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## D2.5 Annual student engagement report 2019-20: Ireland

July 2020

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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 55,000 students living in the private rented sector in the 2019-20 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 reflects on the successes and challenges of the SAVES 2 project as a whole (both SSO and SSO+) and Chapter 5 draws a conclusion.

## 2. The Student Switch Off campaign in Ireland

### 2.1 Universities taking part

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is an umbrella organisation representing the students' unions (student bodies) at thirty higher education institutions on the Island of Ireland. Four universities are part of the SSO project: University College Cork (UCC), Maynooth University (MU), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and Dublin City University (DCU). The total number of students participating in SSO (living in on-campus accommodation) was 5,121.

USI coordinates and delivers the project in all four universities. The Dormitory Coordinator at USI operationally delivers the day-to-day running of the project, and coordinates student engagement activities.

| <b>Name of University</b>              | <b>Number of dormitories at the university</b> | <b>Number of dormitories taking part in SAVES 2</b> | <b>Number of students living in dormitories that are taking part in SAVES 2</b> |
|--|--|---|---|
| Dublin City University                 | 4  | 4   | 1,400   |
| National University of Ireland, Galway | 2 (252 apartments)                             | 2 (252 apartments)                                  | 1,193   |
| Maynooth University                    | 9 (238 apartments)                             | 9 (238 apartments)                                  | 1,250   |
| University College Cork                | 5 (301 apartments)                             | 5 (301 apartments)                                  | 1,278   |

Table 1. Irish universities taking part in SAVES 2 in 2019-20.

## 2.2 Engagement activities

Throughout the 2019-20 academic year, a number of activities took place in the dormitories in Ireland to raise awareness about energy saving. These included social media information campaigns, workshops, photo competitions, on-campus activities, ambassador training sessions, newsletter distribution, and end of year events. The section below describes these in more detail and what engagement levels were reached.

### 2.2.1 Launch of the campaign

USI held a soft launch of the campaign via email where each student living in the campus dormitories was sent an email which informed them about the aims of campaign, upcoming activities and how they can get involved.

After evaluating last year's activities, it was decided not to partake in 'freshers' week' as attending these events in 2018-19 didn't result in good engagement due to all the other societies and projects competing for students' attention during the event.

Instead, USI staff attended campuses and ran treasure hunts in two of the four campuses. Vouchers for prizes were hidden around campus and students were sent out clues via the USI social media, with all clues related to energy. This significantly increased engagement on campus and increased the total number of social media followers for the programme. The treasure hunts took place in NUIG on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2019 and in UCC on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2019. The treasure hunt was not possible in MU due to a poor internet connection. The DCU event unfortunately had to be cancelled, but DCU was visited again soon after to launch the 21 Day Energy Challenge (see section 2.2.3).

### 2.2.2 Ambassador training sessions and ambassador engagement

Student Switch off ambassadors play a key role in making SSO campaign a success. From the evaluation of previous years, it became clear that more engagement was needed from ambassadors and an improved recruitment process. It was decided to combine SSO & SSO+ ambassadors together and brand them 'ECO-ambassadors'. This conclusion was based on feedback from students who didn't know what a 'Switch Off ambassador' was and wanted a title that explained their role to external stakeholders. As all engagement activities take place on campus and not in dormitories it was more logical to have ambassadors trained in both SSO and SSO+. This approach was successful, as a higher number of ambassadors were trained and there was higher engagement from the ambassadors throughout the year.

The first training event took place in July 2019; USI officers who work directly with the SSO campuses were trained to be ambassadors. The training for UCC and NUIG took place on the respective campuses on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, whilst MU and DCU trainings were held together at USI Headquarters. Table 2 describes the number of trainings ran at each university, and how many students attended,

Each training was two and half hours long using a PowerPoint presentation with images, videos and information slides. Each ambassador was presented with a t-shirt, jumper, pen, tote bag and stickers, along with information sheets.

As a result of these adaptations, ambassador activity increased during the 2019-20 academic year. They attended events such as, Climate Youth Summit, spoke on radio, helped at information and attended the 21 Day Energy Challenge Launch (see section 2.2.3) with the Minister for Environment. At the end of the year they were provided with a certificate for all their hard work on the project. This substantial engagement in the delivery of the project helped meet the objective for the SAVES 2 project to be authentically engaging.

One of the Irish ambassadors was interviewed on the flagship RTÉ National Radio show 'Morning Ireland', where he talked about his involvement in 'Youth Climate Summit' and the SAVES 2 project. Additionally, ambassadors were on two regional radio stations 'Galway Bay' and 'Flirt FM' to talk about '21 Day Energy Challenge' and 'SAVES' project.

The ambassadors expressed satisfaction at the work they were called upon to undertake:

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*"I believe the USI's 'Switch it Off' ambassador campaign has had a fantastic [first] year. In my time as an ambassador, I represented the campaign at the NYCI Climate Summit in the RDS<sup>1</sup> and helped with a few events on campus at my home institution. I think this campaign has the ability to make a tangible difference and believe it will in years to come. It was a shame it was cut short this year but such are the times we find ourselves in. I am looking forward to engaging with this campaign again in the future."* - Niall, DCU ambassador

*"I thoroughly enjoyed being an Eco ambassador. Being part of a bigger team that separately identifies issues in our respective Universities, and then coming together to plan out strategies on how to solve various problems was exciting. Darcy is a wonderful leader, and I had a blast working with her"* - Finn, Maynooth University ambassador

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| Name of University | Number of training sessions ran | Number of students attending |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| All / USI OFFICERS | 1                               | 4                            |
| NUIG               | 1                               | 2                            |
| MU                 | 1                               | 1                            |
| UCC                | 1                               | 2                            |
| DCU                | 1                               | 3                            |

Table 2. Number of students attending ambassador training sessions at Irish SAVES 2 universities in 2019-20

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

Irish college accommodation does not normally permit external visitors, for the purposes of security and safety of residents. As a result, USI relied heavily on social media engagement, along with some face to face on campus visits. This consisted of setting up stands in a key location in the university and handing out information stickers and chatting to students about the project. USI also ran trainings and competitions while on the site.

The 21 Day Challenge was a campaign run by USI in conjunction with SSE Airtricity, a national energy generation and POS company, integrated into the SAVES 2 campaign. The concept branches from the fact it takes 21 days to develop a habit, therefore students were challenged to make more sustainable life and energy choices over the 21 days. Students were empowered to make these changes through online tips and rewards. More information on the 21 Day Challenge is available [here](#). As part of the 21 Day Energy Challenge a launch event was held in DCU apartments. The launch was a meet and greet and photo opportunity with the Minister for Communications & Environment & Climate action (a cabinet minister), a Director from SSE Airtricity (an energy generation and POS company), and the ECO Ambassadors. After the launch, information stands ran from 1pm-4pm and students received prizes such as concert ticket, pens, Ben and Jerry's ice cream and Irish Rail travel vouchers. USI encouraged students to enter the photo competitions, in which they sent in photos of themselves carrying out the 'tip of the day'. USI also took the challenge to each of the SSO campuses and held a similar stand.

SAVES 2 visited each SSO campus twice during the year for face to face visits with students and National College of Ireland, Galway three times. These visits involved hosting information stands, quizzes and other activities whilst establishing holistic links to other positive sustainability focused activities such as Fairtrade fortnight in some cases. Additional campus visits had been arranged for late February and March but were halted due to COVID-19 restrictions. The dates of each visits can be seen below:

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<sup>1</sup> RDS is the name of the building (the Royal Dublin Society) which held the conference.

- University College Cork – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 & 13<sup>th</sup> November
- Dublin City University – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 & 2<sup>nd</sup> November
- National University of Ireland, Galway - 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 & 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019
- Maynooth University – October 2019 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

| Name of University | Number of onsite engagement visits | Description of Activities   |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| DCU                | 2                                  | Launch of the 21 Day Challenge. Information stand with sticker; leaflets and iPad. Competitions were ran on the day, asking students to carry out energy saving activities. In February, as it was Fairtrade Fortnight, free Fairtrade chocolate was given out too. |
| MU                 | 2                                  | Information stand with sticker; leaflets and iPad. Competitions were ran on the day, asking students to carry out energy saving activities. In February, as it was Fairtrade Fortnight, free Fairtrade chocolate was given out too.                                 |
| UCC                | 2                                  | Information stand and treasure hunt   |
| NUIG               | 3                                  | Information stand and treasure hunt. In December, a training session was run on how students and their unions can be more sustainable focusing on energy saving activities.   |

Table 3. Face-to-face engagement activities in Irish university campuses (excluding ambassador training) in 2019-20

## 2.2.4 Social media competitions

With the exception of the treasure hunts, a decision was taken not to run individual photo competitions for each university. As a result, all photo competitions were open to all students from the Irish universities at the same time with no distinction between SSO and SSO+. Whilst SSO participants received more information about competitions via USI's newsletter, no separation was made between the two campaigns for these competitions. For reporting purposes, USI assumed half the entries were from SSO students living in dormitories, and half were from SSO+ students in the private rented sector. 180 entries were received in total from these activities, with 90 assumed to be from SSO students in dormitories.

| Name of University/Month of Competition | Competition type and theme  | Number of entries | Platform used (Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat etc) |
|---|---|-------------------|---|
| UCC                                     | Treasure hunt   | 50                | Snapchat, Instagram.                            |
| NUIG                                    | Treasure hunt   | 43                | Snapchat, Instagram                             |
| All SSO universities<br>November        | 21 Day Challenge: new tip over 21 days, ranging from boiling the kettle, to not using hairdryer, as well, as layering up. | 31                | Instagram, Facebook                             |
| All of SSO, ran in December             | Shutting down and switching off stand by as they left dorms for the Christmas break                                       | 9                 | Newsletter, Instagram, Snapchat                 |
| January                                 | Layer up 3  | 9                 | Newsletter, Instagram, snapchat                 |

|          |   |    |                                 |
|----------|---|----|---------------------------------|
| February | Valentine's day, we released our graphics   | 3  | Newsletter, Instagram, snapchat |
| March    | Earth hour  | 15 | Instagram                       |
| April    | Easter hunt: we ran a hunt online where we gave our clues to energy saving appliances in home and students had to guess what we were referring too. | 20 | Instagram snapchat              |

Table 4. Photo competitions at Irish SAVES 2 universities in 2019-20.

### 2.2.5 Climate change quizzes

Climate quizzes were launched in 2019-20 to raise awareness on the climate crisis, and how everyday energy use is linked to wider climate issues. All of the quiz questions were about energy saving measures and activities, such as washing clothes at 30 degrees, as well as using LED lighting. The quizzes were available online via the SSO website throughout the year, but dissemination was focused on the face to face activities in November. A link to the quiz was also sent out in USI's November newsletter.

For the purposes of capturing entries for competitions at engagement events, the decision was taken to deploy electronic tablets (lent for the purpose by USI). When students came to the stand, they were asked to take the quiz and those who got four out of five correct answers won a prize. Everyone who took the quiz got a free pen with campaign branding. At MU, due to a poor Wi-Fi connection, it was difficult to run the quizzes.

Engagement at information stands was brisk, with approximately 100 students engaged at each event. Some events were significantly busier. In total, 384 students took part in the climate quizzes in 2019-20.

A second semester quiz was scheduled for March, but in line with the policies of our organisation on contacting students during the stressful period of COVID-19 lockdown, a decision was taken not to do so. In retrospect this was the only plausible decision, as colleges have not at the time of writing returned. The November quiz remained available on the SSO website for students to access if they visited the website.

### 2.2.6 End of year event

To add credibility and status to the winners of the overall energy saving competitions, it was decided to invite the winner and runner-up to USI's 'Student Achievement Awards' gala to be presented with their prize. Restrictions relating to COVID-19 meant that this event was moved online and was held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The recipients were invited to attend the event via the Campus Accommodation teams. Prizes were forwarded to the winners' home addresses. Runners up were given a tote bag and in some cases a water bottle, along with a certificate stating they were finalists, while the winners were given open Irish Rail vouchers and Ben and Jerry's ice cream vouchers.

### 2.2.7 Other Miscellaneous Activities

USI believes that linking energy saving activities more holistically to sustainability actions has the best likelihood of embedding and normalising energy-saving behaviour, taking care not to lose focus on energy advice. Many of USI's members took part in raising awareness for 'Climate Case Ireland', a court case in which a group of activities took the government to court over their inaction on climate change. This year the case was held in Supreme Court and USI students got involved in some online engagement.

Ambassadors also took part in '[Climate Youth Summit](#)' in Dublin. This was a national conference with a diverse mix of organisations, NGOs and youth organisations. Young people got a chance to learn more and contribute their personal thoughts and experiences in regard to Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals. One of the programme's ECO Ambassadors attended and was interviewed by national radio. They also engaged fully in the conference and asked questions to the panel.



ECO Ambassadors also wrote articles on [LGN pipeline](#) and [climate action](#) in general, which were published on the Spunout, a nationally recognised youth engagement website.

USI is an official [Irish Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Champion](#). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Champions Programme is an initiative established by the SDG Unit in the Department of Communication, Climate Action, and Environment. 12 champions were selected from key sectors of society, Trade Unions, Business and NGOs to achieve nationwide prominence and raise public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. This presented the opportunity to link praxis to practice and further embed the work of SSO into USI's wider work and externally facing mission. USI intertwined the SDGs into other work, which meant ECO Ambassadors and members worked on Fairtrade, Women's Equality, waste management and other sustainable activities both on campuses and in external activities, again engaging holistically to establish credibility and add force to the energy saving message.

Through SSO, USI engaged with Oxfam for their 'Secondhand September' campaign, making video and content for social media encouraging students to prefer second-hand (and therefore less energy intense) clothing from second-hand retailers. The programme was glad to have the engagement of the President of USI, who participated in the launch and photo call.

### 2.2.8 End of year event Summary of SSO engagement Statistics 2.2.8

Table 6 below gives an overview of the SSO engagement achievements in Ireland.

| Name of University | No. students living in dormitories | No. students signed up to the campaign | % students signed up to the campaign | Number attending the Ambassador training | Online climate quiz entries | Online competition entries | Number of social media followers (please specify which one)         | % energy saved    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| NUIG               | 1,193                              | 1,193                                  | 100                                  | 2  | 96                          | 22                         | Snapchat: 75<br>Instagram: 216<br>NUIG SSO Facebook:67              | No data available |
| UCC                | 1,278                              | 1,278                                  | 100                                  | 2  | 96                          | 22                         | Snapchat: 75<br>Instagram: 216<br>UCC SSO Facebook:112              | 3.53              |
| MU                 | 1,250                              | 1,250                                  | 100                                  | 1  | 96                          | 23                         | Snapchat: 75<br>Instagram: 217<br>MU SSO Facebook:81                | 1.23              |
| DCU                | 1,400                              | 940                                    | 100                                  | 3  | 96                          | 23                         | Snapchat: 75<br>Instagram: 217<br>DCU SSO Facebook:102              | 3.36              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>5,121</b>                       | <b>4,661</b>                           | <b>100</b>                           | <b>8</b>                                 | <b>384</b>                  | <b>90</b>                  | <b>Snapchat:300</b><br><b>Instagram: 867</b><br><b>Facebook:362</b> | <b>2.71</b>       |

Table 5. Overall student engagement statistics in Ireland in 2019-20



NUIG/UCC/MU: The students in the accommodation managed by the universities are deemed signed up to the campaign as they receive monthly emails

DCU: There are four main blocks of accommodation that are run by the university and we communicated with them via Facebook, as per the instructions with the accommodation department.

For Instagram followers, Snapchat followers, quizzes and competitions, the total number was divided by 2 for SSO and SSO+, with the SSO figures split between the four universities.

## 2.3 Communication with students

USI has always found social media to be the most effective way of communicating with students as it reaches a wide range of students, along with using diverse communication methods such as videos, images and links. This year, online communication in the Irish universities was mostly focused on Instagram and Snapchat accounts @switchoff.ie as there was little to no interaction with students via Facebook. In many cases the @usi Instagram account was used to disseminate information, as well as the USI twitter.

Instagram (@switchoff.ie , @usi.ie) was used for day-to-day postings, using the @ function allowed direct communication with student unions and societies, increasing engagement. The number of followers doubled from 2018-19, increasing from 450 to nearly 900.

Snapchat was the best platform for photo competitions, yielding significant uplift in engagement (sometime 300%) when the platform was used. Facebook was not as heavily used this year and mainly used to promote articles and events and is not widely used by students for informal communication.

During face-to-face interaction, 'energy saving stickers' were handed out to students, along with pens and tote bags. Electronic tablets were used as a visual tool in conversations with students to inform them about the project, as students were not open to taking unnecessary printed information (such as flyers). SSO graphics and videos were loaded onto the electronic tablets to add to the information sharing.

Each month, students living in campuses accommodation in three of the four universities were sent a newsletter which contained a link to the dashboard, information on the photo competition and tips for saving energy. DCU did not send these emails, instead communications were focused on the Facebook groups dedicated to the apartment blocks.

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/>

## 2.4 Engagement materials

USI continued to use t-shirts, jumpers and SSO branded pens which were produced in year one of SAVES 2. Additionally, targeted posters and stickers from year two were placed in common areas in universities, such as area with microwaves and kettles. A new tote bag was also produced which proved to be very popular and generated interest at information stands, as well as acting as a marketing material.

In addition to physical materials, a significant effort was made in the creation of digital collateral for the programme.

Sponsorship came in the form of vouchers from Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Irish Rail & SSE Airtricity (tickets to soccer games & zoo).

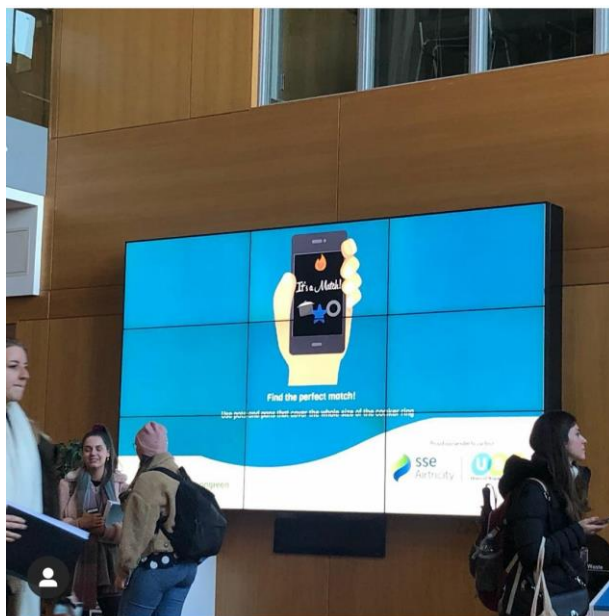


Figure 1: Tote bag created as a material      Figure 2: A 'tip' graphic in the NUIG library



Figure 3: Social Media materials 'Energy Tip'      Figure 4: Social Media Materials 'Energy Tip'

## 2.5 The energy dashboard

The Energy Dashboard is a tool allowing high quality data on actual energy usage in campus accommodation to be tabulated and presented to students to evidence their energy saving. Every month the link to the dashboard was sent via newsletters & students were encouraged to visit the dashboard to view their data. The quality and frequency of data from UCC improved in the year, with DCU and MU always supplying high quality data. In general, because the data supplied by most institutions had a significant latency period (weeks in most cases) and because it was in no case possible to automatically supply data direct to the dashboard, the energy dashboard was more aspirational than operationally useful to our campaign.

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 Photos from the 2019-20 SSO campaign

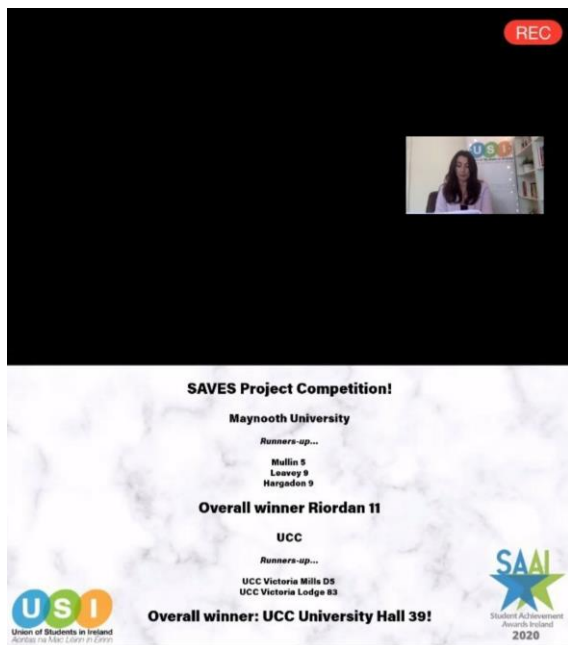


Figure 7: Screenshot of the accountment of the Winners of SSO competition as part of the USI Awards which took place online.



Figure 8: Instagram post informing students to switch to energy-saving lightbulbs



Figure 9: Social media post with images of Galway Launch of '21 Day Energy Challenge'

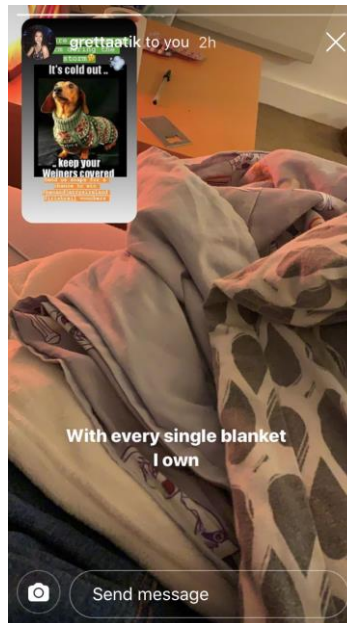


Figure 10: Entry by a student into photo competition, showing how they layered up

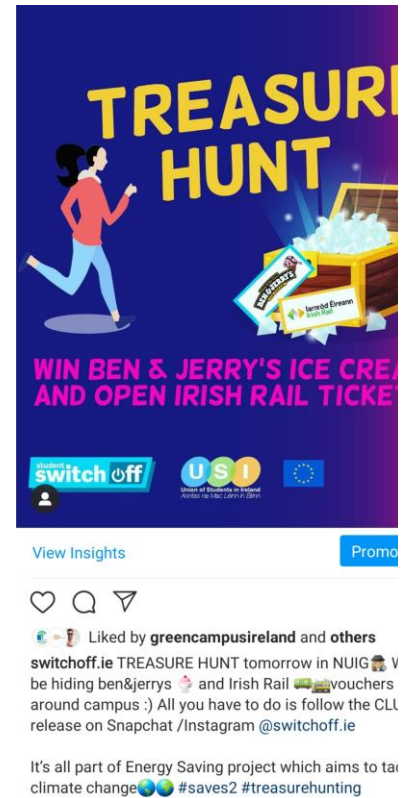


Figure 11: Instagram post about Treasure hunt

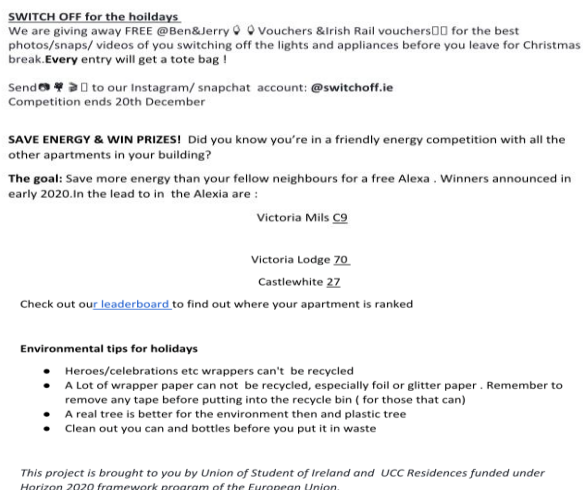
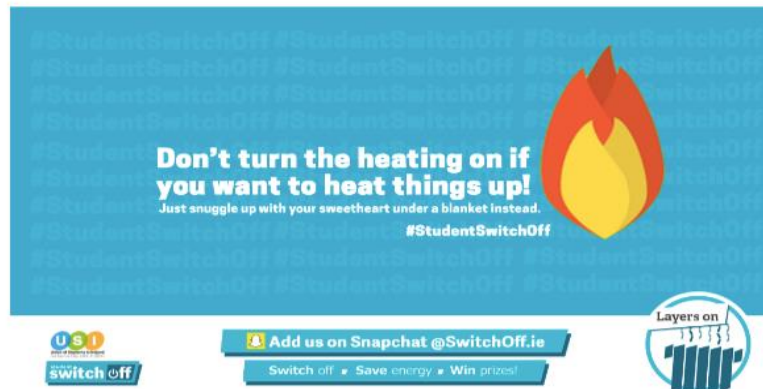


Figure 12: Screenshot of the December Newsletter sent via email to the universities taking part in SSO. It contains an update on the leaders, link to the dashboard, competition of the month, as well as, sustainable tips.





#### WINNER WINNER 🏆🏆🏆

We have a whole new set of winners this month. Keep reading to see who was knocked off the winning spot in each building & how you can win prizes. Keep an eye on your apartment progress via our [leader board](#).

University Hall is Apartment 6  
 Victoria Mills E16  
 Castle white Apartment 39  
 Victoria lodge Apartment 70

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!

Let's keep the romance of Valentine's day going!!!

#### COMPETITION TIME!

Let's keep the romance of Valentine's day going!!!

For a chance to win prizes, enter our monthly competition:

#### SWITCH OFF

We are giving away FREE @BenandJerryIreland 🍪 🍪 Vouchers & Iarnód Éireann vouchers 🍷 for the best photos/snaps/ videos of you saving energy in your home while still keeping warm.

Send 📸 📱 to our Instagram account: [switchoff.ie](#) or on Snapchat: [switch off.ie](#)  
 Competition ends 20th February

#### FAIRTRADE FORENIGHT

We will be in UCC on February 27th with a guest speaker, keep an eye out on the SU page for more details of how you can get free chocolate and learn about how buying fairtrade impacts people's lives.

*This project is brought to you by USI, UCC Student Union and the UCC accommodation department.*

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

### 3.1 Universities receiving information

2019/20 was the second year of running in SSO+ in Ireland. The programme continued to use social media as the main channel to promote SSO+. USI took the decision to roll out SSO+ to all other colleges in the membership, creating a significantly larger audience for the message.

An SSO+ newsletter was sent out each month to students who signed up for more information via surveys (278). Trainings and workshops were also run in some universities.

| Social media                  | Number of followers |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Instagram USI                 | 2,985               |
| Instagram Switch Off          | 900                 |
| Snapchat Switch off           | 600                 |
| Twitter USI                   | 16,000              |
| Mailchimp Newsletter sign ups | 278                 |
| Facebook USI                  | 20,971              |

Table 6. Social media reach for SSO+ in Ireland in 2019-20.

The colleges receiving information on SSO+ were:

Carlow College, Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Carlow, Institute of Technology Tralee, Institute of Technology Limerick, Institute of Technology Tipperary, Waterford Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Galway / Mayo Institute 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 College of Ireland, College Art & Design.

As in previous years, SSO+ reach was estimated based on social media reach. Altogether, over 101,732 people were reached during the '21 Day Energy Challenge'. In December the reach was 8,111, based solely on Instagram and Facebook posts, during the 'Sustainable Advent Calendar'. For the remainder of the year, an average Instagram post from the 'Switch off Account' would reach an average of 700 students.

The overall reach (101,732) was divided between the 18 universities.

### 3.2 Engagement activities

During September 2019, as students were getting ready for the new academic year, a soft launch was held on social media, encouraging students to buy energy saving appliances for their new accommodation.

The SSO+ campaign was officially launched on 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, coinciding with the 21 Day Energy Challenge, as described in section 2.2.3. Students were challenged to carry out a tip of the day over 21 days in an effort to save energy, reduce exposure to fuel poverty and tackle climate change. The launch consisted of a meet and greet with the Minister of Communication, Climate Action & Environment, the head of SSE Airtricity, and SSO & SSO+ ambassadors. It took place in a local student apartment with a photo opportunity. The photo, along with a press release, was sent out to national media outlets and was published in the online edition of the Irish Independent, Ireland's highest circulating newspaper, in university papers and on USI's social media. Additionally, throughout the 21 days of the programme, activities were carried out on university campuses, including running trainings, information stands and competitions.

| Engagement Activity                       | Frequency                                  | Theme   | Reach  | Additional Information   |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Articles                                  | 2, Ad-hoc.                                 | Climate Action<br><br>LNG pipeline  | Unknown but the sites get 1 million views per year   | <a href="https://spunout.ie/opinion/article/angry-irelands-inaction-climate-change">https://spunout.ie/opinion/article/angry-irelands-inaction-climate-change</a><br><br><a href="https://spunout.ie/opinion/article/why-stop-shannon-lng-terminal">https://spunout.ie/opinion/article/why-stop-shannon-lng-terminal</a> |
| Sustainability Calendar Instagram         | 24 posts, one per day during the action.   | Calendar was a mix of general sustainable tips around energy, waste, Fairtrade etc.   | 3,398  | Due to unforeseen circumstances with our PR manager we missed some days of posting.  |
| Sustainability Calendar Facebook /Twitter | New post each day from December 1-10th     | Calendar was a mix of general sustainable tips around energy, waste, Fairtrade etc.   | 3,594  | Due to unforeseen circumstances with our PR manager we missed some days of posting.  |
| SSO+ tip videos                           | 5 over the year                            | Instagram video on all SSO tips<br><br>Meter reading  | Average post on Instagram reached 700 and stories reached 350<br><br>Some were also placed on twitter during '21 Day Energy Challenge' and captured as part of 101,732 | SSO+ videos on energy saving tips were due to go out in March to line up with when students would be searching for accommodation but were held back due to COVID-19  |
| Photo competitions                        | At least once a month and more in November | Energy saving actions<br>World environmental day  | Average post on Instagram reached 700 and stories reached 350<br><br>90 entries were received from SSO+ students   | The full reach is unknown as it was hard to capture twitter reach  |
| Workshops/training                        | 5 over the 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 | 155  |  |



|                         |              |  |   |  |
|-------------------------|--------------|--|---|--|
| Face to Face activities | 9            | Information stands with a mix of quiz, competitions, talking to students | 900<br>Estimated reach of at least 100 students per college |  |
| Newsletters             | Once a month | Mix of energy tips, quizzes, photo competitions                          | 278 per newsletter  |  |
| Printed Materials       | Once a year  | Booklet page in UCC accommodation guide<br><br>USI officer Guide         | 1,500<br><br>108  |  |

Table 7. Engagement activities undertaken as part of the Irish SSO+ campaign in 2019-20.

### 3.2.1 Emails and social media

The SSO+ newsletter was sent once a month and contained information on energy saving tips, quizzes, photo competitions. In the second semester, key messaging for SSO+ was planned around house hunting, searching for BER as well as other energy saving measures in a house, but it was decided not to proceed due to COVID-19 as students were not going to be searching for new accommodation for the upcoming college year at this time. It was also agreed to be insensitive to publish about these topics given the wider concerns of students at that time.

USI's social media accounts were updated with SSO+ content on a regular basis, at least once a week and in cases numerous times a week. The 'sustainable Christmas calendar' was updated most days from December 1<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>.

USI did not focus on smart meters as they have yet to be rolled out in Ireland.

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

The first SSO+ training for the year took place in July 2019 at Student Union Training (SUT), thirty student officers from our various membership took part. The session was run twice over the day for two hours in the form of a PowerPoint presentation with information on campaign and how they can save energy both themselves and in their role as leaders on campus.

Four further trainings were run. Two took place during DIT 'Green Week' on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, on the different DIT campuses throughout Dublin. The programme took over lectures for the hour, reaching 85 students. Another session was held at NUIG, as part of National LGBTI training, with 20 students from all over Ireland at the training. The final training session took place in Tallaght IT in March, prior to campus closures, with an attendance of 20. Again, all these trainings were a PowerPoint presentation with overview on the project, tips on how they can energy. Each participant was given a pen and stickers, and some received tote bags if they answered quiz questions correctly. In total, therefore, 155 students received face-to-face in-depth training.

Activation days and information stands were also held throughout the year. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, a regional launch of the '21 Day Challenge' was held where local radio (KFM, 83,000 LPW) was present to hear about the campaign directly from SSO+ ambassadors and SU officers. Additionally, the Mayor of Galway was invited for a photo opportunity at the University. For the rest of the day, a stand was present in a key location with heavy footfall, with the aim to speak to students about the campaign and encouraging them to take part in SSO+. Another regional launch was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, which had the same format but with members of the local county council offices in attendance rather than the mayor.

Information stands were also held in:

- Dublin Institute of Technology (Technological University Dublin): 14/11/2019
- Blanchardstown (Technological University Dublin): 7/11/2019 & 28/1/2020
- Athlone IT: 05/03/2020
- Tallaght IT (Technological University Dublin): 08/11/2019 and 11/03/2020

SSO+ Ambassador training took place alongside SSO training (see section 2.2.2). More training workshops were scheduled but COVID-19 prevented these from going ahead.

### 3.2.3 Photo competitions and engagement activities

As described in section 2.2.4, all photo competitions were open to both SSO and SSO+ students. These competitions were promoted via social media, as well as directly to those on the SSO+ newsletter. The prizes included Ben & Jerrys vouchers, Irish Rail Vouchers, Tote bags, tickets to Dublin zoo and concert tickets). Competitions were usually held monthly, with more running during November in line with the 21 Day Challenge. For reporting purposes, it is assumed that half the entries were from SSO students living in dormitories, and half were from SSO+ students in the private rented sector. 180 entries were received in total from these activities, with 90 assumed to be from SSO+ students.

During COVID-19, online competitions were still held. A competition was launched to coincide with 'Earth Hour', asking students to send photos on Snapchat of what energy saving measures they were planning during the hour. Additionally, an 'Easter Hunt' was held where clues were given to an energy saving appliance within a home and students were asked to guess that appliance based on the clues.

## 3.3 Engagement materials

Most of the graphics for 2019-20 were reused from previous years as they were still relevant and engaging. New graphics were designed for social media for the 21 Day challenge which contained a mix of SSO and SSO+ messaging along with some made by SSE Airtricity.

The printed materials were the same as for SSO (see section 2.4), and included t-shirts, stickers, tote bags and pens.



Figure 14 & 15: Example of the tips distributed via social media during the 21 Day Challenge

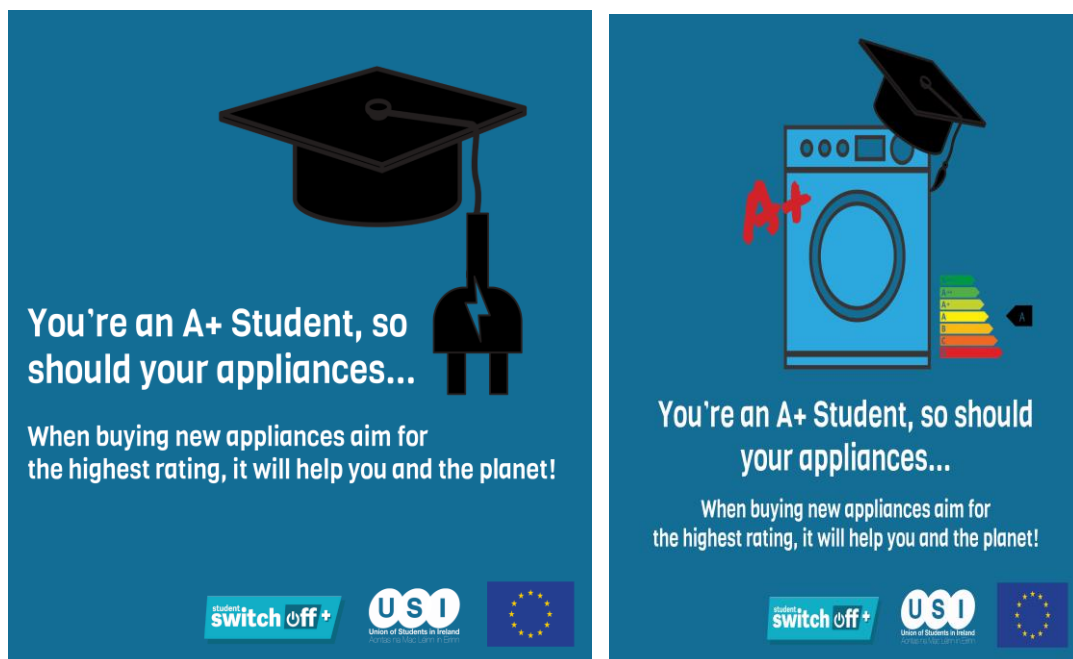


Figure 16 & 17: SSO+ graphics encouraging students to buy energy saving appliances

### 3.4 Photos from the SSO+ campaign

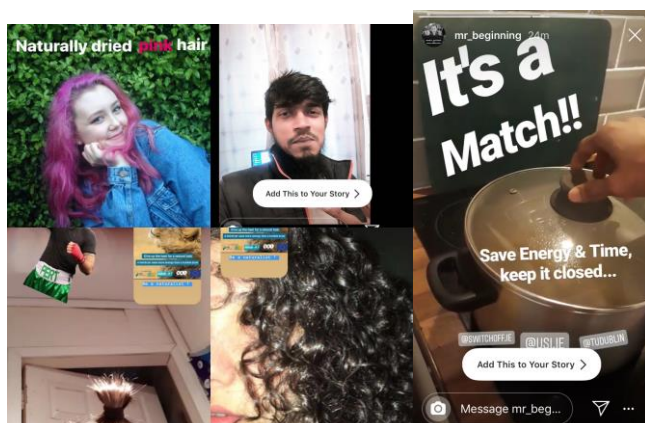


Figure 18 & 19: Examples of entries into photo competitions are part of the 21 Day Challenge



Figure 20: Photo of the launch in Carlow IT with Student Union Officers along with staff from County Council and the IT.

## CHECKOUT

### Average Irish Person Consumes 1,460 Cups Of Tea Per Year

Published on Nov 4 2019 4:19 PM in [Technology](#) tagged: [Trending Posts](#) / [tea](#) / [Minister for Communications](#) / [Climate Action and Environment](#)



The average Irish person average consumes 1,460 cups of tea per year, so make sure you always boil just the amount of water you need, was one of the tips given today when SSE Airtricity and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) met at the DCU campus to launch a new partnership.

SSE Airtricity and the USI have partnered up to 'challenge students to make better environmental actions' over the next 21 days.

Figure 21: Press Release from the 21 Day Challenge launch. Featured in photo is USI President, DCU SU President, the Minister of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and SSE Airtricity.

You Retweeted



Business Plus @B... · 04/11/2019 ✓

SSE Airtricity is partnering with the Union of Students in Ireland for a 21-day challenge, urging students to get more environmentally friendly [@sseairtricity](#) [@theUSI](#)



Figure 22: Example of coverage of the 21 Day Energy Challenge in Business Plus magazine, an industry publication in Ireland



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



Figure 23: Instagram Post announcing the Launch of the 21 Day Energy Challenge.

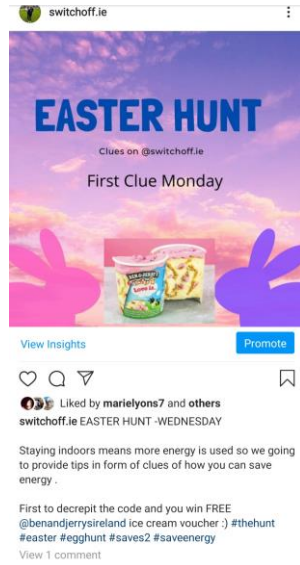


Figure 24: Instagram Post announcing the Easter Hunt competition

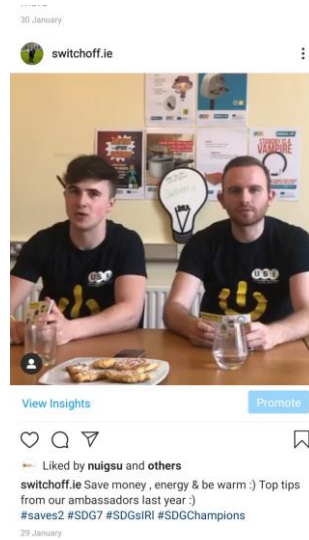


Figure 25: Instagram Post of a video made by Ambassadors providing tips on how to save energy in the home.



Figure 26: Twitter post encouraging meter reading.

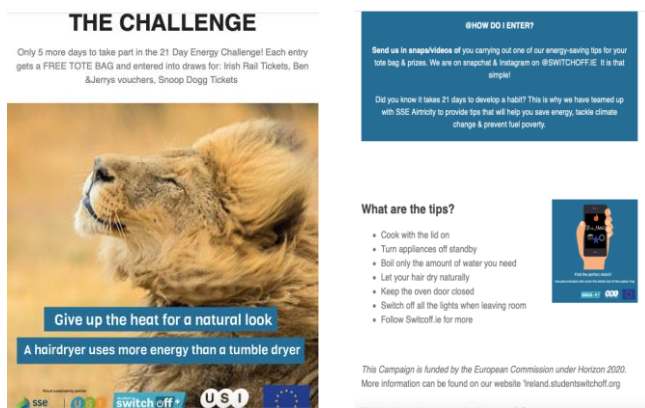


Figure 27& 28: Screenshot of the November SSO+ Newsletter

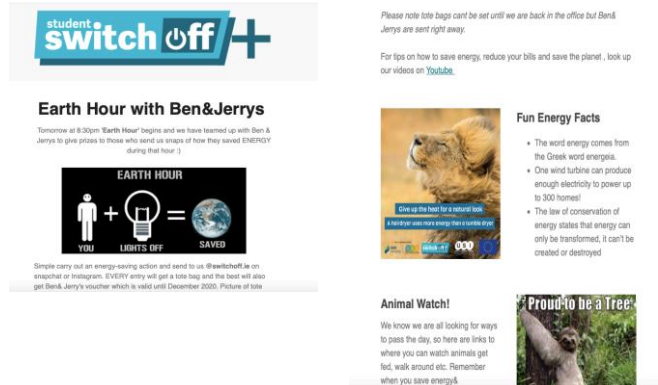


Figure 29& 30: Screenshot of the March SSO+ Newsletter

## 4 Reflections of SAVES 2 in Ireland

### 4.1 Successes and challenges of SSO and SSO+ in 2019-20

In general, this was the most successful year of SAVES 2 in Ireland. Overall, both SSO and SSO+ campaigns were successful, with each year seeing an increase in engagement with students, evidenced by Instagram followers more than doubling from its first year to second. Students' unions have started to come to USI with requests to run trainings and information stands. The work has generated interest and it is USI's ambition to embed this work into future activities when colleges return.

Like 2018-19, there were issues capturing online engagement statistics as no company captures good analytics for Instagram & Snapchat. Nonetheless these platforms were successful in engaging students because these are favoured by them so were used throughout the campaigns. Proactive measures were taken to record the engagement after each post but it was not always possible so an average was used in most cases.

Staff and university privacy laws proved to be a challenge for SSO. USI were not allowed into campus apartments and negotiated a plan with on-campus staff to distribute newsletters and general information on behalf of the campaign; this limited the amount of direct communication with students to once a month.

It was decided in 2018-19 to run more face to face activities for SSO+, which is why the 21 Day Energy Challenge was launched in 2019-20 to great success with national media coverage, engagement with government departments and from students themselves. The Challenge also helped provide structure to USI's members to engage with SAVES 2, as it offered a targeted campaign with a timeframe and actions for them to focus on. There is a possibility that USI runs the challenge again in the future along with SSE Airtricity.

There was increased engagement from ambassadors in 2019-20 and many expressed a sadness that their time as Ambassadors was cut short due to COVID-19. Many asked if they could continue to stay on as Ambassadors next year, which may be possible with the future of the campaigns (see section 4.4 on Legacy).

COVID-19 affected a lot of the engagement activities planned, including a 'Green Week Road Show', which would have seen further sessions for SSO+ universities.

### 4.2 Embedding SAVES 2 into wider activities

#### 4.2.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

Due to the SAVES 2 project, as well as USI's other sustainable activities, USI was selected as one of the twelve national Sustainable Development Champions. This involved attending an official launch at the National Ploughing Championship in September. The event itself has 300,00 visitors over 3 days. This also meant USI attended stakeholders' meetings throughout the year, run by the department and had over 100 attendees from various NGO, Business and Government Departments. A presentation was due to be given on USI's sustainability work, including SAVES 2, but the meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19. As SDG number 7 focuses on affordable and clean energy, SAVES 2 was easily incorporated into presentations about SDGs and to report back on work in this area.

#### 4.2.2 The INTENSIFY project

[The Interreg INTENSIFY project](#) innovatively addresses a key challenge for European Cities and regions: how to energize citizens and communities to achieve more carbon reduction.

USI was invited to give a presentation at the Interreg Europe Intensify Project study visit as part of the work carried out in the University of College Cork to engage with staff and students. The study visit took place in Cork and was attended by people working on energy projects around Europe. The presentation was on the SAVES 2 project aims and objectives, activities, communication channels and future plans.

### 4.2.3 Other Activities

In order to make SAVES 2 impactful and relevant, USI capitalized on campaigns which were already embedded into members' workplans, such as Green Weeks and Fairtrade Fortnight. These presented an opportunity to go to the universities and run stands and sessions. This holistic approach allows for engagement of a diverse range of students. As some students are not sufficiently enthusiastic about energy alone, contextualizing the campaign within other sustainability activities attracted more students than previously possible.

Similarly, photo competitions were linked to global calendar events such as Earth Hour, Halloween, Valentine's Day and Christmas as it related the competitions and campaign to events already happening in the students' lives.

USI obtained a page in University of College Cork rent & information booklet, which was used to provide energy saving tips for students. This was distributed to 1,500 students and local residents. Alike, a similar page was included in USI's student handbook which was given to 108 incoming Student officers.

The 21 Day Challenge had a social media reach of over 408,000 across all of USI's social media account, with 381,000 reached on Twitter alone, drawing attention to the reality of students achieving valuable energy savings.

## 4.3 Impact of SAVES 2

Overall, Ireland saw a diverse reach of engagement for the project including national and regional media, along with targeted communications towards students and universities. These included radio appearances, press releases, articles, student booklets and social media accounts. The general work of the student movement has been significantly enhanced with an embedded energy saving culture. The widest impact of SAVES 2 has been a change in attitude of our member organisations, including recognition that real changes to attitudes can be made by Students' Unions working towards an energy conservation goal.

It is clear that embedding sustainability activities into the work of the student movement has normalised this activity, meeting some of the core objectives of the whole programme and call. A carbon saving of 81.34 tonnes for the SSO+ (private rental sector students) is a welcome contribution to the effort to get students achieving valuable energy savings, and a saving of 24.7 tonnes for the SSO campuses is welcome despite the challenges in the timely application of data. That students taking minor but meaningful steps could achieve more than 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction is symbolically important.

## 4.4 Legacy of SAVES 2

SAVES 2 has created a very significant and profoundly embedded sense of action on energy saving amongst USI's members. Accommodation suppliers grew to engage deeply with the campaigns and enjoyed celebrating success in the reduction of energy waste. The presence of the programme provided a nucleation point for environmental, energy and sustainability actions in general and provided a focus for activities of that sort. The presence of the Dormitory Coordinator made energy saving and general environmental activity a fact of the activities of the whole organization.

USI believes there is scope for follow on activity on promotion of energy reduction and promotion in Ireland of energy reduction activities in a wider sense and will be following those up in due course. Going forward SAVES 2 will continue to be integrated into the work carried out by USI. USI's status as a Sustainable Development Goal Champion by the Government of Ireland has solidified this effort and ensured continued activity. USI is a champion on Goal 7: Affordable & Clean Energy under this remit.

Additionally, USI will incorporate the findings of the SAVES 2 report around fuel poverty into a Mental Health campaign, focusing on the link between damp & mold on poor mental health. USI is hoping to continue as the lead voice in the student arena in Ireland on saving energy and how it can help tackle both fuel poverty and mental health. One of the key components of this will be seeking a renewal of the partnership with SSE Airtricity for the 21 Day Energy Challenge as well as continuing to promote the project aims via social media, thus ensuring long lasting impact of SAVES 2.



## 5 Conclusions

Overall, the implementation of SAVES 2 for the 2019-20 academic year was a success in Ireland. USI had significant and active participation from students for both SSO & SSO+ despite challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak towards the end of the year.

USI found new ways to reach and engage students via partnerships with SSE Airtricity and as SDG Champions for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The targeted campaigns and actions such as the 21 Day Energy Challenge, led to a surge in social media reach, with a reach of over 101,732. USI's increased use of Instagram and utilization of the software's features boosted awareness amongst other societies and organizations.

USI increased the number of ambassadors this year with 12 SSO Ambassadors and seven SSO+ ambassadors. Ambassadors helped increase the awareness of the project via their various media appearances, presence on campus and participation in activities. They also assisted on-campus activities to run the quizzes, photo competitions and workshops.

That students from both SSO and SSO+ taking minor but meaningful steps could achieve more than 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction is strategically important as we seek to advance the status of students as environmental champions in the months and years ahead.