



**Joint Study that includes a BluE-Map used
to raise awareness on environmental
protection for youth in BSB regions
(*Activity 1.18*)**

Contents

Introduction	6
I) Survey analysis- Quantitative research.....	8
Section 1: Demographics.....	8
Section 2: Knowledge of Environmental Concepts.....	11
Section 3: Engagement in pro-Environmental behaviours	15
Section 4: Barriers to Sustainable Practices	17
Section 5: Learning preferences and interests	19
Final comments from respondents.....	21
II) Interview interpretation conclusions – ACTIE Partner (Moldova) - Qualitative research.....	22
II.1 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses	23
1.1 Understanding environmental protection	23
1.2 Engagement and motivation	23
1.3 Challenges and barriers	23
1.4 Education and awareness.....	24
II.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.....	24
2.1 Understanding environmental education	24
2.2 Engagement and challenges.....	24
2.3 Effective strategies	25
2.4 Future improvements	25
II.3 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses	25
3.1 Role in environmental awareness	26
3.2 Challenges and perceptions	26
3.3 Support and resources.....	27
II.4 Similarities and differences across groups.....	27
4.1. Common understandings of environmental protection	27
4.2. Perceptions of current education and awareness	28
4.3. Challenges and barriers	28
4.4. Effective strategies and desired support	28
Summary Table: Similarities and differences across groups.....	29
II. 5 Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues	30
Conclusion.....	31
III. Interview interpretation conclusions – PRO NATURA GALATI Partner (Romania)	32
III.1 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses	32
1.1 Understanding environmental protection	32
1.2 Engagement and motivation	33
1.3 Challenges and barriers	33
1.4 Education and awareness.....	34
III.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.....	35
2.1 Understanding environmental education	35

2.2	Engagement and challenges.....	36
2.3	Effective strategies	36
2.4	Future improvements	37
III.3	Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses	38
3.1	Role in environmental awareness	38
3.2	Challenges and perceptions	38
3.3	Support and resources.....	39
	Similarities and differences across groups	40
	Summary Table: Similarities and differences across groups.....	41
	Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues	42
	Conclusion.....	43
	IV. Interviews interpretation conclusions - Mare Nostrum partner (Romania)	44
IV.1	Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses	44
1.1	Understanding environmental protection	44
1.2	Engagement and motivation	44
1.3	Challenges and barriers	44
1.4	Education and awareness.....	45
IV.2	Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.....	45
2.1	Understanding environmental education	45
2.2	Engagement and challenges.....	47
2.3	Effective strategies	48
2.4	Future improvements	50
IV.3	Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses.....	51
3.1	Role in environmental awareness	52
3.2	Challenges and perceptions	52
3.3	Support and resources.....	53
	Comprehensive interpretation of interviews on ecological awareness.....	54
IV.4	Interpretation of interview conclusions by group.....	54
4.1.	Youth perspectives	54
4.2.	Parent perspectives	55
4.3.	Teacher & Youth leaders perspectives	56
IV.5	Similarities and differences across groups	57
5.1.	Common understandings of environmental protection	57
5.2.	Perceptions of current education & awareness.....	58
5.3.	Challenges and barriers	58
5.4.	Effective strategies and desired support	59
	Summary Table: Similarities and differences across groups.....	59
IV.6	Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues.....	61
	V. Interviews interpretations conclusions - NALAG partner (Georgia)	63
V.1	Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses	63
1.1	Understanding environmental protection	63
1.2	Engagement and motivation	63
1.3	Challenges and barriers	63
1.4	Education and awareness.....	64

V.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.....	65
2.1 Understanding environmental education	65
2.2 Engagement and challenges.....	65
2.3 Effective strategies	65
2.4 Future improvements	66
V.3. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses	67
3.1 Role in environmental awareness	67
3.2 Challenges and perceptions	67
3.3 Support and resources.....	67
V.4. Similarities and differences across groups	68
4.1. Common understandings of environmental protection	68
4.2. Perceptions of current education & awareness.....	69
4.3. Challenges and barriers	69
4.4. Effective strategies and desired support	70
V.5 Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues	71
Conclusion: A unified call for action	72
VI. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner ACTIE (Moldova).....	73
VII. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner PRO NATURA GALATI(Romania) .	83
VIII. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner Mare Nostrum (Romania)	85
IX. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner NALAG (Georgia)	94
X. Consolidated report on environmental attitudes and behaviors.....	103
Pressing environmental issues	103
Motivation for participation.....	104
Preferred learning channels and methods in education	105
Preferred learning methods.....	106
Role of Social Media	107
Brainstorming solutions.....	108
Ranking sustainable behaviours (common top choices).....	108
KEY JOINT CONCLUSIONS	109
Overall Conclusions	109
XI. Observation collecting report	110
1. General information.....	110
2. Participant engagement and interaction.....	110
3. Learning methods and preferred engagement approaches.....	113
4. Environmental topics of interest.....	114
5. Challenges and barriers to engagement	114
6. Environmental mapping and findings.....	115
7. Recommendations for targeted interventions	115
Key recommendations	116
Engagement and behaviours	117
Concerns raised.....	117
Environmental hotspots	118
8. Additional observations and notes.....	118
<i>Overall Observations and Conclusions</i>	118



XII. Guidance and Recommendations.....	119
Regional-level recommendations (all Black Sea states).....	127
Recommendations for Romania	128
Recommendations for Moldova	128
Recommendations for Georgia	129
Cross-cutting tools and policy instruments	129
Suggested first steps	130

Joint Study that includes a BluE-Map used to raise awareness on environmental protection for youth in BSB regions

(Activity 1.18)

Introduction

As part of Activity A1.18, the Joint Study on how young people across the BSB region understand and engage with environmental protection was successfully completed and launched. The research applied a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, interviews, and focus groups to deliver both broad statistical insights and deeper personal perspectives.

Quantitative research:

A **structured questionnaire** was distributed to young people, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders through online platforms, schools, and youth networks. The **survey** explored knowledge of environmental concepts, current sustainable practices, and preferred learning methods. In total, were collected 444 responses from diverse geographic areas, ensuring a representative and well-balanced sample.

Qualitative research:

To complement the survey, **semi-structured interviews and focus groups** were carried out to capture motivations, barriers, and attitudes toward environmental action.

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.

Focus groups: Each project partner implemented two sessions, engaging over 30 participants per session. Participants were stratified by age group and role to ensure balanced representation and comparability of perspectives. This structure facilitated substantive discussions on environmental challenges, educational priorities, and mechanisms for enhancing youth engagement. In total, the focus groups convened more than 240 participants, providing a robust qualitative basis for identifying needs and potential interventions.

Together, these findings revealed not only general trends but also personal stories and community insights, providing a holistic understanding of youth awareness and engagement. The evidence gathered directly shaped the recommendations of the Joint Study and supported the development of the BluE-Map – a practical tool created to raise awareness and inspire environmental action among young people in the BSB region. Taken together, these findings highlight not only overall trends but also individual experiences and community perspectives, offering a comprehensive view of youth awareness and engagement. The collected evidence directly informed the recommendations of the Joint Study and contributed to the creation of the BluE-Map – a practical tool designed to raise awareness and motivate environmental action among young people in the BSB region.

The final Joint Study report integrates quantitative results, qualitative insights, and field **observations** from project activities. It presents both measurable patterns and nuanced perspectives, offering a strong evidence base for promoting youth participation in environmental protection. This report combines quantitative data, qualitative insights, and field observations from project activities. It captures both measurable patterns and more nuanced viewpoints, providing a solid evidence base for strengthening youth participation in environmental protection.

I) Survey analysis- Quantitative research

One of the key tools employed in the Joint Study methodology is a survey questionnaire specifically designed to capture the perspectives of young people from all partner countries. The questionnaire served as an important means of collecting first-hand insights into the experiences, opinions, and expectations of the younger generation, allowing for a comparative analysis across different national contexts.

To ensure broad participation and inclusivity, the survey was distributed through multiple channels. For young people enrolled in schools and universities, teachers played a supportive role in facilitating access and encouraging completion of the questionnaire. At the same time, social media platforms were used as an additional dissemination tool, reaching those outside formal education and ensuring that a more diverse range of voices was represented.

This dual approach helped maximize participation and contributed to the richness and reliability of the collected data.

Section 1: Demographics

Age group

A total of 444 young people, aged between 12 and 30, completed the survey questionnaire. The majority of respondents (63%) were in the 12–17 age group, reflecting a strong representation of adolescents still in formal education. Meanwhile, 28% were aged 18–24, a stage often associated with higher education or early entry into the labour market, and 9% fell within the 25–30 age group, providing valuable insights from young people who are further along in their personal and professional development.

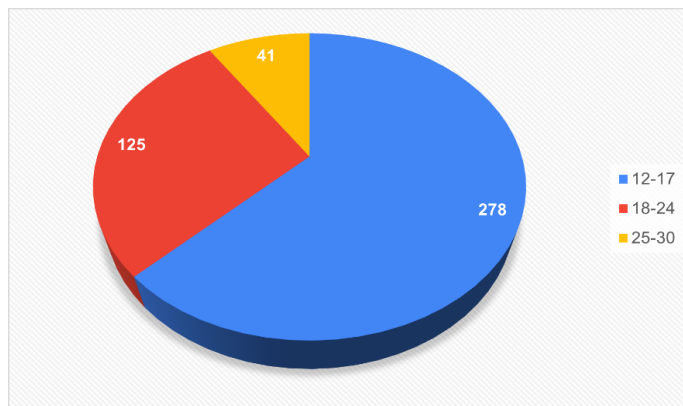


Fig. 1 The participation rate of survey respondents by age group

Educational institution enrolment

The vast majority of respondents (93%) are currently enrolled in an educational institution, while only 7% are no longer studying. This outcome is not surprising, given the relatively young age profile of the participants in the survey.

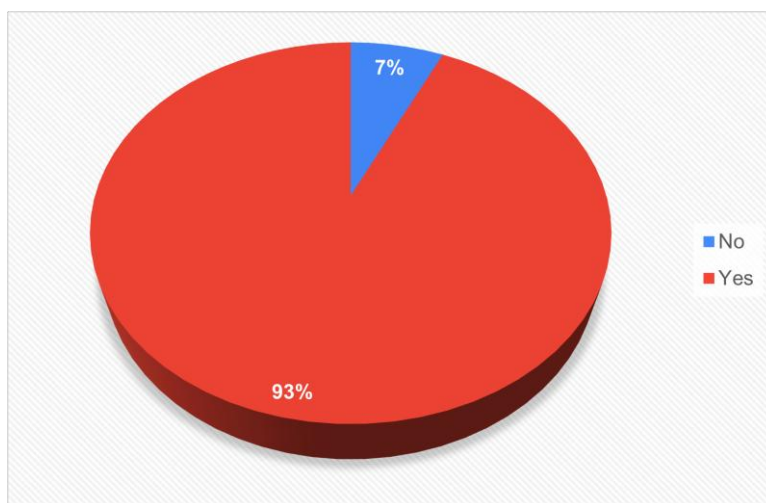


Fig.2 The enrollment rate of respondents in an educational institution

Looking more closely at the distribution of students across different levels of education, the largest share is represented by high school students (38%), followed closely by those attending secondary school (28%).

University students and those enrolled in post-secondary vocational or technical programs each account for 13% of the respondents, showing a balanced representation of these two groups. A smaller portion of the respondents (3%) are engaged in postgraduate studies, while 5% have already completed their formal education and are either active in the labour market or currently taking a break from further studies.

These results illustrate that the sample is predominantly made up of young people still in formal education, reflecting the intended target group of the survey.

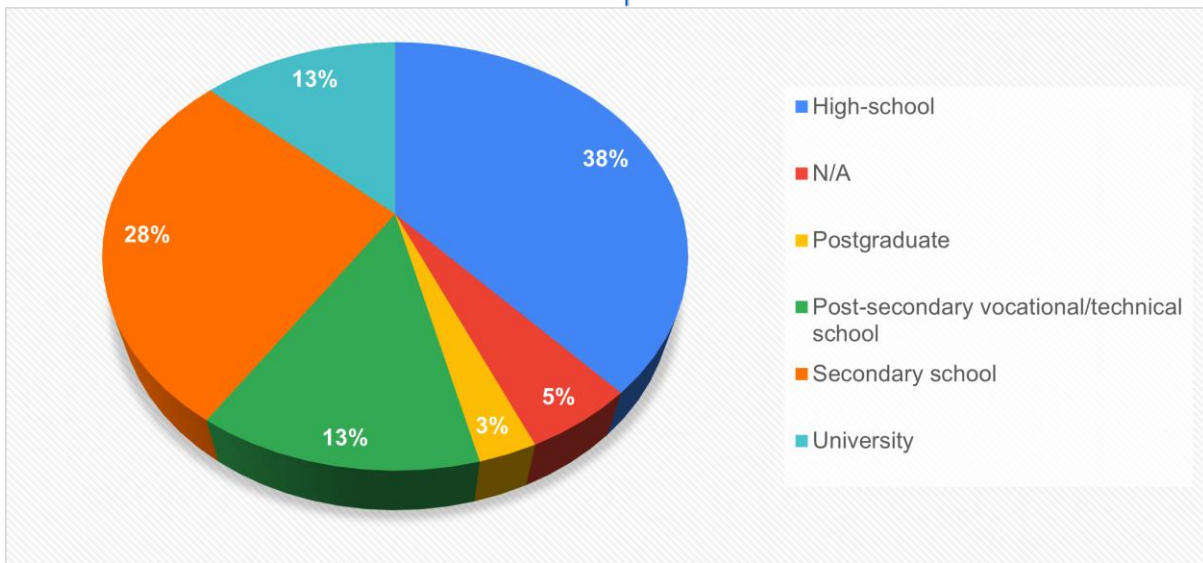


Fig. 3 Distribution of respondents across educational levels

Living areas and national representation

To gain a more complete understanding of the respondents’ profiles, they were also asked to indicate their current place of residence in terms of urban, rural, or suburban areas. The majority, representing 68% of participants, reported living in urban areas. In comparison, 26% reside in rural areas, while a smaller share of 6% live in suburban settings.

This distribution highlights the predominance of urban youth within the sample, while still ensuring that perspectives from rural and suburban communities are also reflected.

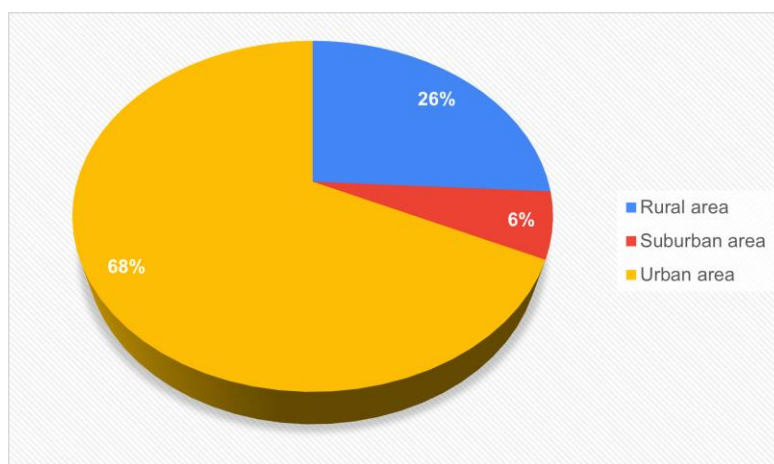


Fig.4 The respondents' area of residence

In terms of country of origin, the majority of respondents came from Romania, representing 59% of the total sample. Participants from Moldova accounted for 28%, while 13% of the respondents were from Georgia.

The higher share of Romanian participants can be partly explained by the fact that two project partners are based in Romania, which facilitated wider dissemination of the questionnaire and encouraged greater involvement of young people from this country. This distribution reflects both the collaborative nature of the project and the balanced engagement of youth across all partner countries.

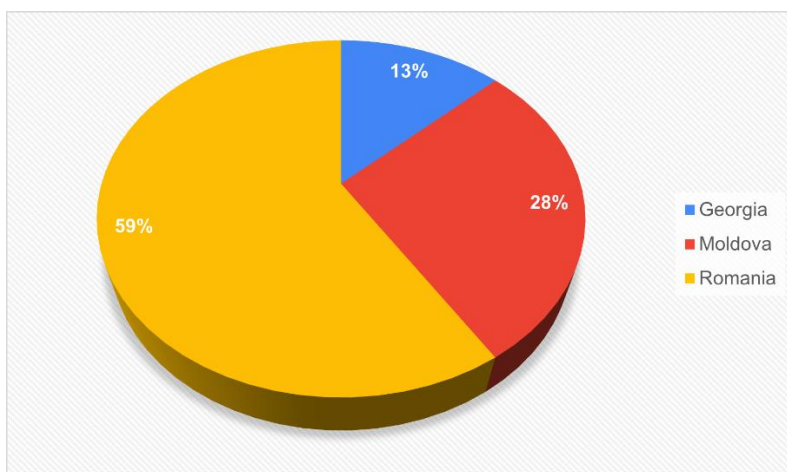


Fig. 5 Distribution of respondents by nationality in the study

Section 2: Knowledge of Environmental Concepts

This section aimed to evaluate young people’s understanding of key environmental issues and terminology. It included questions on topics such as climate change, biodiversity, waste, and sustainable practices, allowing the study to identify both accurate knowledge and common misconceptions among respondents.

The first question addressed under the section was “**Which of the following best describes climate change?**”, with the following answers to choose from:

- Natural variation in weather patterns
- **A long-term change in global or regional climate patterns due to human activities (CORRECT ANSWER)**
- Ozone layer depletion
- An increase in natural disasters with no human influence
- I don’t know

The majority, 248 participants, correctly identified climate change as a long-term change in global or regional climate patterns due to human activities. However, the remaining responses reveal some gaps in knowledge and common misconceptions. A total of 74 respondents considered it merely a natural variation in weather patterns, while 51 associated it with ozone layer depletion, and 32 believed it to be an increase in natural disasters without human influence. Additionally, 39 participants admitted that they did not know the answer. These results suggest that while most young people demonstrate an accurate understanding of climate change, a significant minority still hold misunderstandings or lack sufficient knowledge on the topic.

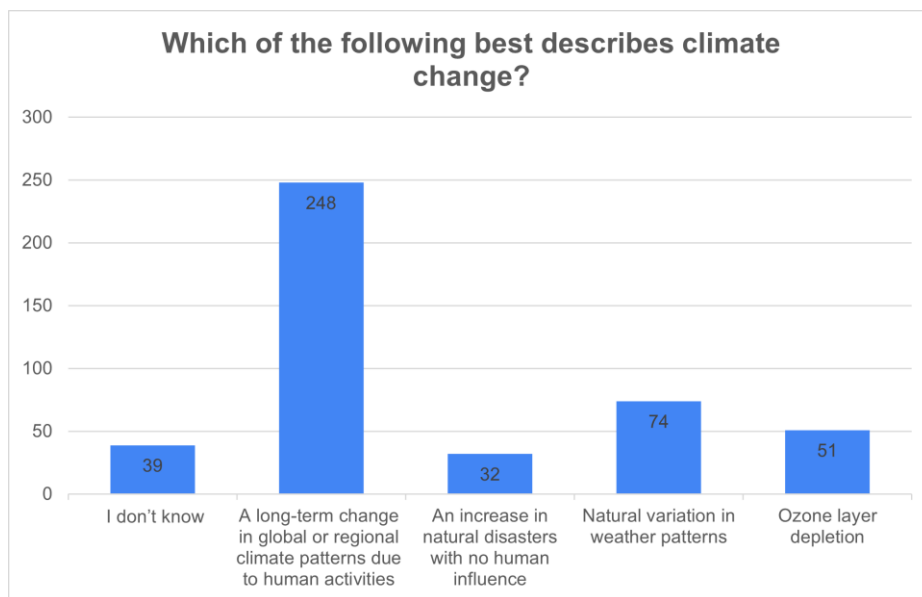


Fig. 6 Proportion of correct answers on knowledge of the term 'climate change'

The second question in Section 2 asked respondents, “What do you understand by biodiversity loss?” and provided several possible answers:

- The extinction of a few species naturally
- **A significant reduction in the variety of life forms due to human activities (CORRECT ANSWER)**
- The destruction of rainforests only

- The loss of genetic diversity within a single species
- I don't know

The majority of participants, 292, correctly identified it as a significant reduction in the variety of life forms due to human activities. However, other responses indicate some misunderstandings among the respondents. A total of 57 participants thought biodiversity loss refers to the natural extinction of a few species, 37 associated it solely with the destruction of rainforests, and 24 believed it involves the loss of genetic diversity within a single species. Additionally, 34 respondents admitted that they did not know the answer.

Overall, these results show that while most young people possess an accurate understanding of biodiversity loss, there is still a notable portion of respondents with partial knowledge or misconceptions about the concept.

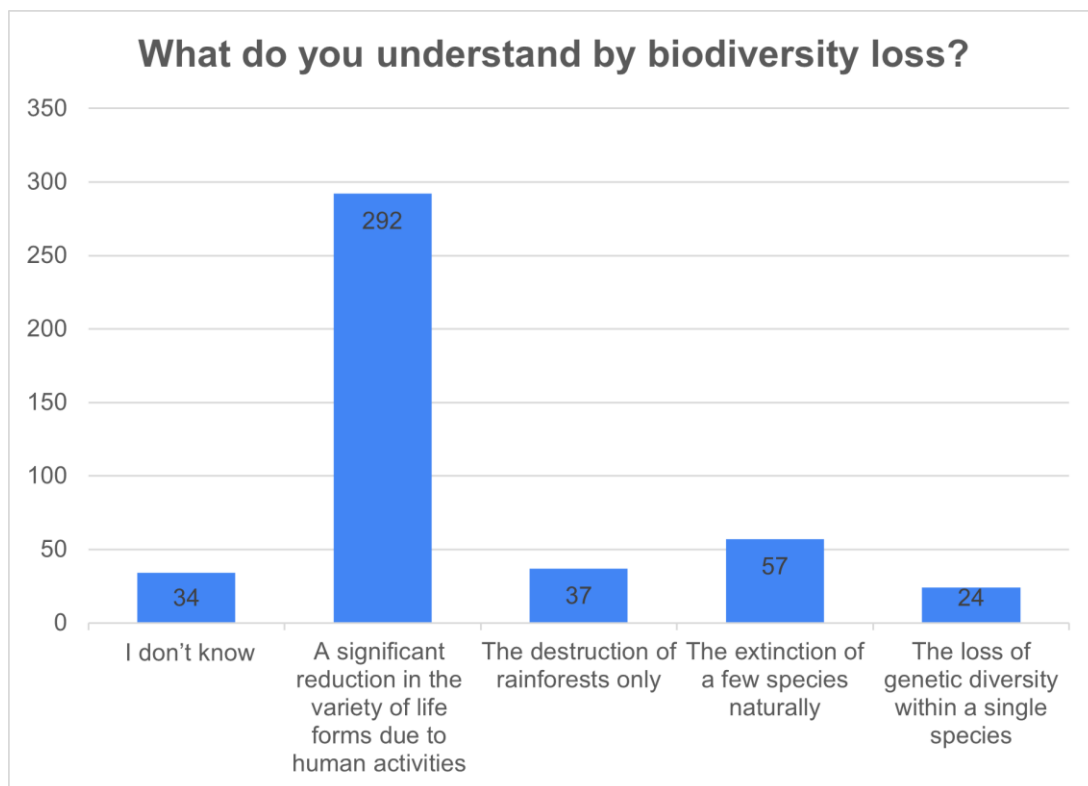


Fig.7 The proportion of correct responses regarding the term biodiversity loss

In the survey, young people were also asked to indicate which of the following options represents a sustainable practice:

- Using single-use plastics
- **Recycling and reducing waste (CORRECT ANSWER)**
- Overfishing in oceans
- Wasting water and energy
- None of the above

Most respondents, 339 in total (more than 76%), correctly identified “recycling and reducing waste” as an example. A smaller number of participants chose incorrect options, with 47 selecting “using single-use plastics”, 26 choosing “wasting water and energy”, 11 identifying “overfishing in oceans”, and 21 opting for “none of the above”.

These responses indicate that while awareness of sustainable practices is generally high among the participants, a minority still confuse harmful or unsustainable actions with environmentally responsible behaviour.

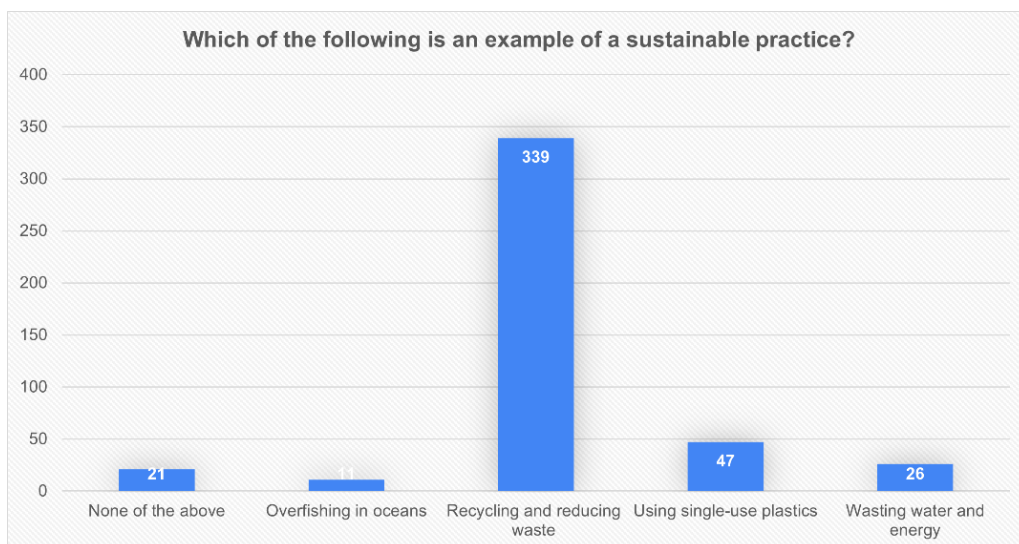


Fig. 8 Respondents' perceptions of sustainable actions

Section 3: Engagement in pro-Environmental behaviours

Section 3 of the survey explored young people’s involvement in environmentally friendly actions and initiatives, as well as changes they have made in their lifestyles to reduce environmental impact. The questions aimed to capture both habitual behaviours and active participation in environmental efforts.

Regarding the frequency of environmentally friendly actions, the survey shows that a large majority of respondents demonstrate consistent pro-environmental behaviour, with 23% reporting that they “always” engage in actions such as recycling, reducing waste, or conserving energy, and 46% indicating they do so “often”. Only a small portion reported engaging in these actions “rarely” (5%) or “never” (1%).

In terms of country of origin, there are no significant differences between young people from Romania, Moldova, and Georgia, as the results are similar across all three groups. This suggests that most young people are regularly involved in sustainable practices in their daily lives.

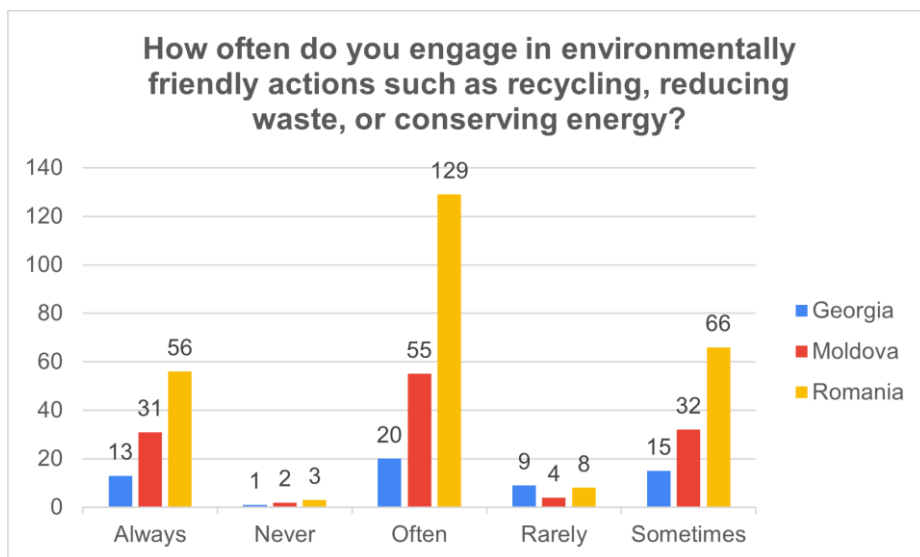


Fig. 9 Frequency of respondents' participation in sustainable actions, by partner country

When it comes to participation in environmental initiatives, while fewer respondents are actively involved in organized environmental initiatives, nearly 57% participate either “regularly” (15%) or “occasionally” (42%). About one-third (32%) engage “rarely”, and 11% have never participated.

There are slight differences between young people from Romania, Moldova, and Georgia, but overall, these variations are not significant. This indicates moderate engagement in community or group-based environmental activities, with room to encourage more active involvement.

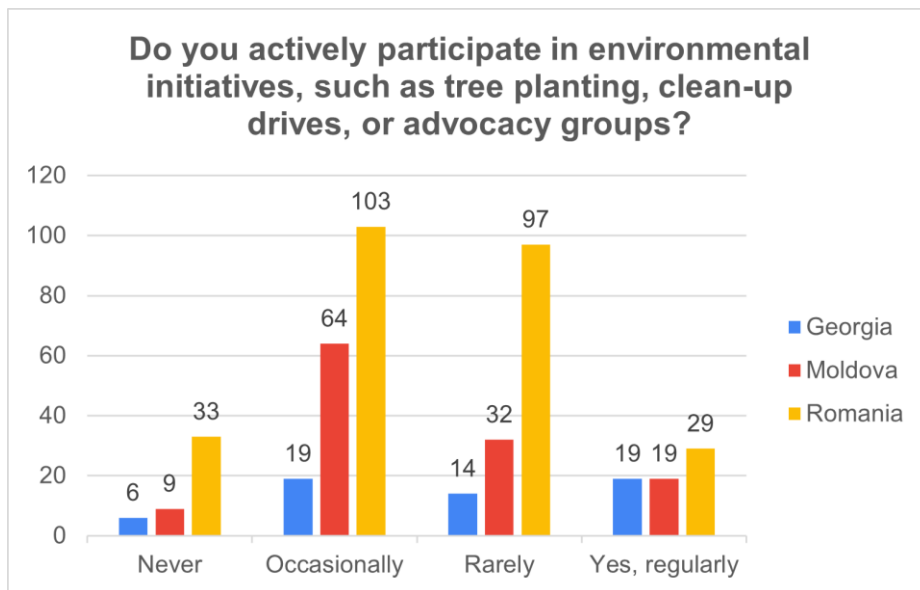


Fig.10 Respondents' mode of participation in sustainable actions by partner country

The last question of the section addressed lifestyle changes to reduce environmental impact. A substantial majority of young people (68%) have made lifestyle changes, such as using reusable products, conserving energy, or supporting eco-friendly brands, while an additional 21% plan to implement such changes in the future. Only 11% have not made any changes and don't plan to. The results are similar across Romania, Moldova, and Georgia, suggesting that young people from the three countries share similar mindsets and approaches when it comes to adopting sustainable practices in their daily lives.

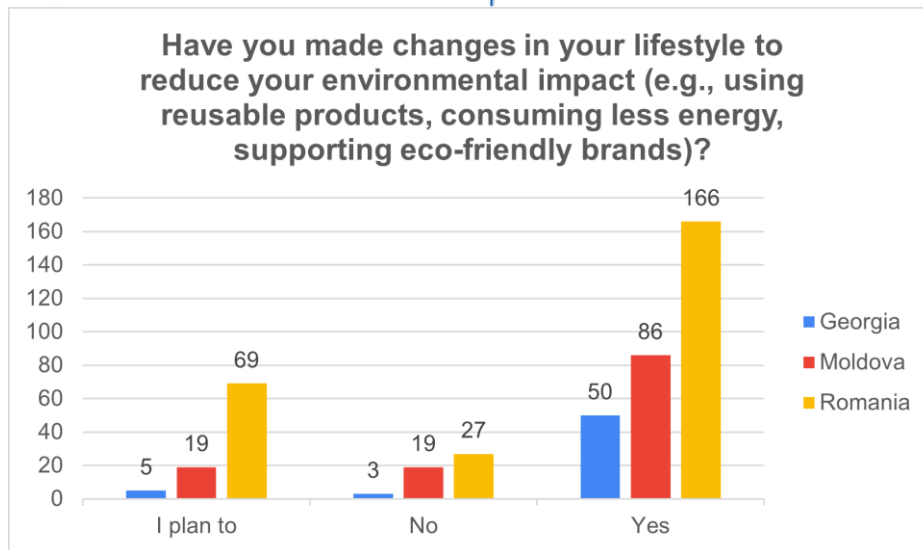


Fig.11 Respondents' approach from partner countries to lifestyle changes for environmental impact reduction

Section 4: Barriers to Sustainable Practices

Under this section, the survey explored the obstacles that prevent young people from adopting more sustainable behaviours and their perceptions of individual impact on environmental issues. Section 4 aimed to identify both practical and psychological barriers to pro-environmental actions, providing insight into areas where support, information, or policy interventions might be needed.

A list of potential barriers preventing young people from adopting more sustainable behaviours was provided and they were asked to choose all applicable options, but also to contribute with their own ideas, if needed.

The main obstacles reported by young people were the cost of sustainable products (149 responses) and lack of knowledge about sustainable options (129 responses). Other factors included lack of access to sustainable options (58), lack of motivation (57), social or cultural influences (22), and government policies or lack of incentives (19). A small number of respondents (10) mentioned personal reasons such as exams, laziness, or poor infrastructure.

These results highlight that both practical barriers (cost and availability) and informational barriers (knowledge) are the most significant challenges for young people in adopting sustainable lifestyles.

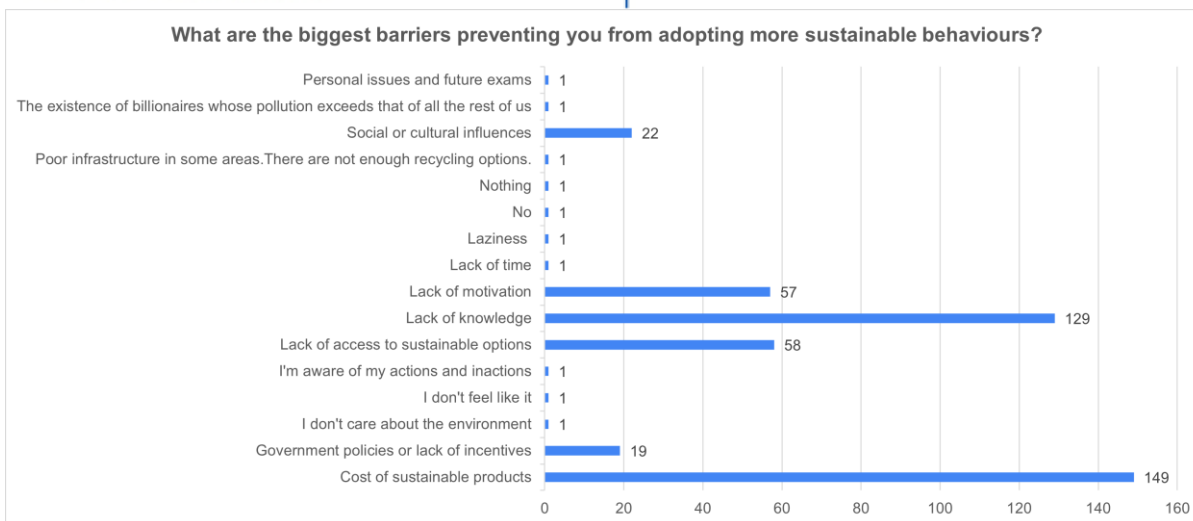


Fig. 12 Challenges encountered by respondents in adopting sustainable practices

Respondents were asked whether they agree with the statement: “It is difficult for individuals to make a real impact on environmental issues.” Overall, 42% of young people agreed or strongly agreed, 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 33% remained neutral.

Looking at the data by country, the distribution shows some differences in trends.

Georgia: Responses are relatively balanced, with 38% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 29% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, and 33% neutral. This suggests a mix of optimism and scepticism among Georgian youth.

Moldova: A majority of respondents (60.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that individual actions have limited impact, while only 11.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. About 28% remained neutral. This indicates that young people in Moldova tend to feel that individual actions alone have a smaller effect.

Romania: Responses are more evenly distributed, with 35% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 30% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, and 35% neutral. The trend is similar to Georgia, showing a balanced perception with both scepticism and optimism.

So, while there are slight differences between countries, the overall perception among youth is mixed: many recognize the challenges of making a tangible impact individually, but a substantial proportion remains neutral or optimistic. Moldova shows a somewhat stronger trend toward believing that individual actions have limited effect, whereas Georgia and Romania show more balanced opinions.

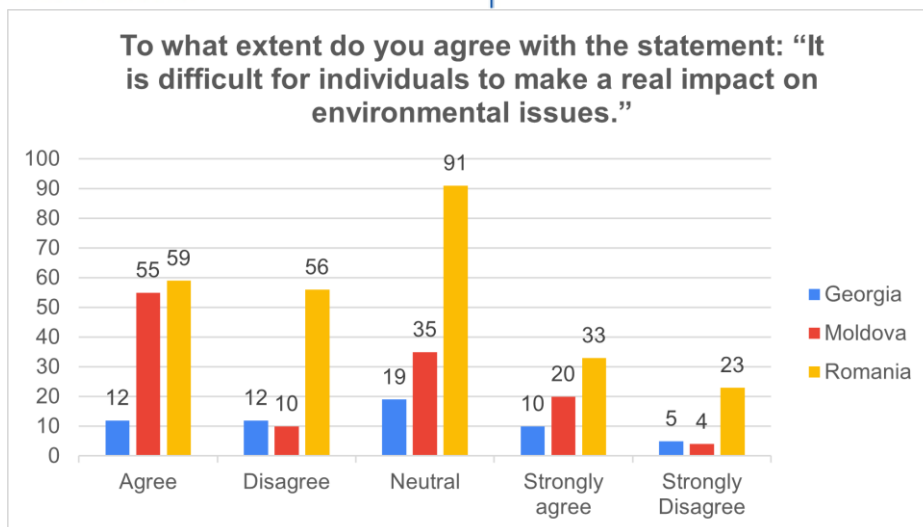


Fig. 13 Respondents' beliefs from partner countries on the impact of their involvement in environmental issues

Section 5: Learning preferences and interests

Understanding how young people prefer to learn about environmental issues is essential for designing effective educational strategies. In this section, respondents were asked about their level of interest in environmental topics, the areas they would most like to explore, and the methods they find most engaging. The results highlight both the strong motivation among youth to deepen their knowledge and the diverse ways in which they prefer to access information.

When asked about their interest in learning about environmental protection, most respondents expressed a strong interest in expanding their knowledge, with 30% reporting that they are “very interested” and 49% “somewhat interested”. About 19% were neutral, while only 2% reported no interest, and none indicated being “not very interested”.

This demonstrates a high overall motivation among young people to engage with environmental topics. No significant differences were noticed between the 3 countries.

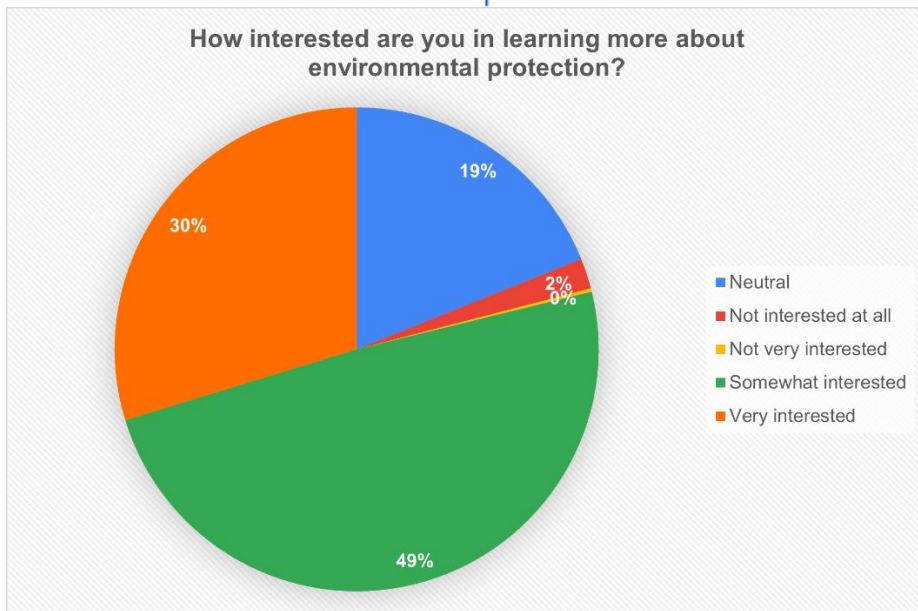


Fig.14 Respondents' interest in environmental education

In terms of topics of interest, climate change and its impacts emerged as the most popular topic, chosen by 222 respondents. Sustainable living practices were also highly valued (89), followed by renewable energy sources (55), wildlife and biodiversity conservation (40), and waste management and recycling (19). Circular economy and sustainable business practices received fewer responses (14), while a small number (5) indicated other or unspecified topics.

These results indicate that youth are primarily interested in broad, impactful environmental issues and practical ways to live sustainably.

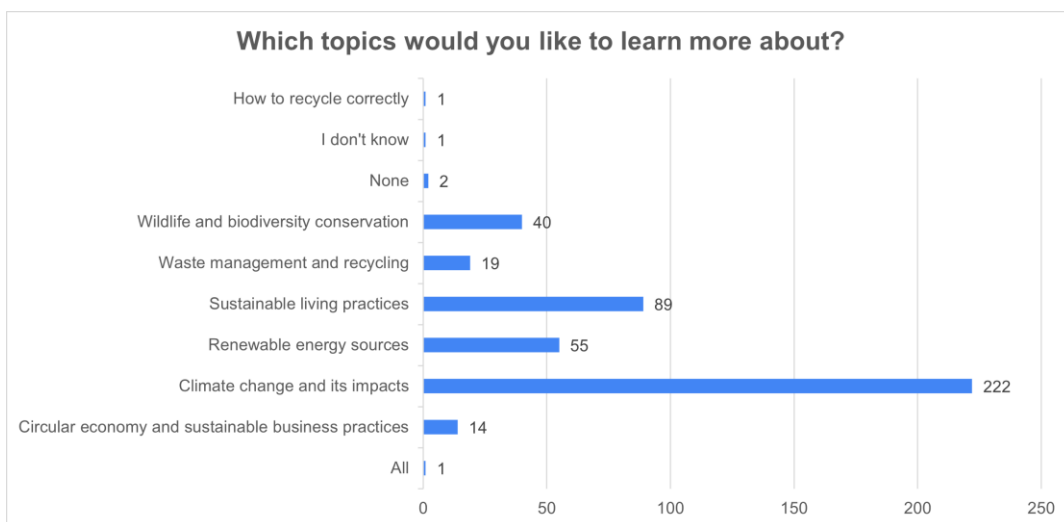


Fig.15 Respondents' topics of interest in environmental education

The third and last question targeted the preferred learning methods of young people about environmental issues. Respondents favoured a mix of visual and experiential learning. The most popular methods were documentaries and videos (131) and volunteering or practical experiences (105), followed by online articles and blogs (74) and educational courses or workshops (50). Interactive apps or games were chosen by 44 participants, while social media campaigns attracted 34. This shows that young people prefer engaging, hands-on, and multimedia approaches rather than purely text-based learning.

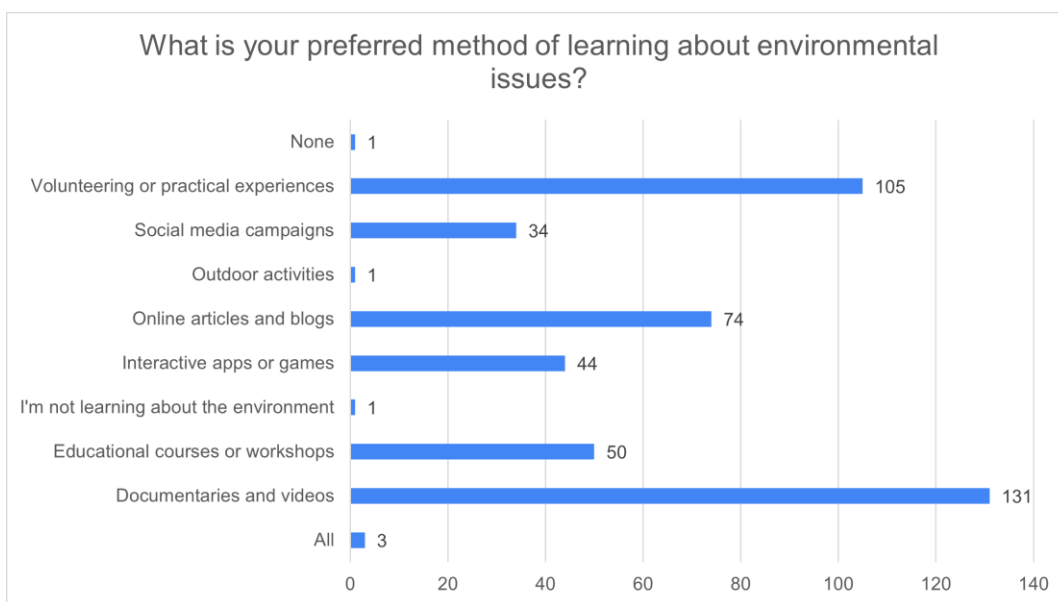


Fig.16 Preferred learning methods of respondents regarding environmental education

Final Comments from Respondents

The last section of the survey invited young people to share additional thoughts, and while many responded with “no comments,” several participants offered meaningful, inspiring, or light-hearted reflections. A selection of the most relevant and interesting remarks is highlighted below:

“In my opinion, people should take action for the environment without being pushed by social media, monetary rewards, and so on.”

“I believe that important changes require both individual actions and large-scale solutions, such as government policies and industry involvement. Every contribution counts, but a collective effort is needed.”

“I’m sorry that I don’t know a lot about this topic, but when it comes to recycling and respecting nature, I do what I can.”

“We have to take care of our planet!”

“If you truly want to get involved, create more volunteer activities.”

“I hope we get more practical experience to help us learn 😊.”

“I want to participate in all kinds of outdoor-related programs.”

“It is essential that young people are provided with more accessible, real, and easy-to-understand information about environmental issues - especially about what each of us can do on a personal level. Because change begins with small steps. Thank you ❤️”

“Thank you for such initiatives 💖.”

“We are the future; it is our duty to protect the environment so that we ourselves are protected in the future! ❤️”

These comments reflect a mix of thoughtful reflections, constructive feedback, and motivational messages, showing both the enthusiasm and the sense of responsibility young people feel toward environmental protection.

II) Interview Interpretation Conclusions – 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.

II.1 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.2 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.

II.3 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.

II.4 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)

II. 5 Recommendations & 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.

III. Interview Interpretation Conclusions – PRO NATURA GALATI Partner (Romania)- Qualitative research

Given today's climate challenges, ecosystem degradation, and our collective responsibility to build a sustainable future, environmental education has emerged as a crucial area of focus in modern schooling. This report gathers insights, perspectives, and experiences from a diverse group of individuals, including teachers and youth leaders who promote environmental education in schools, as well as environmentally conscious parents, students, and young volunteers.

III.1 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses

1.1 Understanding environmental protection

Understanding and protecting the environment requires constant and conscious involvement, not just isolated or symbolic actions. The deep motivation to live in a healthy environment, together with the recognition of our individual responsibility, fuels the desire for change.

Consumer society, cultural influences, and the lack of accessible resources create real barriers to adopting sustainable behaviors. At the same time, environmental education often remains superficial, theoretical, and insufficiently anchored in the daily reality of young people.

In order to transform awareness into effective action, it is essential for environmental education to become practical, engaging, and relevant. Collaboration between schools, local communities, NGOs, and digital platforms can add value to shaping young people as environmentally responsible citizens. Only through sustained and coordinated efforts can we build a society that protects nature, not just in words, but through concrete actions.

Across the interviews, participants generally recognize environmental protection as essential for preserving nature, reducing human impact, and promoting sustainable living. While some define it in practical terms, such as minimizing their carbon footprint or recycling, others see it as a moral responsibility to respect nature and protect endangered species. Many emphasize that environmental protection is not just symbolic; it is a necessary response to long-term exploitation of natural resources and increasing environmental degradation.

1.2 Engagement and motivation

Understanding and protecting the environment means more than symbolic gestures — it is about a responsible and continuous attitude toward nature. Every contribution, no matter how small it may seem, matters. Recycling, avoiding single-use products, saving resources, or taking part in ecological initiatives are concrete steps toward a cleaner future. The motivation ultimately comes from the genuine desire to live in a healthy, balanced environment, as well as from the awareness of the negative impact we have on the planet. Even if not all of us have yet taken part in large-scale projects, the willingness to get involved shows that there is hope and potential for change.

Participants' involvement varies widely. Some actively engage in recycling, avoiding single-use products, conserving energy and water, or participating in clean-up activities and tree planting. Others have little direct involvement but express interest in contributing to environmental initiatives in the future. Motivations include the desire to live in a clean, healthy environment, to contribute to meaningful change, and to reduce negative impacts on the planet. For some, witnessing pollution or unsustainable practices in their communities also drives the desire to act.

1.3 Challenges and barriers

Adopting a sustainable lifestyle is not a simple process, but one full of challenges. The consumerist way of life, cultural influences, and social pressures in a society driven by excessive consumption can make changing habits difficult. In addition, economic barriers, such as the higher cost of eco-friendly products or the lack of sustainable alternatives, limit access to a green lifestyle. Another significant obstacle is the lack of strong environmental education, both in schools and within families, as well as the absence of positive role models in society. Nevertheless, acknowledging these difficulties is an important step toward change.

Several barriers hinder sustainable behavior. Social influences, such as peer attitudes or societal consumerist pressures, are commonly cited. Economic factors, like higher costs of eco-friendly products, also limit participation. Cultural factors, including lack of education or visible role models and insufficient public awareness, further reduce motivation. Many participants highlighted that adopting sustainable habits can feel inconvenient or require extra effort, which discourages consistent practice.

1.4 Education and awareness

Participants generally perceive current environmental education as insufficient. Schools provide limited exposure, and public awareness campaigns often fail to reach youth effectively. Many suggest that education should be more practical, interactive, and integrated across subjects. Social media and short, engaging content are considered highly effective tools for reaching young people. Additionally, participants advocate for “learning by doing” through volunteer projects, clean-ups, and other hands-on activities.

To enhance the impact of environmental education, participants recommend increasing practical, experiential learning opportunities, such as outdoor activities, workshops, and community projects. Raising awareness through social media campaigns and clear statistics about environmental impact is also emphasized. Finally, they suggest stronger leadership by example, stricter environmental legislation, and more visible engagement from adults and authorities to inspire young people to adopt sustainable practices.

Environmental education in Romania today is present, but still insufficiently developed to have a real and lasting impact on the ecological awareness of young people. Although progress can be seen compared to past years, a much more applied, practical, and interdisciplinary approach is needed. Static, theoretical activities fail to capture the interest of the younger generation, which prefers learning through direct experience: workshops, outdoor activities, community projects, or creative content on social media.

To increase the effectiveness of environmental education, it is essential for schools to collaborate with NGOs, local authorities, and the online environment in order to create interactive, relevant, and motivational programs. Only by integrating sustainability into both curricular and extracurricular activities, in a coherent and modern way, can we shape a generation that is active and environmentally responsible.

III.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.

Environmental education is an essential component in shaping students as future responsible citizens. The involvement of children, especially in primary school, is visible and promising, particularly when supported by dedicated teachers and engaging practical activities. However, the reality of the Romanian educational system shows that this dimension is often affected by challenges such as lack of time, limited resources, and inconsistent collaboration with local authorities. In this context, environmental education risks being perceived more as an occasional activity rather than as a value integrated into students' development.

2.1 Understanding environmental education

Integrating environmental education into teaching activities is essential for shaping students who are aware of and responsible toward the environment. Through thematic projects, practical activities, and active involvement in events such as Earth Day or clean-up campaigns, students not only learn theory but also develop real behaviors with a direct impact on the community.

The messages conveyed should emphasize responsibility, respect for nature, and the consequences of inaction. Protecting natural resources is not just an abstract concept, but a reality that influences our everyday lives. Through consistent and coherent education, the school can become an important catalyst in forming a generation that understands both the value and the fragility of the planet.

The teachers integrate environmental topics into their teaching through a variety of approaches, depending on the age of students and subject matter. In chemistry and physics lessons, as well as during counseling classes and “Green Week,” environmental themes are addressed. For younger children, topics are introduced through thematic games, storytelling, songs, and visual materials, while primary school students engage in practical projects like selective recycling, plant care, and ecological actions in the schoolyard or local park. Across all ages, the key messages emphasize respect for nature, responsible behavior, proper waste management, conserving resources, and understanding that even small actions contribute to a cleaner environment.

2.2 Engagement and challenges

Students' involvement in environmental issues is generally positive, especially when they are guided by motivated and dedicated teachers. Children's enthusiasm is evident in practical ecological activities, and their desire to contribute to protecting nature is genuine and encouraging. Nevertheless, promoting environmental education comes with real challenges. The lack of time, caused by the overlap of many curricular and extracurricular activities, limits the frequency and depth of educational interventions.

For environmental education to become a sustainable component of the educational process, constant support, accessible resources, and functional partnerships between schools, communities, and public authorities are needed.

Student engagement varies by age and context. Pre-school children show high involvement when activities are interactive and age-appropriate, while older students' engagement can be limited by lack of parental support or competing responsibilities. Challenges cited by the teachers include limited time for ecological activities, scarcity of age-appropriate materials, conveying abstract ecological concepts to very young children, and inconsistent collaboration with local authorities. A common observation is that motivation—both of students and parents—is crucial for effective engagement.

2.3 Effective strategies

For environmental education to have a real and lasting impact, it is essential that the strategies used be practical, hands-on, and adapted to children's ages. The most effective methods have proven to be those that involve students directly—through concrete actions and the power of personal example. When students observe responsible behaviors and take part in ecological activities, they develop an authentic connection with nature and learn to protect it.

Interactive methods—such as thematic projects, field trips, workshops, or educational games—play a decisive role in motivating students. These approaches transform theoretical information into personal experience and stimulate both emotional and civic engagement.

To strengthen educational efforts, partnerships between schools, NGOs, and local communities must be better structured and officially supported. Joint projects have the potential to create a local culture of sustainability and to involve not only students, but also parents and citizens in protecting the environment.

Practical, hands-on activities are universally regarded as the most effective strategies. These include clean-up campaigns, planting projects, selective recycling, and participation in group projects. Interactive methods, such as games, field trips, and audiovisual presentations, help students understand environmental issues while making learning enjoyable and memorable. Teachers highlight that leading by example, integrating daily eco-friendly practices, and involving parents significantly enhance students' awareness and pro-environmental behaviors. Collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local communities is improved through joint projects, workshops, and campaigns that actively engage both students and families.

2.4 Future improvements

Looking toward the future, the introduction of a weekly environmental education class and the inclusion of sustainability topics in the national curriculum, in an interdisciplinary manner, would represent important steps forward. Likewise, the official recognition of schools that develop ecological practices would encourage institutional involvement and create models to be followed across the country.

To increase the impact of environmental education, teachers recommend: integrating environmental education into daily activities, making learning more attractive and interactive, and providing accessible educational materials. Policy-level support could include financial incentives, formal inclusion of sustainability topics in the curriculum, training for educators, and recognition of schools that excel in environmental education. Joint initiatives among schools, NGOs, and local authorities are also seen as essential to strengthen environmental awareness and practice in the community.

III.3 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses

Environmental responsibility begins within the family and must be strengthened through early education, continued in school, and supported by the community. Ecological awareness is not just a matter of information, but of developing healthy and sustainable habits. Although there are real obstacles to adopting a sustainable lifestyle—from the lack of educational resources to everyday practical difficulties—a joint effort between parents, schools, and authorities can turn environmental education into an active force for change. Only through genuine and continuous collaboration can we create generations capable of protecting the environment in a conscious and responsible way.

3.1 Role in environmental awareness

Ecological awareness begins in the family, where the first life habits are formed. In this sense, early education on environmental protection is essential for the development of responsible and engaged adults. If young people learn from childhood to recycle, reduce waste, and respect nature, these behaviors become ingrained reflexes in their everyday lives.

All three parents emphasized the importance of educating children about environmental protection from an early age. They agree that forming responsible habits at home—such as recycling, reducing waste, and using resources sustainably—is essential for raising future adults who value sustainability. Parents play a direct role in guiding their children, primarily through personal example, daily practices, and active engagement in eco-friendly behaviors. Common strategies at home include selective waste collection, recycling, responsible consumption, and discussing environmental issues with children.

3.2 Challenges and perceptions

Parents reported several challenges in promoting environmental awareness. A recurring difficulty is the conflict between daily routines and sustainable practices—for example, the convenience of using disposable products or relying on private vehicles. Additionally, children are constantly exposed to messages encouraging overconsumption. Despite these obstacles, parents believe that today's youth are generally more environmentally conscious than previous generations,

thanks to increased access to information, school campaigns, and civic activism. However, they note that not all children are equally engaged.

Even when there is a desire to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, everyday difficulties—such as a busy schedule or the lack of viable alternatives to car travel—can sometimes limit the consistent application of ecological principles.

3.3 Support and resources

Parents generally feel that schools provide some environmental education through subjects like biology, geography, and civic education, as well as special events like Earth Day or “Green Week.” Nevertheless, they agree that schools often lack sufficient materials, trained staff, or infrastructure to support practical ecological activities. To improve sustainability education at home, parents suggested resources such as age-appropriate books, brochures, educational games, recycling kits, experiments, and visits to organic farms or recycling centers. They also believe that local communities and authorities can play a key role by:

- Improving and maintaining parks, urban gardens, and recreational areas to foster connection with nature.
- Creating spaces for families to donate or exchange used items.
- Organizing bio fairs, recycling workshops, and community clean-up campaigns.
- Providing incentives, regulations, and educational programs that encourage sustainable living.

Currently, environmental education provided in Romanian schools is unfortunately insufficient. Although environmental topics are occasionally included in the curriculum and in some extracurricular activities, the lack of genuine involvement from decision-makers means that education for sustainability remains more theoretical than practical.

For parents to support the development of a strong ecological awareness in children, a real partnership with kindergartens and schools is essential. Only through collaboration between family, school, and community can a culture of environmental responsibility be built, which is necessary for the future of our children.

Similarities and differences across groups

Similarities: All groups—youth, teachers and youth leaders, and parents—share a fundamental appreciation for environmental protection. They recognize that understanding ecological issues is important not just theoretically, but through practical engagement that encourages action. There is a common belief that environmental education should lead to real-life behaviors that contribute to a healthier and more sustainable world. Each group acknowledges that raising environmental awareness is a shared responsibility, requiring involvement from schools, families, and the wider community.

Differences: **Youth** prioritize direct, hands-on experiences. They are motivated by activities such as field trips, clean-ups, workshops, and interactive projects that allow them to actively participate and see tangible results. For young people, learning is most effective when it is engaging, creative, and immediate. **Teachers and youth leaders** focus more on methodology and curriculum integration. They are concerned with how environmental concepts can be systematically incorporated into lessons, extracurricular activities, and long-term programs. Their emphasis is on structured approaches, pedagogical strategies, and creating consistent learning opportunities that develop students' knowledge and responsible behaviors over time. **Parents** emphasize collaboration between home and school. They see their role as supporting and reinforcing eco-friendly habits in the family environment. Parents are particularly concerned with guidance, accessible resources, and communication with educators so that their children receive consistent messages and opportunities to practice sustainable behaviors at home.

Shared barrier:

Across all groups, a common challenge is the lack of sufficient resources, time, and structured support. Youth often face limited opportunities to participate in hands-on activities due to scheduling conflicts or unavailable programs. Teachers and youth leaders struggle with overcrowded curricula, insufficient teaching materials, and the need for professional development. Parents may lack guidance or clear ways to contribute effectively to environmental education at home. This shared barrier highlights the need for coordinated efforts and accessible tools to support all stakeholders in fostering sustainable behaviors.

Similarities: All groups value environmental protection and recognize the need for practical engagement.

Differences: Youth prioritize direct experience; teachers/youth leaders focus on methodology and curriculum integration; parents emphasize home-school collaboration and support.

Shared barrier: Lack of resources, time, and structured support affects all groups.

Summary Table: Similarities and Differences Across Groups			
Category	Youth	Parents	Teachers & Youth Leaders
Common Understandings of Environmental Protection	Value protecting nature and see it as essential for a healthy future; understand recycling, reducing waste, and sustainable behavior.	Emphasize both environmental protection and teaching responsibility; focus on modeling positive behaviors.	Believe environmental protection is vital and should be taught early; see it as part of family responsibility and life-long habits.
Perceptions of Current Education & Awareness	Often find school environmental education theoretical and limited; prefer interactive, hands-on learning.	Recognize environmental education is insufficient and often too theoretical; seek to provide practical experiences and guidance.	Observe that schools provide some environmental education but feel it is inconsistent; want stronger cooperation with schools to reinforce learning at home.
Challenges and Barriers	Limited access to engaging activities; busy schedules; lack of sustainable alternatives in daily life.	Time constraints in the curriculum; limited resources; lack of institutional support; difficulty implementing applied lessons.	Limited knowledge/resources to support children; inconsistent communication with schools; everyday practical constraints (time, resources).
Effective Strategies & Desired Support	Hands-on activities: workshops, field trips, eco-projects; peer role models; interactive content online.	Interdisciplinary and applied teaching; collaboration with NGOs and local communities; official recognition and support.	Strong partnerships with schools; structured programs for families; guidance on reinforcing sustainable habits at home; community engagement opportunities.

Table 2: Similarities and differences across groups (PRO NATURA Galati Interviews in Romania)

Recommendations & Solutions for learning about environmental issues

1. Hands-On and experiential learning

- Organize workshops, field trips, community clean-ups, gardening, and eco-projects.
- Use real-life examples to teach concepts like recycling, waste reduction, and energy conservation.
- Encourage students to apply learned principles at home and in their communities.

2. Interactive and engaging methods

- Use games, simulations, and digital platforms (apps, social media challenges, educational videos) to make learning appealing.
- Integrate creative projects like posters, videos, or campaigns that allow students to express their ideas.

3. Interdisciplinary integration

- Include environmental topics across subjects: science, geography, civics, and arts.
- Connect sustainability concepts to everyday life and societal issues.

4. Collaboration and partnerships

- Foster partnerships between schools, NGOs, local authorities, and families to create joint programs.
- Involve youth in decision-making and local environmental initiatives to give them ownership.

5. Role models and mentorship

- Teachers, youth leaders, and parents should model sustainable behaviors.
- Invite experts, activists, and community leaders to share experiences and motivate students.

6. Parental and Family Involvement

- Encourage parents to reinforce eco-friendly habits at home.
- Provide guidance, resources, and activities that families can do together.

7. Regular and consistent education

- Include weekly or recurring environmental education sessions in the school curriculum.
- Use both formal lessons and extracurricular activities to ensure continuous engagement.

8. Recognition and motivation

- Celebrate schools, classes, and students who show active participation in environmental initiatives.
- Award certificates, create eco-clubs, or feature projects publicly to motivate further involvement.

9. Address barriers and provide resources

- Ensure access to eco-friendly alternatives (recycling bins, sustainable transport, educational materials).
- Reduce logistical barriers by coordinating school schedules and community events.

10. Evaluation and feedback

- Assess the impact of environmental education programs on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Use feedback to improve activities and make them more relevant and effective.

Conclusion

Overall, learning about environmental issues is most effective when it is practical, consistent, and engaging. A combination of hands-on activities, interactive methods, and real-life examples helps students develop lasting eco-friendly habits. Collaboration between schools, families, NGOs, and local authorities strengthens the impact, while role models and active participation motivate youth to take responsibility. Addressing barriers and providing accessible resources ensures that environmental education is not only theoretical but translates into meaningful action. By integrating these strategies, we can cultivate a generation that is aware, responsible, and proactive in protecting the environment.

IV. Interviews interpretation conclusions - Mare Nostrum partner (Romania) - Qualitative research

Environmental education is currently one of the most relevant educational directions, given the climate challenges, the degradation of ecosystems and the responsibility of current generations in shaping a sustainable future. This report brings together the ideas, opinions and experiences of teachers and youth leaders actively involved in promoting environmental education in schools, parents concerned about environmental pollution and young people (students and volunteers).

IV.1 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. This includes protecting the environment where we live and following rules designed to safeguard it. Learning about environmental issues often happens first through school and educational programs, with some exposure from volunteer organizations and media. Some respondents recalled their first awareness beginning as early as primary school, with specific lessons about pollution or wildlife.

1.2 Engagement and motivation

Young people engage in various pro-environmental activities such as recycling, volunteering, activism, and conservation efforts. Their motivation stems from recognizing the urgency of environmental problems and a desire to contribute positively to the planet's health. Many have taken part in environmental campaigns or projects and describe these experiences as educational and inspiring. They appreciate opportunities to meet like-minded individuals and to feel that their actions make a real difference.

1.3 Challenges and barriers

Several barriers to adopting sustainable behaviors were highlighted. Some personal limitations include family influence, which can restrict individual action. Economic factors play a role, especially the higher cost of eco-friendly products, which can deter young people from making sustainable choices. Social influences, such as peer attitudes and the lack of enforcement of environmental laws, also make engagement more difficult. Additionally, gaps in infrastructure (e.g.,

insufficient recycling bins) and lack of prior environmental education or experience reduce motivation and ability to act.

1.4 Education and awareness

Current environmental education is seen as insufficient and often too theoretical, lacking practical application. Many believe more compulsory and engaging education is needed to help young people develop informed opinions and behaviors. Suggestions to improve awareness include greater emphasis in schools, interactive activities, and stronger partnerships between NGOs and educational institutions. Social media is viewed as the most effective channel to reach youth, especially when messages are brief, relatable, and show direct personal impact. Workshops, social media content, and documentaries are preferred learning methods due to their interactivity and visual appeal.

IV.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.

2.1 Understanding environmental education

How are environmental topics integrated into teaching and training activities?

Teachers from various disciplines actively incorporate environmental education into their daily teaching practices, even when the subject matter is not directly related to science. For example, a French teacher uses literary texts and multimedia materials that highlight environmental issues, such as pollution or sustainability, in language classes. Other teachers report designing thematic projects and campaigns, including recycling initiatives and tree planting activities, which help students understand environmental problems in a practical and meaningful way.

Moreover, structured programs like Erasmus+ offer valuable opportunities to introduce environmental topics through interdisciplinary and intercultural projects. These provide students with hands-on experiences that go beyond textbooks, increasing their awareness of environmental challenges and solutions.

Integrating environmental topics into teaching and training:

- Teachers integrate environmental themes even in non-science subjects (e.g., foreign languages), using texts, videos, thematic projects, and extracurricular activities (e.g., recycling, planting).
- Educators and teaching assistants include environmental education in science classes or daily routines (e.g., waste sorting, avoiding food waste).
- Erasmus projects are frequently mentioned as effective platforms for environmental education.

Key messages conveyed regarding environmental protection

Across all interviews, several recurring messages were emphasized. Educators consistently highlight that each individual has a role in protecting the planet. Students are taught that even small daily actions, like turning off unused lights or reducing water consumption, can make a real difference. Teachers stress that what we leave behind today directly impacts future generations. This long-term perspective is meant to instill a sense of stewardship.

A clear emphasis is placed on correct waste sorting, with designated bins for different materials (paper, plastic, electronics). Educators use these systems to teach students about sustainability infrastructure. Students are encouraged to avoid food waste by consuming everything on their plates and respecting shared resources, such as classroom supplies or public spaces.

Teachers demonstrate environmentally responsible behavior themselves, showing students what it means to act in a sustainable and ethical way.

Key environmental messages conveyed to students:

- Personal responsibility: everyone plays a role in protecting the planet.
- Small actions matter: reducing consumption, recycling, saving resources.
- Leading by example: students are encouraged to mimic positive adult behavior.
- Long-term impact: stressing that our actions affect future generations and we should strive to leave the world better than we found it.

2.2 Engagement and challenges

How engaged are students or youth in environmental issues?

Student engagement in environmental education varies significantly depending on age and the methods used. Young children tend to respond well to interactive and fun activities, such as games, projects, or creative contests. These formats help them grasp concepts through concrete experiences. Older students are more likely to engage when they can see the real-world implications of environmental problems, particularly if they are involved in decision-making processes within school projects.

However, some educators observe that students do not always internalize environmental values. While they may understand the facts, their behavior does not always reflect a deep understanding of long-term consequences. This is often attributed to their age and level of maturity.

How engaged are students/young people in environmental issues?

- Young children are curious and receptive, especially when engaged through play and practical activities.
- Teenagers show greater interest when they understand the real-world impact of environmental problems.
- In some cases, engagement remains low, often due to a lack of deep awareness or because of age-related cognitive development.

What challenges are faced in promoting environmental education?

One of the main challenges identified is the lack of time in the formal school curriculum to address environmental education thoroughly. Teachers often have to incorporate these topics informally or through extracurricular activities, which limits their reach and consistency.

Another common issue is the lack of age-appropriate and engaging educational materials. Some schools also face institutional resistance to change, with limited support for innovative or interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability.

Challenges faced in promoting environmental education:

- Lack of time in the school schedule dedicated specifically to environmental topics.
- Insufficient teaching resources, especially age-appropriate materials.
- Institutional resistance to change, often slowing down eco-initiatives.
- Lack of a clear school-wide strategy on sustainability education.

Are there barriers that limit your ability to teach sustainability?

Several barriers were identified:

- **Funding gaps:** Limited access to funds for materials or practical activities restricts teachers' ability to implement environmental projects.
- **Administrative burdens:** Bureaucracy and unclear school policies regarding environmental education reduce motivation among staff.
- **Lack of clear strategy:** The absence of a school-wide or national strategy on environmental education makes it difficult for teachers to align their efforts and feel supported.

Identified barriers:

- Inadequate funding for practical projects and materials.
- Bureaucracy and lack of sustainable partnerships with relevant institutions.
- Absence of coherent education policies around sustainability and environmental learning.

2.3 Effective strategies

What strategies have proven effective in raising awareness and promoting pro-environmental behaviors?

Among the most effective strategies are those that involve students in hands-on, participatory learning. Projects funded through Erasmus+ or supported by NGOs give students the chance to work on real environmental challenges, often leading to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility.

Activities such as waste collection, thematic workshops, and environmental campaigns allow students to practice what they learn and see the results of their actions.

Another key strategy is modeling behavior. When educators and staff consistently practice what they preach — such as properly sorting waste, reducing plastic use, and respecting nature — students tend to follow these examples.

Strategies proven most effective for awareness and behavior change:

- Erasmus and locally-based projects are among the most effective.
- Learning through action: workshops, recycling, planting, competitions.
- Role modeling by adults has a strong influence on student behavior.

The role of interactive methods:

Interactive methods such as gamification, educational excursions, and creative competitions are highly effective in engaging students. These approaches make abstract concepts more tangible and enjoyable, leading to better retention and greater enthusiasm. Hands-on learning also supports the development of problem-solving skills and critical thinking.

Although field trips to polluted areas or recycling facilities were rarely mentioned as currently implemented, several educators stressed the potential value of such experiences. They believe these activities could significantly deepen students' understanding of environmental degradation and the importance of sustainable practices.

The role of interactive methods:

- Interactive methods increase engagement and deepen understanding: gamification, outdoor learning, project-based learning.
- Students better grasp their personal environmental impact.
- Hands-on activities foster emotional connections with nature and sustainability values.
- Improving collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local communities:
- A need for long-term partnerships, not just one-off events.

- NGOs can offer expertise, resources, and experiential opportunities (e.g., visits to recycling plants or polluted areas).
- Collaboration could be improved through support from local authorities and the creation of school-community networks.

2.4 Future improvements

Recommended changes for increasing impact of environmental education:

Teachers recommend several improvements:

- **Curriculum reform:** Include environmental topics across various subjects, not just science.
- **Teacher training:** Provide continuous professional development in sustainability education.
- **Increased funding:** Ensure better access to materials and field-based learning opportunities.
- **More experiential learning:** Prioritize outdoor education, real-world problem solving, and collaborative activities. Educators also stressed that lessons on sustainability should not remain theoretical. Instead, they should be embedded in daily routines, such as waste management, responsible consumption, and energy use at school.

Recommended changes for greater environmental impact:

- Updating school curricula to include environmental themes across subjects.
- Ongoing professional development for teachers in green education.
- Increased funding for environmental projects at both local and national levels.
- Greater emphasis on experiential learning, with more outdoor and real-world activities.
- **How can policymakers support educators?**

Policymakers can support environmental education by allocating budgets for green infrastructure (solar panels, recycling stations, eco-classrooms), recognizing and promoting teacher efforts in sustainability as a professional priority, facilitating partnerships with local organizations and providing platforms for collaboration and listening to teachers and students through public consultations and feedback loops.

Ultimately, educators need to be trusted, equipped, and respected as change agents who can lead the transformation toward a more sustainable and conscious society.

Policymakers could support educators :

- Allocating funding for sustainable infrastructure (e.g., solar panels, recycling systems).
- Establishing clear education policies that promote green competencies.
- Involving teachers and students in decision-making and consultation processes.
- Recognizing teachers as agents of change, and supporting them through resources, trust, and autonomy.

Improving collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local communities:

Educators agree that collaboration between schools and external organizations must be strengthened. Suggestions include:

- Establishing formal partnerships with NGOs and public institutions.
- Jointly organizing clean-up events, tree planting, and sustainability workshops.
- Creating shared networks for resource exchange and best practices.

Many educators pointed out that local authorities should take a more active role in facilitating these connections and supporting long-term projects.

IV.3 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses

Based on the interviews with parents here are the key conclusions regarding their roles, challenges, and perceived support in fostering ecological awareness and sustainability in their children.

3.1 Role in environmental awareness

All three parents **unanimously emphasize the critical importance of young people learning about environmental protection**. One parent highlights the urgency due to "excessive deforestation, pollution levels, and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources." Other sees ecological education not just as a desideratum but as an "axiom of our times," a "proof of civilization and common sense," linking it to the ancestral wisdom of not wasting resources.

As for their role in educating their children about sustainability, all three parents see it as **primary and continuous**. One parent considers her role as a mother "paramount in making children responsible regarding the environment." Other parent actively teaches sustainability through daily actions, especially **recycling**, to illustrate that "natural resources cannot be exploited indefinitely." The other one stresses that education "starts in the family" and that "the role of parents is crucial" because "young people, small children, function by the rules of mimicry."

They encourage environmentally friendly behaviors at home through various methods. A parent promotes **recycling**, keeping the environment clean ("not throwing garbage indiscriminately"), and preserving nature ("not harming animals, not picking flowers and shrubs"). Other parent uses **educational stories** and daily reminders for her young children on basic actions like proper waste disposal. The other one describes her approach as an "obsession" for actions like **turning off lights, closing taps, collecting used oil, reconditioning clothes, and separate waste collection**, emphasizing that her child "was forced" into these habits through consistent parental example and discipline.

3.2 Challenges and perceptions

Regarding difficulties in promoting ecological awareness within the family, a parent has "not encountered difficulties" as her children are young and "open to anything" she tells them. The other parent also states that her family "does not encounter difficulties," as "we are all aware of the necessity of ecological education." Other parent echoes this for her immediate family, having "taken care to form healthy reflexes" from a young age. She notes that guests and friends also comply with the house rules or she "solves the problems herself."

On the perception of current youth's environmental awareness compared to previous generations, there's a nuanced view. One parent believes "young people today are more aware of environmental problems" than older generations, who she feels "still don't fully realize the need for recycling" and don't understand that "current climate changes are a result of past abuses." The other parent agrees that "young people today have access to a lot of information and they can choose to have an environmentally friendly behavior," and "most of them... choose this behavior." She contrasts this with previous generations who "didn't pollute... as we pollute today" and "respected nature as a matter of course." In stark contrast, other mother believes that "this generation is the least conscious," despite "all the propaganda and all the efforts of awareness." She blames "this society based on consumption and opulence, on poor quality false idols," asserting that "young people no longer have correct benchmarks," and that schools and NGOs cannot compete with the "aggressively promoted bad taste and questionable morals" from media.

3.3 Support and resources

When asked about schools' role in ecological education, there's a mixed response. One parent observes that "schools are slowly starting to offer ecological education" through projects her daughter undertakes, but believes "there is always room for more." The other parent hasn't yet formed a definitive opinion, having only observed this education through "friends' children." Another one, however, is firmly negative, stating "No, no," schools "don't help at all" or "not sufficiently." She attributes this to a lack of time, resources, adequate curriculum, and interest, citing also the "poor ecological education of the teachers."

For additional support and resources, one parent suggests "projects like competitions" that challenge children to "bring back to life... an object that might end up in the trash," as such activities would "tempt" young children. Another one thinks schools could help by giving children "homework related to sustainability resources," which would also aid parents in engaging with their children on these topics.

Regarding how local communities and authorities can support families in adopting a more sustainable lifestyle, there are several concrete proposals. One parent points to the need for authorities to "sign contracts... for selective waste collection," noting that in her smaller town, only

household waste is collected. The other parent is more critical, stating that city halls and councils "don't help enough." She advocates for "extended monitoring systems and law enforcement," citing an example of a nearby city with video monitoring and immediate intervention teams for environmental infractions. She also calls for "modernized and functional waste collection points," lamenting that existing ones in her neighborhood "don't work." Another one highlights the importance of **motivation** for people to engage in sustainable practices, suggesting that a reward system, similar to past initiatives where people received money for recycling bottles or paper, is crucial to form good habits. She emphasizes that "people need to be motivated to do this." She concludes by strongly recommending the resumption of "good habits" from her childhood, like school-organized paper collection drives that offered rewards to students, classes, and even the school itself.

Comprehensive interpretation of interviews on ecological awareness

This analysis synthesizes insights from interviews with young people, parents, and teachers regarding their understanding, engagement, challenges, and proposed solutions for environmental protection and education.

IV.4 Interpretation of interview conclusions by group

4.1. Youth perspectives

Young people generally understand environmental protection as **respecting and caring for nature and the planet**, including safeguarding their living environment and following protective rules. Their initial awareness often stems from **school and educational programs**, with some influence from volunteer organizations and media. Some even recall first learning about it in primary school.

Youth actively engage in pro-environmental activities like **recycling, volunteering, activism, and conservation**. Their motivation is driven by the **urgency of environmental problems** and a desire to contribute positively. They find environmental campaigns and projects educational and inspiring, valuing opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals and feel their actions make a difference.

However, they face several barriers:

- **Personal limitations**, such as family influence.
- **Economic factors**, particularly the higher cost of eco-friendly products.
- **Social influences**, like peer attitudes and lack of law enforcement.
- **Infrastructure gaps** (e.g., insufficient recycling bins) and limited prior environmental education.

Youth perceive current environmental education as **insufficient and too theoretical**, lacking practical application. They advocate for more compulsory and engaging education to develop informed behaviors. Preferred learning methods include **workshops, social media content, and documentaries** due to their interactivity and visual appeal. Social media is considered the most effective channel for brief, relatable messages showing direct personal impact.

4.2. Parent perspectives

Parents unanimously underscore the **critical importance of young people learning about environmental protection**, citing concerns like deforestation, pollution, and resource exploitation. They view ecological education as an "axiom of our times" and a "proof of civilization," linking it to not wasting resources.

They see their role as **primary and continuous** in educating children about sustainability, emphasizing that education "starts in the family" and that children learn through "mimicry". They actively encourage eco-friendly behaviors at home through:

- **Recycling and keeping the environment clean.**
- **Educational stories and daily reminders.**
- Consistent discipline and parental example for actions like turning off lights, closing taps, collecting used oil, and separate waste collection.

Most parents reported **not encountering difficulties** in fostering awareness within their immediate families, attributing this to their children's openness or established healthy reflexes.

Perceptions on youth environmental awareness vary:

- Some believe **young people today are more aware** than older generations due to information access.
- One parent (Gabriela) holds a **starkly negative view**, believing "this generation is the least conscious" due to a consumption-driven society, false idols, and media promoting "bad taste".

Regarding schools, parents have a **mixed response**: some see schools slowly starting to offer ecological education, while others are firmly negative, citing **lack of time, resources, adequate curriculum, interest, and even "poor ecological education of the teachers"**. Parents suggest projects like competitions to "bring back to life an object" or homework related to sustainability resources.

They propose concrete actions for local authorities:

- Implementing **selective waste collection contracts**.
- **Extended monitoring systems and law enforcement** for environmental infractions.
- **Modernized and functional waste collection points**.
- Crucially, **motivation and reward systems** (like past paper collection drives) are seen as vital to encourage sustainable habits.

4.3. Teacher & Youth leaders perspectives

Teachers integrate environmental themes across various subjects, including non-science ones, using texts, videos, thematic projects, and extracurricular activities like recycling and planting. They often use Erasmus+ projects as effective platforms. Key messages conveyed include **personal responsibility** (everyone plays a role), **small actions matter, leading by example**, and understanding **long-term impact** on future generations. They also emphasize **proper recycling and minimizing waste**.

Student engagement varies by age: **young children are curious and receptive** to play and practical activities , while **teenagers show more interest when they understand real-world impact**. However, some note that students may understand facts but not internalize values, often due to age-related cognitive development.

Significant challenges in promoting environmental education include:

- **Lack of time** in the school schedule.
- **Insufficient age-appropriate teaching resources**.
- **Institutional resistance to change** and lack of a clear school-wide strategy.
- **Inadequate funding** for practical projects.
- **Bureaucracy** and absence of coherent education policies.

Effective strategies involve **hands-on, participatory learning** such as workshops, recycling, planting, and competitions.

Role modeling by adults is also highly influential. Interactive methods like gamification, outdoor learning, and project-based learning increase engagement and understanding, fostering emotional connections with nature. Teachers stress the potential value of field trips to polluted areas or recycling facilities.

They emphasize the need for **long-term partnerships** between schools, NGOs, and local communities, with NGOs offering expertise and resources. Policymakers should support educators by **updating curricula**, providing **ongoing professional development**, increasing **funding for green infrastructure and projects**, and involving teachers and students in decision-making.

IV.5 . Similarities and differences across groups

5.1. Common understandings of environmental protection

- **Similarity:** All three groups agree that environmental protection involves **caring for nature and the planet**. There's a shared emphasis on **personal responsibility** and the impact of individual actions.

- **Similarity:** All recognize the **urgency** of environmental issues, whether due to pollution and resource exploitation (parents) , or the need to contribute positively to planetary health (youth) , or to ensure a better future for generations (teachers).

5.2. Perceptions of current education and awareness

- **Similarity:** Youth and teachers largely agree that **current environmental education is insufficient and too theoretical**, lacking practical application. Parents also express mixed to negative views, often citing similar issues like lack of time or adequate curriculum.
- **Difference:** While some parents and youth believe young people are **more aware** than previous generations due to information access , one parent strongly disagrees, blaming societal consumption and negative media influence for a *lack* of consciousness in the current generation. Teachers note that while students grasp facts, they don't always internalize values, particularly older students.

5.3. Challenges and barriers

- **Similarity:** All groups point to **lack of adequate infrastructure** (e.g., insufficient recycling bins, non-functional collection points) as a barrier.
- **Similarity:** **Lack of sufficient or effective education** is a common challenge mentioned by youth (too theoretical) , parents (schools not helping enough) , and teachers (lack of time, resources, clear strategy).
- **Difference:** Youth specifically highlight **economic factors (cost of eco-friendly products)** and **social influences (peer attitudes, lack of law enforcement)** as barriers. Parents also emphasize the need for better **law enforcement and motivation systems**. Teachers focus more on **institutional barriers** within schools, such as bureaucracy and funding gaps for projects.



5.4. Effective strategies & desired support

- **Similarity:** There is a strong consensus across all groups for **practical, hands-on, and experiential learning**. This includes activities like recycling, planting, workshops, and competitions.
- **Similarity: Role modeling and leading by example** are consistently highlighted by parents (children learn by "mimicry") and teachers ("modeling behavior" is effective).
- **Similarity:** All three groups suggest **strengthening collaboration** between schools, NGOs, and local communities/authorities.
- **Difference:** Youth specifically mention **social media, workshops, and documentaries** as preferred interactive learning methods. Parents emphasize the need for **motivation and reward systems** from authorities. Teachers focus on **curriculum reform, professional development for educators, and policymaker support for green infrastructure and policies**.

Category	Youth	Parents	Teachers & Youth leaders
Common Understandings of Environmental Protection	View environmental protection as a personal responsibility and a way to contribute to planetary health and the future.	Emphasize responsibility to avoid pollution and protect nature for health and ethical reasons.	Focus on the future and intergenerational responsibility; link environmental care to moral and civic education.
<i>Similarities</i>	All agree on the importance of caring for nature, individual responsibility, and the urgency of environmental issues.		
Perceptions of Current Education & Awareness	Believe education is too theoretical; prefer practical learning. Think young people are becoming more aware due to media and school exposure.	Mixed views: Some agree youth are more aware, while others blame consumerism and media for low awareness. Feel schools aren't doing enough.	Agree current education is insufficient and too fact-based. Students understand concepts but often lack internalized values.

<u>Similarities</u>	General agreement that current environmental education lacks practical application and effectiveness.		
<u>Differences</u>		Some disagreement among parents about generational awareness	Teachers observe a disconnect between knowledge and values.
Challenges and Barriers	Identify infrastructure gaps, peer influence, economic barriers (e.g., cost of green products), and lack of law enforcement.	Highlight lack of bins, insufficient school support, and need for stronger enforcement and motivation systems.	Point to systemic issues: rigid curriculum, lack of funding, administrative barriers.
<u>Similarities</u>	All cite poor infrastructure and inadequate education as key barriers.		
<u>Differences</u>	Youth focus more on social and economic barriers.	Parents stress external motivation.	Teachers emphasize institutional and structural constraints.
Effective Strategies & Desired Support	Prefer workshops, social media, and documentaries; request more hands-on, creative learning.	Value early education through example; recommend external motivation systems and public rewards.	Use modeling, competitions, and fieldwork; call for curriculum reform and educator training.
<u>Similarities</u>	All support experiential learning, behavioral modeling, and stronger collaboration between schools, NGOs, and communities.		
<u>Differences</u>	Youth focus on media and peer engagement.	Parents emphasize home habits and motivation systems.	Teachers want institutional support and curriculum flexibility.
Table 3: Similarities and differences across groups (Mare Nostrum’s Interviews in Romania)			

IV.6 .Recommendations and solutions for learning about environmental issues

Based on the combined insights, particularly focusing on what resonates with young people and what parents and teachers believe is effective, here are applicable measures and recommendations for how young people would like to learn about the environment:

1. **Prioritize practical and experiential learning:**

- **Hands-on activities:** Implement more projects like recycling initiatives, tree planting, waste collection drives, and "upcycling" competitions (e.g., bringing old objects back to life).
- **Outdoor and real-world exposure:** Organize field trips to recycling facilities, polluted areas (to see impact), or natural reserves (to foster appreciation).
- **Daily routine integration:** Embed sustainability lessons into daily school life through responsible waste management, energy use, and consumption practices.

2. **Foster interactive and engaging methods:**

- **Gamification and creative contests:** Use games, challenges, and creative competitions to make learning enjoyable and tangible, especially for younger children.
- **Workshops and project-based learning:** Conduct interactive workshops and sustained projects where students actively solve real environmental challenges, fostering ownership and responsibility.
- **Visual and relatable content:** Utilize documentaries and multimedia materials that show direct personal impact and are easily digestible.

3. **Leverage modern media and communication channels:**

- **Strategic social media engagement:** Use social media platforms with brief, relatable messages that demonstrate direct personal impact, as this is the most effective channel to reach youth.
- **Digital learning resources:** Develop and promote online educational content that is interactive and visually appealing, complementing traditional teaching.

4. **Strengthen collaborative ecosystems:**

- **Formal partnerships:** Establish long-term collaborations between schools, NGOs, and local communities. NGOs can provide expertise, resources, and experiential opportunities.
- **Community networks:** Create shared networks for resource exchange and best practices, supported by local authorities.
- **Parent-school synergy:** Schools could assign "homework related to sustainability resources" to involve parents and reinforce learning at home.

5. **Implement policy and resource allocation changes:**

- **Curriculum reform:** Update school curricula to integrate environmental themes across all subjects, not just science, to provide a holistic understanding.
- **Teacher professional development:** Provide continuous training and resources for teachers in green education, recognizing them as agents of change.
- **Funding and infrastructure:** Allocate increased funding for environmental projects (both local and national), and invest in sustainable school infrastructure like recycling systems and eco-classrooms.
- **Motivation and incentives:** Reintroduce reward systems for sustainable behaviors (e.g., for recycling, waste collection), as motivation is key for habit formation.
- **Law enforcement and monitoring:** Local authorities should enforce environmental laws more rigorously and establish effective monitoring systems for infractions.
- **Functional waste management:** Ensure local authorities implement and maintain effective, widespread selective waste collection and functional collection points.
- **Involve students and teachers in decision-making:** Policymakers should consult educators and young people to ensure that environmental policies and educational strategies are relevant and impactful.

By combining these multi-faceted approaches, environmental education can become more engaging, practical, and effective, fostering a generation of environmentally conscious and responsible citizens.

V. Interview Interpretation Conclusions – NALAG Partner (Georgia) - Qualitative research

Amidst pressing climate challenges and the degradation of ecosystems, environmental education has risen to prominence as a critical area within contemporary pedagogy. This report compiles the insights and experiences of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including educators and youth leaders actively promoting environmental education in schools, as well as environmentally conscious parents and young people such as students and volunteers.

V.1 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed youth's responses

1.1 Understanding environmental protection

Young respondents demonstrate a deep emotional and ethical connection to environmental protection. They see it not only as a civic responsibility but as a personal and moral obligation to care for the planet, often likening nature to family or personal property. Their motivation stems from the desire to leave a clean world for future generations and to safeguard essential resources such as air, water, and food.

1.2 Engagement and motivation

Youth are actively involved in a wide range of pro-environmental activities, especially through school-organized events. Clean-up campaigns, tree planting, composting, creative recycling, and awareness-raising art projects are common. Importantly, their engagement is largely intrinsic—driven by a personal sense of duty. However, peer influence and social learning opportunities also serve as significant motivators. Participation in these activities offers them a sense of purpose, community involvement, and creative expression.

1.3 Challenges and barriers

Several key barriers were identified:

- Infrastructure issues: Lack of waste bins, poor waste management systems, and inadequate sorting facilities—especially in rural areas—limit practical environmental action.

- Behavioral norms: Social practices such as littering and open burning persist and discourage sustainable habits.
- Institutional conflicts: Students noted difficulties in balancing academic demands with active involvement in environmental campaigns.

Interestingly, economic and social barriers were not commonly addressed, either due to lack of awareness or reluctance to discuss these issues, suggesting a gap in critical reflection or dialogue around socioeconomic influences.

1.4 Education and awareness

There is strong critique of current environmental education, which is seen as overly theoretical and disconnected from real-world application. Students express a clear preference for:

- **Interactive, hands-on learning** (e.g., games, clean-up drives, field trips)
- **Creative and visual approaches** (e.g., posters, drawings, videos)
- **Regular and dedicated time** in school schedules for environmental projects

Despite resource limitations (e.g., lack of labs), youth show resilience and a solution-focused mindset, offering practical suggestions for improving learning engagement.

Across the board, youth favor a blend of theoretical and practical learning, enriched by visual and creative formats. Seminars, trainings, documentaries, and especially social media content are considered powerful tools for awareness-raising. The use of artistic expression (drawings, videos, storytelling) is seen as an effective and emotionally resonant method for communicating environmental values. Young people show a high level of environmental awareness and are eager to take action when given the opportunity. Their motivation is authentic, their ideas are constructive, and they are ready to contribute. However, structural and educational limitations—not lack of interest—are the main barriers to deeper engagement.

To maximize youth participation, there is a clear need to:

- **Improve infrastructure** (especially waste management systems)
- **Reform environmental education** to be more experiential and student-driven
- **Support schools with resources** for hands-on and creative learning
- **Value and integrate youth feedback** into project planning and curriculum design

This generation is ready to act—not just learn—and they are asking for the tools, time, and space to make a real impact.

V.2 Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed teachers' and youth leaders' responses.

2.1 Understanding environmental education

The interviewed teachers clearly demonstrate a **practical and integrated approach to environmental education**. They incorporate environmental themes into regular lessons using **experiential learning methods**—such as clean-up campaigns, field trips, debates, poster-making, and real-world case studies. Students learn about core environmental topics (e.g., recycling, composting, deforestation) and are also introduced to global frameworks like the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. This approach connects local action to broader global awareness.

2.2 Engagement and challenges

Students are described as **highly engaged and enthusiastic**, especially when learning is interactive, competitive, or community-based. Activities such as eco-challenges, awareness campaigns, and student-led initiatives foster a strong sense of involvement and concern over environmental issues like pollution and climate change.

However, **teachers face notable challenges**:

- **Resource constraints**, such as lack of funding for materials or event organization.
- **Curriculum rigidity**, where strict schedules and limited flexibility restrict the timing and depth of environmental activities.
- **Limited inter-school collaboration**, despite interest, due to administrative or logistical obstacles.

2.3 Effective strategies

Teachers have adopted **innovative and student-centered strategies** to overcome these barriers. Making learning **engaging and creative**: poster contests, geographic models, interactive games. **Partnering with external actors**: e.g., rangers, NGOs, and local government agencies, which enhance learning with real-world relevance.

Using **positive reinforcement** and student recognition (e.g., awards, competitions) to boost motivation. **Digital outreach** (e.g., eco-video challenges, social media campaigns) as a growing method for engagement and visibility. These approaches create a dynamic learning environment that fosters not just awareness but **active participation** in environmental protection.

2.4 Future improvements

To make environmental education more impactful, teachers suggest:

- **Adjusting the curriculum** to allow flexibility for environmental projects during optimal seasons.
- **Increasing funding and institutional support** for continuous environmental activities.
- **Scaling up successful collaborations** (e.g., with the Gori Development Fund or municipal agencies).
- **Encouraging peer learning** among youth and between schools to share best practices and co-develop projects.

Systematic and institutional support is needed to turn one-time projects into sustainable, long-term environmental engagement. The interviews reveal a strong commitment by educators to meaningful environmental education, despite structural and resource limitations. Teachers are already employing best practices, including experiential learning, creative expression, community collaboration, and the use of technology to engage students.

Key takeaways include:

- **Hands-on learning is highly effective** and should be prioritized.
- **Student motivation is not a barrier**—it’s institutional rigidity and lack of resources that need to be addressed.
- **External collaboration** has proven successful and should be expanded into more consistent, inter-school and cross-sector initiatives.
- **Digital platforms** offer exciting new opportunities for environmental education and awareness-raising.

Teachers are not only teaching sustainability—they are actively building it into the school culture, and with stronger policy and financial support, they can significantly expand their impact.

V.3. Environmental education through the lens of the interviewed parents responses

3.1 Role in environmental awareness

The parent views early environmental education as essential, ideally beginning in early childhood. They emphasize habit-building from a young age, teaching children not to litter and to understand the health and environmental consequences of pollution—especially hazardous waste. Rather than using rewards, the parent encourages modeling and consistent correction, believing in the power of repetition and example to shape lasting behaviors.

At home, sustainable habits are encouraged through shared activities, like waste collection and proper disposal, reinforcing responsibility and awareness in everyday life. The approach focuses on long-term behavioral change over short-term motivation.

3.2 Challenges and perceptions

One of the key challenges is the lack of infrastructure, especially public trash bins. This sometimes leads children to carry waste for long distances or, regrettably, dispose of it improperly. Interestingly, the parent observed that older children often act as role models, guiding younger ones, indicating positive peer influence.

Regarding generational awareness, the parent perceives significant improvement among today's youth. They attribute this to sustained public efforts, including community clean-ups and greening programs, which have gradually shaped youth attitudes toward the environment.

3.3 Support and resources

The parent sees schools as valuable in raising environmental awareness, but not sufficient. Education should begin within the family, with schools and universities serving to reinforce these values. For more impactful environmental education, three key areas were identified:

- **Improved infrastructure** (especially more public trash bins)
- **Wider access to information** through campaigns and educational materials
- **Stronger community involvement** via organized events and support for student participation

The parent calls for **systemic solutions**: visible signage, anti-littering messages, consistent infrastructure, and locally funded environmental programs. They also recommend **active involvement of youth** in clean-up and awareness activities, facilitated by schools and municipalities. Educational institutions should be resourced not just to teach but to organize meaningful, habit-forming experiences.

This interview reflects a **deep commitment to environmental values within the family setting**, with the parent acting as an educator and role model. The focus on **early education and consistent behavior modeling** underscores a belief in long-term, internalized environmental responsibility.

The parent's insights also highlight that:

- **Infrastructure is a practical barrier** to sustainable behavior, especially for children.
- **Generational awareness is improving**, but needs continuous support.
- **Families, schools, communities, and governments must collaborate**, combining education with tangible support (like clean-up campaigns, signage, and accessible waste disposal).

Ultimately, this perspective affirms that **environmental awareness is a shared responsibility**—one that begins at home and must be sustained through coordinated community and policy efforts.

V.4. Similarities and differences across groups

4.1. Common understandings of environmental protection

Similarities:

All groups agree that environmental protection is a moral duty and a shared responsibility. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of early education and habit formation (especially noted by parents and echoed by teachers). Youth and teachers link environmental protection to concrete actions (e.g., recycling, composting, clean-up), while parents focus more on behavior in daily life (e.g., not littering).

Differences:

Youth often express their understanding in emotional and generational terms, focusing on leaving a clean planet for the future. Teachers connect environmental responsibility to global frameworks (e.g., SDGs) and emphasize structured learning goals. Parents center their understanding on family habits and the impact of pollution on children's health and well-being.

4.2. Perceptions of current education & awareness

Similarities:

All groups recognize that environmental education exists but believe it is insufficient in its current form. Preference for interactive, hands-on learning is consistently mentioned across groups.

Differences:

Youth find current education too theoretical and request more creative and field-based activities. Teachers are actively implementing environmental lessons but feel restricted by curriculum rigidity and resource limits. Parents acknowledge the school's role but believe environmental education should begin at home, with schools playing a secondary, reinforcing role.

4.3. Challenges and barriers

Similarities:

Infrastructure issues are a common concern across all groups (e.g., lack of bins, poor waste management). Resource limitations and insufficient institutional support are highlighted by both teachers and parents.

Differences:

Youth focus more on logistical and institutional barriers, such as missing school time for activities and poor access to proper waste sorting systems. Teachers emphasize curricular constraints, funding shortages, and lack of inter-school collaboration.

Parents are more concerned with practical barriers in public spaces (e.g., children having to carry trash due to lack of bins) and lack of community initiatives.

4.4. Effective strategies & desired support

Similarities:

All groups support interactive, creative, and experiential learning methods (e.g., campaigns, clean-ups, posters, videos). There is a shared call for more structured support from institutions, including better infrastructure, funding, and awareness campaigns.

Differences:

Youth suggest specific improvements like dedicated school time, art-based awareness projects, and integration of social media. Teachers seek curriculum flexibility, external partnerships (e.g., rangers, NGOs), and scaling of digital outreach efforts. Parents focus on early habit-building at home, more visible public signage, and government-led infrastructure improvements to support sustainable behaviors in families.

Summary Table			
Category	Youth	Parents	Teachers
Common Understandings	Emotional, generational duty; personal responsibility	Early habit formation; family-based behavioral norms	Teach everyday actions and global consequences
Perception of Education	Too theoretical; need creativity & practice	Schools help but family is primary educator	Active efforts in schools, but limited by structure & resources
Challenges & Barriers	Infrastructure, schedule conflicts, limited facilities	Lack of bins, limited campaigns, behavior gaps	Curriculum inflexibility, lack of funding & inter-school coordination
Effective Strategies & Support	Art, media, peer projects, field trips	Model behavior, signage, trash bins, community support	Gamification, partnerships, digital outreach, curriculum reform

Table 4: Similarities and differences across groups (from NALAG's Interviews in Georgia)

V.5 Recommendations & Solutions for learning about environmental issues

1. Enhancing education & awareness

- Move beyond theory: shift the focus from purely theoretical lessons to a hands-on, practical approach. integrate more experiments, workshops, and real-world projects.
- Use engaging media: leverage social media, documentaries, and videos to make environmental topics more accessible, interesting, and memorable for young people.
- Promote creative expression: encourage students to use creative methods like drawing, making posters, and creating videos from recycled materials to raise awareness and deepen their understanding.

2. Increasing practical engagement

- Organize regular activities: schedule dedicated time for monthly clean-up campaigns and tree-planting events. this provides a consistent and tangible way for students to contribute.
- Integrate field trips: plan educational excursions to relevant sites like recycling centers or natural reserves to provide practical experiences and connect learning to the real world.
- Dedicate school time: advocate for a designated time slot within the school schedule for environmental projects and activities, ensuring they don't conflict with other classes or upset teachers.

3. Addressing infrastructure & resources

- Improve local infrastructure: work with local communities and municipalities to install more trash bins and recycling facilities in public spaces, especially in areas where they are lacking.
- Provide school resources: secure funding or donations to provide schools with the necessary materials and equipment for hands-on projects and experiments.

4. Fostering community & collaboration

- Encourage social interaction: emphasize the social and fun aspects of environmental activities. organize group events where friends can participate together to make the experience more enjoyable and motivating.
- Educate the broader community: launch public awareness campaigns to address cultural habits and low awareness of waste management. this can help reduce issues like littering and burning waste.
- Bridge the socioeconomic gap: although not a focus in the provided text, future efforts should address the economic and social barriers that may prevent some young people from participating in environmental initiatives.

Conclusion: A unified call for action

This study, synthesizing perspectives from youth, educators, and parents, reveals a powerful and unified narrative about environmental responsibility: it is a shared endeavor that requires intentional collaboration across generations and institutions.

The findings confirm that young people are not only highly aware of environmental issues but also genuinely motivated to act. Their eagerness is rooted in a deep, moral conviction and a desire for hands-on, tangible involvement. However, this passion is frequently held back by systemic barriers, not a lack of interest.

Educators, mirroring this commitment, are already employing best practices like experiential learning and creative projects despite limited resources. They see firsthand that the biggest obstacles are institutional rigidity and inadequate support systems. Their success depends on more than just curriculum; it requires consistent policy and financial backing.

Crucially, the parental perspective highlights that environmental values are first instilled at home, through consistent role modeling and early education. This foundational awareness is then

strengthened by schools and the wider community. The insights from parents reinforce a key finding from all three groups: a lack of supporting infrastructure—such as accessible recycling and waste disposal—serves as a very real barrier to sustainable behavior for everyone.

In summary, this research underscores that environmental awareness is a shared responsibility, but its success depends on coordinated action. To truly unlock the potential of the next generation of environmental stewards, we must:

- Reform environmental education to be more interactive, practical, and student-driven, and provide schools with the necessary resources.
- Invest in community-level infrastructure to make sustainable behaviors easier and more accessible for everyone.
- Create and sustain partnerships between families, schools, and local governments to provide consistent support and opportunities for meaningful, collective action.

The study's ultimate conclusion is an optimistic one: the will to create a sustainable future already exists. Now, it is up to all of us—from parents and teachers to policymakers and communities—to build the supportive framework that will allow that will to flourish.

VI. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner ACTIE (Moldova)

Based on the two focus group reports, here is a detailed analysis of the responses, similarities, and differences between the youth group and the adult group (teachers, youth leaders, parents).

1. What does environmental protection mean to you?

Youth

The youth have a pragmatic and personal perspective. They define environmental protection through concrete actions: a cleaner environment , acting responsibly , sorting waste , and protecting animals and plants. They view environmental protection as a form of **respect**—for nature, for others, and for themselves—and emphasize that "every action matters".

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults have a broader, more technical perspective. Their answers include concepts such as:

- having clean air and unpolluted water
- preserving nature as it is
- responsible use of natural resources
- protecting ecosystems and biodiversity
- a commitment to a healthy future for everyone

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups mention the importance of a clean environment and protecting animals and plants.
- **Differences:** The youth focus on individual actions and personal impact, while adults use more technical language, specifying concepts like ecosystems and biodiversity.

2. How did you first learn about environmental issues?**Youth**

Young people learned about environmental issues from multiple and varied sources, with a strong emphasis on digital media and personal experiences. Sources mentioned include:

- school
- social media and YouTube
- personal observations of trash in nature
- documentaries about endangered animals
- conversations with family and friends

They emphasize the realization of "personal responsibility".

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults learned from personal experiences that developed over time, as well as from traditional media sources. Examples include:

- observing seasonal changes like snowless winters
- becoming a parent
- from the media (news, documentaries)
- direct contact with nature, like seeing disappearing forests

- getting involved in civic or NGO activities

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups learned from direct personal observations of environmental degradation and from media.
- **Differences:** The youth are more influenced by **social media and online platforms**. Adults mention parenthood as a significant factor, while youth talk about responsibility toward future generations.

3. In what ways do you get involved in pro-environment activities?

Youth

The youth's responses are very practical and include:

- greening campaigns
- picking up trash from the street
- reducing plastic consumption (using reusable bottles and bags)
- using energy-efficient light bulbs
- planting trees and flowers
- donating clothes and items

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults get involved in concrete actions, with a focus on community and influencing others:

- participating in tree planting campaigns
- sorting plastic bottles and paper
- using reusable products
- discussing how to reduce energy consumption with colleagues
- attending online workshops

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups participate in tree planting campaigns, recycling, and using reusable products.

- **Differences:** The youth mention more modern actions like donating items , while adults emphasize influencing colleagues.

4. What motivates you to participate?

Youth

The youth's motivations are personal and idealistic:

- a cleaner environment
- love for nature
- a sense of responsibility toward the planet
- the desire to leave a cleaner world for future generations
- the power of personal example
- the satisfaction of doing something concrete

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adult motivations are more focused on the impact they have on others, especially children:

- the desire to have a clean planet for themselves and their children
- the satisfaction of doing something concrete
- being an example for young people and children
- a sense of belonging to a community that cares
- the positive impact they see in places where they take action

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups are motivated by the desire to contribute to a better environment and leave a cleaner place for future generations. Both feel the satisfaction of doing something tangible.
- **Differences:** Adults are strongly motivated by their role as a role model for youth and children. The youth emphasize personal responsibility and the idea that change "must start with me".

5. Have you ever been involved in an environmental project or campaign?

Youth

Youth have participated in school and local projects, and their experiences brought them satisfaction and new knowledge:

- tree planting campaigns, where they learned about biodiversity
- educational projects, where they explained recycling to younger students
- nature clean-up days, where they were saddened by the amount of trash but happy with the result
- collaborations with young people from other countries

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults had similar experiences, often alongside their children:

- clean-ups organized by the city hall
- tree planting activities
- unofficial actions, organized with family
- attending meetings with local authorities

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups participated in concrete actions like clean-ups and tree planting. Both were shocked by the amount of garbage found in nature.
- **Differences:** Adults mention the importance of dialogue with authorities , but also the frustration of wanting to see more concrete actions follow. The youth mention a wider range of activities, including educational projects and international collaborations.

6. What difficulties do you face in adopting a sustainable lifestyle?

Youth

The youth's difficulties are mainly related to infrastructure, costs, and support:

- lack of waste collection infrastructure
- sustainable products are more expensive and hard to find
- lack of time for planning a sustainable lifestyle
- lack of support from family or colleagues
- contradictory information on what is truly "eco"

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults' difficulties are similar, with an emphasis on the attitude of others and local infrastructure:

- not enough recycling bins
- eco products are sometimes expensive or hard to access
- their family doesn't recycle, making it difficult for them to do it alone
- some people find it easier to throw garbage carelessly
- lack of good public transportation

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups identify the high cost of eco-products and the lack of recycling infrastructure as major obstacles. The lack of support from family is a common problem.
- **Differences:** The youth also mention lack of time and contradictory information, suggesting a greater complexity in their consumption decisions.

7. What factors hinder young people's involvement?**Youth**

The youth feel hindered by:

- peer pressure
- lack of positive role models among adults
- limited financial resources
- lack of free local opportunities, especially in rural areas
- a mentality of "it's fine as it is"
- disinformation

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults have a similar perspective, but with a stronger emphasis on education and policies:

- peer pressure to conform to uninterested groups
- lack of financial resources for eco products or educational activities
- cultural norms prioritizing comfort and overconsumption
- limited environmental education in schools
- lack of positive role models

- lack of clear, consistent local policies

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups identify peer pressure, lack of role models, limited financial resources, and insufficient environmental education as major hindering factors.
- **Differences:** Adults specifically mention the lack of clear **local policies** as a systemic obstacle. The youth highlight the "it's fine as it is" mentality.

8. How effective do you think current environmental education is?

Youth

The youth find it somewhat effective, but state:

- too little time is dedicated to it
- topics are treated superficially, not regularly
- there are no dedicated ecology classes in many schools
- opportunities in rural areas are more limited than in cities

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults have similar criticisms:

- education is useful but not enough to change habits
- lessons are often too theoretical and lack practical activities
- opportunities in rural areas are more limited than in cities
- teachers need better training to teach these topics effectively
- information is sometimes too complex

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups agree that education is flawed due to limited time and a lack of practical application. The disparity between urban and rural areas is also a shared concern.
- **Differences:** Adults emphasize the need for teacher training, while the youth mention the need for dedicated and mandatory classes.

9. What improvements would you suggest to raise awareness among young people?

Youth

The youth propose solutions based on action and their own environment:

- introducing mandatory environmental classes
- educational trips into nature
- local projects with direct engagement
- student-led environmental clubs
- awareness videos adapted for social media

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults propose similar solutions, but with an emphasis on collaboration and promotion:

- more practical classes and nature trips
- creating environmental groups in every school
- using social media for attractive campaigns
- engaging young influencers
- more contests and awards for youth projects
- organizing interactive workshops with experts

Similarities and Differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups suggest more practical activities, nature trips, and creating school environmental clubs. Both see immense potential in using social media for awareness campaigns.
- **Differences:** Adults mention engaging influencers and offering awards for projects, while the youth propose mandatory classes and involvement in school decisions.

10. What learning methods seem most interesting to you?

Youth

The youth are attracted to digital and interactive methods:

- YouTube, TikTok, and social media
- educational apps and games on phones or tablets
- workshops with practical and creative projects
- documentaries with impressive visuals

Teachers, youth leaders, parents

Adults prefer a combination of practical and interactive methods:

- short, fun videos on TikTok and Instagram
- educational games and apps
- workshops with practical activities
- documentaries with impressive visuals
- interactive discussions with experts and volunteers
- participation in clean-up and tree planting actions

Similarities and differences

- **Similarities:** Both groups recognize the power of social media (TikTok, YouTube), educational games, and documentaries. Workshops with practical activities are also considered effective by both.
- **Differences:** Adults also mention video presentations and discussions with experts, while the youth focus exclusively on their preferred platforms.

Key Conclusions

The analysis of the two focus groups shows distinct perspectives with a common core of values.

Youth:

- They have a pragmatic and digital vision of environmental protection. For them, small, individual actions are essential.
- They are heavily influenced by the online environment (social media, YouTube, apps) and see these platforms as crucial for education and awareness.
- They are motivated by personal responsibility and the desire to inspire other young people.
- Their main obstacles are a lack of infrastructure, high costs, and social peer pressure.



Teachers, youth leaders, parents

- They have a more mature and systemic vision, understanding complex concepts like biodiversity and ecosystems.
- They were shaped by personal observations over time and traditional media.
- They are strongly motivated by their role as a model for younger generations.
- Their primary obstacles are a lack of infrastructure and clear local policies, as well as the passive attitude of those around them.

Key Similarities:

- Both groups recognize the need for a **more practical environmental education**, with more concrete actions in nature.
- Both agree that the lack of recycling infrastructure and the high cost of eco-friendly products are major barriers.
- Both believe that the disparity in opportunities between urban and rural areas is a significant problem.
- Both see **social media** as an extremely effective tool to reach young people.

In conclusion, the two groups have complementary visions. The youth bring a dynamic, digital perspective focused on individual action and inspiring others, while adults bring a vision based on experience, emphasizing the importance of structures (family, community, school) and local policies to create a lasting impact. An effective strategy should combine these perspectives: use the modern and digital methods proposed by the youth, within more solid structures and with greater support from adults and authorities, as suggested by the latter.

VII. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner PRO NATURA GALATI (Romania)

On 12 September 2005 and 20 September 2025 respectively, two Focus Group Meetings were conducted, bringing together a total of 34 participants. The first focus group consisted of young people from Galati Municipality public schools (grades 10–11), while the second involved stakeholders.

Focus Group Meeting I – Young People

1. What motivates you to participate in environmental activities or campaigns?

Sometimes, simply understanding environmental issues (climate changes, pollution, deforestation, etc.) may be enough to motivate someone to take action. At the same time, when you see that things are not going well (e.g., garbage in nature, pollution), you can feel a strong desire to do something concrete to change the situation. It's nice to work with others for a common cause and feel like you're part of a community that cares.

2. How do you feel about using technology (apps, virtual reality, etc.) to teach environmental protection?

Technology makes learning more interactive and engaging. Applications transform abstract information into visual and practical experiences, which can arouse curiosity and a desire to learn more. You can learn at your own pace, anytime and anywhere, that can reduce stress and make you feel more comfortable with the learning process.

However, it should be taken into account that not everyone has easy access to applications or the internet, especially in rural areas. We believe that the most effective method remains at school and in the family.

3. What role do social media and online platforms play in your environmental engagement?

Social media plays an important role in my commitment to the environment. Through platforms like Instagram or TikTok I quickly learn about environmental issues, campaigns and simple solutions that I can apply. For example, a study shows that over 70% of young people use social networks to inform themselves about climate change. I draw inspiration from the educational

and motivational content and try to pass on the messages that matter. However, I think it is essential that online actions are duplicated by real facts.

Interactive session

The participants were divided into 2 parts: GOVERNMENT vs ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Both sides had to be aware of different views on environmental issues, practice argumentation, decision making and negotiation.

Focus Group Meeting II – Stakeholders

1. What do you think are the most pressing environmental issues today?

The most pressing environmental issues today are interconnected and impacting globally as well as locally. In Romania, the biggest environmental problems are closely related to the lack of effective regulation, reduced environmental education and lack of involvement of authorities. Sustainable solutions and the active involvement of citizens are urgently needed.

2. How do you prefer to learn about environmental topics?

Ideal is to accumulate knowledge about environmental protection through well-structured and documented methods. In general, they show interest in documentaries and articles from reliable sources, as well as in specialized broadcasts and conferences dedicated to ecological themes. Participation in practical workshops or local events is also an effective way to integrate theoretical information into everyday activities.

Increased attention is also paid to educational materials that offer concrete and applicable solutions in everyday life, such as methods of reducing energy consumption, correct recycling or responsible use of resources. Awareness campaigns conducted on social media platforms are appreciated to the extent that they are supported by non-governmental organizations or recognized experts in the field.

3. Do you think environmental education is accessible enough for everyone? If not, what needs to change?

In Romania, environmental education is not accessible enough for everyone. Although there are valuable initiatives, access varies significantly depending on the urban or rural environment, socio-economic status and available educational resources.

What needs to be changed?

Increasing investment in education, accessibility of educational resources, continuous training of teachers, collaboration between institutions and communities, etc.

Only through an integrated approach and supported by all stakeholders can fair access to environmental education be ensured for all citizens.

VIII. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner Mare Nostrum (Romania)

As part of the study dedicated to understanding environmental attitudes and behaviors among young people and adults, a focus group was organized according to the structure proposed in the methodology of the project "EcoYOU – Clean and Green Minds for an Environmentally Friendly Behaviour". The activity aimed to explore the participants' perspectives on preferred learning methods regarding environmental protection, identification of topics of environmental interest, barriers that limit involvement and the role that social media plays in environmental mobilization.

The focus group was moderated by two facilitators and lasted 2 hours. The structure of the session included an introductory phase, opening questions to warm up the discussion, a main section of in-depth dialogue (deep dive), interactive activities and a closing session with reflections and feedback. The opening questions, displayed visually, allowed participants to introduce themselves by answering one of them, thus contributing to the creation of an informal and open climate. The subsequent discussions focused on personal experiences and opinions related to ecological learning, civic engagement, barriers encountered in participation and the influence of digital channels.

This approach allowed for valuable insights, both cognitively (what participants know) and emotionally (what they feel and what motivates or discourages them), providing a solid foundation for the development of future initiatives in the field of ecological education and sustainable public participation.

To the open-ended question “What do you think are the most pressing environmental issues today?”, participants repeatedly identified air pollution, water pollution and excess plastic (including in the form of microplastics) as the most worrying. Problems related to inefficient recycling,

improper waste management, heavy car traffic, lack of green spaces and degradation of natural habitats were also frequently mentioned. Other relevant responses included climate change, unsustainable consumption, light pollution, but also human factors such as indifference, lack of environmental education and lack of civic engagement. These themes reflect a clear perception of the cumulative impact of human activities on the environment and set a suitable framework for exploring in-depth environmental attitudes and behaviours within the focus group.

When asked about the motivation for participating in environmental activities or campaigns, participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of individual and collective responsibility, as well as concern for the future. Responses such as a cleaner future, the future of young people, hope for the future or a responsible future reflect the desire to actively contribute to protecting the environment for future generations. Values such as civic spirit, community involvement, the desire for change and care for nature were also frequently mentioned, indicating a deep motivation anchored both in personal beliefs and in the attachment to the common good.

Regarding learning preferences related to environmental topics, participants expressed a clear preference for practical, interactive and non-formal methods. Terms such as practical activities, projects, workshops, workshops, games, teamwork and exchange of experiences appear frequently, indicating that learning is perceived as more effective when based on direct experience and collaboration. Participants also mentioned visual and auditory sources, such as documentaries, examples provided by specialists and online content (e.g. YouTube, webinars), signaling the need for accessible and reality-based content. Thus, the results suggest that ecological learning is perceived as more effective when it combines active involvement, concrete examples and social interaction, to the detriment of purely theoretical or formal formats.

1. What learning methods do you find most motivating for environmental subjects? Why?

The analysis of the responses provided by the four groups – two of young people and two of adults – highlights both similarities and notable differences in preferences related to learning methods for environmental subjects. These differences are mainly related to life stages, interests and the ways in which each category interacts with information and personal or collective motivation.

YOUTH: Interactivity, visual, social involvement and personal motivation

Common elements for both groups of young people:

- Interactivity is essential: methods such as playing, gamification, competitions and workshops are preferred because they transform learning into a pleasant, engaging and active experience.
- Personal and social involvement matters: both self-interest and learning through experience exchange (NGO, Erasmus) or teaching others contribute to deeper and more motivating learning.
- Visual tools and media: films, social media posts or advertisements are seen as effective methods of information, because they adapt to the current way of consuming information among young people.
- Debates and discussions are valued because they stimulate critical thinking and allow for the confrontation of ideas, generating reflection and deeper understanding.

Specific to group 2 of young people: emphasis is placed on experiential learning and gamification, with a clear justification: environmental themes can become attractive through gamification, which helps internalize messages through direct involvement.

TEACHERS, TRAINERS, PARENTS: Practical, community-oriented, socially responsible

Common elements between the two group:

- Practical and experiential methods are dominant: activities such as sanitation, educational visits, workshops, demonstration activities are perceived as the most effective. Here, the need for adults to see the concrete applicability of knowledge is noted.
- Films and documentaries appear in both groups, suggesting a consensus on the effectiveness of narrative visual formats.
- Volunteering and public campaigns: adults are more likely to relate to community and social responsibility. Activities like "Plastic-Free July" or public events have a behavior modeling component through civic engagement.

- The power of example and motivation through incentives show that it is important for adults to see tangible results or recognition for sustainable behaviors.

Specific to adults:

- Methods such as future planning (scenarios) and mind maps are mentioned, which involve abstraction and planning, indicating a more reflective and strategic thinking style.
- Family activities and educational roles for children – reflect a parental and community dimension specific to adults.

Conclusions

- Young people are attracted to dynamic and interactive methods that stimulate curiosity and personal involvement. Learning through play, direct experience and visual media dominate their preferences. Valuing the exchange of ideas and collaboration indicates a high openness to informal learning.
- Adults prefer methods that are grounded in reality and applicability. They learn more effectively when methods are connected to everyday life and have a visible impact (e.g. recycling, volunteering, educating children). There is an increased emphasis on responsibility and the role of social role model.
- The common point between generations is the desire for practical involvement and the use of visual means, but the motivations differ: for young people, it's about curiosity and reward; for adults, it's about responsibility and social impact.
- For effective educational policies or environmental campaigns, it is essential to adapt methods to the specifics of each target group: for young people - gamification, online media, experiential; for adults - practical examples, community empowerment, transgenerational education.

2. What environmental topics are you most interested in learning more about?

Analysis of answers:

Youths are showing a broad and diverse interest in a variety of environmental topics. Recurring themes include global warming, biodiversity, pollution (air, water, fuels), deforestation and food

waste. Emerging or less widely discussed topics in the general public discourse are also highlighted, such as microplastics, light pollution or the impact of artificial intelligence on the environment.

A notable aspect is the interest in the information dimension: young people are concerned about disinformation, media manipulation, and superficial or exaggerated presentation of environmental issues. This indicates a developing critical capacity and the need for credible, clear, and balanced sources.

Teachers, trainers and parents focuses on issues with a tangible and immediate impact on the quality of life. Among the most mentioned are air and water pollution, lack of green spaces, insufficient recycling and weak environmental regulation. There are also concerns about major sources of pollution, such as large industries, intensive agriculture or the fast fashion sector.

Adults place a strong emphasis on institutional, economic, and legislative responsibility, indicating an understanding of environmental issues from a systemic and structural perspective. There is also a desire for civic and educational involvement, with an emphasis on modeling sustainable behaviors in the community and family.

Comparative conclusions

Young people are receptive to a wider range of topics, including emerging themes and aspects of communication and technology, while adults focus on concrete, local issues with the potential to be regulated through public policies. Young people also view the environment through the lens of media experience and the technological future, while adults approach it through the lens of the tangible present and civic or family responsibilities.

3. What are some of the barriers that prevent you from participating in environmental initiatives?

Analysis of answers:

In the context of promoting sustainability and civic engagement, it is essential to understand the perceived obstacles that limit citizens' participation in environmental protection initiatives. This analysis explores and compares the barriers identified by groups of young people and adults, with the aim of highlighting commonalities and significant differences, providing a solid basis for proposing tailored solutions.

Barriers identified among young people

Lack of access to information and promotion - one of the most frequently mentioned obstacles is insufficient or difficult to access information. Young people report a lack of adequate promotion both online (social networks) and in the educational environment (schools, teachers). This deficiency leads to low visibility of initiatives, which, although they may exist, do not effectively reach the young audience.

Logistical and systemic limitations - other barriers are of a logistical nature or related to the local context: lack of transport, lack of large or frequent actions in small towns and low involvement of local authorities, such as city halls. There is also dissatisfaction with the insufficient coverage of existing systems, such as RetuRO, perceived as incomplete and ineffective for all types of waste.

Personal constraints - limited free time, limited financial resources and convenience are mentioned as personal factors limiting participation. The idea of scholarships for involvement is suggested as a method of actively encouraging participation.

The role of education – education is seen as an essential factor, but currently insufficient and unequally distributed. The need for a systematic, continuous approach, from the early years of school and adapted to the current needs of young people is expressed.

Identification barriers among teachers, trainers and parents

Lack of institutional promotion and involvement - adults emphasize, similarly to young people, the lack of promotion of environmental initiatives by competent institutions and the insufficient involvement of the state. They see the authorities as a key actor in activating and supporting ecological actions and perceive a lack of leadership in this regard.

The lack of education and awareness - for adults, early childhood education and continuing environmental education are considered weaknesses of the current system. The lack of a coherent and continuous educational effort to support the formation of a sense of civic responsibility and personal responsibility is reported.

Lack of role models and effective communication - a distinctive barrier highlighted by adults is the absence of promotion of positive behaviors in public space, but also the lack of accessible role models, such as influencers or public figures who consistently and credibly support environmental causes. Individualism and social apathy are also identified as important obstacles ("Why me?").

4. What role do social media and online platforms play in your commitment to the environment?

Analysis of answers:

In the digital age, social media and online platforms have become essential channels for information, mobilization and civic expression. This section analyzes the perceptions of groups of young people and adults regarding the impact of the digital environment on engagement in environmental issues. The aim is to highlight the similarities, differences and opportunities for strategic use of these channels in environmental campaigns and initiatives.

Young people's perception of the role of social media

Young people identify social media as an essential tool in forming ecological awareness, with the following major functions:

- Information and awareness: Networks are primary sources of information about environmental issues (e.g. microplastics, deforestation), events (e.g. Earth Hour), projects or initiatives (e.g. tree planting).
- Promotion and mobilization: Young people use platforms to promote their own activities or to highlight areas that need protection, thus contributing to the local visibility of the issues.
- Community building: There is a strong need for belonging to an environmental community, and social media provides this framework, allowing for quick interactions and the feeling of being "part of something bigger."
- Informal education: The accessed content also has a didactic role, and young people learn from videos, infographics or viral campaigns.
- Beware of disinformation: Young people are aware of the risk of disinformation, an aspect that indicates a relatively high level of critical thinking regarding digital sources.

Teachers, trainers and parents perception of the role of social media

Adults similarly recognize the significant impact of online platforms in the field of environmental protection, but with some specific nuances:

- Awareness and information: Social media is perceived as a tool for public awareness of environmental issues, especially in the context of abuses and crises (e.g. illegal construction, maritime accidents).
- Appeal to influencers: Unlike young people, adults emphasize the role of influencers in shaping public behavior and express the need for them to explicitly promote sustainable behaviors.
- Clarity and efficiency in communication: The need for simple, short and concise language, adapted to the viralization mechanisms specific to the platforms, is emphasized.
- Thematic communities and applications: Adults mention circular economy platforms (e.g. Vinted) and the idea of forming online communities with common ecological interests, reflecting a practical and solution-oriented approach.

Conclusions

Both young people and adults recognize the importance of social media in environmental engagement, but they value it differently. Young people see these platforms as primary sources of information, spaces for promoting their own initiatives, and means of belonging to ecological communities. In contrast, adults emphasize the role of social media in raising public awareness of serious environmental issues and emphasize the importance of involving influencers and clear messages. While young people draw attention to the risk of misinformation, adults highlight the need for effective communication and practical solutions, such as reuse applications.

At the closing stage of the focus group discussion, participants were asked the following open-ended question: "What do you think can be done to improve environmental education and engagement?"

Following the participants' answers to this recapitulative question, several clear and recurring directions regarding the improvement of education and involvement in the field of environmental protection emerge. First, the emphasis is on practical ecological education, introduced early and

maintained throughout life, through activities adapted to both children and adolescents, adults and seniors. The importance of interactive lessons, educational games and applied projects, carried out in schools, high schools and universities, but also in the community, is emphasized.

Secondly, there is a constant need for intensified promotion – online, through the media, but also within educational institutions – so that the ecological message is visible, accessible and attractive. In this regard, the involvement of authentic influencers, inspirational models and resource persons who can mobilize large audiences is also mentioned.

It is also emphasized that environmental education should not remain the sole responsibility of teachers, but should be institutionally supported, including through the creation of a specialized structure and the active involvement of authorities and political decision-makers. At the same time, the organization of frequent, smaller events that facilitate community participation and involvement in concrete actions is appreciated. Finally, the participants believe that personal example, youth empowerment and continuity of education are essential to transform environmental concern into a natural and constant practice.

In addition to the feedback provided, participants unanimously appreciated the open and interactive atmosphere of the focus group, noting that they felt listened to and involved throughout the discussion. The facilitators were described as professional and energetic, contributing significantly to the positive dynamics of the event.

Among the most appreciated elements were the quality of the discussions, the interactivity through the Mentimeter platform, the good organization, the teamwork and the exchange of ideas. As aspects for improvement, the need for a short break for networking and the complete accessibility of the location for people with mobility difficulties were mentioned.

IX. Analysis of Focus Groups conducted by the partner NALAG (Georgia)

As part of the joint event held in Georgia from 2–6 June 2025, two Focus Group Meetings were conducted, bringing together a total of 29 participants. The first focus group consisted of young people from Gori Municipality public schools (grades 7–11), while the second involved stakeholders representing local governmental agencies, public schools and youth workers. These discussions provided valuable insights from both youth and institutional perspectives on environmental challenges and opportunities for action in the region.

Focus Group meeting I – Young people

1. What do you think are the most pressing environmental issues today?

Answer: Participants highlighted a range of environmental issues, with stray dogs in Gori frequently mentioned as a visible and immediate problem. Others pointed to pollution, particularly plastic waste in rivers, illegal dumping, and improper waste management. Some also mentioned poor infrastructure, lack of green spaces, and air pollution caused by vehicle emissions.

2. What motivates you to participate in environmental activities or campaigns?

Answer: Most participants expressed a sense of civic responsibility, noting that their motivation comes from both the current state of the environment and a moral obligation to preserve nature for future generations. Some referenced cultural values passed down from ancestors who protected the environment, while others emphasized personal responsibility—“you shouldn’t need motivation; you should do it for yourself.” There was also concern about visible damage, such as plastics in waterways harming fish and ultimately human health.

3. How do you prefer to learn about environmental topics?

Answer: A wide variety of learning channels were identified, including family members, teachers, and social media (particularly trusted, well-known pages). Participants also mentioned NGOs such as CENN, Youth Bank, and Biliki as valuable sources of information, along with non-formal education activities like clean-up campaigns and tree planting. School subjects (biology, geography), encyclopedias, magazines, and science channels like National Geographic and Discovery were also noted, as well as school-led “environmental days” with field visits to observe local biodiversity.

4. What about experiential learning appeals to you? Can you think of an example where it worked for you?

Answer: Participants shared positive experiences with hands-on learning, such as CENN-led ideathons and environmental trainings. These activities allowed them to see real-world problems and develop practical solutions, which they found more impactful than classroom learning.

5. How about gamification? Would that make environmental topics more fun and relatable?

Answer: The group agreed that gamified approaches—such as creating board games, designing models of the Earth, and hosting friendly competitions—make environmental topics more engaging. They recalled successful examples from school projects where games and creative activities improved participation and understanding.

6. Can you describe a specific event, game, or experience that helped you understand environmental issues?

Answer: Many participants referred to community clean-up events, tree-planting campaigns, greenhouse projects, and school-based activities like poster-making and debates. Watching animated films about environmental issues and discussing them afterward was also mentioned as an effective tool for raising awareness among younger students.

7. How do you feel about using technology (apps, virtual reality, etc.) to teach environmental protection?

Answer: Participants saw potential in digital tools but noted challenges related to access and infrastructure, especially in rural areas. While advanced technologies like virtual reality sound exciting, practical digital solutions—like mobile apps or interactive online platforms—are considered more realistic and easier to implement.

8. What environmental topics are you most interested in learning more about?

Answer: Areas of interest include planting and maintaining green areas, protecting animals from extinction, reducing air pollution and vehicle emissions, and understanding global Sustainable Development Goals (with SDG 7 on clean energy, SDG 14 on life below water, and SDG 3 on health and well-being frequently mentioned).

9. Are there particular topics or issues you think are most urgent for your community?

Answer: Urgent issues identified include river water pollution caused by human activity, inadequate infrastructure for waste management, low public awareness about environmental protection, and the stray dog population. Participants stressed that these issues require immediate action at both community and local government levels.

10. How do you feel about the media’s coverage of environmental issues? Does it inspire you to take action?

Answer: Opinions were mixed. Some participants felt there is limited coverage and a lack of in-depth analysis in Georgian-language media, leading to gaps in public understanding. Others pointed out disinformation issues and insufficient attention to local environmental challenges. On a positive note, emerging eco-podcasts, small but dedicated YouTube channels, and social media campaigns were seen as promising and inspiring for future engagement.

11. What kind of support or resources would help you overcome those barriers?

Answer: Participants requested more experienced trainers and facilitators, regular discussion meetings and exhibitions, increased opportunities for youth to attend environmental trainings, and a revival of public lecture formats (like those previously held at Gori University). They also recommended monthly community gatherings to plan environmental actions and develop practical projects.

12. Do you think environmental education is accessible enough for everyone? If not, what needs to change?

Answer: While schools have capable and committed teachers, most participants felt that environmental education is not engaging enough or equally accessible to all. They emphasized the need for more interactive programs, increased technical capacity (e.g., access to digital resources), and additional extracurricular activities to make learning about environmental protection more appealing.

13. What role do social media and online platforms play in your environmental engagement?

Answer: Social media plays a significant role in sharing information about protected areas (e.g., Tana and Tedzmi reserves), campaigns, and environmental solutions. Participants shared examples of discovering environmental events, creative workshops, and even family picnics through social media. However, they also noted challenges like internet access limitations, repetitive discussions on the same topics, and information fatigue. Despite these challenges, social media remains a key tool for mobilization and spreading awareness, especially when used creatively (e.g., online debates, presentations, poster campaigns).

Interactive session

Participants suggested community-driven and systemic solutions:

- **Infrastructure:** Improve waste management systems, create more public green spaces, and invest in infrastructure that supports clean rivers and safer streets (e.g., controlling stray dogs humanely).
- **Awareness and education:** Develop targeted campaigns for schools and villages, emphasizing why small actions matter (e.g., litter prevention, eco-friendly habits). Participants requested a monthly community day dedicated to environmental education, including exhibitions, discussions, and knowledge-sharing events.
- **Youth and family engagement:** Encourage family-based environmental responsibility, such as rotating clean-up responsibilities among household members, and creating intergenerational projects where children and parents work together (e.g., tree planting, waste segregation).
- **Technology and media:** Use social media and accessible apps to share stories, events, and educational material. Participants recommended engaging local influencers and producing short Georgian-language videos that make environmental topics relatable.
- **Volunteerism and leadership:** Several participants committed personally to acting as role models: avoiding environmentally harmful behaviors, advocating for greener village initiatives, and organizing greening campaigns. A specific idea mentioned was to make key roads, such as the Bakuriani road, more attractive and tourist-friendly through beautification projects.
- **Policy support:** Some suggested stronger involvement from local authorities, including structured environmental programs led by village heads or municipalities, with youth actively involved in planning and monitoring progress.

Focus Group meeting II – Stakeholders (teachers , trainers, parents)

1. What do you think are the most pressing environmental issues today?

Participants strongly emphasized the harmful impact of pollution on public health, particularly air and water contamination, which they linked to increased risks of respiratory diseases and cancer. Several participants raised waste mismanagement as an equally urgent problem, noting the lack of recycling facilities and improper waste collection in some areas. Others expressed concern over biodiversity loss, especially in and around protected areas where human activity is increasing. A few participants highlighted how political and social challenges divert attention from environmental priorities, making it harder to implement sustainable solutions.

2. What motivates you to participate in environmental activities or campaigns?

Many participants said they are motivated by a desire to protect their own health and that of their families, particularly from pollution-related risks. Others spoke of a sense of responsibility toward future generations, feeling that it is their duty to leave behind a healthier and safer environment. Some participants described civic engagement and community pride as key motivators, emphasizing that visible environmental problems like roadside litter inspire them to act. A smaller group mentioned that witnessing the positive impact of environmental initiatives in their community gave them a strong incentive to participate regularly.

3. How do you prefer to learn about environmental topics?

The discussion showed diverse learning preferences. Many participants rely on digital and social media platforms such as trusted Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and eco-focused blogs for fast and visual content. Others mentioned that they value information from public lectures, professional workshops, and community events. Documentaries and magazines like National Geographic and Discovery Channel were seen as helpful for understanding global issues, while some said family discussions and peer-to-peer learning in their neighborhoods were equally important. Several participants stressed that hands-on activities such as clean-up campaigns or community-led site visits provided valuable real-world learning experiences.

4 & 5. What about experiential learning appeals to you? Can you think of an example where it worked for you? How about gamification? Would that make environmental topics more fun and relatable?

Participants appreciated experiential learning because it creates a stronger personal connection to environmental issues. Many mentioned examples such as tree-planting initiatives, visits to protected areas led by rangers, and community clean-up actions that allowed them to see immediate results of their engagement. Gamification approaches were considered potentially effective for adult audiences as well, especially when linked to community challenges, digital apps, or reward-based programs that encourage eco-friendly behavior. Several participants suggested adopting approaches already tested in corporate training, where interactive tasks and competitions increased participation and motivation.

6 & 7. Can you describe a specific event, game, or experience that helped you understand environmental issues? How do you feel about using technology (e.g., apps or virtual reality) to teach environmental protection?

Participants shared diverse experiences, including hands-on clean-up campaigns, ranger-led tours of protected areas, and public awareness events focused on waste sorting and recycling. Some had engaged in citizen science activities, such as wildlife observation or water quality testing, which left a strong impression. There was openness to using technology tools like mobile apps, online platforms, or even virtual reality to supplement environmental awareness, but many emphasized that real-world activities felt more practical and impactful in their communities.

8 & 9. What environmental topics are you most interested in learning more about? Are there particular topics or issues you think are most urgent for your community?

The group expressed strong interest in alternative energy solutions, emphasizing the need to understand how solar and wind energy could be adopted locally, as well as how government subsidies might encourage uptake. Waste management and recycling were identified as urgent issues, with participants suggesting improvements in battery disposal, composting, and eco-friendly product use. There was also curiosity about biodiversity and local ecosystems, as well as how climate change

is likely to affect their immediate environment. Awareness-raising and public behavior change were mentioned repeatedly as essential steps for tackling these issues.

10. How do you feel about the media’s coverage of environmental issues? Does it inspire you to take action?

Participants agreed that while environmental topics are occasionally covered, the media often lacks local context and practical advice. Some participants appreciated the growing presence of eco-podcasts and YouTube creators focused on environmental issues, even though their audiences are still relatively small. Others found that much of the coverage is too global or abstract, like stories about melting ice in Greenland, without analysis of what these changes mean locally. Despite this, there was optimism that environmental issues are becoming more visible and may gain mainstream attention in the near future.

11. What kind of support or resources would help you overcome those barriers?

The participants highlighted a need for public events, workshops, and accessible community-based programs that provide practical environmental knowledge. Many called for financial and technical support for environmental initiatives, including better access to recycling machines and specialized equipment. Several participants emphasized the importance of trained facilitators and experts to support local initiatives and keep community members engaged. Others suggested the need for regular, accessible information updates tailored to their specific region, so environmental engagement can be sustained beyond one-off events.

12. Do you think environmental education is accessible enough for everyone? If not, what needs to change?

The consensus was that environmental education is not equally accessible, especially in rural or remote areas with fewer resources. Participants noted the need to improve technical capabilities in community centers and adult learning spaces, such as multimedia tools and demonstration equipment. They also expressed interest in making environmental learning more interactive and practical, with a focus on real-life problem-solving and behavior change. Expanding community-

driven opportunities, like workshops, public seminars, and outdoor environmental events, was seen as an important way to reach more diverse audiences.

13. What role does social media and online platforms play in your environmental engagement?

Participants agreed that social media is a key information channel for environmental issues, helping to share updates about community clean-ups, recycling programs, and educational content. However, some were concerned about contradictory or superficial information, which can confuse people or discourage action. A few participants admitted that personal economic and social challenges sometimes reduce their engagement with environmental content online. Others shared positive examples, such as local recycling initiatives and Georgian-language environmental documentaries and reports that make complex issues more understandable and relatable.

Interactive session insights – solutions and personal roles

Proposed solutions:

Participants prioritized behavior change and public awareness campaigns, emphasizing practical steps such as reducing single-use plastics, promoting eco-products, and adopting environmentally friendly habits in households and workplaces. Many highlighted the need for investment in recycling infrastructure, including accessible composting programs and proper disposal systems for hazardous waste like batteries. Local government involvement was considered essential, particularly in allocating funds for environmental campaigns, waste management projects, and the development of protected area management plans. Some participants suggested financial incentives and community engagement programs, such as reward systems for responsible waste disposal or eco-friendly practices in businesses and neighborhoods, drawing inspiration from successful models abroad. The group also discussed the importance of strategic planning and training programs for implementing local waste management and renewable energy initiatives effectively.

Personal roles identified:

Participants acknowledged the importance of individual responsibility, committing to avoid environmentally harmful behaviors and adopt greener practices such as waste separation, reducing plastic use, and supporting local eco-products. Several emphasized their readiness to participate in or organize community clean-up events, tree planting initiatives, and public discussions on

environmental policies. Some expressed interest in policy engagement, such as advocating for eco-friendly infrastructure planning and participating in public consultations on environmental strategies. A few participants also noted that they could leverage their professional skills and social networks to raise awareness, support environmental campaigns, and mentor others on adopting sustainable lifestyles.

X. Consolidated report on environmental attitudes and behaviors emerging from all Focus Groups Combined

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.

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.

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.

1. 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.

2. 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.

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.

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.

XI. Observation collecting report

1. General information

The EcoYOU project, “*Clean and Green Minds for an Environmentally Friendly Behaviour*”, aimed to foster environmental responsibility across the Black Sea Basin through education, civic engagement, and cross-border collaboration. Partners ACTIE (Moldova), Pro Natura (Romania), Mare Nostrum (Romania), and NALAG (Georgia) organized a wide range of activities designed to raise awareness, mobilize communities, and provide practical training on environmental protection. This report summarizes their contributions in a narrative form, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative insights.

The project engaged diverse stakeholders across Romania, Moldova, and Georgia to promote sustainable practices, raise awareness on environmental issues, and foster cross-border cooperation. Between 2024 and 2025, the four project partners – LP ACTIE (Moldova), PP2 Pro Natura (Romania), PP3 Mare Nostrum (Romania), and PP4 NALAG (Georgia) – organized a wide range of activities including clean-up events, capacity-building sessions, awareness seminars, joint camps, round tables, interviews, and podcasts. These initiatives combined experiential learning, community engagement, and institutional dialogue to address pressing environmental challenges, particularly those related to waste management and microplastic pollution.

The data reflects inputs from various observers and project partners, documenting participant engagement, topics of interest, challenges, and environmental concerns.

2. Participant engagement and interaction

Across the four partners, engagement levels were consistently **high**, with participants actively collaborating, sharing knowledge, and taking initiative during hands-on activities such as clean-ups and joint camps.

Clean-up activities were among the most engaging events. Mare Nostrum mobilized over 240 participants across beaches in Constanța County, while ACTIE gathered around 100 participants in clean-ups near villages and lakes. NALAG involved more than 50 participants in joint and local

clean-ups in Georgia, and Pro Natura brought together 50 people at Lake Brateş for an international clean-up action. Actions most frequently observed included **picking up litter, sorting recyclables, and sharing environmental knowledge.**

- **Clean-up campaigns** were among the most visible actions.
 - Mare Nostrum mobilized over **240 participants** across beaches such as Pescărie, Corbu, Vama Veche, and Modern Beach, collecting hundreds of kilograms of waste.
 - ACTIE engaged communities in Cahul, Manta, and Giurgiulesti, with over **100 participants** involved in removing waste from riverside and village areas.
 - NALAG organized both local and joint clean-ups in Georgia, bringing together more than **130 participants** in Gori, Tana, and Tedzami, reinforcing the symbolic dimension of regional cooperation.
 - Pro Natura held a **common clean-up at Brateş Lake**, engaging **50 participants**, including cross-border partners, transforming the event into a demonstration of regional solidarity.

Awareness seminars proved particularly effective in reaching young audiences. Mare Nostrum delivered **36 microplastic seminars** reaching over 700 youth and 40 teachers. Pro Natura hosted **seven awareness sessions** in schools and universities in Galaţi, each engaging around 30 participants. NALAG organized **five awareness seminars** in different municipalities of Georgia, reaching more than 170 students, teachers, and local representatives. These seminars highlighted the impact of microplastics and generated lively discussions.

- **Educational and awareness events** were central.
 - Mare Nostrum delivered **36 microplastic seminars**, reaching more than **770 young people and teachers.**
 - ACTIE and Pro Natura organized multiple **awareness-raising seminars** in schools, universities, and community centers, each hosting around **30 participants** per session.
 - NALAG held seminars in five Georgian municipalities, with participant numbers ranging between **21 and 46**, focusing on the dangers of microplastics.

Round tables and joint events brought stakeholders together to exchange knowledge. Mare Nostrum's launching round table at Ovidius University engaged 56 participants, while NALAG's round table in Gori hosted 42 people, including cross-border partners. Pro Natura and ACTIE also organized joint events, each attracting around 30 participants from diverse institutions.

Capacity-building sessions engaged local administrations, NGOs, and teachers in discussions on sustainable waste management and environmental policies. Mare Nostrum (36 participants), ACTIE (15 participants), Pro Natura (18 participants), and NALAG (over 90 participants across four municipalities) emphasized collaboration between institutions and community representatives.

- **Capacity-building sessions and round tables** complemented the outreach activities.
 - Pro Natura convened **18 specialists** from public authorities in Galați to identify pollution-reduction strategies.
 - Mare Nostrum and ACTIE facilitated training sessions in Constanța and Cahul, while NALAG focused on municipal representatives in Georgia, discussing policy and infrastructure improvements.
 - Joint round tables and partner meetings gathered stakeholders from **all partner countries**, reinforcing knowledge transfer and good practice exchange.

Joint camps encouraged experiential and multicultural learning. Mare Nostrum gathered 42 participants at Corbu-Vadu Beach, ACTIE engaged 36 in Valeni village, and NALAG hosted 42 participants in Gori. These events fostered cooperation among youth, educators, and environmental experts from all three countries.

Interviews, focus groups, and 8-hour overtime sessions allowed for deeper reflection. All partners organized interviews with youth, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to explore perceptions of environmental education and behavioural barriers. Focus groups (10–44 participants each) facilitated open discussion, while hackathon-style overtime sessions (Mare Nostrum: 31 participants, ACTIE: 28 participants, NALAG: 41 participants) produced innovative environmental project ideas.

- **Youth-focused joint camps and 8-hour hackathon-style events** stimulated creativity and teamwork.
 - Mare Nostrum hosted a joint camp at Corbu-Vadu Beach with **42 participants**, while NALAG held a youth camp in Gori with the same number of participants, involving forest rangers, educators, and youth workers.
 - ACTIE and Pro Natura also organized multi-day youth activities combining dialogue, fieldwork, and cultural exchange.

- **Podcasts and interviews** added an innovative communication component.
 - Pro Natura produced multiple podcast episodes featuring institutions such as the Environmental Guard of Galați and the ECOSAL waste management service, exploring local and regional environmental reforms.
 - NALAG contributed with cross-border podcast episodes, extending project visibility to broader audiences.
 - Both Pro Natura and Mare Nostrum conducted structured interviews with youths, educators, parents, and community leaders, generating qualitative data on attitudes toward environmental protection.

Across all partners, participant engagement was consistently **high**, with individuals actively taking part in clean-up campaigns, awareness sessions, and collaborative discussions.

3. Learning methods and preferred engagement approaches

The events used a blend of **experiential learning (hands-on clean-ups, environmental patrols), community-based learning (round tables, focus groups), and digital tools (podcasts, IT app demonstrations)**. Among these, experiential and community-based approaches proved most effective, as participants were actively involved in discussions and hands-on tasks.

Topics that generated the greatest interest included **waste management & recycling, microplastic pollution, conservation and biodiversity, and climate change**. Students frequently asked questions

about microplastic sources, while institutional stakeholders were more engaged in discussions on waste management infrastructure and cross-border cooperation.

Learning methods incorporated into these events were diverse:

- **Experiential learning** was dominant, particularly in clean-up campaigns and joint camps.
- **Community-based learning** characterized round tables and awareness seminars, encouraging dialogue between generations and sectors.
- **Digital resources and storytelling** were used effectively in podcasts and hackathons.

The most engaging topics across all partners were **waste management and recycling, biodiversity conservation**, and the **threat of microplastics**. These themes consistently provoked questions from young people, teachers, and local authorities, reflecting growing environmental consciousness in the Black Sea Basin.

4. Environmental topics of interest

- **Waste management and recycling** emerged as the most consistently discussed topic.
- Other recurring interests included **climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy**.
- These topics align with pressing local and global environmental challenges.

5. Challenges and barriers to engagement

Some challenges were observed during implementation:

- **Weather conditions** occasionally limited participation in outdoor clean-ups. Participants showed resilience and adaptability.
- **Limited resources and equipment** were noted during patrols and waste collection in rural or protected areas. Limited resources in some localities constrained the scale of clean-up efforts, but this was mitigated by strong community volunteerism.

- **Knowledge gaps** among youth required facilitators to adapt content to different educational levels. Knowledge gaps among younger participants highlighted the need for sustained educational programs, which partners addressed by increasing

Despite these barriers, participants responded positively, showing flexibility, enthusiasm, and willingness to adapt. Collaborative spirit and local partnerships helped overcome most obstacles. Participants largely responded to these challenges with enthusiasm, often compensating for limitations through teamwork and improvisation.

6. Environmental mapping and findings

Events provided valuable mapping data for the BluE-Map platform. High-density waste hotspots were identified on **Romanian beaches**, around **Brateș Lake**, and in **Georgian protected areas** such as Tana and Tedzami. The most frequent waste categories included plastics, glass bottles, fishing gear, and household waste. These observations underline the urgent need for **recycling programs and waste segregation infrastructure** across project regions.

Through clean-up events and patrols, several **waste hotspots** were identified: beaches along the Romanian coast (Pescărie, Corbu, Vama Veche), Lake Brateș in Galați, protected landscapes in Georgia (Tana and Tedzami), and rural lakesides in Moldova. Waste types most frequently collected included plastics, packaging materials, and household waste. Stakeholders highlighted concerns about **microplastic accumulation, insufficient recycling infrastructure, and illegal dumping sites**, which were recorded for BluE-Map monitoring.

7. Recommendations for targeted interventions

The activities implemented by ACTIE, Pro Natura, Mare Nostrum, and NALAG demonstrate the added value of cross-border cooperation in environmental protection. Together, the partners engaged **thousands of citizens**, mobilized **youth, educators, local authorities, and NGOs**, and tested a variety of learning and engagement methods.

Key recommendations include:

- **Strengthening waste segregation programs** at local and regional levels.
- **Expanding awareness campaigns** on microplastics and biodiversity, especially in schools.
- **Investing in infrastructure improvements** such as waste bins, recycling stations, and improved waste management services.
- **Enhancing cross-border exchanges** through digital tools (podcasts, webinars) and in-person youth camps.
- **Sustained monitoring and mapping** of environmental hotspots to support evidence-based policy making.

Ultimately, the EcoYOU project showed that only through **collaborative, participatory, and innovative approaches** can lasting ecological responsibility be cultivated across the Black Sea Basin.

Overall, the EcoYOU project demonstrated strong engagement across all partner countries, successfully combining awareness raising, institutional cooperation, and practical action. Mare Nostrum stood out for its extensive educational seminars, ACTIE for its consistent community-based clean-ups, Pro Natura for its diversified activities combining seminars, podcasts, and international cooperation, and NALAG for its wide municipal outreach and cross-border engagement.

Based on findings, recommended interventions include:

- Strengthening **waste collection and recycling infrastructure**, especially in rural and coastal areas.
- Expanding **policy advocacy and awareness campaigns** targeting youth and institutions.
- Enhancing **cross-border joint actions** to address shared environmental challenges.
- Continuing **research and monitoring** through tools like BluE-Map to track progress.

The collaborative nature of the EcoYOU project showed that environmental challenges transcend borders and that shared knowledge, engagement, and community action are vital to building a sustainable future for the Black Sea Basin region.

- **NGOs** were the most frequently involved, followed by **local authorities, schools, and community actors**. Their presence reflects strong institutional engagement in the program.

Engagement and behaviours

- Engagement levels were reported as **high**, with participants actively discussing, asking questions, and sharing experiences.
- Observable behaviours included **note-taking, guiding others, and contributing to discussions**.

Concerns raised

- Participants expressed concerns about **landfill management, water management, waste transportation, and sustainable agriculture practices**.
- In some sessions, no significant concerns were reported.

Challenges and responses

- Commonly identified challenges:
 - Lack of prior knowledge or training.
 - Limited resources to implement solutions.
 - Difficulty in applying knowledge to local contexts.
- Participants often responded by **adapting resource use and attempting to localize solutions**, showing resilience and commitment.

Environmental hotspots

- Some areas were identified as **waste hotspots**, linked to landfill and waste transportation issues.
- Other observations highlighted **water pollution and agricultural impacts**.

8. Additional observations and notes

Many responses left blank; when provided, they suggested:

- More **in-depth training sessions**.
- Greater emphasis on **practical application** at the local level.
- Ensuring **resources and support** are available for implementation.

Overall Observations

- **High participant engagement** was a defining feature of the sessions.
- **Waste management** is the central issue across all regions, supported by concerns about climate change and agriculture.
- **Local authorities play a crucial role** as hosts and stakeholders, ensuring institutional backing.
- While knowledge and resource gaps remain, participants are motivated and willing to adapt solutions.

Conclusion

The observations indicate that the organized events are achieving their intended purpose: raising awareness, fostering engagement, and aligning discussions with community needs. To build on this momentum, future activities should emphasize **practical implementation, targeted resources, and follow-up support** for participants.

XII. Guidance and Recommendations

The *Joint Study that includes a Blue-Map used to raise awareness on environmental protection for youth in BSB regions* explores the complex and pressing issue of environmental education, with a particular emphasis on youth awareness and engagement within the Black Sea Basin region. Recognizing that environmental challenges are both global and deeply local, the research sought to capture not only statistical trends but also the lived experiences of young people, parents, and educators. Together, these perspectives offer a holistic understanding of how environmental values are formed, sustained, and, at times, hindered by structural barriers.

The findings reveal that young people are not only aware of environmental issues but are eager to participate in addressing them. Their motivation stems from both moral conviction and a desire for tangible action. However, this enthusiasm is often constrained by systemic limitations, such as inadequate infrastructure, rigid institutional frameworks, and limited opportunities for sustained participation. Educators, on their part, strongly affirm the value of experiential learning, creative projects, and interactive teaching methods. Many are already implementing innovative practices in their classrooms despite insufficient resources, demonstrating resilience and commitment. Parents, meanwhile, emphasize the significance of early education within the home environment, highlighting the role of consistent role modelling and family routines in fostering sustainable habits.

Across these groups, there emerges a unified call for reform in how environmental education is approached. Current programs are often perceived as overly theoretical, failing to maintain engagement or connect to the practical realities of daily life. To address this, the study recommends a decisive shift toward experiential and project-based learning. Hands-on initiatives such as recycling projects, tree planting, waste collection drives, and school gardening not only impart knowledge but also cultivate responsibility and ownership among youth. Field trips to recycling facilities, nature reserves, or polluted sites further strengthen awareness by connecting abstract concepts to lived experience.

Interactive and engaging methods are equally essential. Gamified challenges, creative competitions, and digital resources make environmental education both enjoyable and memorable, particularly for younger students. Social media and short-form video content are identified as

especially powerful tools for reaching youth audiences, providing accessible platforms that blend education with creativity. At the same time, schools must integrate environmental themes across subjects—from science and geography to arts and civics—so that sustainability is not treated as an isolated topic but rather as a fundamental component of holistic learning.

Collaboration is another cornerstone of effective environmental education. The study underscores the need for stronger partnerships between schools, local authorities, NGOs, and families. Such cooperation ensures access to expertise, resources, and community-based opportunities. Importantly, youth should not only participate in activities but also in decision-making processes, thereby reinforcing their sense of ownership and agency. The role of parents remains vital, as eco-friendly practices within households reinforce lessons learned in schools and cultivate lifelong habits.

Structural barriers must also be addressed if these recommendations are to succeed. The lack of adequate waste management infrastructure—such as accessible recycling bins, composting systems, and collection points—represents a significant obstacle to sustainable behavior. Policy reforms, investment in infrastructure, and the consistent enforcement of environmental laws are therefore essential. At the same time, recognition and incentive systems, including eco-clubs, certificates, or public showcases of student projects, can further encourage participation and sustain motivation.

Ultimately, the conclusions of this study present a hopeful vision. While challenges remain, there exists a strong and unified commitment among youth, educators, and parents to take responsibility for environmental stewardship. The will to act is already present; what is required is a supportive framework of policies, resources, and collaborative networks that can channel this energy into meaningful change. Environmental education must therefore move beyond theoretical instruction and become a lived, consistent practice that connects classrooms, households, and communities. By doing so, we can cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who are not only knowledgeable but also empowered to safeguard the future of their regions and the planet as a whole.

Based on the combined insights, particularly focusing on what resonates with young people and what parents and teachers believe is effective, here are applicable measures and recommendations for how young people would like to learn about the environment:

1. **Prioritize practical and experiential learning:**

- **Hands-on activities:** Implement more projects like recycling initiatives, tree planting, waste collection drives, and "upcycling" competitions (e.g., bringing old objects back to life).
- **Outdoor and real-world exposure:** Organize field trips to recycling facilities, polluted areas (to see impact), or natural reserves (to foster appreciation).
- **Daily routine integration:** Embed sustainability lessons into daily school life through responsible waste management, energy use, and consumption practices.
- Organize workshops, field trips, community clean-ups, gardening, and eco-projects.
- Use real-life examples to teach concepts like recycling, waste reduction, and energy conservation.
- Encourage students to apply learned principles at home and in their communities.

2. **Interactive and engaging methods**

- Use games, simulations, and digital platforms (apps, social media challenges, educational videos) to make learning appealing.
- Integrate creative projects like posters, videos, or campaigns that allow students to express their ideas.

3. **Interdisciplinary integration**

- Include environmental topics across subjects: science, geography, civics, and arts.
- Connect sustainability concepts to everyday life and societal issues.

4. Collaboration and partnerships

- Foster partnerships between schools, NGOs, local authorities, and families to create joint programs.
- Involve youth in decision-making and local environmental initiatives to give them ownership.

5. Role models and mentorship

- Teachers, youth leaders, and parents should model sustainable behaviors.
- Invite experts, activists, and community leaders to share experiences and motivate students.

6. Parental and family involvement

- Encourage parents to reinforce eco-friendly habits at home.
- Provide guidance, resources, and activities that families can do together.

7. Regular and consistent education

- Include weekly or recurring environmental education sessions in the school curriculum.
- Use both formal lessons and extracurricular activities to ensure continuous engagement.

8. Recognition and motivation

- Celebrate schools, classes, and students who show active participation in environmental initiatives.
- Award certificates, create eco-clubs, or feature projects publicly to motivate further involvement.

9. Address barriers and provide resources

- Ensure access to eco-friendly alternatives (recycling bins, sustainable transport, educational materials).
- Reduce logistical barriers by coordinating school schedules and community events.

10. Evaluation and feedback

- Assess the impact of environmental education programs on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Use feedback to improve activities and make them more relevant and effective.

11. Enhancing education & awareness

- Move beyond theory: shift the focus from purely theoretical lessons to a hands-on, practical approach. integrate more experiments, workshops, and real-world projects.
- Use engaging media: leverage social media, documentaries, and videos to make environmental topics more accessible, interesting, and memorable for young people.
- Promote creative expression: encourage students to use creative methods like drawing, making posters, and creating videos from recycled materials to raise awareness and deepen their understanding.

12. Increasing practical engagement

- Organize regular activities: schedule dedicated time for monthly clean-up campaigns and tree-planting events. this provides a consistent and tangible way for students to contribute.
- Integrate field trips: plan educational excursions to relevant sites like recycling centers or natural reserves to provide practical experiences and connect learning to the real world.
- Dedicate school time: advocate for a designated time slot within the school schedule for environmental projects and activities, ensuring they don't conflict with other classes or upset teachers.
- 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.

13. Addressing infrastructure & resources

- Improve local infrastructure: work with local communities and municipalities to install more trash bins and recycling facilities in public spaces, especially in areas where they are lacking.
- Provide school resources: secure funding or donations to provide schools with the necessary materials and equipment for hands-on projects and experiments.

14. Fostering community & collaboration

- Encourage social interaction: emphasize the social and fun aspects of environmental activities. organize group events where friends can participate together to make the experience more enjoyable and motivating.
- Educate the broader community: launch public awareness campaigns to address cultural habits and low awareness of waste management. this can help reduce issues like littering and burning waste.
- Bridge the socioeconomic gap: although not a focus in the provided text, future efforts should address the economic and social barriers that may prevent some young people from participating in environmental initiatives.

15. Foster interactive and engaging methods:

- a. Gamification and creative contests: Use games, challenges, and creative competitions to make learning enjoyable and tangible, especially for younger children.
- b. **Workshops and project-based learning:** Conduct interactive workshops and sustained projects where students actively solve real environmental challenges, fostering ownership and responsibility.
- c. Visual and relatable content: Utilize documentaries and multimedia materials that show direct personal impact and are easily digestible.

16. Leverage modern media and communication channels:

- a. **Strategic social media engagement:** Use social media platforms with brief, relatable messages that demonstrate direct personal impact, as this is the most effective channel to reach youth.
- b. **Digital learning resources:** Develop and promote online educational content that is interactive and visually appealing, complementing traditional teaching.

17. Strengthen collaborative ecosystems:

- a. **Formal partnerships:** Establish long-term collaborations between schools, NGOs, and local communities. NGOs can provide expertise, resources, and experiential opportunities.
- b. **Community networks:** Create shared networks for resource exchange and best practices, supported by local authorities.
- c. **Parent-school synergy:** Schools could assign "homework related to sustainability resources" to involve parents and reinforce learning at home.

18. Implement policy and resource allocation changes:

- a. **Curriculum reform:** Update school curricula to integrate environmental themes across all subjects, not just science, to provide a holistic understanding.
- b. **Teacher professional development:** Provide continuous training and resources for teachers in green education, recognizing them as agents of change.
- c. **Funding and infrastructure:** Allocate increased funding for environmental projects (both local and national), and invest in sustainable school infrastructure like recycling systems and eco-classrooms.
- d. **Motivation and incentives:** Reintroduce reward systems for sustainable behaviors (e.g., for recycling, waste collection), as motivation is key for habit formation.
- e. **Law enforcement and monitoring:** Local authorities should enforce environmental laws more rigorously and establish effective monitoring systems for infractions.
- f. **Functional waste management:** Ensure local authorities implement and maintain effective, widespread selective waste collection and functional collection points.

- g. **Involve students and teachers in decision-making:** Policymakers should consult educators and young people to ensure that environmental policies and educational strategies are relevant and impactful.

19. 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.

20. Build visible infrastructure

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

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

By combining these multi-faceted approaches, environmental education can become more engaging, practical, and effective, fostering a generation of environmentally conscious and responsible citizens. Participants prioritized behavior change and public awareness campaigns, emphasizing practical steps such as reducing single-use plastics, promoting eco-products, and

adopting environmentally friendly habits in households and workplaces. Many highlighted the need for investment in recycling infrastructure, including accessible composting programs and proper disposal systems for hazardous waste like batteries. Local government involvement was considered essential, particularly in allocating funds for environmental campaigns, waste management projects, and the development of protected area management plans. Some participants suggested financial incentives and community engagement programs, such as reward systems for responsible waste disposal or eco-friendly practices in businesses and neighborhoods, drawing inspiration from successful models abroad. The group also discussed the importance of strategic planning and training programs for implementing local waste management and renewable energy initiatives effectively.

An effective strategy should combine these perspectives: use the modern and digital methods proposed by the youth, within more solid structures and with greater support from adults and authorities, as suggested by the latter.

Regional-level recommendations (all Black Sea states)

1. Develop a joint Black Sea Environmental Education Strategy.

- Coordinate curricula, campaigns, and youth programs across the basin through the Black Sea Commission, linking schools, NGOs, and local authorities.
- Integrate marine literacy (ecosystems, pollution, climate change, sustainable fisheries) into regional cooperation projects.

2. Create a shared online “Black Sea Learning Hub.”

- Digital resources (videos, teaching guides, citizen science tools, data dashboards) available in multiple languages for teachers and students.
- Connect with EU and UNESCO environmental education frameworks to ensure quality and interoperability.

3. **Citizen science and community engagement.**

- Promote basin-wide school and youth projects such as beach clean-ups, water-quality monitoring, and biodiversity surveys.
- Annual Black Sea “Eco-Challenge” events where students present solutions to environmental issues.

4. **Capacity building for educators.**

- Regional teacher training programs, summer schools, and exchange visits to share best practices in marine and climate education.

Recommendations for Romania

- **Leverage EU environmental and education directives.**

Romania can integrate Black Sea–specific content into existing environmental education programs supported by the EU Green Deal, Erasmus+, and MSFD outreach activities.

- **Formal education:** Include modules on Black Sea ecosystems and sustainable coastal development in high school and university curricula (particularly in Constanța and Danube Delta regions).
- **Non-formal education:** Expand NGO–school partnerships for marine litter campaigns and citizen science projects supported by the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Education.
- **Teacher training:** Use EU funding (Erasmus+, LIFE) to create specialized training courses for educators in coastal and riverine areas.

Recommendations for Moldova

- **Integrate environmental education into transboundary river programs.**

Since Moldova is landlocked, focus on Dniester/Prut water education, linking river health to the Black Sea.

- **Formal education:** Update national curricula to include modules on water cycle, pollution control, and international river-basin management, emphasizing downstream effects on the Black Sea.
- **Community engagement:** Empower rural schools and local councils with low-cost water-testing kits, encouraging students to monitor local rivers.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with Romania and Ukraine on cross-border school twinning projects for river and Black Sea awareness.

Recommendations for Georgia

- **Tourism and coastal communities as key targets.**
Strengthen marine education programs in schools around Batumi, Poti, and other coastal cities, emphasizing waste management and climate resilience.
- **Formal education:** Incorporate marine and coastal studies into national curriculum reforms, using pilot programs in coastal schools.
- **Public campaigns:** Link environmental education with eco-tourism promotion, emphasizing sustainable beaches and fisheries.
- **Higher education:** Encourage universities to develop environmental communication and marine science programs, aligned with EU Neighbourhood standards.

Cross-cutting tools and policy instruments

- **National Environmental Education Strategies** (aligned with the UN Decade of Ocean Science and Education for Sustainable Development).
- **Youth engagement platforms:** National Black Sea Youth Councils feeding into the Black Sea Commission.
- **Integration of SDGs in curricula:** SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).
- **Partnerships:** With UNESCO, EU Erasmus+, GEF/World Bank “Blueing the Black Sea” program for funding and technical support.

Suggested first steps

1. Co-design a **joint environmental education pilot program** with shared curricula and teaching resources.
2. Launch a **regional online Black Sea Education Portal** with open-access materials for teachers.
3. Implement “**Adopt a River / Adopt a Beach**” **school projects**, coordinated basin-wide.
4. Organize an **annual Black Sea Youth Forum on Environment and Education** to foster collaboration and innovation



Project title : BSB00532 EcoYOU - Clean and Green minds for an environmental friendly behaviour.

Material editor: Ecological Nongovernmental Organization Mare Nostrum

Contact details of the material editor: (office@marenosttrum.ro / 0040341407432/
[https://marenosttrum.ro/.](https://marenosttrum.ro/))

Publishing date : 17.10.2025

The responsibility for the content of this material is that of the author(s). The content of this material does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Union.

Reproduction is authorized, provided the source is acknowledged, and any changes are indicated.