



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Sustainability Annual Report

Academic year 2024-2025

University
ofGalway.ie



Annual SDG Report - Academic Year 2024-2025

As Ireland's first university designated as a National SDG Ambassador, the University of Galway is proud to present this Annual Sustainability Report for Academic Year (AY) 2024–2025. The report highlights the collective achievements of our students, staff, and partners as we advance the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It reflects our ongoing commitment to embedding the SDGs across all aspects of university life - in teaching and learning, research, campus operations, partnerships, and community engagement. This year also marked a significant milestone as we celebrated 10 years of sustainability leadership through our Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), established in 2015 alongside the launch of the UN SDG framework - a decade of transformative action and impact.

Over the past year, the University of Galway has made significant strides in advancing its sustainability ambitions, underpinned by the launch of our new Strategic Plan 2025–2030, which places the SDGs at the heart of the University's mission. Other key highlights include: ranking as the number one university in Ireland for sustainable development for the fourth consecutive year; advancing groundbreaking health and climate research initiatives; securing the Smarter Travel Mark for progress in sustainable transport; delivering a successful SDG Week that inspired action and awareness across our community; and establishing both the Sustainability Engagement Fund and the Sustainability Champion Digital Badge to support and empower grassroots SDG action. Together, these achievements demonstrate the University's commitment to driving positive change and building a fairer, greener, and more sustainable future, both locally and globally.

At the core of this work is our **Learn-Live-Lead** model:

- **Learn:** Integrating sustainability into teaching, learning, and research to inspire and equip students and staff as future sustainability leaders.
- **Live:** Embedding sustainable practices in daily campus culture, operations, and infrastructure.
- **Lead:** Championing sustainability through partnerships, policy advocacy, and community engagement locally, nationally, and globally.

This report illustrates how these pillars shape meaningful SDG action and impact at the University of Galway.



Summary of Key Highlights of the Year

- **Launched the University of Galway Strategic Plan 2025–2030**, embedding the SDGs at the core of education, research, operations, and partnerships to drive global impact.
- **University of Galway ranked Ireland's top university for sustainable development** for the fourth consecutive year, and among the top three in the EU, in the *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025*.
- **Established the Institute for Health Discovery and Innovation**, driving cutting-edge health research aligned with SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing)
- Launched the **Sustainability Engagement Fund** to empower student and staff projects advancing SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 14 (Life Below Water).
- **Secured the Smarter Travel Mark**, recognising leadership in sustainable transport.
- **Achieved the An Taisce Green Campus Flag** for a sixth theme (green labs)
- **Created a Pocket Forest on campus** to boost biodiversity, support carbon sequestration, and provide a living sustainability lab.
- **Signed the Durham Declaration on Earth Day 2025**, reinforcing our commitment to climate leadership.
- **Launched the Sustainability Champion Digital Badge** empowering students and staff to actively lead sustainable change across campus and beyond.
- **Co-hosted the 2025 Climate and Nature Conference** with the Mary Robinson Centre, advancing action on SDG 13 (Climate Action).
- **Celebrated 10 years of sustainability leadership** through our Community and University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP), established in 2015 alongside the launch of the UN SDG framework



LEARN

Integrating sustainability into teaching, learning, and research to inspire and equip students and staff as future sustainability leaders

Launch of the Sustainability Champion Digital Badge

The University of Galway has launched the Sustainability Champion Digital Badge as part of its University Skills Passport (USP) initiative, which recognises extracurricular and co-curricular learning and leadership skills developed by students. This credential is awarded to students who complete a structured programme combining sustainability learning, action, and advocacy. For example, participants attend a sustainability orientation session, contribute to sustainability-focused working groups, take part in practical initiatives such as reducing waste, promoting energy efficiency, or supporting biodiversity and complete a reflection on their impact. The badge acknowledges personal growth in leadership, systems thinking, and project management, while contributing to the University's wider environmental and social goals. In June 2025, nine exceptional students were [awarded the badge](#) in recognition of their dedication and tangible contributions to fostering a more sustainable campus..Designed to be digital and shareable, the badge enhances students' profiles on LinkedIn, CVs, and portfolios, showcasing their alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the University's leadership in campus-wide sustainability transformation.

Launch of Innovative New Courses for School Pupils

In January 2025, the University of Galway introduced [innovative courses](#) for school pupils, designed to enhance Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) education and encourage early engagement with higher learning. The courses offer hands-on experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, aiming to inspire the next generation of researchers and professionals. This initiative supports SDG 4 (Quality Education), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By providing these opportunities, the university contributes to building a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

Targets for Consent Education

The University of Galway's Active* Consent programme [has called](#) for the Further and Higher Education and Training sectors to establish firm targets for consent education and sexual violence prevention among students and staff. The programme released a report highlighting that nearly 25,000 first-year higher education students engaged with its orientation resource during the 2023-2024 academic year, with 80% finding it useful and 91% recommending it to peers. Active* Consent advocates for at least 80% of incoming higher education students to participate in consent education during orientation, extending similar opportunities to further education and training learners, providing ongoing consent education throughout students' academic journeys, and ensuring all staff engage in relevant training. This initiative aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by promoting gender equality and reducing inequalities through comprehensive consent education and violence prevention strategies.

Barriers to Inclusion faced by Undergraduate Students

In September 2024, the University of Galway published a [comprehensive report](#) examining the barriers to inclusion faced by undergraduate students, aligning with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The study, conducted between 2018 and 2021, involved 1,391 undergraduates from the College of Business, Public Policy, and Law, capturing experiences both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings revealed that while many students found the learning environment inclusive, the pandemic introduced challenges such as social isolation, decreased motivation, and increased anxiety. International students often faced loneliness and cultural adjustments, while students with disabilities reported accessibility issues despite support from the Disability Support Service. LGBT+ students highlighted the need for inclusive language and representation. The report recommended actions like developing anti-racism and reasonable accommodation policies, enhancing training on equality, diversity, and inclusion, promoting accessibility, and organising social events to foster inclusion. These initiatives reflect the University's commitment to reducing inequalities and promoting an inclusive academic environment.

University of Galway Signs New Four-Year Agreement with the Higher Education Authority

The University of Galway has signed a new [four-year strategic agreement](#) with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), marking a commitment to academic excellence, research, and social impact. This agreement outlines the university's objectives, including enhancing student access to education, fostering innovation, and promoting equality and sustainability. The partnership aligns with national priorities and the government's vision for higher education, ensuring that Galway continues to serve as a leader in research and learning. Additionally, the agreement includes a focus on inclusion, ensuring underrepresented groups have better access to education. By committing to these goals, the university aims to contribute to the broader development of Ireland's knowledge economy. The agreement will also support initiatives that address major societal challenges, including climate change, digital transformation, and healthcare innovation. The agreement includes performance objectives on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increasing sustainability in the curriculum. These align closely with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 7 (Clean and Affordable Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Funding from the ENLIGHT University Alliance

The University of Galway has announced that twelve of its projects will [receive support](#) from the ENLIGHT European University Alliance and the Higher Education Authority. ENLIGHT, an alliance of ten universities across Europe, aims to foster collaboration in teaching, learning, research, and outreach. The funded projects at the University of Galway will involve partnerships with counterparts in eight countries, focusing on areas such as ageing, plastic pollution impacts, decolonising higher education, human rights, and sustainability. These initiatives are part of a €4 million fund allocated by ENLIGHT, with over €500,000 designated to support the University of Galway's collaborations.

New Institute for Health Discovery

In September 2024, the University of Galway announced the [establishment](#) of the Institute for Health Discovery and Innovation, aiming to advance disease understanding and healthcare solutions. Interim Director Professor Ted Vaughan will lead over 200 researchers and academics in fields such as biomedical science and engineering, focusing on areas like cancer biology, biomedical engineering, regenerative medicine, neuroscience, diagnostics, and advanced therapeutics. The Institute will collaborate closely with the University's Institute for Clinical Trials, CÚRAM (the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Medical Devices), and BioInnovate, an Enterprise Ireland fellowship program. This initiative seeks to translate fundamental scientific research into innovative treatments and interventions, aligning with SDG 3 by promoting good health and well-being through pioneering research and technological advancements.

€4m charitable investment in breast cancer research launched

The [announcement of a €4 million charitable investment](#) in breast cancer research at University of Galway aligns strongly with SDG 3. The funding, launched by the Minister for Health, will support pioneering studies aimed at improving outcomes for breast cancer patients through earlier detection, innovative treatments, and personalised care. This investment reflects the University's commitment to advancing medical research that addresses critical public health challenges, working in partnership with charities, clinicians, and patients. The initiative highlights the power of research-driven innovation in tackling non-communicable diseases and improving wellbeing.

Health focused research

The University of Galway is spearheading cutting-edge research that significantly advances SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through groundbreaking projects addressing pressing global health challenges. A recent study highlights the [link](#) between frequent consumption of fizzy or fruit drinks and high coffee intake with an increased stroke risk, emphasising the importance of dietary habits in stroke prevention. Complementing this, our researchers are [examining](#) severe stroke risk factors, such as high blood pressure, smoking, and irregular heartbeat, to develop strategies for early intervention and prevention. In tackling chronic diseases, the university is contributing to major advancements in [neurodegenerative disorder research](#), supported by substantial EU funding. This initiative aims to unlock novel therapies and improve patient outcomes for debilitating conditions like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Similarly, [Relevium Medical](#), in collaboration with the university, has secured €4.6 million to develop a groundbreaking treatment for knee osteoarthritis, offering new hope for millions suffering from joint degeneration. University of Galway researchers are also leading efforts in regenerative medicine and musculoskeletal health. A [landmark breakthrough](#) in bioprinting functional human heart tissue brings the possibility of creating transplantable organs closer to reality, addressing critical shortages in donor hearts. Additionally, [research on electrical stimulation](#) shows promising potential in maintaining tendon health, offering non-invasive therapeutic options for tendon injuries and related conditions. Through these transformative initiatives, the University of Galway is fostering global partnerships to tackle some of the most urgent health challenges of our time, contributing directly to improving lives and achieving SDG 3.

The award of SDG focused research funding

The University of Galway has secured funding for five innovative research projects under the Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland [Frontiers for the Future Programme](#), part of a €26 million national investment supporting 40 projects. The funded projects focus on diverse and impactful research areas relating to the SDGs including- developing novel therapies for severe childhood neurological disorders; advancing targeted treatments for breast cancer; predicting and controlling agricultural nitrous oxide emissions; creating gene therapy approaches to reduce spinal cord injury scarring and promote nerve regeneration, and utilising machine learning for advanced mathematical computations. These projects reflect the university's commitment to addressing critical health, environmental, and technological challenges.

World's Largest Digital Microbe Collection to Transform Health Research

A team of researchers at the University of Galway has developed the world's largest digital microbe collection, a groundbreaking database designed to advance global health research. This resource compiles microbial genome data, allowing scientists to analyse and understand the role of microbes in disease, antibiotic resistance, and human health. The database will facilitate the development of new medical treatments, improve disease prevention strategies, and support the growing field of microbiome research. This initiative represents a major advancement in digital health technologies, enabling researchers worldwide to access a wealth of microbial data in real time. The collection will be particularly beneficial for studying antimicrobial resistance, a growing public health concern. By offering open access to this database, the University of Galway is fostering collaboration among global health researchers. This initiative aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), as it enhances scientific accelerates innovation in healthcare, and strengthens the global capacity to combat infectious diseases and promote well-being for all.

Study Reveals High Rates of Antimicrobial-Resistant Bacteria in Swans

A recent University of Galway [study](#) has revealed alarmingly high rates of antimicrobial-resistant (AMR) bacteria in swans, raising concerns about the spread of antibiotic resistance in wildlife. The findings suggest that swans may act as carriers of resistant bacteria, posing potential risks to both human and animal health. The study underscores the importance of monitoring wildlife as part of a broader public health strategy to combat antimicrobial resistance. This research aligns with SDG 3 as it highlights the need for better strategies to track and manage AMR threats.

University of Galway contributes to global annual health and climate change report

University of Galway [has contributed](#) to the eighth annual Lancet Countdown report on Health and Climate Change, highlighting escalating global health threats due to climate change. The report revealed that in 2023, individuals experienced an average of 50 additional days of health-threatening temperatures compared to a non-climate change scenario. Additionally, 48% of the global land area faced extreme drought—the second-highest level on record—leading to increased food insecurity for 151 million more people than the annual average between 1981 and 2010. The report criticised ongoing investments in fossil fuels and insufficient funding for health protection measures, emphasising the need for immediate action

to reduce emissions and enhance resilience against climate impacts. Professor Karyn Morrissey from the University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and the Ryan Institute contributed to the report, focusing on the economic and health implications of climate change. Her work underscores the critical importance of integrating health considerations into climate policies to mitigate adverse outcomes. This collaboration aligns with the University's commitment to addressing climate-related health challenges and advancing SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Marine Science and Climate Change

In October 2024, marine scientists at the University of Galway [revealed insights](#) into climate change recorded by tiny polar organisms. The study analysed the biological and chemical markers preserved in the remains of these organisms, providing valuable data on historical climate conditions and trends. This research enhances the understanding of climate change impacts on marine ecosystems and contributes to predictive models for future climate scenarios. The findings support SDG 14 (Life Below Water) by promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources.

Advancing Pollinator Conservation Through Groundbreaking Honeybee Research

In 2024, researchers at the University of Galway made significant contributions to pollinator conservation through two major initiatives. In October, the [University confirmed](#) that the native Irish honeybee is a distinct subspecies, unique from other European honeybees. This discovery has vital implications for conservation strategies, breeding programmes, and habitat preservation, helping to protect pollinator biodiversity and support the resilience of pollination services essential for agriculture and ecosystems. This research aligns with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by promoting sustainable agriculture through the protection of pollinators.

The University also leads **FREEB**, a major European research project investigating the survival of wild honeybee colonies across the continent. Focusing on genetic resilience and ecological interactions, FREEB aims to inform conservation policies that protect biodiversity and halt ecosystem degradation. This work directly supports SDG 15 (Life on Land) and reflects the University's strategic priority to advance research that safeguards terrestrial biodiversity in response to the decline of wild pollinators.

Study Reveals Extent of Ecological Damage from Niger Delta Oil Spills

A University of Galway-led [study](#) has uncovered the severe ecological damage caused by oil spills in Nigeria's Niger Delta, one of the most environmentally impacted regions in the world. The research highlights the extensive contamination of water, soil, and local ecosystems, affecting both biodiversity and human health. It also sheds light on the long-term effects of oil pollution, including habitat destruction and reduced agricultural productivity for local communities. The findings emphasise the urgent need for sustainable environmental management and corporate accountability. The study calls for stricter regulations, cleanup initiatives, and greater investment in alternative energy sources to prevent future ecological disasters. This research aligns with SDG 14 (Life Below Water), as it focuses on protecting marine and freshwater ecosystems from pollution and degradation. By documenting the full

extent of the damage, the University of Galway is contributing valuable scientific data that can inform policy decisions and environmental restoration efforts.

Gamma-Ray Technology Enhances Peatland Mapping in Ireland

A groundbreaking [study by the University of Galway](#) in March 2025 utilised gamma-ray technology to advance peatland mapping in Ireland. Peatlands play a crucial role in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation. Accurate mapping is essential for their protection and restoration. This research positions Ireland at the forefront of environmental monitoring and contributes to global efforts in combating climate change. The project supports SDG 13: Climate Action, by addressing climate change and its impacts, and SDG 15 (Life on Land), which focuses on sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, and halting biodiversity loss.

Tidal Research Highlights Storm Eowyn's Impact

University of Galway researchers conducted a [study](#) in April 2025 analysing the effects of Storm Eowyn, which brought record-breaking winds and storm surges to Ireland. The research revealed that if the storm had coincided with a high spring tide, catastrophic flooding could have occurred in cities like Galway and Limerick. This underscores the increasing risks posed by climate change-induced extreme weather events. The findings support SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, by making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, and SDG 13 (Climate Action), emphasising urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Research Suggests Passage Tombs Were Solar Observatories

A [study](#) conducted in April 2025 by the University of Galway proposed that the ancient passage tombs of Brú na Bóinne served as sophisticated solar observatories. This research offers insights into the astronomical knowledge of prehistoric societies and highlights the cultural significance of these ancient structures. Understanding such heritage contributes to preserving cultural identity and history. This aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), particularly target 11.4, which focuses on strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

Tax Clinic honoured for educational excellence at Irish Accountancy Awards

The University of Galway's Tax Clinic was [recognised for excellence in education](#) at the Irish Accountancy Awards, exemplifying SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) through practical action. The clinic provides free, accessible tax advice to individuals and communities who may struggle to afford professional services, including low-income workers and migrants. By combining teaching and service, the initiative enhances students' learning while directly addressing inequality and financial exclusion. This model of engaged scholarship reflects the University's mission to foster social justice and inclusion, empowering both learners and the communities they serve.

LIVE

Embedding sustainable practices in daily campus culture, operations, and infrastructure

University of Galway awarded Smarter Travel Mark

University of Galway has been awarded the Smarter Travel Mark by the National Transport Authority. The award recognises the University's significant progress in promoting sustainable travel initiatives on campus. University staff and students accepted the award at an event during Bike Week 2025. The award recognises the University's commitment to reducing its transport-related carbon footprint through active travel initiatives, sustainable commuting plans, and community engagement. By encouraging cycling, walking, and public transport use, the University is helping create a healthier, more sustainable urban environment for students, staff, and the wider Galway community. This success highlights how integrated travel planning and infrastructure improvements can support climate goals, air quality, and wellbeing, contributing to more live-able and resilient cities. This achievement aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by supporting sustainable transport systems and fostering inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban mobility for the University and the wider Galway community.

Celebrating National Biodiversity Week

As part of National Biodiversity Week 2025 (16-25 May), the University of Galway's College of Science and Engineering EDI Committee hosted a special Mindfulness and Biodiversity Walk for staff, celebrating the rich natural heritage of our campus. Led by Dr Caitriona Carlin from the School of Natural Sciences and the Ryan Institute, participants explored the University's beautiful Biodiversity Trail along the River Corrib and visited the newly established Pocket Forest Woodland. The event offered staff a chance to connect with nature, learn about local wildlife, and gain insights into the flora and fauna thriving on campus. The walk combined mindfulness practices with biodiversity awareness, creating a valuable space for well-being, reflection, and connection. Building on the success of previous events such as bat tours and biodiversity walks, this initiative further strengthened staff engagement with sustainability and campus nature. The event highlighted how the University's outdoor spaces support both biodiversity and well-being, reinforcing our commitment to creating a healthy, inclusive, and sustainable campus environment. By enhancing understanding of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, the initiative contributes to SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), promoting the protection and restoration of biodiversity in and around our campus.

Events to mark National Bike Week 2025

As part of National Bike Week 2025 (10-18 May), the University of Galway celebrated sustainable and active travel with a series of campus events designed to promote cycling and build a healthier, low-carbon community. Activities included a well-attended Bike Maintenance Talk and Demonstration led by An Mheitheal Rothar, where staff and students learned practical tips to keep their bikes in top condition. A Coffee Morning / Connect Café followed, featuring a short talk and lively discussion with Professor Eoghan Clifford (Engineering) and

Marianne McNally (HR) on the benefits of cycling for well-being and the environment. These events offered opportunities for participants to engage with cycling culture, share experiences, and learn how to incorporate active travel into their daily lives. The University's Bike Week activities complemented the wider Galway Bike Festival, reinforcing our commitment to smarter, greener transport choices. Through initiatives like these, the University continues to encourage active travel and support progress toward our sustainability and health goals. This initiative supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by promoting inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable communities and public spaces.

University of Galway Plants Pocket Forest Woodland

The University of Galway has launched an initiative to create a 'pocket forest' on its campus, promoting biodiversity and ecological restoration. Pocket forests are dense, small-scale woodlands designed to replicate natural ecosystems, using a mix of native tree species to enhance carbon sequestration and support local wildlife. This initiative, part of the university's broader sustainability efforts, seeks to combat climate change, improve air quality, and provide a living laboratory for students and researchers studying environmental science. By planting these mini-forests, the university is actively contributing to reforestation efforts, helping to offset carbon emissions while also fostering an educational resource for the community. The project also engages students and local volunteers, promoting environmental awareness and hands-on participation in conservation work. This initiative aligns with SDG 15 (Life on Land), which focuses on protecting, restoring, and promoting sustainable land ecosystems.

How Do We React When We Hear of an Animal Becoming Extinct?

In November 2024, the University of Galway hosted a [discussion](#) on public reactions to animal extinctions, exploring psychological and sociocultural factors influencing perceptions of biodiversity loss. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of conservation efforts and the impact of human activities on wildlife. This initiative supports SDG 15 (Life on Land), which seeks to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. By engaging the community in these discussions, the university encourages proactive involvement in biodiversity conservation.

Citizen Science Initiative: Urban Fox Monitoring

In October 2024, the University of Galway launched a [citizen science project](#) inviting volunteers to monitor urban fox populations in Galway City. This initiative aims to gather data on fox distribution, behaviour, and interactions with urban environments, contributing to wildlife conservation efforts and enhancing urban biodiversity understanding. By engaging the community in scientific research, the project fosters environmental stewardship and public awareness of urban wildlife. This aligns with SDG 15 (Life on Land), which emphasises the protection and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.

University of Galway calls on Inishowen residents to track bee colonies

The University of Galway's call to the people of Inishowen to help track wild bee colonies is a powerful example of SDG 15 (Life on Land) in action at the community level. By involving

citizens in monitoring and mapping bee populations, this initiative supports biodiversity conservation and ecological awareness. The project aims to identify and protect rare wild honey bee colonies in Donegal, contributing valuable data to national and European efforts to safeguard pollinators. This citizen science approach reflects the University's commitment to inclusive, participatory research that fosters local stewardship of natural habitats, reinforcing the connection between communities and biodiversity protection.

Sensory-Friendly Santa's Grotto Brings Christmas Magic to Children and Their Families

In December 2024, the University of Galway [organised a sensory-friendly](#) Santa's Grotto, providing an inclusive holiday experience for children and families, particularly those with sensory sensitivities. The event featured adapted lighting, sounds, and interactive activities to ensure comfort and enjoyment for all participants. This initiative aligns with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. By creating accessible and inclusive events, the university fosters a sense of belonging and community among diverse populations.

University Launches Widening Participation Report and Sensory Campus Website

In December 2024, the University of Galway [launched](#) a Widening Participation Report and a Sensory Campus Website, aiming to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for students with diverse needs. The report outlines strategies to support underrepresented groups in higher education, while the website provides resources and information on sensory-friendly campus facilities. These initiatives support SDG 4 (Quality Education), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By implementing these measures, the university demonstrates its commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment.

Celebrating Irish Traveller History & Culture

University of Galway [launched](#) the Mincéirs Archives, a comprehensive collection dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history and culture of the Irish Traveller community. This initiative focuses on the transformative period from the 1960s onwards, highlighting the community's experiences amid Ireland's social, economic, and cultural changes, as well as the emergence of the Traveller rights movement both nationally and across Europe. The archive encompasses materials related to Traveller human rights, education, employment, accommodation, music, folklore, and photographs, providing a rich resource for understanding the community's diverse experiences. Notably, it includes official documents such as the 1963 Report of the Commission on Itinerancy and records from various Traveller advocacy organisations. The Mincéirs Archives aim to integrate Traveller history and culture into the University's teaching, learning, and research activities, promoting greater understanding and respect. This endeavour aligns with SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities) by acknowledging and valuing the unique heritage of the Irish Traveller community, thereby fostering inclusivity and equity within the academic environment and beyond.

Sean Nós Singing Workshops at University of Galway

In October 2024, the University of Galway [hosted Sean Nós singing workshops](#), celebrating traditional Irish music and culture. The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to learn and perform this unique form of unaccompanied singing, fostering cultural appreciation and preservation. This initiative aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. By promoting cultural heritage and community engagement, the university contributes to the social and cultural vitality of the region. This initiative is funded by Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and An Chomhairle Ealaíon in collaboration with the Centre for Irish Studies at University of Galway

LEAD

Demonstrating leadership and championing policy, partnerships, and community impact for sustainable futures

Minister Lawless launches University of Galway Strategic Plan 2025–2030

The launch of the University of Galway's [Strategic Plan 2025–2030](#) by Minister Lawless reinforces the institution's deep alignment with SDG 4 (Quality Education). The plan outlines the University's vision to deliver transformative education that addresses global challenges, including climate action, health, and inclusion. Sustainability and the SDGs are embedded as core pillars, with a strong focus on creating an equitable and future-ready learning environment. Through innovative teaching, research, and partnerships, the University aims to empower students and staff to become agents of positive societal change. This strategy affirms Galway's leadership in advancing the SDGs within higher education.

Achieving Number One University in Ireland for Advancing the SDGs

University of Galway has been ranked the number one university in Ireland for sustainable development for the fourth year in a row, and top three in the EU, in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025. The rankings assessed 2,526 universities from 130 countries on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with participation up 65% on last year, making this recognition even more significant. Among the highlights: top 50 globally for SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), SDG 3 (Good Health), and SDG 17 (Partnerships); top 75 for SDG 6 (Clean Water) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water). Our green campus initiatives, biodiversity enhancements, certified green labs, and halving of greenhouse gas emissions since 2016 showcase our leadership in creating a sustainable future.

Marking World Environment Day by celebrating student leadership in sustainability

As part of World Environment Day 2025 celebrations, University of Galway honoured the outstanding contributions of students who are leading efforts to create a more sustainable future on campus and beyond. This year saw two key initiatives recognising student leadership, innovation, and action in sustainability. Nine students were awarded the Sustainability Champion Digital Badge for their dedication to advancing sustainability through projects

focused on waste reduction, energy conservation, awareness campaigns, and cross-cultural collaboration. These students completed sustainability training and delivered real-world initiatives aligned with the SDGs and the University's Sustainability Strategy. In addition, the University announced the recipients of the 2025 Student Sustainability Leadership Awards, recognising exceptional student leaders who have made significant contributions to sustainability on campus. These students will work with the University's Sustainability Office over the coming year, representing the student voice and supporting progress towards the University's climate and sustainability goals.

University of Galway hosts second annual SDG Week

The University of Galway hosted [its second annual Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) Week from September 16th to 21st](#), underscoring our dedication to global sustainability. The event featured a variety of student and staff-led activities, including guided walks along the University's biodiversity and SDG trails, seminars, roundtable discussions, poster presentations, a second-hand clothing sale, and a quiz night. A notable highlight was the panel discussion titled "Engineering a Sustainable Transport System for Galway and the West Region," which addressed traffic congestion and featured engineering experts discussing topics such as the Galway City Transport Strategy, Very Light Rail, and the Galway to Oughterard Greenway. Deputy President & Registrar, Professor Becky Whay, emphasised the University's role as Ireland's leading institution for sustainability and its designation as a national SDG Ambassador. The week also included a talk by Professor Leon Tikly from the University of Bristol on decolonising higher education. Additionally, the University launched its Annual Sustainability Report for 2023/24, highlighting contributions toward advancing the SDGs. This initiative aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), reflecting the University's commitment to promoting education, sustainable urban development, and environmental stewardship.

Mary Robinson Climate and Nature Conference 2025

[The 2025 Climate and Nature Conference](#), co-hosted by the Mary Robinson Centre and the University of Galway, highlighted the urgent need for integrated action on climate change and biodiversity loss. This event brought together international leaders, academics, activists, and policymakers to explore solutions at the intersection of climate and nature. Aligning with SDG 13 (Climate Action), the conference advanced dialogue on accelerating global efforts to limit temperature rise while restoring ecosystems. The University's leadership in convening this event underscores its role as a catalyst for collaborative climate solutions. Key themes included climate justice, just transitions, and nature-based solutions, reinforcing our commitment to embedding SDG 13 across research, teaching, and public engagement.

University of Galway marks Earth Day 2025 by signing the Durham Declaration

On Earth Day 2025, the University of Galway marked its commitment to sustainability by signing the [Durham Declaration](#), a bold initiative uniting leading European universities in climate action. Launched at the Coimbra Group Climate Symposium, the Declaration sets out seven guiding principles focused on embedding sustainability throughout university life. By endorsing it, the University of Galway reinforces its role as an educator, researcher, and

societal leader working toward a net zero, nature-positive future. The commitment encompasses advancing climate research, integrating sustainability into teaching, transforming campus operations, and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This milestone reflects the University's dedication to empowering students, staff, and community partners to drive sustainable development through education, innovation, and civic engagement. In solidarity with peers across Europe, the University acknowledges the urgent challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss and embraces the collective responsibility to act. Signing the Durham Declaration is a significant step in Galway's journey toward a more sustainable and resilient future.

Galway City Climathon 2024

In October 2024, the University of Galway hosted the [Galway City Climathon](#), a 24-hour global climate change innovation marathon. Participants collaborated to develop innovative solutions to local climate challenges, focusing on areas such as sustainable transportation, waste management, and renewable energy. The event brought together students, professionals, and community members to engage in climate action and entrepreneurship. This initiative supports SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting innovative solutions to combat climate change and its impacts.

National Campaign for 16 Days of Activism

In November 2024, the University of Galway [participated](#) in the national 16 Days of Activism campaign, a global initiative aimed at raising awareness and combating gender-based violence. The university organised a series of events, including workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns, to engage students and staff in discussions about consent, respect, and equality. This initiative aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. By actively participating in this campaign, the university demonstrates its commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals.

University of Galway Expands Female Entrepreneurship Programme Nationwide

The University of Galway has announced the nationwide expansion of its female entrepreneurship program, aiming to support women-led businesses and address gender disparities in entrepreneurship. This program provides mentorship, networking opportunities, and tailored business training to female entrepreneurs, helping them overcome challenges such as access to funding, business scaling, and market entry. The expansion will allow more women across Ireland to access critical support structures, ultimately fostering a more inclusive business environment. Originally launched as a regional initiative, the program has demonstrated significant success in equipping women with the skills and confidence to grow their enterprises. By scaling it nationally, the university hopes to empower a new generation of female business leaders, strengthening economic development and innovation. This aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), as it directly addresses barriers that limit women's economic participation. By ensuring that female entrepreneurs receive equal opportunities, this initiative contributes to a more balanced and diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ireland.

University of Galway Launches Global Galway

In November 2024, the University of Galway [launched](#) "Global Galway," an initiative designed to strengthen its international partnerships and expand its global presence. The program focuses on collaborative research, student and staff exchanges, and community engagement projects with institutions worldwide. This initiative supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), which emphasises the importance of global partnerships in achieving sustainable development. By fostering international collaborations, the university aims to address global challenges through shared knowledge and resources.

University of Galway Expert on UN Climate Change Advisory Role

In November 2024, a [University of Galway expert](#) was appointed to a United Nations climate change advisory role, reflecting the university's expertise in environmental science and policy. This appointment underscores the university's commitment to contributing to global climate action efforts. It aligns with SDG 13 (Climate Action), which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Through this advisory role, the university aims to influence international climate policies and promote sustainable practices.

Social Initiative for Farming Community Goes Transatlantic

In January 2025, the University of Galway expanded its [social initiative for the farming community](#) to include transatlantic partnerships, collaborating with institutions in North America to share knowledge and resources. The program focuses on sustainable agricultural practices, rural development, and community resilience. This initiative aligns with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), which aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. By fostering international collaborations, the university supports the global exchange of agricultural knowledge and practices.

Partnership with Galway Science & Technology Festival

The University of Galway has partnered with the Galway Science & Technology Festival to promote STEM education and inspire future generations of scientists and engineers. The festival, which includes interactive exhibits, workshops, and expert talks, aims to engage students, families, and the public in hands-on scientific discovery. Through this partnership, the university is reinforcing its commitment to making STEM education more accessible and engaging for young learners. By fostering curiosity and innovation, the initiative encourages more students to consider careers in science and technology. This aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), as it supports lifelong learning opportunities, and the development of critical skills needed for the future workforce.

Family Fun Day to Inspire Future Engineers During Engineers Week 2025

The University of Galway hosted a Family Fun Day as part of Engineers Week 2025, featuring interactive activities designed to spark interest in engineering. The event aimed to make engineering accessible and engaging for children and families, encouraging future careers in STEM fields. This initiative aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), by promoting hands-on learning and inspiring the next generation of engineers.

US-Ireland Relations and Peacebuilding

In October 2024, the University of Galway, in collaboration with other universities, [marked](#) the significance of US-Ireland relations and peacebuilding efforts. The event featured discussions on the historical and contemporary aspects of the relationship, focusing on peace processes, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges. This initiative aims to strengthen transatlantic ties and promote mutual understanding, contributing to global peace and stability. It aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.

Taoiseach delivers keynote at public engagement for better policy seminar

The University of Galway's hosting of a high-level seminar on public engagement for better policy, with a keynote by the Taoiseach, demonstrates its contribution to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The event explored how inclusive public engagement can strengthen democratic processes, enhance policymaking, and build trust in institutions. Bringing together leaders, researchers, and citizens, the seminar reinforced the importance of evidence-informed, participatory approaches to governance. The University's role in convening this dialogue reflects its mission to promote open, transparent, and accountable institutions through education, research, and civic engagement.

Irish Study Identifies Financial and Canvassing Barriers for Disabled Political Candidates

A University of Galway [study](#) has identified significant financial and logistical barriers that prevent disabled individuals from fully participating in politics. The research highlights the high costs of campaigning and the accessibility challenges candidates face, calling for policy reforms to create a more inclusive political system. By addressing these structural inequalities, the study aligns with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which promotes equal opportunities and empowerment for all.

National Recognition University of Galway's Palestinian Solidarity Society

In April 2025, the University of Galway's Palestinian Solidarity Society (PSS) was honoured with the Best Society Civic or Charity Award at the Board of Irish College Societies (BICS) National Awards. This recognition celebrates the society's unwavering commitment to advocating for Palestinian rights and raising awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Throughout the academic year, PSS organised a series of impactful events, including demonstrations, fundraisers, and high-profile speaker sessions, to highlight the ongoing challenges faced by Palestinians. Their efforts not only educated the university community but also fostered a culture of empathy and activism on campus. Notably, the University of Galway became the first Irish university to publicly call for a ceasefire, a milestone achieved through the persistent advocacy of PSS in collaboration with other pro-Palestinian organisations within the university and the broader Galway community. This award underscores the significant role student societies play in promoting social justice and global awareness. The achievements of PSS align with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), by promoting inclusive societies and advocating for human rights.

Student Volunteer Ireland Conference features SDGs in Action

Students from the University of Galway received travel bursaries to attend the [national Student Volunteer Ireland Conference](#), joining peers from ATU, UCC, UCD, TU Dublin, and UL. Over 65 students took part in workshops to build volunteer management skills, deepen their understanding of the SDGs, and connect with a national student leadership movement. Keynotes highlighted circular economy initiatives and policy influence, while Barretstown hosted the event, fostering connections around SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing). Funded by the Irish Youth Foundation, the conference inspired students to advance volunteering on campus, with participants earning a Digital Badge for their engagement.

University of Galway Launches Nelson Mandela Fund

In March 2025, the University of Galway introduced the [Nelson Mandela Fund](#) to honor the legacy of the renowned South African leader. This initiative aims to support students from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly those from the Global South, by providing scholarships and fostering educational opportunities. By promoting inclusivity and diversity within the academic community, the fund seeks to empower individuals who might otherwise face barriers to higher education. This endeavor aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education for all, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), focusing on reducing disparities within and among countries.

University of Galway and Ulster University launch COSHARE North-South report

In collaboration with Ulster University, the University of Galway has [launched](#) the COSHARE North-South survey report, outlining key findings from the first all-island study of higher education staff members' experiences of consent, sexual violence, and harassment in higher education institutions in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The survey received responses from 521 staff members, with 45% from Northern Ireland and 55% from the Republic of Ireland; 75% of respondents identified as female. The report calls for greater collaboration between higher education sectors in both regions to enhance protections for staff and support positive change. This initiative fits under SDG 5 (Gender Equality) particularly target 5.2 (eliminate violence against women and girls) and 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination).

Imirce: Archive of Irish Emigrant Letters

The University of Galway has launched *Imirce*, a digital archive preserving Irish emigrant letters, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This initiative captures personal migration stories, helping to document Irish cultural heritage. This project aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), as it preserves historical knowledge and strengthens cultural identity.

Sustainability Engagement Fund

The University of Galway has launched the [Sustainability Engagement Fund](#), a dedicated grant scheme designed to support student and staff led initiatives that promote awareness, dialogue, and action on the SDGs across campus and within the wider community. Aligned with our Learn Live Lead framework, the Fund has already empowered a diverse range of

projects, from Model United Nations simulations that help secondary level students explore global SDG challenges like clean water (SDG 6), to sustainability webinars and workshops tackling water management, biodiversity, and climate change. With small grants awarded for grassroots events, the Fund nurtures creativity, civic engagement, and peer education, fostering a sense of collective ownership over sustainable practice. By facilitating bottom up initiatives and supporting aspiring sustainability leaders, the Engagement Fund plays a pivotal role in embedding SDG understanding and action across all levels of university life. The awardees for the Sustainability Engagement Fund 24/25 are:

- Andreea Alexandrov (School of Engineering) for multimedia storytelling showcasing community-driven solutions to water-related challenges
- Lucy Elvis and Michela Dianetti (School of History and Philosophy) for 'Hidden Depths' workshops with primary school pupils and an active retired community
- Hugh Gately (Literary & Debating Society) for the University of Galway Model United Nations
- Storm McDonald (School of Natural Sciences) for Galway Coast/Aquarium Documentary and River Corrib Exploration
- Paola Sofía Serrano Bravo (Cúram) for a boardgame on water management in lab environments

A Snapshot of Sustainability Progress



'University of Galway awards Sustainability Champion digital badges to exceptional students

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon



JE Cairnes School of Business and Economics hosts SDG show case event as part of SDG Week 2024

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon



University of Galway plants Pocket Forest Woodland

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon



University of Galway awarded Smarter Travel Award by the National Transport Authority

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon



*University of Galway sign the
Durham Declaration*

Credit: Mike Shaughnessy



*University of Galway co-hosts
the 2025 Climate and Nature
with the Mary Robinson Centre*



*Bike Maintenance Talk and
Demonstration led by An
Mheitheal Rothar during
National Bike Week 2025*



*Student Adam Mullins wins the
ENLIGHT Sustainability Award
2025 for the Spéir Students'
Union Pantry - a food-sharing
and redistribution initiative*

Credit: Aengus Mc Mahon