

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***

Consolidated Report on environmental attitudes and behaviors
Synthesis of Focus Group Results

The four partner focus groups (Romania – Pro Natura, Mare Nostrum, Moldova- ACTIE; Georgia – NALAG) were facilitated with the aim of exploring **learning preferences, motivational factors, barriers, and solutions** for youth environmental engagement. Participants included youth (secondary school students) and adult stakeholders (teachers, parents, NGOs, municipal representatives).

The four focus group reports explore similar themes related to environmental protection from the perspectives of both youth and adults. While each location has unique findings, a clear set of commonalities and differences emerge, particularly between the generational groups.

Ground rules were observed across groups: respect for differing opinions, confidentiality, active participation, and voluntary consent. Based on the four reports, here is a consolidated comparative analysis of the findings from the focus group meetings.

1. Pressing environmental issues

Across all four locations, participants identified pollution as the most urgent environmental issue.

- **Youth:** Young people in Georgia mentioned stray dogs as a pressing local issue alongside plastic waste in rivers and illegal dumping. They also noted poor infrastructure, lack of green spaces, and air pollution from vehicle emissions. The youth in Moldova and Romania identified a similar range of issues, including air and water pollution, deforestation, and climate change. Highlighted visible issues like pollution, plastic waste, lack of recycling, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** The adult groups focused on issues with a tangible, immediate impact on public health, such as air and water contamination. They emphasized

waste mismanagement, the lack of recycling facilities, and biodiversity loss. They also noted systemic issues like insufficient environmental regulation and the fast-fashion sector. Stressed systemic problems — biodiversity loss, poor waste management, air/water pollution, and inadequate enforcement of policies.

Similarities: All groups, regardless of location or age, consistently named **air and water pollution** and **waste management** as top concerns.

Differences: Youth groups were more likely to mention a broader range of topics, including **emerging issues** like microplastics, light pollution, and disinformation. Adults, on the other hand, focused on **systemic and structural problems** like institutional responsibility, economic factors, and policy.

2. Motivation for participation

The motivations for participating in environmental activities were largely aligned across all groups, centered on a sense of responsibility and concern for the future.

- **Youth:** Young people are driven by a sense of **personal responsibility** and the desire to leave a better world for future generations. The idea of "doing it for yourself" and not needing external motivation was a strong theme. They also feel motivated by being part of a community that cares. Youth are motivated by love for nature, personal responsibility, visible change, and the wish to leave a cleaner world for future generations.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Adults are motivated by a desire to protect their own health and that of their families from pollution-related risks. They also see themselves as **role models** for young people and children, feeling a strong sense of responsibility to set an example. Adults are motivated by their role as models for children, community pride, and the health/safety of their families.

Similarities: Both generations share a core motivation of concern for the **future of the planet** and future generations. The desire to contribute to the "common good" was a shared value.

Differences: The youth's motivation is more idealistic and based on personal choice, whereas adults' motivation is often linked to their **parental or community role** and their desire to show a tangible impact.

3. Preferred learning channels and methods in education

There was a clear consensus that current environmental education is too theoretical and needs to be more engaging.

- **Youth:** Young people have a strong preference for **interactive, experiential, and digital methods**. They mentioned workshops, hands-on activities, games, and competitions. They are also highly influenced by visual and audio content from platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and documentaries.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Adults also favor **practical and experiential methods**, such as clean-ups, educational visits, and volunteering. They value documentaries, webinars, and discussions with experts. For them, learning is most effective when it is connected to everyday life and has a visible impact.

Similarities: Both groups agree on the importance of **practical activities, visual media**, and the need for environmental education to be more hands-on and less theoretical. They also noted that education is not equally accessible in urban versus rural areas.

Differences: The youth's preference for **gamification** and learning through "play" is a unique element, while adults prioritize methods that demonstrate direct, tangible applicability and social impact.

- **Youth:** Prefer digital media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube), apps, and gamification.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Prefer documentaries, workshops, conferences, and structured materials, but are open to digital formats when credible.

Preferred learning methods

- **Youth:** Gamification, short videos, social media campaigns, experiential learning (tree planting, clean-ups), interactive apps.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Practical workshops, interactive discussions with experts, documentaries, and structured school-based lessons.

4. Environmental topics of interest

- **Youth:** Recycling, reducing plastics, biodiversity, clean energy, sustainable transport, climate change.
- **Georgia (NALAG):** Emphasis on clean water, air pollution, and public health.
- **Romania (all partners):** Strong focus on education in schools, biodiversity, and reducing waste.

5. Barriers to engagement and involvement

Across all groups, the barriers to adopting a sustainable lifestyle were remarkably similar, pointing to systemic and social challenges.

- **Youth:** The youth groups frequently cited a lack of **local infrastructure** (e.g., recycling bins), the high cost of eco-friendly products, and a lack of support from family and peers. They also feel hindered by a lack of positive role models and a general "it's not urgent" mentality. Lack of infrastructure (bins, collection points), peer pressure, misinformation, lack of rural opportunities, cost of eco-products.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Adults also pointed to the lack of **infrastructure** and the high cost of products. They added a strong emphasis on the lack of clear, consistent **local policies** and the passive attitude of some community members. They believe that political and social challenges often divert attention from environmental priorities. **Adults:** Lack of consistent policies, insufficient teacher training, weak enforcement, limited infrastructure.

Similarities: All groups identified **lack of infrastructure**, high costs, and insufficient institutional support as major obstacles.

Differences: Adults are more focused on the **systemic, policy-level barriers**, while the youth are more sensitive to **social barriers** like peer pressure and the lack of accessible opportunities.

5. Social media and digital platforms

Role of Social Media

Social media is a significant tool for both young and adult participants, but they use and perceive it differently.

- **Youth:** Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram are central to how young people learn about environmental issues, campaigns, and simple solutions. They use it to share information, find local events, and mobilize peers.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Adults also see social media as a powerful tool for awareness and promotion. They believe that short, fun videos and engaging local influencers can be very effective.

Similarities: Both generations agree that social media is an **extremely effective tool** for raising awareness and sharing information.

Differences: The youth view social media as a **primary source** of information and inspiration, whereas adults see it more as a **promotional tool** that needs to be supported by credible sources like NGOs or experts.

- Seen as **highly influential** across all groups, but concerns exist about misinformation, superficial content, and rural access gaps.

6. Brainstorming solutions

- **Shared proposals:** More clean-up campaigns, tree planting, awareness workshops, gamified school competitions, and youth–parent intergenerational projects.

Ranking sustainable behaviours (common top choices)

1. Reducing single-use plastics.
2. Recycling and proper waste management.
3. Planting trees and greening public spaces.
4. Energy-saving practices at home/school.
5. Promoting sustainable transport.

What could improve environmental education and engagement?

- **Youth:** Mandatory environmental classes, eco-clubs in schools, more practical outdoor lessons, locally tailored campaigns.
- **Teachers, trainers and parents:** Better teacher training, engaging influencers for campaigns, offering awards/contests for eco-projects, more policy support and municipal involvement.

Participants expressed that the sessions were:

- **Engaging** — especially interactive elements (games, debates, brainstorming).
- **Inclusive** — youth felt their opinions were valued.
- **Useful** — adults appreciated sharing perspectives with youth.

Suggested improvements: more time for brainstorming, more structured follow-up with authorities, and ensuring rural participants have equal representation.

KEY JOINT CONCLUSIONS

1. **Youth = pragmatic, digital, action-driven.** Their activism is powered by personal responsibility and digital tools.
2. **Adults = systemic, policy-oriented, role models.** They highlight structures (education, community, authority involvement).
3. **Common barriers:** lack of infrastructure, high costs of eco-products, rural–urban inequality, weak education delivery, misinformation.
4. **Shared vision:** Need for **practical, engaging, community-based environmental education**, supported equally by schools, NGOs, and authorities.
5. **Recommendation:** Combine youth-driven innovation (apps, social media, gamification) with adult systemic backing (curriculum reform, municipal infrastructure, policy enforcement).

Overall Conclusions

The reports reveal a generational divide in perspective and approach. Young people are digital natives who see environmental action through the lens of individual choice, social media influence, and interactive learning. They are motivated by curiosity and personal responsibility. Adults, meanwhile, approach environmental issues with a more systemic, practical mindset, focused on community impact, family responsibility, and policy-level change.

To create an effective environmental strategy, it is crucial to combine these two perspectives: leverage the digital-first approach and interactive methods favored by the youth, while simultaneously addressing the systemic and infrastructural barriers identified by adults.