

EU Sustainable Energy Awards: Finalists

The EU's [energy policies](#) aim to ensure that European citizens can access secure, affordable and sustainable energy supplies. The [EU Sustainable Energy Awards](#) (EUSEW Awards) acknowledge the crucial role of the private and public sector, NGOs, national and local authorities [for a climate-neutral Europe](#). Every year the European Commission recognises the most outstanding initiatives in the energy sector.

The 12 finalists will compete across 4 award categories: Engagement, Leadership, Innovation and Youth. People all around Europe can watch the finalists' videos, cast their vote and help the best project win the [2019 Citizens' Award](#)!

On Tuesday 18 June, the winners of the [EU Sustainable Energy Awards will be unveiled](#). This year it will also feature [a special category for Eastern Partnership countries](#). Follow the Awards Ceremony live via web streaming or register to attend on the [EUSEW website](#).

The awards are part of EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) that will take place in Brussels on 18-20 June 2019. Organised by the European Commission, EUSEW is now in its 14th year and is the biggest event dedicated to renewables and efficient energy use in Europe.

This year, a project from Lithuania is also among the finalists.

Educating students about energy efficiency

Name: Students Achieving Valuable Energy Savings 2 (SAVES2)

Award category: Youth

Organisation: National Union of Students of the United Kingdom

Location: Vilnius, Lithuania

Other countries involved: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania

Duration: 2017-2020

Website: <http://www.saves-project.eu>

Encouraging new energy habits

Every year in autumn, students across Europe leave for university. For many, it's their first time away from home and, research suggests, it's a good moment to get into new habits. "If you move into a new city, a new environment, you are more likely to shed old habits and take on something new", said Joanna Romanowicz, Project Manager of SAVES2, a pioneering project that aims to use this window of opportunity to teach young people about energy use.

Launched in 2017, the project operates across 7 different European countries working with about 50 universities in Lithuania, Cyprus, Ireland, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and the United Kingdom. During its lifecycle it hopes to reach more than 200,000 students, raising awareness of how they use energy in their everyday lives.

Taking action in student halls

SAVES2 aims to guide students towards better energy practices as they start out in college dorms, where an all-inclusive rental fee – that remains the same no matter how much energy is used – often encourages wasteful behaviour. To counter this, the project team sets up contests in which students compete to see which group can use the least energy. The young people act as coordinators in

dormitories, urging others towards better energy use, or write blogs on the SAVES2 website, where they share tips and tricks. The project also offers practical advice, such as switching off lights, using lids when cooking, or wearing a sweater instead of immediately turning up the heating.

The impact of these actions can be seen through energy use on college campuses. A report produced by SAVES2 on its work at Lithuania's Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, for example, reveals that thanks to increased awareness the energy use of the 3,740 students that participated in the project 2017-2018 dropped by 8%, representing a saving of around 24,000 tons of CO₂.

Protecting the vulnerable

While the project encourages a thoughtful approach to energy use, it also wants to ensure students are aware of their energy rights. The 7 participating countries were chosen as they all have high incidences of fuel poverty, both among the general population and younger people. Students, especially those based off campus, are particularly vulnerable to rental-market forces which can lead to them living in poor housing conditions.

To address this problem, the project works with students to help them make better informed choices. Location and price often determine choice of accommodation, yet young people may not realise that a cheap but draughty house will leave them with huge heating bills. And booming property markets mean some may fear asking their landlords for improvements. The SAVES2 team teaches students how to read energy bills, as well as making sure they know their rights—for instance, that landlords are legally obliged to show them a building's energy performance certificate before they commit to moving in.

A new generation of energy responsible citizens

Through its work the project is increasing awareness of energy use among young people at a critical point in their lives, helping them to gain skills that can serve them throughout their adult lives. As well as influencing their personal energy use, SAVE2 aims to inspire young people to spread the word among their friends and families and in their local communities.

“Our aim is that when students go through the educational system, they can become more energy literate, save energy at the same time and know how to make the right choices”, Romanowicz said. “It is about empowering them so that they continue making these decisions as they move through life and pass it on to their peers.”