

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

Synthesis of interview results

This report presents the findings from the interviews with the four partners—Pro Natura (Romania), Mare Nostrum (Romania), ACTIE (Moldova), and NALAG (Georgia).

The interviews constitute one of the four research instruments applied in the framework of the A1.18 Joint Study. A total of 46 participants were included in this process, carefully selected to reflect different perspectives relevant to the study's objectives. Among them were 22 young people, whose views provide direct insight into youth experiences and needs; 10 parents, who offer a complementary understanding shaped by their roles in family life and upbringing; 11 teachers, representing the educational environment and its influence on young people's development; and 3 youth leaders, whose contributions reflect the role of community engagement and leadership in shaping youth trajectories. The inclusion of these diverse categories of respondents ensures a multidimensional understanding of the issues under investigation and enhances the validity of the study's findings.

A1.18 Interview analysis- Pro Natura Partner (Romania)

The report from the Pro Natura partner gathers insights from 3 teachers and youth leaders, 3 parents, and 7 students and young volunteers.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Youth's responses

- **1.1 Understanding environmental protection:** Environmental protection requires constant and conscious involvement, not just isolated actions. Young people's motivation stems from a desire to live in a healthy environment and a recognition of their individual responsibility. They understand it as essential for preserving nature, reducing human impact, and promoting sustainable living. Some define it practically, such as minimizing their carbon footprint or recycling, while others see it as a moral responsibility.

- **1.2 Engagement and motivation:** Young people's involvement varies, with some actively recycling, avoiding single-use products, and participating in clean-ups or tree planting, while others express interest in future involvement. Motivations include the genuine desire to live in a clean environment and to reduce negative impacts on the planet.
- **1.3 Challenges and barriers:** Barriers to a sustainable lifestyle include the consumerist way of life, cultural influences, and social pressures. Economic factors like the higher cost of eco-friendly products and the lack of accessible resources also pose challenges. Another significant obstacle is the lack of strong environmental education in schools and families, as well as the absence of positive role models.
- **1.4 Education and awareness:** Current environmental education is perceived as insufficient and often too theoretical. Participants suggest it should be more practical, interactive, and integrated across subjects. Social media and short, engaging content are seen as effective tools to reach young people.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Teachers' and Youth Leaders' responses

- **2.1 Understanding environmental education:** Teachers integrate environmental topics into their lessons through thematic projects, practical activities, and events like Earth Day. Key messages emphasize individual responsibility, respect for nature, and the consequences of inaction.
- **2.2 Engagement and challenges:** Student involvement is generally positive, especially among younger children who are guided by dedicated teachers. However, challenges include a lack of time due to a crowded curriculum, limited resources, and inconsistent collaboration with local authorities.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Parents responses

- **Role and perspective:** The report includes insights from "environmentally conscious parents." This implies that parents are not just passive observers but are actively involved in fostering environmental awareness. However, it also identifies a significant challenge: a lack of strong environmental education within families.
- **Key insights:** This perspective highlights a gap where parents may want to contribute but lack the necessary knowledge or resources to do so effectively. The report's conclusion that environmental education should be "practical, consistent, and engaging" applies not only to schools but also to the family unit, underscoring the need for a collaborative approach.

A1.18 Interview analysis- Mare Nostrum Partner (Romania)

The Mare Nostrum partner's report also compiled insights from teachers and youth leaders, parents, and students. The interviews were carried out with a variety of stakeholders – 6 youths, 3 educators/teachers, 3 youth workers, and 3 parents – allowing us to explore in depth their perspectives on environmental education, motivations, and perceived barriers to pro-environmental behaviour.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Youth's responses

- **1.1 Understanding environmental protection:** Environmental protection is understood as respecting and caring for nature and the planet. Initial awareness often begins in primary school through lessons, educational programs, and media exposure.
- **1.2 Engagement and motivation:** Young people engage in activities like recycling, volunteering, and conservation. Their motivation comes from the urgency of environmental problems and a desire to contribute positively to the planet's health.
- **1.3 Challenges and barriers:** Barriers include personal limitations like family influence, economic factors such as the high cost of eco-friendly products, and social influences like peer attitudes and a lack of law enforcement. Gaps in infrastructure, such as insufficient recycling bins, also reduce motivation.

- **1.4 Education and awareness:** Current environmental education is considered insufficient and too theoretical. More compulsory and engaging education is needed. Social media is viewed as the most effective channel to reach youth with brief and relatable messages. Workshops and documentaries are also preferred learning methods.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Teachers' and Youth Leaders' responses

- **2.1 Understanding environmental education:** Teachers integrate environmental topics into various subjects, even non-science ones like foreign languages. They use texts, videos, and projects to convey key messages. The main messages are that every individual has a role in protecting the planet and that even small daily actions matter.
- **2.2 Engagement and challenges:** Student engagement varies by age. While young children respond well to interactive activities, some educators note that older students don't always internalize environmental values. Challenges include a lack of time in the formal curriculum, insufficient age-appropriate materials, and institutional resistance to change.
- **2.3 Effective strategies:** Hands-on, participatory learning is most effective, with projects funded by initiatives like Erasmus+ being particularly successful. Role modeling by adults is also a key strategy. Interactive methods like gamification and educational excursions are highly effective in engaging students.
- **2.4 Future improvements:** Recommended improvements include curriculum reform to include environmental topics across all subjects, continuous professional development for teachers, and increased funding for projects and materials. Policymakers can support educators by allocating budgets for green infrastructure and involving teachers and students in decision-making.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Parents responses

- **Role and perspective:** Parents are recognized as key stakeholders who are concerned about environmental pollution. The report highlights their crucial role as influencers and role models in shaping a child's perception of environmental issues. It emphasizes that the family and home environment are fundamental to promoting sustainable behaviors.
- **Key insights:** Parents' actions, such as sorting waste and making conscious purchasing decisions, are seen as vital for teaching children about responsibility and sustainability. They are a primary source of information and inspiration, as their behaviors directly influence their children's habits. The document suggests that a lack of such role modeling at home can be a barrier.

A1.18 Interview analysis- NALAG Partner (Georgia)

This report compiles insights from educators and youth leaders, parents and 5 young people.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Youth's responses

- **1.1 Understanding environmental protection:** Young respondents have a deep emotional and ethical connection to environmental protection, viewing it as a personal and moral obligation. They often liken nature to personal property and are motivated by the desire to leave a clean world for future generations.
- **1.2 Engagement and motivation:** Youth are actively involved in school-organized activities like clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and creative recycling. Their engagement is largely intrinsic, driven by a personal sense of duty, but peer influence also plays a role.
- **1.3 Challenges and barriers:** Key barriers include infrastructure issues such as a lack of waste bins and poor waste management systems, especially in rural areas. Behavioral norms like littering also persist and discourage sustainable habits. Institutional conflicts, such as balancing academic demands with environmental campaigns, were also noted.

- **1.4 Education and awareness:** Students strongly critique current environmental education, seeing it as overly theoretical. They prefer interactive, hands-on learning, creative approaches, and dedicated time for environmental projects. Social media is considered a powerful tool for awareness-raising.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Teachers' and Youth Leaders' responses

- **2.1 Understanding environmental education:** Interviewed teachers demonstrate a practical and integrated approach, incorporating environmental themes into regular lessons using experiential learning methods like clean-up campaigns, field trips, and debates.
- **2.2 Engagement and challenges:** Students are described as highly engaged and enthusiastic, especially when learning is interactive. Teachers face challenges such as resource constraints, curriculum rigidity, and limited inter-school collaboration.
- **2.3 Effective strategies:** Teachers have adopted innovative strategies like creative learning through poster contests and interactive games. Partnering with external actors like NGOs and using digital outreach are also effective.
- **2.4 Future improvements:** To increase the impact of environmental education, teachers suggest adjusting the curriculum for more flexibility, increasing funding and institutional support, and encouraging peer learning.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Parents responses

- **Role and perspective:** The parental perspective is highlighted as **crucial and foundational**. The document states that environmental values are first instilled at home, through consistent role modeling and early education.
- **Key insights:** This finding reinforces the idea that the family is the first and most important classroom for environmental values. Parents are seen as responsible for a child's foundational awareness, which is later strengthened by schools and the community. The report also notes that parents face the same practical barriers as everyone else, such as the lack of recycling and waste disposal infrastructure, which makes it difficult to turn good intentions into action.

A1.18 Interview analysis- ACTIE Partner (Moldova)

This report includes insights from 4 teachers and youth leaders, 3 parents, and 4 young people.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Youth's responses

- **1.1 Understanding environmental protection:** Youth associate environmental protection with cleanliness, waste reduction, and ensuring a healthy planet for future generations. They see it as a shared responsibility to protect nature from pollution and careless human behavior.
- **1.2 Engagement and motivation:** Their involvement includes recycling, participating in clean-up campaigns, and tree planting. Motivations are driven by setting a personal example for peers, a desire for a clean environment, and promoting collective responsibility.
- **1.3 Challenges and barriers:** Practical obstacles include a lack of infrastructure, such as not enough trash bins or recycling options. A recurring theme is that many peers and adults are indifferent, which reduces collective engagement. Cultural attitudes and permissive legislation are also noted as barriers.
- **1.4 Education and awareness:** Perceptions of environmental education differ, with some finding it effective and others believing it is insufficient. Suggestions for improvement include more interactive activities and using social media and short videos to capture attention.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Teachers' and Youth Leaders' responses

- **2.1 Understanding environmental education:** Interviewees integrate environmental topics by emphasizing shared responsibility and highlighting core messages like water and forest conservation. The consensus is that early education is crucial, focusing on practical understanding beyond theory.
- **2.2 Engagement and challenges:** Teachers observe that younger children are more engaged, but interest often wanes during adolescence. Other obstacles include competing distractions like technology, lack of specific ecological lessons, and insufficient family involvement. Institutional barriers and permissive legislation also pose challenges.

- **2.3 Effective strategies:** Practical, hands-on activities like planting trees and cleaning local areas are considered the most effective methods. Interactive methods like gamification and excursions also play a valuable role.
- **2.4 Future improvements:** Interviewees recommend interdisciplinary approaches, increased practical involvement, and establishing more local green spaces near schools. They also suggest that policymakers support education by funding large-scale campaigns and improving legislation.

Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed Parents responses

- **Role and perspective:** Parents were among the groups interviewed, and their perspective is considered essential. The report points to a lack of family involvement as a challenge in environmental education, indicating a need for a stronger partnership between schools and families.
- **Key insights:** The document emphasizes that home-based learning, driven by role modeling and daily sustainable routines, is a powerful tool. The report suggests that when parents are indifferent or uninvolved, it can undermine the efforts of teachers and youth leaders. This highlights the need for family engagement strategies to ensure that the messages received at school are reinforced at home.

Comparative narrative study: perceptions and challenges in environmental education in Romania, Moldova, and Georgia

This comprehensive report, based on conclusions from interviews with partners Pro Natura, Mare Nostrum (Romania), ACTIE (Moldova), and NALAG (Georgia), analyzes the state of environmental education, highlighting similarities, differences, and the specific context of each country.

General conclusions: A shared ground of awareness

All partners recognize environmental education as essential in facing current climate challenges. There is a solid consensus that young people are aware of the importance of environmental protection. They actively participate in actions such as recycling, cleanup campaigns,

and tree planting. Their motivation stems from the desire to live in a healthy environment, contribute to positive change, and leave a cleaner world for future generations.

However, a recurring theme across all countries is the perception that current environmental education is **insufficient and excessively theoretical**. Young people and educators advocate for a more practical, interactive, and reality-based approach that transforms knowledge into concrete actions.

Similarities: Shared challenges and solutions

Regardless of the country, the interviews reveal a common set of challenges and proposed solutions.

Common challenges:

- **Lack of infrastructure:** A major issue is deficient infrastructure, such as the lack of recycling bins and adequate waste management systems. This limits practical actions and discourages sustainable behaviors.
- **Theory vs. practice:** Theoretical, static activities fail to maintain the interest of young people.
- **Social influences and lack of role models:** The pressures of consumer society and the indifference of some adults or peers undermine collective commitment.
- **Economic barriers:** The higher cost of eco-friendly products is cited as an obstacle to adopting a sustainable lifestyle.
- **Rigidity of the educational system:** Lack of time in the school curriculum and a rigid administrative framework limit the possibility of consistently integrating environmental topics.

Common strategies and solutions:

- **Interactive and practical methods:** All partners emphasize the effectiveness of hands-on activities, such as tree planting, cleanup campaigns, workshops, and community projects.
- **The role of social media:** Social media and short video content are considered essential tools for reaching and raising awareness among young people.

- **Inter-institutional collaboration:** Stronger collaboration is recommended among schools, NGOs, local authorities, and families to create interactive programs and ensure coherent support.

Country-specific analysis and notable differences

Romania (Mare Nostrum and PRO NATURA GALATI)

- **Vision of education:** Both Romanian organizations view environmental education as a process of empowering future citizens. There is a strong emphasis on long-term impact and the individual role of each person, even through small actions like turning off lights or reducing water consumption.
- **Specific challenges:** In addition to the lack of time and resources, Pro Natura highlights the absence of positive role models in society. Mare Nostrum emphasizes the difficulty of maintaining long-term student engagement, especially among teenagers, who do not always internalize environmental values.
- **Proposed solutions:** It is suggested that environmental education be introduced into the daily routines of schools and that the curriculum be reformed to integrate environmental themes across all subjects.

Georgia (NALAG)

- **Vision of environmental protection:** Young people in Georgia demonstrate a deep emotional and ethical connection to the environment, which they perceive as a moral obligation or even "personal property."
- **Specific challenges:** NALAG identifies infrastructure problems, such as the lack of trash cans in rural areas, as a primary practical barrier. It also mentions a difficulty in balancing academic requirements with participation in environmental campaigns. Unlike their Romanian counterparts, the Georgian partner notes that economic and social barriers are not mentioned as frequently.

- **Proposed solutions:** A special emphasis is placed on improving waste management infrastructure and systematic institutional support. It is also proposed to value the feedback of young people in project planning and curriculum design.

Moldova (ACTIE)

- **Vision of environmental protection:** Young people in Moldova define environmental protection as maintaining cleanliness, reducing waste, and ensuring a healthy planet for future generations.
- **Specific challenges:** In addition to the lack of infrastructure, ACTIE highlights the social and cultural indifference of many adults and peers. An important challenge is the decrease in young people's interest in environmental issues as they transition from childhood to adolescence. There is also concern about permissive legislation.
- **Proposed solutions:** The creation of local green spaces and greenhouses near schools is recommended. It is also suggested that policymakers fund large-scale campaigns and improve legislation.

Final conclusions

This comparative study demonstrates that while there is a common denominator in the awareness of the importance of environmental education, the approach and challenges vary slightly depending on the national context.

- **Essential common points:** All countries agree that education must be more practical and less theoretical, using modern tools such as social media. All partners also indicate the need for better inter-sectoral collaboration.
- **Regional specifics:** While Romanian partners focus on integrating environmental themes into school routines and individual responsibility, the Georgian partner emphasizes institutional support and a solid infrastructure. The Moldovan partner highlights the need to combat social indifference and create concrete green spaces within the school environment.

In conclusion, the will to create a sustainable future exists among young people in all three countries. Now, the main mission is to build a solid framework—based on practical education, adequate infrastructure, and institutional support—that allows this desire to transform into concrete and lasting actions.