)

*This project is brought to you by Union of Student of Ireland and Maynooth University Residences funded under Horizon 2020 framework program of the European Union.*

Figure 6: Newsletter for February 2019 to students living in accommodation in Maynooth University



Figure 7: An original Instagram post, along with USI account sharing it



Figure 8: Post promoting presence on campus and asking students to visit the stan

## 3. The Student Switch Off+ campaign in Ireland

### 3.1 Universities receiving information

SSO+ was launched in Ireland for the first time during the 2018-19 academic year. After feedback from students, officers, and focus groups, USI decided to use social media to promote SSO plus and not emails for a number of reasons:

- USI were informed students don't read emails
- USI had a ready-made audience as the majority of followers are students in their universities
- Students' unions said they had enough newsletters to send to students, so they would post on social media instead
- Reach a wider and diverse audience without travelling
- Students were reluctant to provide their email address

Next year USI is hoping to sign up students to a newsletter as well as Instagram. USI also want to get formal commitment from students' unions to promote the project.

As well as social media USI ran information stands and workshops in some of our collages and at the National Council of USI (a two day meeting in which representatives from each member organisation is present).

| Social Media         | Number of followers |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Instagram USI        | 2,000               |
| Instagram switch off | 450                 |
| Snapchat switch off  | 500                 |
| Facebook USI         | 18,250              |
| Twitter USI          | 14,500              |

| Name of University                                | Number of students reached |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Carlow College                                    | 71,000                     |
| Cork Institute of Technology                      |                            |
| Institute of Technology Carlow                    |                            |
| Institute of Technology Tralee                    |                            |
| Institute of Technology Limerick                  |                            |
| Institute of Technology Tipperary                 |                            |
| Waterford Institution of Technology               |                            |
| Athlone Institution of Technology                 |                            |
| Dundalk Institution of Technology                 |                            |
| Galway /Mayo Institution of Technology            |                            |
| National University of Ireland, Galway            |                            |
| National University of Ireland, Maynooth          |                            |
| St .Angela's College Sligo                        |                            |
| Dublin City University                            |                            |
| Dublin Institute of Technology                    |                            |
| Institute of Technology Tallaght                  |                            |
| Trinity college Dublin                            |                            |
| National collage of Ireland, College Art & Design |                            |

Table 6. Universities in Ireland receiving SSO+ information

### 3.2 Engagement activities

Unlike SSO, the vast majority of SSO+ engagement is done online via email and social media; this is predominantly because unlike university dormitories, that are normally localised and easily accessible, privately

rented accommodation is spread across town, and is not easily accessible. The main activities that took place as part of SSO+ was regular posts on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and a face-to-face training.

| Engagement Activity               | Frequency                                | Theme                                                                                                                                                                                     | Reach                                                                                                                                | Additional Information                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Articles                          | 3 throughout the year                    | Tips of saving energy while living on campus<br>Plastic free living<br>Energy Efficient & sustainable valentines                                                                          | Unknown but the sites get 1 million views per year<br><br>One post with a link to the article reached 2.3k                           | <a href="#">Spunout link article 1</a><br><br><a href="#">Spunout Link article 2</a>                                                                                                                             |
| Sustainability Calendar Instagram | New post each day from December 1-24th   | Calendar was a mix of general sustainable tips around energy, waste, Fairtrade etc                                                                                                        | Reach for only tips relating to energy was 805 and 1,627 impressions via @switchoff.ie Instagram and 1,750 for the @USI.ie Instagram | Total reach for calendar was 4,788 on Switch Off Instagram and 6,000-7,000 on USI Instagram                                                                                                                      |
| Sustainability Calendar Facebook  | New post each day from December 1-24th   | Calendar was a mix of general sustainable tips around energy, waste, Fairtrade etc                                                                                                        | The total reach for the four facebook pages for only energy tips was 1,022                                                           | The total reach for the whole calendar was 2,009                                                                                                                                                                 |
| SSO+ tip videos                   | Posted in March/April at least six times | March- keeping warm during winter<br>April - tips when searching for new accommodation, checking the BER, searching for mould, double glazing.                                            | Social media posts on Facebook / Twitter reached 4,529                                                                               | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Photo competitions                | Monthly                                  | Energy saving actions<br>World environmental day                                                                                                                                          | 18k at a minimum                                                                                                                     | USI have a break down from their Meltwater stats that show one post on environmental day reached 18.8k (tweet below).                                                                                            |
| Workshops/ training               | 7 times a year                           | The project, background, tips, how to get involved, energy saving measures when in the home and when searching for accommodation, how to apply the training /tips to their everyday lives | 200 students                                                                                                                         | This was training which took place in four separate institutions, Carlow Institution of Technology, Dublin Institution of technology, St Angela's College , Dublin City University and Twice at National Council |
| Face to Face activities           | 4 times a year                           |                                                                                                                                                                                           | USI didn't count the footfall of students on campus as there was limited personally so we didn't have the resources to               | USI didn't count the times they promoted SSO+ while in institutions which were part of SSO                                                                                                                       |



|                   |  |                        |                                                                                                           |  |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Printed Materials |  | Energy saving stickers | 2,000 were handed out but this does not include all those who we reached by having them in a common area. |  |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

Table 7. SSO+ activities in Ireland in 2018-19

### 3.2.1 Emails and social media

USI's social media accounts (same social media account for SSO mentioned in section 2.3) were updated on SSO+ on a regular basis, at least once a week and in some cases numerous times a week. For instance, in December 2018, USI ran a 'sustainable advent calendar during which five days were dedicated to SSO+ tips. In March 2019, USI updated the account more with tips, such as watching out for mold, looking for EPC rating when looking for private accommodation as they knew this was when students would be searching for accommodation for the new year. Along with #energy tips' the other main focus is SSO+ content was the photo competitions.

USI didn't focus on smart meters as they have yet to be rolled out in Ireland therefore most houses don't have one.

### 3.2.2 Training sessions and face-to-face activities

USI did training sessions at Carlow Institution of Technology, (29<sup>th</sup> November 2018), Dublin City University (28<sup>th</sup> November 2018), Dublin Institution of Technology (21<sup>st</sup> November 2018) and St Angela's College (18<sup>th</sup> February 2019). These were an hour-long presentation, with some quiz questions. It provided an overview of the campaign in general and how students can save energy in their everyday lives. Pen and vouchers were handed out to those who answered the questions correctly. In total approximately 200 students attended the sessions.

USI also provided training at the National Congress and the National Council, the content was about both SSO and SSO+ but focused on how students' unions could save energy and help promote the campaign in their institutions.

### 3.2.3 Photo competitions and engagement activities

Every time USI ran an SSO photo competition (please refer to section 2.2.4), students from SSO+ could enter; they were promoted via social media, as well as, the emails directly sent to those living in campus accommodation. The prizes were the same as those in SSO (Ben & Jerry vouchers, Irish Rail voucher, tickets to the Dublin Zoo, tickets to concerts)

## 3.3 Engagement materials

The main engagement materials for SSO+ were videos, social media content, stickers and flyers.

The videos can be accessed on USI's YouTube account under the [SSO plus playlist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMS3RciNE-w&list=PLfx7YJPf54SNKoBkCOP7VOQ8z1F8p0S2c) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMS3RciNE-w&list=PLfx7YJPf54SNKoBkCOP7VOQ8z1F8p0S2c>).

During the first semester USI used Ben & Jerry and Irish Rail Vouchers for prizes and when SSE Airtricity started sponsorship in the second semester, they used their concert, zoo, games tickets as prizes.

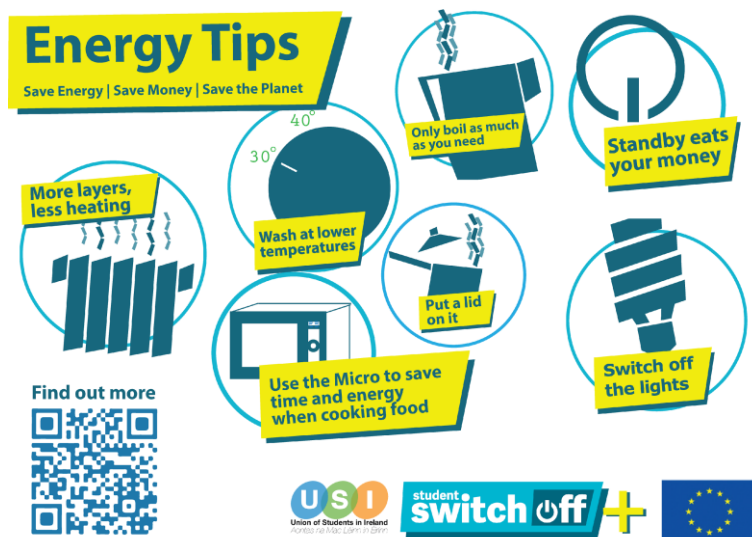


Figure 9: Example of the SSO plus stickers

## Here are some tips for the Green Generation:

**Tip 1: Check your Building Energy Rating (BER)**

BER rates the overall energy efficiency of the building. Properties being rented must have a BER certificate. It runs from A-G, like in college aim for the highest grade when possible!

**Tip 2: Do an insulation check**

The more insulated your home the less you will pay on your bills. Double or triple glazing windows will help keep the heat in, as will heavy curtains and draught tape. Carpets help trap the heat too!

**Tip 3: Locate your meter**

Energy bills are often estimated. Look at your meter to see if the numbers match your bill to ensure you're being charged the correct amount. You can also switch energy supplier if you think you are being charged too much.

**Tip 4: Energy saving appliances**

Check the energy labels on appliances and purchase 'A' rated whenever possible as they will save you money in the long run. Remember you can always take them with you when you move out.

**Tip 5: Search for mould and dampness**

Inspect around window, door frames, walls, ceilings, the corner of rooms and on your mattress.

**Saving energy can save the world, but also our pockets!**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 754203

Figure 10: Flyers handed out an information stands and workshops

### 3.4 Successes and challenges

SSO+ may have had a greater impact than SSO this year as it was easier to reach these students via social media, information stands, promotion materials. In a focus group carried out about the project, students said they knew about the campaign as the stickers were visible on campus and they followed USI on Instagram.

One of the main successes was sponsorship from an energy company (SSE Airtricity) which will lead to more targeted initiatives next year, access to greater prizes and also add an extra layer of expertise to the project.

The main challenge was capturing engagement statistics. USI have a breakdown of statistics for posts but there was a problem with the company they used to generate them so in some cases were missing some.

Furthermore, USI wanted to ensure that they weren't just reaching students but were having an impact on their actions in the long-term. As a consequence, USI decided to carry out more face to face activities for SSO+ during the 2019-20 academic year.

Finally, USI had a difficult time recruiting ambassadors and receiving entries to photo competitions which is why they have decided that their ambassadors will be trained in SSO and SSO+ and have more targeted and individualized competitions.

### 3.5 Photos from the SSO+ campaign



Figure 11: Ambassadors filming a video on sharing energy tips to students, and advertising the energy saving stickers and posters from the campaign.



Figure 12: Energy saving sticker in the UCC campus. The stickers are used near energy intensive appliances and light switches to embed good habits for saving energy everywhere



Figure 13: SSO+ training in Carlow Institution of Technology, the student won a prize for guessing right answer. Even on a cold day, ice cream is a good incentive to save energy!

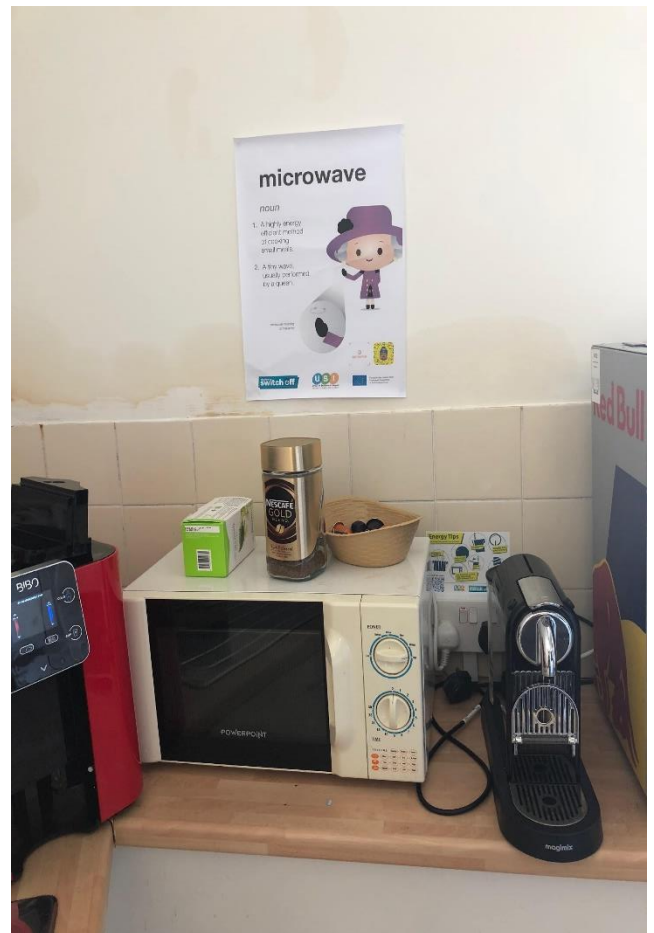


Figure 14: The promotional material in a common space in St Angela's College. St Angela's is a small college keen to engage in SSO plus and general energy waste reduction. It's a success of the programme that other universities wish to take part.



### 3.6 Social media and email examples from the SSO+ campaign



Figure 15: One of the tweets sent out. Using one form of social media to promote others was an effective way to cover multiple audiences and publics.



Figure 16: An Energy saving tip via Twitter





Figure 17: Instagram post seeking photo competition entries. Promotion of competitions and calls to action by Instagram and Snapchat results in effective and memorable prompt activity.

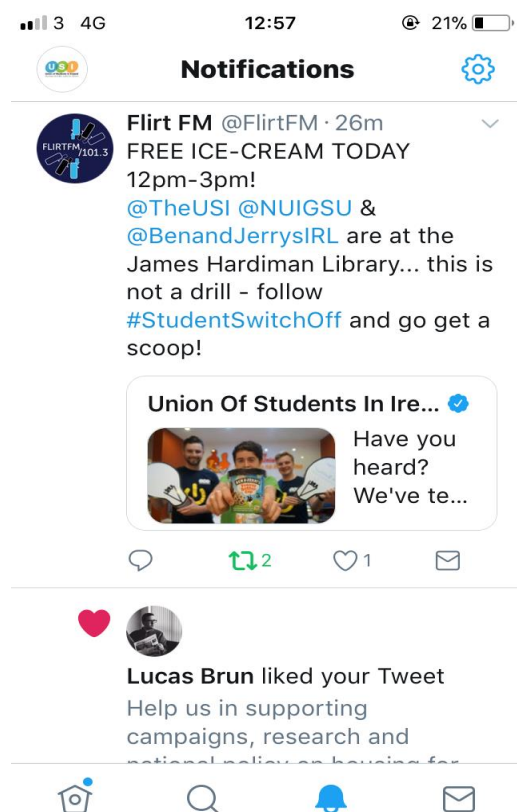


Figure 18: Local radio station highlighting USI's presence on NUIG campus



Figure 19: Photo competition promotion via USI Twitter account



Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

Mar 28 • 3:17 PM

energy this #earthhour! 🌍♻️ #greengeneration Send us in 📷📱  
photos/snaps/video of how your saving energy coming up to  
#earthhour @switchoff.ie (snapchat/Instagram) or @DCUSSO on  
Facebook. Prizes will be given to most creative ways of saving  
energy Competition closes Wednesday

switchoff.ie

18.6k Reach

Positive 🟢

Figure 20: Earth Hour photo competition promotion via USI facebook page.

## 4 Conclusions

Overall, both campaigns were successful. Whereas last year USI had more general engagement from students, such as entries in photo competitions, this year USI had more involvement from members organizations, societies and deeper engagements from students. Posters and stickers were received positively by students and the accommodation staff said they felt that more students knew about the project this year. The move towards Instagram was a success.

Capacity was a challenge this year, in year one USI (2017-18) only ran SSO however year 2 saw also included SSO+. That said, USI still only had one staff member working on the project full time and were unable to recruit the number of ambassadors needed to bolster the project. This meant USI couldn't run targeted activities such as individual photo campaigns for each university and more workshop in universities for SSO+. During the year USI ran out of prizes which limited the amount of competitions they could run.

In 2019/2020, USI will run more targeted activities in individual universities. USI is hoping that the planned actions with SSE will entice more institutions to get involved and the '21 day challenge' will make it easier for students' unions and students to enroll in the project. USI also want to try and run more face to face engagement activities.

USI are also going to start the recruitment for ambassadors earlier for 2019-20 and reach out to students in environmental and social justice societies.

Finally, USI would like to keep better records of all of our activities to ensure we have the correct and most up to date information.