

Education with Sustainability Conference at IT Sligo

The first international 'Education with Sustainability (EwS)' conference in Ireland was held at IT Sligo from 20-22nd August. CERIS Research Centre, IT Sligo, in collaboration with the ESAI and Mid Sweden University, hosted this three day event which focussed on the challenges facing all aspects of educating for a sustainable future. The conference opened with a very successful evening public event entitled 'Fake News and Impacts' where a panel of five experts engaged a large audience with a short presentation in their chosen area of the Impact of Fake News. Panel members included Ella McSweeney (Food and Farming Journalist), Alison Greig (Director of Education for Sustainability, Anglia Ruskin University), Michael Ewing (Coordinator of Irish Environmental Network), Oonagh Monaghan (Food Consultant and Author), Ciaran Byrne (CEO Inland Fisheries Ireland). An audience of 100 attended the event with a very lively engagement between the floor and the panel, chaired expertly by Richard Thorn (Emeritus President of IT Sligo).

The three day conference was attended by researchers, lecturers and students from delegates from eight Irish Higher Education Institutes and international delegates from Mid Sweden University, Hochschule Osnabruck, Hochschule Luzern, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Hague University of Applied Science, Leuphana University of Lüneburg and UniLaSalle - Ecole des Métiers de l'Environnement and also by other international speakers.

The ESAI were well represented at this conference by Frances Lucy (Chair ESAI and conference organiser), Tom Curran (ESAI Council and UCD) and Liam McCarton (ESAI council, DIT and EWS conference workshop organiser).

Presentations topics included sustainability aspects at preschool, second level and higher education and outreach initiatives. These were very diverse and ranged from a talk on a Bolivian Andean community to a Swedish case study of sustainability in graphic design education. Workshops were also held on Life Cycle Analysis, Corporate Social Responsibility and Design and the provocatively titled, How Unsustainable are the Sustainability Goals.

Duncan Stewart attended all of the conference and commented,

' It was clearly evident to me and expressed by all participants, that we are living today in an unprecedented and extremely unsustainable time in the history of life on this one and only living planet. that sustains our very existence and that enables us to flourish into a foreseeable future. Humans, as a single species have now clearly extended way beyond the safe thresholds of Earth's stabilizing systems, with its functioning, replenishing processes and its planetary boundaries. Where global citizens and especially our young generation need to collectively understand and urgently commit to mitigating climate change, to halt biodiversity loss, over-consumption, global depletion of

resources, waste, pollution and inequality at the local, national and global level. In my opinion, 3rd level research on this key topic is now critically needed.'

Irish delegates included representatives from eight Higher Education Institutes, highlighting the national importance of the conference. 'We will produce a peer reviewed publication on Sustainability in Irish Higher Education from the conference outputs', stated Professor Frances Lucy, Conference organiser. 'IT Sligo also intends to form a new network on sustainability via the EwS delegates and the ESAI will be involved in this development. This is important in the context of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development in Education 2014-2020.'