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Shared Education for Positive Innovation.

Core Programme Impact Report 2025/26



“

“All of our students who were involved thoroughly enjoyed the programme. Our three semi-finalists performed brilliantly, and it was fantastic to see the confidence they gained throughout the process. The programme provided them with an opportunity to come out of their shells, develop new skills, and collaborate with students from across the country. An experience that will undoubtedly stay with them.”

– SEPI Teacher

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SEPI Core Programme

The SEPI programme aims to foster cross-community and cross-border collaboration between participants by providing a structured programme of best practice exchange, shared learning, and innovation.

100 schools and 4,000 students over 4 years

The Core Programme aims to promote **dialogue and positive exchanges** between **young people** while also facilitating the development of an **entrepreneurial mindset and innovative thinking**.

Key Activities:

- Teacher and Student Training Days
- Virtual Courses
- Impact Day Design Sprints
- Online Masterclasses
- In-person Pitch Off events
- Cross-Island Climate Summit and Awards Ceremony

Year 2 Development

Following the implementation of Year 1, we took feedback from teachers and students on board.

Key development for Year 2:

- The delivery schedule was tightened to September to January: a better flow for teams, and easier to accommodate for schools
- Online activities were made more interactive – introducing Padlet for sharing understanding and Miro boards for developing innovative ideas
- Training days were moved online, allowing all SEPI students to attend directly
- Pitch Off Masterclasses were delivered in person, increasing the meaningful time developing relationships and working as teams
- Early-stage businesses were brought to support the teams through climate challenges, giving a new link to the start-up ecosystem

“

“I don’t think I could recommend any improvements – the changes made this year I felt worked really well.”

– SEPI Teacher

“

“Had fun! Met loads of new people. Learnt a lot about climate change and ways we can be more sustainable. Reinforced my team working skills. Made new friends.”

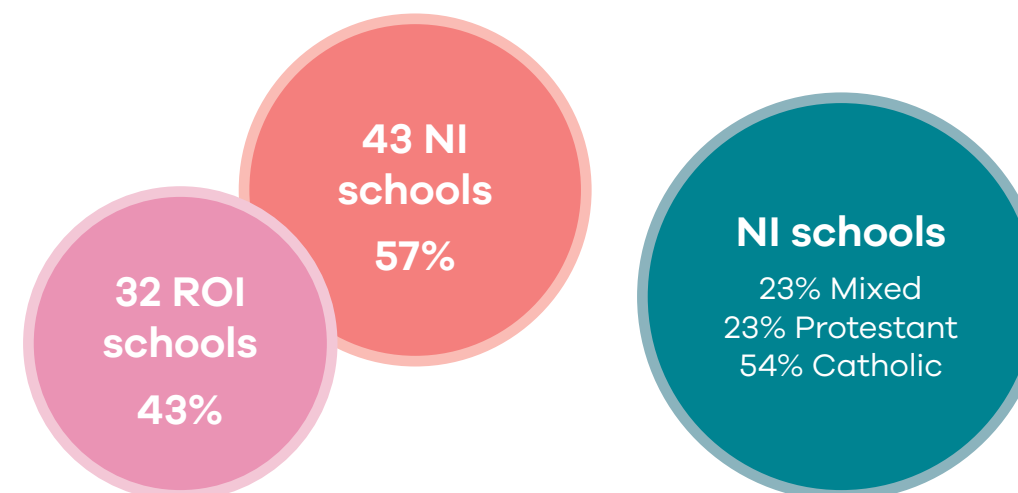
– SEPI Student

Relationship Building

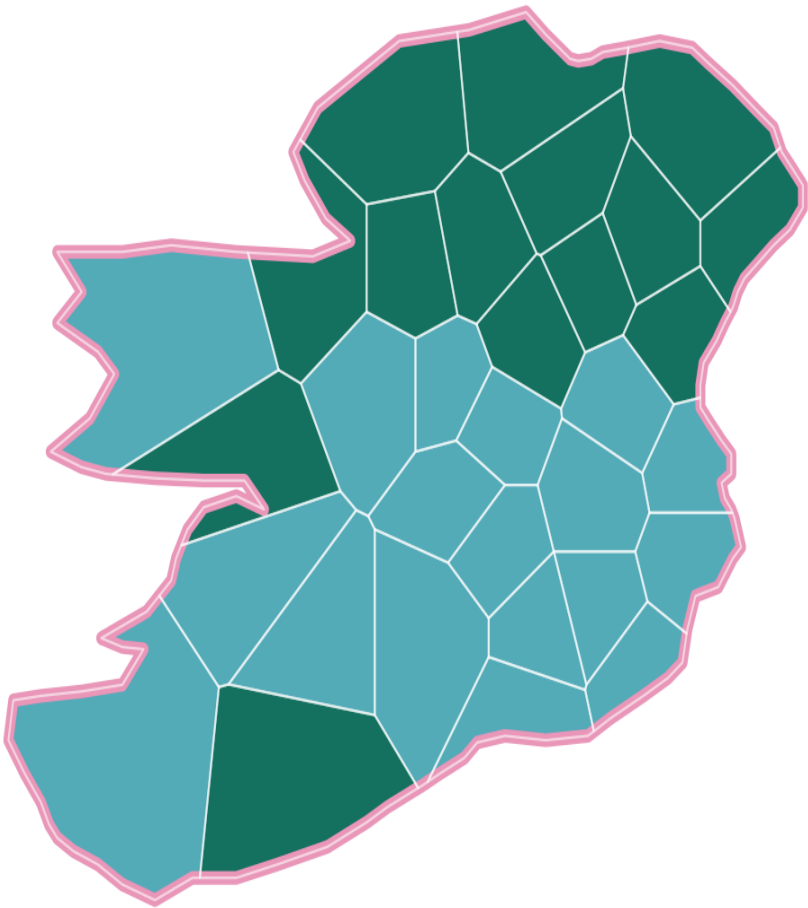
At the heart of SEPI is the belief that meaningful relationships across communities are essential for a peaceful and sustainable future. The Core Programme brings together students and educators from Northern Ireland, the Border Counties, Cork, and Galway to:

- Break down barriers and challenge stereotypes through collaboration.
- Build mutual respect, empathy, and understanding across traditional divides.
- Develop a shared sense of purpose by working on common challenges that affect all communities.

At the start of Year 2, 1107 students from 75 schools enrolled in the programme, engaging in dialogue and joint projects, creating bonds that endure well beyond the programme.



School Enrolment by Region

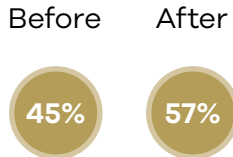


NI 57%	
Antrim	22.7%
Armagh	2.7%
Down	16.0%
Fermanagh	2.7%
L'derry	8.0%
Tyrone	5.3%

ROI 43%	
Cavan	2.7%
Cork	5.3%
Donegal	9.3%
Galway	2.7%
Leitrim	2.7%
Louth	9.3%
Monaghan	8.0%
Sligo	2.7%

Relationship Building

Proportions of students indicating they know a lot/quite a bit about other cultures and identities across the island of Ireland



Proportions of students who perceive relationships between people from different backgrounds on the island of Ireland as positive/very positive



Proportion of students who think relations between people from different backgrounds on the island of Ireland will be better/much better than now in the next few years



70%

of students said that through the project, they had opportunities to get to know people they would not normally mix with

56%

said they now have a better understanding of other communities and cultures on the island of Ireland

74%

said that after taking part, they feel more positive about people from backgrounds different to their own

Relationship Building – Student Feedback

Overwhelmingly, student feedback identified the opportunity to make friends and work as a team as the main benefit of the programme:

- “Getting to know other people outside my school.”
- “Getting to meet the new people and understand how we are similar and different especially when it comes to school and classes.”
- “Was pretty nice interacting and working together with people I don’t usually work with.”
- “Friends.”
- “Getting to meet people from across the border.”
- “New friendships.”
- “Teamwork.”
- “Increasing confidence and learning to take into account opposing opinions.”
- “Making new friends.”



Relationship Building – Teacher Feedback

- “They were able to make new friends from outside our school, which helped them to improve their confidence.”
- “They all enjoyed the social side of things, getting to meet students from a range of backgrounds and schools.”



- “Meeting other students from different backgrounds and working collaboratively.”
- “The students loved it. They worked well with their groups and had really positive things to say about that experience. They were so nervous at first being in groups with students that they had never met. They had such pride as well in their ideas being heard and getting through to the different rounds.”



Climate Action

Climate change is a global challenge that requires local leadership and creative solutions. The SEPI Core Programme integrates climate action at every stage:

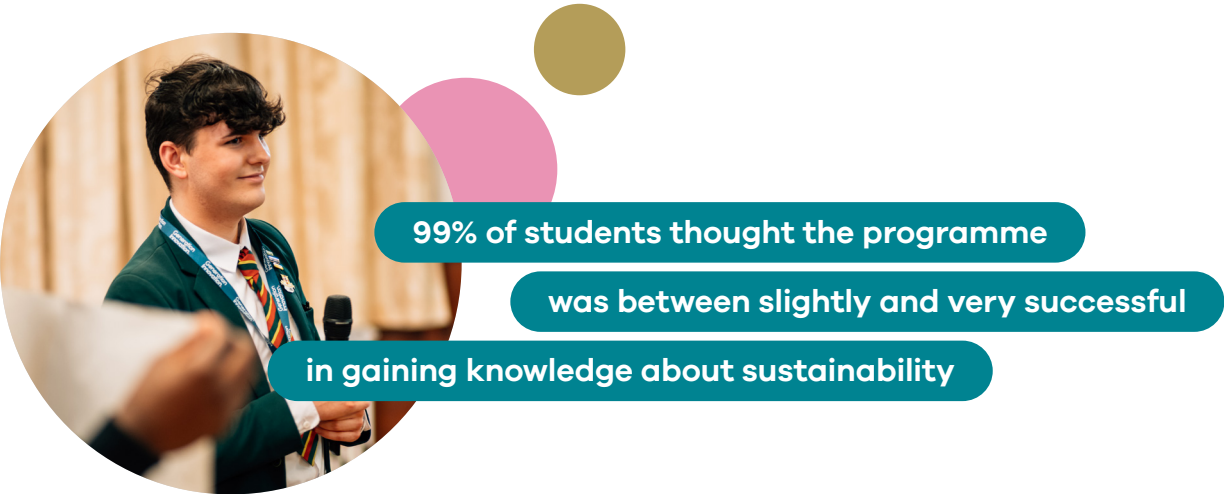
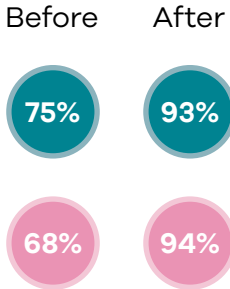
- Online learning modules in sustainability and environmental responsibility, with understandings shared between students across the island through padlet boards
- In-person “Impact Days” where students collaborate with peers to design solutions to real-world climate issues
- Online team collaboration through masterclasses and Miro boards
- In-person Pitch off events – refining ideas and selecting semi-finalists
- A Climate Summit where young people present their ideas to business leaders, policymakers, and the wider community

By linking peacebuilding with sustainability, SEPI ensures that cross-community cooperation contributes to a greener, fairer future.

Climate Action

Proportion of students reporting a good understanding of the science of climate change

Proportion of students reporting a good understanding of how businesses can address climate change



Climate Action – Student feedback

Benefits of SEPI...

- “Gaining knowledge about climate change and developing my socialising, problem solving skills.”
- “Learning more about the Science behind Climate Change.”
- “Presenting climate solutions.”
- “Understanding sustainability.”
- “Learning about how to be more aware of climate change and how to be sustainable.”



Innovation

SEPI fosters an entrepreneurial and problem-solving mindset in young people. Students and educators are introduced to:

- Design Thinking methodologies that encourage creativity, empathy, and collaboration.
- Masterclasses with entrepreneurs and innovators tackling sustainability challenges.
- Opportunities to pitch solutions and compete for Innovation Awards.

Innovation is not just about new ideas but about finding inclusive, practical ways to address pressing issues. SEPI equips participants with the tools to think differently and act boldly.



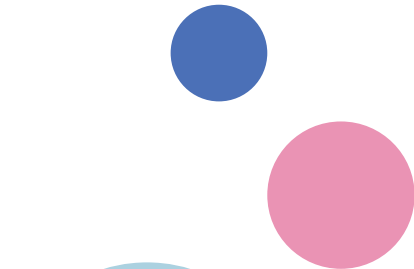
Innovation – Student Feedback

Benefits of SEPI...

“Getting out of your comfort zone and thinking outside the box to make unique ways to benefit the environment.”

“Being able to come up with solutions to problems.”

	Before	After
Proportion of students who consider themselves good at thinking of new solutions to complex problems	80%	90%
Proportion of students who consider themselves good at identifying solutions to climate problems in my community	69%	90%



“**Transformational**”

– SEPI Student
(Describing the SEPI Programme)

Skill Development

Participation in SEPI builds both personal and professional skills that will serve young people throughout their lives. Students gain:

- Teamwork, collaboration, and leadership experience.
- Decision-making and problem-solving abilities rooted in real-world contexts.
- Communication and presentation skills through pitching to panels and engaging with industry experts.

Proportions of students
who feel confident...

Before

After

Meeting new people

64%

76%

Working with other people

76%

81%

Being leader of a team

46%

51%

Explaining their ideas

62%

67%

Speaking in front of a group

40%

56%

Skill Development – Student Feedback

Benefits of SEPI...

- “
- “I gained confidence working in groups and with public speaking.”
- “I’m not very confident when meeting new people and speaking in front of a crowd but I really think that I’ve developed.”
- “I think the encouragement and understanding which we got even before going up to speak. It was understood that we were nervous and we received so much information on how to present and be calm which was brilliant.”
- “To get further skills to use in life and also to make my cv stand out.”
- “Leadership skills and better communication.”
- “Building presentation and communication skills.”
- “Improved my confidence, let me talk to new people and gained new skills!”



Skill Development – Teacher Feedback

- “
- “It gave them the opportunity to develop skills we cannot in the classroom – presenting, working collaboratively both digitally and in person with others, harnessing their creativity to come up with a business model and presenting in front of a large audience.”
- “Developing teamwork skills, thinking creatively, solving problems, presentation skills and engaging with their peers and others outside of their comfort zone.”



Professional Network

SEPI connects schools and students with businesses across the island of Ireland who work with them throughout the programme:

- Impact Days, students work alongside local businesses on live sustainability challenges.
- Mentoring, industry experts provide guidance and feedback on student projects.
- Students present directly to business leaders.

These connections help young people understand career pathways, grow their confidence, and build networks that support future opportunities. Businesses, in turn, engage directly with the next generation of leaders and innovators.



Professional Network – Student Feedback

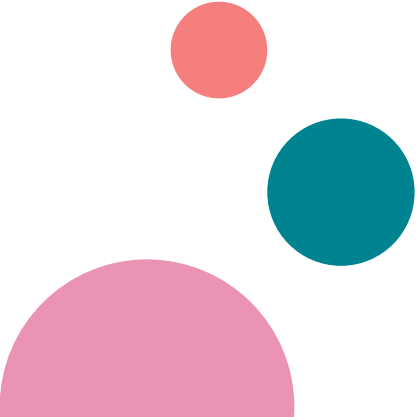
“Meeting new people and opening the potential for meaningful industry links and networking.”

“It was class talking to businesses.”

“Understanding how to appeal to businesses.”

“Opportunities to learn how businesses operate.”

97% of students said that the programme was between slightly and very successful in making connections with businesses



Professional Network – Business Partner Feedback

“Programmes like SEPI remind us why industry engagement with education matters. The young people we worked with weren’t just students, they were problem-solvers, collaborators, and innovators in the making. By partnering with education initiatives, we not only share our expertise but also learn from their fresh perspectives and creative ideas. Seeing them develop skills, confidence, and a passion for tackling real-world challenges reinforces why investing in young talent is so important. We’re proud to have played a small part in their journey, and we look forward to seeing how these emerging innovators continue to shape a brighter, more sustainable future.”

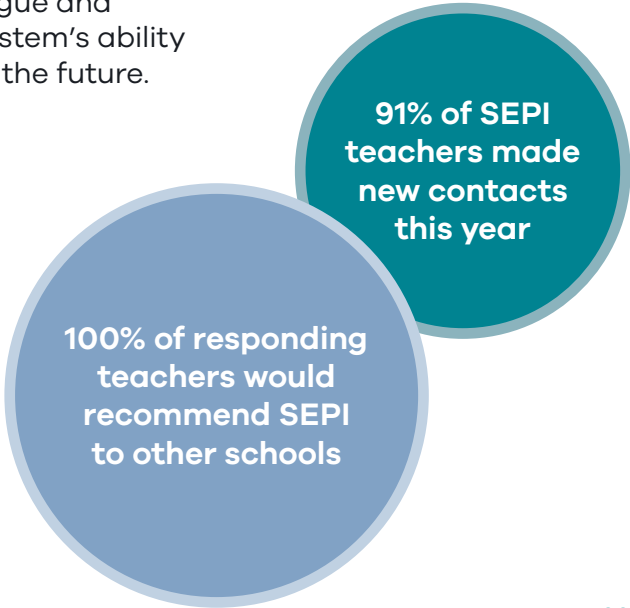
“The SEPI programme highlights the power of collaboration between education and industry. It was inspiring to work alongside students as they explored innovative solutions to clean energy and sustainable transport challenges. Their enthusiasm was impressive, and it was great to see how much they developed in terms of confidence, teamwork, and presentation skills.”

Educator Benefits

Educators play a central role in the SEPI Core Programme. The initiative offers:

- Professional development through training in SEPI’s cross-border and cross-community approach.
- Opportunities to integrate sustainability and peacebuilding themes into the classroom.
- A chance to connect with a network of schools, educators, and businesses across Ireland.

By supporting teachers as facilitators of dialogue and innovation, SEPI strengthens the education system’s ability to prepare young people for the challenges of the future.



Benefits of SEPI for the teachers

“

“Meeting with other educators and sharing experiences and learning from them in a casual social environment with no pressure. I really enjoyed the social aspect of this project and meeting new people.”

“Gave me opportunities to meet other like-minded professionals who are Shared Ed coordinators – especially being new to the role this was invaluable as there are no other opportunities for this.”

“I got the chance to meet teachers from a variety of different schools and education backgrounds.”

“Connections with different schools and seeing the students gain confidence in presenting in front of large groups.”

“Watching my students shine on stage.”



“

“For some of the students,
this is life-changing”

– SEPI Teacher
(Describing the SEPI Programme)

SEPI Year 2

1107
Students

:

75
Schools

:

Northern Ireland,
Border Counties,
Cork and Galway



- **Stronger Relationships:** More positive attitudes, New friendships across communities
- **Greater Confidence:** Teamwork, Communication, Leadership
- **Climate & Innovation:** increased Understanding and Solutions-focused thinking

Sign up for the 2026/2027 programme

Recruitment for the SEPI Core Programme is now open for the 2026/27 school year. If you are a school in Northern Ireland, the Border Counties, Cork, or Galway and would like to get involved, you can express your interest by completing the form at the following link:



Scan here
for more info!

Alternatively, if you would like to learn more about the programme before applying, please feel free to get in touch with us via email at:

SEPIteam@cooperationireland.org

The Shared Education for Positive Innovation (SEPI) programme, supported by PEACEPLUS a project managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



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working for a future together