



## Recommendations for Policy Makers from the Participants of ECO-UNESCO'S Transnational Youth ECO Forum; What's So Hot About Climate Change: Road to Paris, Oct 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2015, Dublin, Ireland.

### BACKGROUND

The aim of this recommendation is to help guide people who are faced with policy choices on climate change issues by sharing the thoughts and recommendations of young people from Ireland and Europe. Our young people are one of the most important stakeholders, yet lack the influence to make their choices known. For this reason, ECO-UNESCO acts to empower young people to take action through a variety of methods, including training, peer education, action plans and youth conferences. In October 2015, ECO-UNESCO held a Transnational Youth ECO-Forum entitled 'What's So Hot About Climate Change': *Road to Paris*. This forum brought together over 70 young people aged 16-18 from Ireland, Italy, Norway, Albania and Czech Republic to learn and discuss the subject of climate change. It provided a platform for young people to meet policy makers and key experts on a range of issues relating to climate change, and have their voices heard. Some of the policy makers and experts present included Matt Carthy (Member of the European Parliament), Jerry MacEvilly (Trocaire's Policy Officer on Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Justice), Claire Byrne (Dublin City councillor), Naoise O Muiir (former mayor), Peter Thorne (Head of Irish Climate Analysis and Research Unit), Duncan Stewart (environmentalist and media personality), Cara Augustenborg (chair of Friends of the Earth), Fiona Kelly (FloudCloud), Phillip O'Brien (EPA), Anne O'Donnell (Head of Citizen Participation at the Department of Youth Affairs), and Valerie Duffy (Development Education Programme Coordinator at the National Youth Council of Ireland). One of the many outcomes of the forum was a list of recommendations created by the young people themselves, specifically for policy makers in preparation for COP21 in November 2015.



The current change in our average climate is linked to human interference according to the 5<sup>th</sup> assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. With the fourth highest levels of greenhouse gases per person in Europe, Ireland's participation is vital. In February 2013, a draft version of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill was produced, based on the recommendations of the Joint Committee which encouraged large-scale action. In January 2015, the bill re-emerged with alterations which removed some of these recommendations for action. Without added action, we will struggle to reach the emissions reductions targets set for 2020.

### THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The 72 participants of ECO-UNESCO's *Transnational Youth ECO Forum: What's So Hot About Climate Change; Road to Paris*, have come up with some recommendations for immediate actions which should assist in counteracting further negative impacts on our environment. These young people from across Europe expressed their wishes to the 11 policy makers and experts present on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015, but also wished that their ideals be taken even further; a wish that as many politicians as possible would read these recommendations and hopefully take them into consideration throughout COP21, and into the future. They have asked for action on the points below to achieve the goal of ending climate change:

1. Young people at the forum felt they were not listened to and recommended that politicians take the views & opinions of young people into consideration.
2. They want politicians start taking the issue of climate change seriously and make the right decisions, as it is everyone's future.
3. Participants wanted a less human focused and a more holistic approach
4. They want any commitments made at COP 21 be legally binding and to reflect a more sustainable use of fossil fuels and other resources.
5. They requested that their own countries reduce their CO2 emissions instead of just capping their levels of increase.
6. They recommended that more initiatives need to be in place for grassroots approaches to the causes of climate change, such as



better access to environmentally conscious foods, transport, housing, fuel consumption, etc.



7. All participants asked that the green climate fund be given priority and they would like to see all countries contribute a % of their GDP to the green fund.
8. A subsequent point to the support of the Green Climate Fund was the suggestion that a portion of the Green Climate Fund be used to support Environmental Education, so that sustainable thinking can be integrated into our daily lives.
9. Young people involved wanted to see a global effort to reduce the current temperature cap of 2.7'C of change lowered to the original 2'C as outlined in the 2010 Cancun Agreements.
10. They wanted clear action in the short term as well as the long term, in particular relation to policy and wanted the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill to be acted upon now.
11. Young people asked for more involvement of EU policy and wanted more opportunities for engagement in climate change education and awareness and that it be communicated in a simplistic way that everyone can understand including opportunities in their studies at school and outside.
12. Young people involved demanded the media needs to involve itself more in COP and climate change, and to help spread awareness not just on the opening day of COP21, but throughout the event and on climate change in general.

## TAKING ACTION

The young people have asked for a way to take these recommendations into account. In practise, there are many ways in which these suggestions could be taken on board. One such way is to combine the efforts of clear legally binding actions and laws to be agreed at COP21, with youth participation in both policy and education of all forms.

Policy: The visiting Norwegian members discussed how in their country, climate policy is used as a method to drive investment into renewable energies. Norway employs a system of CO<sub>2</sub> taxation, with a price on fossil-fuelled emissions, while exempting renewable emissions. Because of this, renewables have become the cheaper source of energy in Norway, and subsequently many private sector businesses have begun investing in



renewable technologies. As Ireland already has a system of subsidies in place for investing in renewable technologies and further research and development, it would be a feasible option to apply this model in Ireland, linking green investment to the recovery of our economy.



Education: The Transnational Youth ECO Forum participants highlighted a need for more education in all forms including within the school curriculum, and for the topic to be made more approachable and an integral part of our daily lives. Simply introducing content about climate change science, causes, consequences and solutions in a traditional teaching environment may not be enough to evoke this change. New methods, values, creative thinking and problem solving-skills will need to be instilled at all levels, through all forms of education including formal, non-formal and informal; and also in teaching and learning methodologies that are participatory, experimental, critical and open-ended such as the practise of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) and non-formal education. Education for Sustainable Development empowers youth to participate instead of just listen, and to experience environmental issues and solutions first-hand. There are many programmes running such as ECO-UNESCO's Youth for Sustainable Development Programme, the Young Environmentalist Awards and workshops and training programmes. Creating a future where people are highly educated on environmental matters can benefit the economy too. ECO-UNESCO has an employability programme aimed at upskilling long term unemployed people for the Green Economy; this also supports the UNESCO initiated programme the Global Renewable Energy Education and Training (GREET) Programme, which supports the building of a highly skilled workforce in the green sector.

## CONCLUSION

The suggestions made by our Youth ECO-Forum participants are feasible and reflect the many changes necessary to achieve both a more sustainable society and a low carbon economy which will benefit society at all levels. Young people highlighted the need for their meaningful engagement and the need for a greater level of awareness and education at all levels. We respectfully request that you take these suggestions into consideration for both COP21 and our future.



## Actual Feedback from Youth Participants of ECO-UNESCO'S Transnational Youth ECO Forum; What's So Hot About Climate Change: Road to Paris,



### Feedback:

- To take the views & opinions of young people into consideration
- Earth BEFORE money!
- Set a good example in the choices they make because it will be us making the same decisions in the future
- Actions speak louder than words
- Countries being genuine about the changes they say they will make (e.g. CO2 emissions)
- Ireland and other countries should donate more to the green fund
- Change the temperature goals from 2.7'C to 2'C
- Fair distribution of responsibility
- Involve this in our education more
- Spread awareness
- Start small (grassroots approach)
- To take our points that we said today
- We want all our countries to reduce their emissions and have it be legally binding
- Set a goal sooner
- Everyone agrees to have their co2 emissions properly monitored
- Get the media to raise awareness about cop21 and not just during
- We want action and change
- Better environmental transport
- We want them to cut all emissions, not just CO2
- And more money to the developing country fund
- We want a sustainable future for everyone – input from every country/consensus, protection of the nature
- Media Campaign
- Eco-friendly houses
- Sustainable use of resources
- Start taking our future seriously
- Make sure they make the right decisions
- Co2 levels to come down
- Commitment to the climate fund
- Reduce, reuse, recycle

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- Make people more aware of COP and its goals
- Explain climate change in an easy to understand way to the environment
- Put emphasis on efficiency with fossil fuels
- Work towards renewable energy
- All countries commit to reducing their emissions
- A lot of countries give a % of their GDP to the green climate fund
- A greater focus on the environment, not just humans
- Take part
- Inform others

