

EcoYOU – Clean and green Minds for Environmentally Friendly Behaviour
***A1.18 Developing a Joint Study that includes a Blue-Map used to raise awareness on
environmental protection for youth in BSB regions***

Interview interpretation results – ACTIE Partner
(Moldova)- Qualitative research

Environmental education has become one of the most important areas of focus in education today, in light of climate challenges, ecosystem degradation, and the responsibility of current generations to build a sustainable future. This report compiles the insights, perspectives, and experiences of teachers and youth leaders who are actively engaged in promoting environmental education in schools, as well as environmentally conscious parents and young people, including students and volunteers.

I. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses

1.1 Understanding environmental protection

All four respondents associate environmental protection with maintaining cleanliness, reducing waste, and ensuring a safe, healthy planet for both current and future generations. They see it as a shared responsibility to protect nature from pollution and careless human behavior. Most first learned about environmental issues through school lessons, teachers, or organized activities, though some also mentioned online sources such as the internet or social media platforms.

1.2 Engagement and motivation

Their involvement includes recycling at home and school, participating in clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and avoiding littering. Motivations vary slightly: some are driven by a personal example they want to set for peers, others by a desire to see a clean environment, protect animals, or encourage collective responsibility. Two of the four have taken part in organized environmental projects (e.g., government-led clean-ups or school campaigns), which they described as positive, collaborative, and even enjoyable experiences. One explicitly stated they have never joined such a project but still maintain individual pro-environmental habits.

1.3 Challenges and barriers

Practical obstacles include a lack of infrastructure (e.g., not enough trash bins or recycling options) and limited opportunities for selective waste collection. A recurring theme is that many peers and adults are indifferent, uninformed, or not motivated, which reduces collective engagement. Cultural attitudes—such as general indifference or the perception that individual actions do not matter—were also mentioned. One respondent noted that family members themselves sometimes fail to support sustainable behaviors.

1.4 Education and awareness

Perceptions of environmental education differ: some find it effective (particularly when their schools organize specific lessons and campaigns), while others believe it is insufficient and needs to be more frequent and practical.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- integrating more interactive activities (games, workshops, competitions),
- using social media and short videos to capture youth attention,
- increasing school-based discussions about environmental risks, causes, and consequences.

As for learning methods, all respondents favor social media for its reach and appeal. Workshops, hands-on projects, and short, engaging videos (including those on TikTok or YouTube) are also considered highly effective.

II. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.

2.1 Understanding environmental education

All interviewees integrate environmental topics in their teaching or training by emphasizing the importance of protecting nature as a shared responsibility. They highlight core messages such as water and forest conservation, pollution reduction, and fostering a correct attitude towards the environment. The consensus is that early education on sustainability is crucial, with a focus on practical understanding beyond theory.

2.2 Engagement and challenges

Teachers observe that younger children tend to be more engaged in environmental issues, but interest often wanes during adolescence, posing a significant challenge. Other obstacles include competing distractions such as technology, lack of ecological lessons in schools, and insufficient family involvement. Institutional and resource barriers exist but can be overcome with commitment. There is also concern about permissive legislation and unsuitable conditions for activities like tree planting.

2.3 Effective strategies

Practical, hands-on activities such as planting trees, cleaning local areas, and involving children in community projects are recognized as the most effective methods to increase environmental awareness and encourage eco-friendly behaviors. Interactive methods like gamification, educational games, and excursions also play a valuable role. Collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local communities is already present but can be further strengthened through joint initiatives and partnerships.

2.4 Future improvements

To enhance the impact of environmental education, the interviewees recommend interdisciplinary approaches, increased practical involvement, and establishing more local green spaces or greenhouses near educational institutions. They also emphasize the importance of continuous community engagement and leadership to motivate youth out of their comfort zones. Political decision-makers can support sustainability education by funding and organizing large-scale campaigns, improving legislation, and promoting integrated, cross-sectoral projects.

Events like “Green Week” are seen as valuable tools to normalize environmental responsibility from a young age. “Green Week” refers to a period focused on environmental awareness and sustainability. During this week, activities, campaigns, or events promote eco-friendly

practices such as recycling, energy conservation, tree planting, and reducing pollution, encouraging individuals and communities to adopt greener lifestyles.

III. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses

The interviews with parents revealed key insights into their roles, challenges, and the support they perceive in promoting ecological awareness and sustainability among their children.

3.1 Role in environmental awareness

Across all three interviews, parents consistently emphasized that teaching young people about environmental protection is **very important**. They view children as the generation that will inherit the consequences of current environmental choices, making early education crucial for developing lasting, positive habits.

Parents see themselves as the **primary role models**. They stress that children learn best by observing behaviors at home: saving water and energy, avoiding littering, reducing plastic use, repairing rather than discarding, and respecting nature (e.g., not picking flowers or wasting resources).

They actively **integrate eco-friendly practices into daily routines**—turning off lights, limiting water use, choosing durable products, walking or biking instead of driving, and avoiding unnecessary purchases. Importantly, parents do not only set rules but also explain the reasons behind them, aiming to build understanding rather than blind compliance.

3.2 Challenges and perceptions

A common challenge mentioned is **external influences**: children see others—at school, in public spaces, or online—behaving differently, which can undermine family rules. Parents must continuously explain why they maintain stricter or more sustainable habits.

Another difficulty is **practical and economic convenience**. Sometimes cheaper or faster options are less sustainable, and children notice these inconsistencies. Parents acknowledge the effort needed to balance ideal behavior with real-life constraints.

Regarding perceptions of today's youth, parents believe that **young people are more aware of environmental issues** than previous generations, thanks to the internet, social media, and educational campaigns. However, they also agree that **awareness does not always lead to action**, and bridging that gap remains a significant challenge.

3.3 Support and resources

Parents feel that schools **do include environmental education**, but it is often **too theoretical and insufficiently hands-on**. They suggest more **practical projects, nature activities, and community involvement** to make environmental lessons more impactful. For additional support, parents would like access to:

- **Age-appropriate educational materials** (books, interactive apps, games, videos).
- **Workshops, local events, and family activities** that promote sustainability.
- **Financial or structural support**, such as making eco-friendly products more affordable.

They also believe that **local communities and governments** should invest in:

- Reliable **recycling infrastructure**.
- **Green spaces and bike lanes** to encourage sustainable lifestyles.

IV. Similarities and differences across groups

4.1. Common understandings of environmental protection

- Youth view environmental protection as maintaining cleanliness, reducing waste, and preserving the planet for current and future generations. It's seen as a shared responsibility to counteract pollution and careless human behavior.
- Teachers and Youth Leaders frame environmental education around protecting nature through water/forest conservation and pollution reduction, also emphasizing shared responsibility and early education.

- Parents also see environmental protection as crucial, especially since children will inherit the consequences of today's actions. They emphasize modeling sustainable behaviors at home as a primary teaching method.

Across all groups, there is a shared belief that protecting the environment is a collective duty, requiring early and consistent education and modeling of responsible behaviors.

4.2. Perceptions of current education & awareness

- Youth have mixed views: some appreciate school-based lessons and campaigns, while others feel the education is too limited or theoretical. Social media and hands-on experiences are seen as more effective.
- Teachers and Youth Leaders believe that current education lacks consistency and depth, particularly during adolescence. They stress the need for practical understanding over theory.
- Parents acknowledge schools include environmental content but feel it is often too abstract. They believe more community-based and experiential learning is needed.

All groups agree that environmental education needs to be more practical, engaging, and connected to real-life experiences.

4.3. Challenges and barriers

- Youth mention lack of infrastructure (bins, recycling options), peer and adult indifference, and cultural attitudes suggesting individual efforts don't matter. Family inconsistency is also noted.
- Teachers and Youth Leaders highlight disengagement during adolescence, limited curriculum space, and institutional challenges such as weak policies and resources.
- Parents face challenges with external influences (peers, media), economic trade-offs, and the effort to consistently model sustainable behaviors. They also feel unsupported by public systems.

Key barriers include inconsistent engagement (especially among adolescents), lack of practical infrastructure, societal indifference, and insufficient institutional or policy support.

4.4. Effective strategies & desired support

- Youth advocate for interactive activities, short videos, social media outreach, and school-based discussions. They prefer workshops and hands-on projects to traditional lessons.
- Teachers and Youth Leaders promote tree planting, clean-up drives, and community involvement. They recommend gamification, NGO partnerships, and government-led campaigns.
- Parents suggest access to age-appropriate materials, community events, and family-based workshops. They call for better infrastructure, affordability of eco-products, and green urban planning.

Effective strategies should blend digital media, community action, and practical learning. Support is needed at multiple levels—schools, families, governments, and infrastructure providers—to create a coherent and motivating educational environment.

Summary Table:		Similarities and Differences Across Groups	
Category	Youth	Parents	Teachers & Youth Leaders
Common Understandings of Environmental Protection	See it as maintaining cleanliness, reducing waste, and protecting the planet; believe it's a shared responsibility.	Emphasize early learning through role modeling at home; believe children must adopt lasting habits.	Highlight environmental protection as a shared duty, focus on resource conservation and fostering correct attitudes.
Perceptions of Current Education & Awareness	Mixed views; some find school efforts effective, others think it's too theoretical; prefer social media, videos, and practical tasks.	Believe school education is too abstract; call for more practical, family-involved learning.	Recognize current education lacks depth and consistency; advocate for practical, experience-based learning.
Challenges and Barriers	Face peer indifference, limited infrastructure (e.g., bins), and cultural attitudes that minimize individual action.	Struggle with external influences and economic constraints; note inconsistencies between ideals and real-world behaviors.	See declining interest during adolescence, lack of curriculum space, and institutional limitations as major obstacles.

Table 1: Similarities and differences across groups (from ACTIE's Interviews in Moldova)

V. Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues

1. Strengthen practical education

- Introduce regular, hands-on environmental projects (e.g., school gardens, waste audits, composting).
- Organize more clean-up events and tree-planting campaigns with measurable goals.

2. Use digital & social media strategies

- Develop short, engaging videos showing real environmental problems and solutions.
- Launch interactive social media challenges (e.g., “7 days plastic-free”) to encourage behavior change.

3. Build visible infrastructure

- Install clearly labeled recycling bins in schools and public areas.
- Provide visual boards or apps that show progress (amount of waste collected, trees planted).

4. Foster peer-Led initiatives

- Create youth ambassador programs where students lead campaigns and workshops.
- Encourage peer-to-peer teaching—youth tend to follow examples from people their age.

5. Integrate environmental topics across subjects

- Instead of treating it as a separate topic, include environmental perspectives in biology, geography, and even art or media classes.

6. Collaborate with local communities & NGOs

- Schools can partner with local organizations for workshops, field trips, and sponsorships.
- Community-level campaigns should involve both parents and children to build a shared sense of responsibility.

Conclusion

This study reveals a strong, unified belief among youth, parents, and educators that environmental protection is a shared responsibility and must be nurtured from an early age. Across all groups, there is consensus that early education is essential in shaping environmentally responsible habits that endure into adulthood.

However, current environmental education is seen as inadequate—often too theoretical, lacking practical relevance, and failing to maintain engagement over time. Youth express a clear preference for digital and interactive formats such as short videos, social media, and workshops, which they find more relatable and impactful. In contrast, parents emphasize the importance of home-based learning through role modeling and daily sustainable routines. Teachers and youth leaders focus on the systemic side, pointing to the need for curriculum reform, cross-disciplinary content, and institutional support.

Despite different perspectives, all groups identify similar challenges: weak infrastructure, social apathy, and a troubling gap between awareness and consistent action. A common concern is that adolescents tend to lose interest in environmental topics as they grow older, highlighting the need for continuous, creative engagement strategies.

Practical, hands-on activities—such as tree planting, clean-up campaigns, and gamified learning—are widely recognized as the most effective methods for fostering real behavioral change. Ultimately, the success of environmental education depends on stronger collaboration between schools, families, communities, and policymakers, working together to make sustainability a lived, accessible, and lasting value for future generations.