

greenACT

PREFACE

GreenACT is a 20 months' project designed to enhance ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION and AWARENESS of YOUNG PEOPLE through the organisation of SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMME to familiarize young people with the idea of environmental citizenship, based on the fact that the future depends on each and one of us by acting responsibly and positively towards our environment and developing sustainable solutions for addressing environmental challenges. In a period where Earth faces the consequences of climate change and global warming crisis and the need for mitigation of climate change is emerging, Green-ACT aims to support further these YOUTH INITIATIVES and raise more awareness in the 6 countries, by educating young people on environmental issues, inspire them in developing a firm ecological mind-set, and invite them to have a positive impact in their communities as active agents.

The partnership is composed of 6 partners from 6 countries: Romania, Lithuania, Cyprus, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Portugal

Furthermore, it aims:

- To promote the idea of establishing SUMMER SCHOOLS for raising young people's environmental awareness;
- To set up the GreenACT MOVEMENT (a network of young activists) for coordinating their actions and engaging citizens;
- To build/increase the capacity of partner organizations to take action regarding the reduction of waste in the partner countries by encouraging local communities to recycle and reuse.
- To equip youth workers with new sustainable environmental skills in order to empower more young people;
- To facilitate brainstorming on challenges and possible solutions of topics such as alternative forms of socio-economy, biodiversity and food production, sustainable production and consumption, transport, etc.

The Comparative Report will be developed by the Portuguese partner, Brigada do Mar, as a result of the Intellectual Output 1, after the analysis and interpretation of each National Report from all the consortiums of the project. The purpose of this document is to compare the young people's knowledge and perceptions gathered from questionnaires that were conducted in each partner country with the information compiled by each partner on the gaps and good practices in environmental policies.

The Comparative Report template follows the below-given structure, proposed by the Intellectual Output leader partner, D.G.T. Association, in order to allow easier comparability of reported information and outcomes across GreenACT partner countries and includes the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: RESEARCH AND PROJECT CONTEXT
- Chapter 2: CROSS NATIONAL COMPARATIVE INDEX
- Chapter 3: CONCLUSIONS ON THE CROSS-NATIONAL FINDINGS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. RESEARCH AND PROJECT CONTEXT	4
1.1. The consortium of partners	4
1.2. Project Context and Objectives	4
1.3. Definition of Main Environmental Concepts	6
2. CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE INDEX	7
2.1. Comparative Desk Research on Environmental Protection	7
2.1.1. Water Management and Treatment	7
2.1.2. Waste Management	8
2.1.3. Environmental Protection	9
2.1.4. Human health and climate change	10
2.1.5. Sustainability	10
2.1.6. Environmental Awareness and Education	11
2.2. Comparative Report from Surveys	12
2.2.1. Personal Actions	12
2.2.2. Policies Actions in Local Community	13
2.2.3. Law and Policies Actions at National Level and EU Level	14
2.2.4. Infographics	15
3. CONCLUSIONS ON THE CROSS-NATIONAL FINDINGS	18

1. RESEARCH AND PROJECT CONTEXT

1.1. The consortium of partners

The Cross-National analysis of the six EU member states in this project - Romania, Lithuania, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovenia and Portugal - included both young people's opinions and feedback from youth workers and each national report analysis as well as desk research of country statistics with main conclusions within the partner countries. This desk and national reports were carried out by project partners:

Romania - Asociatia D.G.T

Lithuania - Asociacija Tavo Europa

Cyprus - A & A Emphasys Interactive Solutions Ltd

Slovenia - Drustvo Bodi Svetluba

Bulgaria - Sdruzheiria Walk Together

Portugal - União Brigada do Mar

1.2. Project Context and Objectives

The effects of climate change are likely to be some of the biggest environmental challenges the world has ever faced. Decades of intensive use of natural resources and degradation of the ecosystem aimed to increase economic development, brought global warming, loss of biodiversity, and various negative impacts on our health.

Europe is one of the 7 continents that face multiple challenges in terms of securing ecological sustainability and addressing climate change. The high percentage of greenhouse emissions, plastic and food waste, pesticide use, and other threats to biodiversity demand people, to make caring for nature, part of their lives. According to Eurostat October 2019, Romania recorded, in 2017, a very low recycling rate of municipal waste of only 14%. Bulgaria is one of the Member States with the most pollution-related deaths associated with air pollution (EIR 2019). In Cyprus, there is a need for raising awareness of water conservation as the island's natural water resources cannot cover the increasing needs. Recently in 2019, EC's President Ursula von der Leyen presented the "European Green Deal", a proposal of measures aimed at tackling the climate emergency, which, emphasizes the need for education providers to engage young people with the changes needed toward sustainable development.

The reason behind the decision of focusing on young people was due to the fact that one-third of the EU population is under the age of 30. While several initiatives dedicated to climate action by the EU have been developed and implemented there is a continuous need to change the attitude of young people against climate change. The future of our continent will be shaped and experienced by more than 150 million young Europeans. This is why we need to empower them with capacities and skills for climate action.

An excellent example of youth activists for the environment was the #FridaysForFuture movement initiated by the 15-year-old Greta Thunberg in August 2018 in front of the Swedish parliament to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. In May 2019, more than 1.5 million young people in more than 125 countries walked out of schools, colleges, and universities in the biggest student climate action. Although the initiatives were a huge success, environmental degradation reached its peak in Europe during the Covid-19 period and various measures for fighting contamination were applied by the governments. While pollution and greenhouse gas emissions have fallen across continents, the mandatory use of disposable face masks and gloves, had negative results, as millions of masks and gloves were discarded in the natural environment, increasing the worldwide burden of plastic waste. As a result, a large amount of plastic waste was never recycled.

The project GreenACT aims to support further these YOUTH INITIATIVES and raise more awareness in the 6 countries, through the organization of the SUMMER SCHOOLS, an innovative learning methodology for educating young people on environmental issues, inspiring them in developing a firm ecological mindset, and engaging them in having a positive impact in their communities as active agents.

Furthermore, it aims to:

- Set up the GreenACT MOVEMENT (a network of young activists) for coordinating their actions and engaging citizens;
- Build/increase the capacity of partner organizations to take action regarding reducing waste in the partner countries by encouraging local communities to recycle and re-use;
- Equip youth workers with a TOOLBOX for setting up the SUMMER SCHOOLS;
- To facilitate brainstorming on challenges and possible solutions on alternative energy resources, biodiversity, and food production, sustainable production, and consumption, transport, etc.;
- To promote the idea of eco-friendly cities in urban regions.

The objectives described above will be achieved through the following Intellectual Outputs (IO):

1. IO1 COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR;
2. IO2 EDUCATIONAL PACK which will facilitate innovative learning practices based mainly on the non-formal method;

3. IO3 Green-ACT CLOUD-BASED PLATFORM: for hosting the GreenACT MOVEMENT where young people and youth workers will utilize for interaction, exchange of information, and cooperation of actions;
4. IO4 TOOLBOX, for preparing an A-Z guide for SETTING UP the GreenACT SUMMER SCHOOLS, pilot testing of the developed IOs, and ensuring the project's exploitation and sustainability.

The project will be carried out in 6 EU countries. The partners were selected carefully since they have common needs when it comes to the promotion of responsible environmental behaviours starting from young people. This transnational initiative will offer transferable valid tools that will change youth's environmental attitudes, the important markers of long-term social change, and interests in other countries (in and out EU).

1.3. Definition of Main Environmental Concepts

Circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended and given further value, implying a reduction of waste to a minimum. - European Parliament

Climate change is the long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns in a place. It can refer to a particular location or the planet as a whole. Climate change may cause weather patterns to be less predictable and has also been connected with other damaging weather events such as more frequent and more intense hurricanes, floods, downpours, and winter storms. - National Geographic

Environmental awareness means being aware of the natural environment and making choices that benefit, rather than hurt, the earth. It is the level of how much people are interested in or care about environmental issues. Environmental awareness can be either local or global depending on the type of environmental problem. - Encyclopedia

Environmental policy is the commitment of an organization or government to the laws, regulations, and other policy mechanisms concerning environmental issues. It is the policy domain that has the main goal of protecting nonhuman entities. - Science Direct

Environmental protection can be defined as the prevention, reduction or elimination of unwanted changes to ecosystems and their constituent parts, in order to conserve natural resources and the existing natural environment. Environmental protection is, therefore, the practice of protecting the natural environment by individuals, organizations and governments. - Eurostat and Science Direct

Global warming is the long-term heating of Earth's climate system observed over the last hundred years due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning, which increases heat-trapping greenhouse gas levels in Earth's atmosphere. Global warming is the cause of climate change. - Nasa

Sustainable living is a way to reduce our carbon footprint and better use the Earth's resources to minimize the environmental damage that can be caused by our lifestyle choices. It's achieved by making choices that aim to reduce our individual and collective environmental impact by making positive changes to offset climate change and reduce environmental damage. - Inspire

2. CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE INDEX

2.1. Comparative Desk Research on Environmental Protection

In order to understand the reality in each country, all partners of the project developed desk research on existing gaps and best practices for environmental protection and awareness. In this section of the comparative report, we will present the highlights, similarities and differences between the consortium partners in the main areas of concern.

2.1.1. Water Management and Treatment

Overall, all the countries showed problems in water management, lacking the effectiveness of laws and legislation or their implementation. One of the main concerns is the pressure on rivers and groundwater. In countries such as Portugal, Bulgaria and Lithuania, there is great pressure on rivers and groundwater sites coming mainly from pollution from agriculture and construction, and therefore, actions to reduce this pressure on groundwater are needed. In addition to these, Portugal is suffering equal pressure on surface waters, particularly the ones with good chemicals, and Lithuania is struggling with the eutrophication of surface freshwater and nitrate concentration, being the Baltic Sea a great concern. On the other hand, Cyprus faces a major problem with the over-abstraction of groundwater, due to its limited water resources, resulting in water scarcity.

As for the quantity of drinkable water was mentioned in Cyprus, Romania and Slovenia as an issue to be improved, particularly in vulnerable communities like the Roma community in Slovenia. The remaining countries of the project didn't mention this matter as problematic.

Less referenced, the water treatment, deserves important attention in water governance at municipal and national levels following the EU Directive of Urban Waste Water. Portugal has reported fragmented management at both levels, whereas, Romania highlighted water treatment as one of the main environmental violations in the country.

Despite overall governance deficiencies, some countries showed to be aligned with the Water Framework EU Directive, for example, Bulgaria has adopted several strategies and plans to guide policies toward water long-term problem-solving, and Lithuania has moved forward with the construction of wastewater treatment plants. Others, such as Portugal, have made partial progress, showing for instance improvements in the Second River Basin Management Plans.

Even though some countries reported problems with water quantity, most of them - Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania and Portugal - proved to have good or even excellent water quality in groundwater and surface bodies as well as in bathing waters. Moreover, Lithuania claimed to be one of few European countries whose population consume only underground water for their needs.

2.1.2. Waste Management

Another important issue shared among the countries under this analysis was waste management, where similarly to water management, almost every country reported problems in managing waste and implementing laws and legislation policies. At least five of the six countries mentioned to be facing challenges in the reduction of waste, at municipal and national levels, and performing above the EU-28 average in terms of recycling, and therefore, by the time of the latest results, were at serious risk of missing the EU target of recycling 50% of municipal waste by 2020.

Moreover, the absence in establishing an adequate network of facilities and equipment that would effectively manage waste to reach higher recycling rates seemed to be a recurrent issue, shared by most the countries. Some, like Cyprus and Bulgaria, are even reported to be facing severe fines due to insufficient recycling ratings or due to delays in closing landfills and still creating illegal ones.

The problem of illegal waste disposal creates serious concern in countries like Bulgaria, where high levels of hazardous waste are generated, and in Lithuania where several surface water bodies are at risk of contamination. In Slovenia, plastic waste and its low recycling rates were claimed as great concerns. Additionally, the plastic waste export is an important pathway of plastic debris loss into the oceans from Europe.

Other reported problems are, on one hand, the lack of fees for non-compliance in landfills and household waste separation, and on the other hand, the lack of economic incentives to motivate companies and citizens to recycle. Cyprus and Portugal have mentioned both as strong reasons for the countries failing in implementing the relevant European Waste Policies and therefore missing the target goals.

Nonetheless, some countries also indicated some progress in developing a national waste management plan. In Cyprus, the “Holistic Waste Management” program (pay-as-you-throw), aiming to transform waste into valuable raw materials is a good example of growth. On the other side, in Lithuania, due to an increase in composting, in 2018, recycling and composting were 53%, being the main waste treatment option, which goes in line with the 2020 targets. And, in Romania, in order to tackle one of the biggest

environmental violations, has been set up a National Waste Committee to strengthen and better coordinate actions in the sector.

2.1.3. Environmental Protection

The topics of environmental conservation and ecosystem services are rather new in most countries, where it seems that knowledge and experience across different sectors are still limited and the prioritization, implementation and management of environmental protection strategies are still weak or absent. These failures were strongly highlighted in countries such as Lithuania and Romania.

Other topics of concern are the lack of environmental monitoring, ecosystem mapping and establishment of penalties, which are mentioned by the majority of the countries but especially emphasized by Cyprus, Lithuania and Portugal. Cyprus showed particularly care regarding illegal bird trapping and the lack of monitoring and penalties, resulting in a serious threat to birdlife, whereas in Lithuania, the environmental taxation remains below the EU average. Portugal, on the other hand, has shown main concern in ecosystem mapping and protection strategies, principally in marine ecosystems, where strategies to address the good environmental status of marine waters are still lacking, and in the regulation of invasive species.

From another perspective, Slovenia claimed that the environmental situation in the country has worsened as environmental organizations are now struggling to get funding and legislation has become more business-friendly at the expense of nature.

The Natura 2000 Network was another subject mentioned among the countries, for both good and bad reasons. Despite the adaptation of the National Strategy for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, in some countries, such as Cyprus, Lithuania, Romania and Portugal, the Natura 2000 Network still needs improvement either in the implementation of strategies or management measures. Moreover, in Romania, an adequate administrative capacity and up-to-date information and data are needed and, in Cyprus, the dissemination of its benefits among stakeholders like farmers, hunters, the tourism sector, private owners and the general public deserves attention too. The real situation in Bulgaria and Slovenia was unclear as the information on this matter was not very detailed.

Nevertheless, most countries showed somehow progress in the implementation and management of the Natura 2000 Network. For instance, the development of an Action plan on risk assessment of invasive alien species in the terrestrial and coastal zone in Cyprus, or the notable example of a regional network in Western Romania in the development of a natural corridor for the Brown Bear and the Wolf through the LIFE project 'Connect Carpathians'. And equally remarkable, the development of species conservation plans and management plans for protected areas and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive for the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission) in Lithuania, or great Slovenia's performance in biodiversity and nature protection, being one of the richest European countries in this matter or, lastly, it's ranking in terms of percentage of forests in its territory (third in European Union) with two virgin forests, recently classified as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

2.1.4. Human health and climate change

In terms of human health, not much information was shared among the countries. Yet, a few countries expressed their concerns mostly about air quality and noise. The quality of the air seems to be a worrying subject in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Portugal, particularly due to the levels of nitrogen dioxide and ozone concentration in bigger cities, whilst, noise consequences are increasing in Portugal.

On the other hand, Lithuania and Slovenia seemed to be doing rather good in this regard. Lithuania claimed that the condition of air, water and soil is good and there are no significant ecological problems. And Slovenia appeared to benefit from its rich forests to maintain its good air quality.

In order to be aligned with international agreements and protocols and to follow European legislation, most countries claimed to be directing efforts to allocate important amounts of money towards climate change-related projects.

2.1.5. Sustainability

In regards to sustainability, the circular economy showed to be the main area of progress, where at least two countries, Cyprus and Portugal, reported employment rates above the EU-28 average, as well as strong civic support for a circular economic system based on the principles of reusing, sharing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing and recycling. Similarly, Romania claimed good progress in the circular economy system.

As for eco-innovation and energy efficiency, the performance and material resources efficiency were rather low, mentioned for example by Bulgaria, Lithuania and Portugal. Bulgaria and Portugal refer to the lack of coordination in the development, implementation and monitoring of the policies and initiatives, and the high dependency on public institutions, mostly large corporations, while Lithuania pointed out its low electrified rail networks.

Also, Slovenia expressed equal concern about the green energy transition, despite mentioned important measures with effect on this subject including investments in reducing flood risks, renewable energy and railway infrastructure, as well as various circular economy projects. On the other hand, Romania showed good progress in resource efficiency, innovation, competitiveness, and knowledge-based in fisheries and aquaculture.

Another issue again highlighted, mostly by Portugal, was the lack of or weak financial incentives for using public transportation or eco-friendly cars, in spite of already existing carbon vehicle taxation. Though, on the opposite, Lithuania has referred to an increase in public transportation.

Lastly, most of the countries seemed to direct efforts toward innovation, sustainability and green cities, by being actively involved in sustainable initiatives and by making good use of European funds both at the regional and the national level such as the European Regional Development Fund and the Urban Development Network. Some examples are the case of Lithuania in the Urban Development Network and

Horizon 2020 Network, Portugal in Euro cities, the European Covenant of Mayors and the European Green Capital 2020, Romania with the Facility for Connecting Europe and Horizon 2020, and Slovenia, which its capital - Ljubljana - has allegedly been, since 2014, the only European capital member of Zero Waste Europe Network.

2.1.6. Environmental Awareness and Education

Citizens among the six countries proved to be very concerned about the negative impacts of human activity on the environment, showing great environmental awareness and willingness to contribute to nature and biodiversity protection and to build a more ecologic and sustainable lifestyle. Yet, countries such as Cyprus and Romania have revealed that the public is not well informed about environmental rights and does not have adequate access to justice in environmental matters.

Environmental and climate action both civic and non-governmental organisations were mentioned as one of the strongest initiatives towards environmental protection with several great and inspiring movements, projects and practices from most countries. Some examples worth mentioning are the garden of the future initiative in Cyprus, the community ecological youth contests to raise environmental awareness in Bulgaria, the zero waste and conscious consumption practices in Portugal, the World Bee Day in Slovenia, and the volunteering clean-up campaigns and movements in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Portugal, for example.

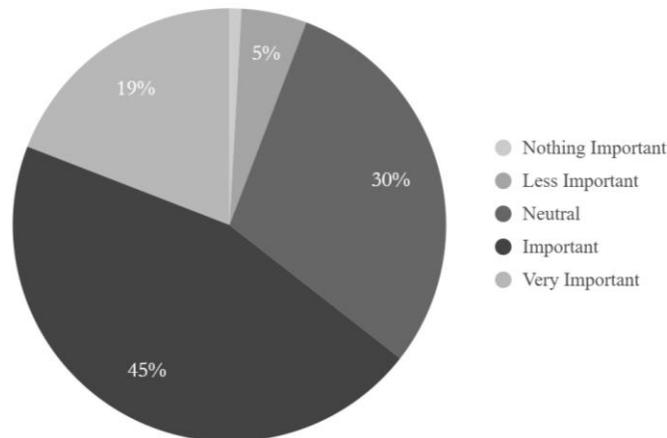
Moreover, some countries showed also important examples of progress in environmental education, either by the inclusion of environmental and sustainability programs in the public schools of Cyprus, the ocean literacy 'Blue School' programs in Portugal, and the active participation of schools in projects related to environmental care in Bulgaria and Lithuania.

2.2. Comparative Report from Surveys

In this section, we will highlight the main comparative results after analyzing the questionnaire that was part of a national survey in each country of the consortium. This survey was conducted among 18-30-year-olds in the 6 European countries on environmental education and awareness and a variety of environment-related issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, waste management, energy consumption and green living. Overall, 228 responses were obtained, with Romania (50) and Lithuania (45) being the countries with the highest number of participants.

2.2.1. Personal Actions

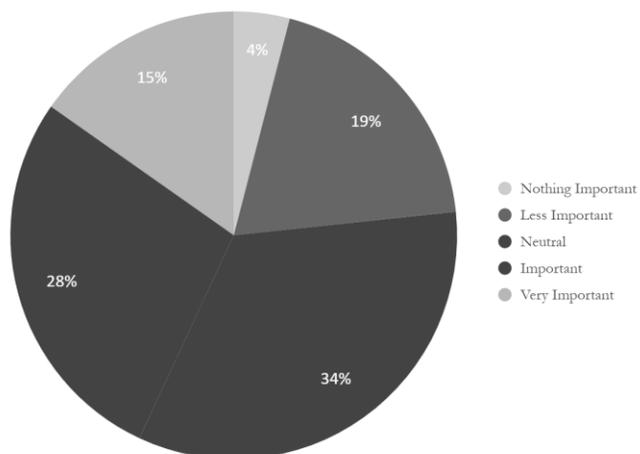
Starting with the personal actions, the main questions in the questionnaires were focusing on environmental awareness and personal action toward protecting the environment around the participants. Among the 6 countries, as it is shown below, 45 % of the participants in the questionnaires said that it is important to be environmentally aware while 5% considered it less important. This consensus was expressed in the majority of the countries, being the young in Romania the only ones expressing higher numbers in a neutral opinion.



Graph 1. How important the participants considered to be environmentally aware.

Regarding the actions to improve the environment around them, the majority of the young people considered themselves active in taking action in this matter. For instance, when asked about the use of eco-bags for shopping, 32% mentioned using them as important and 22% as very important. These results can be confirmed in graph 2. Here, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania showed a lower percentage of use compared to the other three countries. On the other hand, considering the use of recycled products, only 2 in 5 participants affirmed to be using them often or always. Portugal showed the higher percentage with

over 70% of the participants said always, whereas in the remaining countries the majority of the answers were neutral.



Graph 2. The results regarding the use of recycled items by the participants.

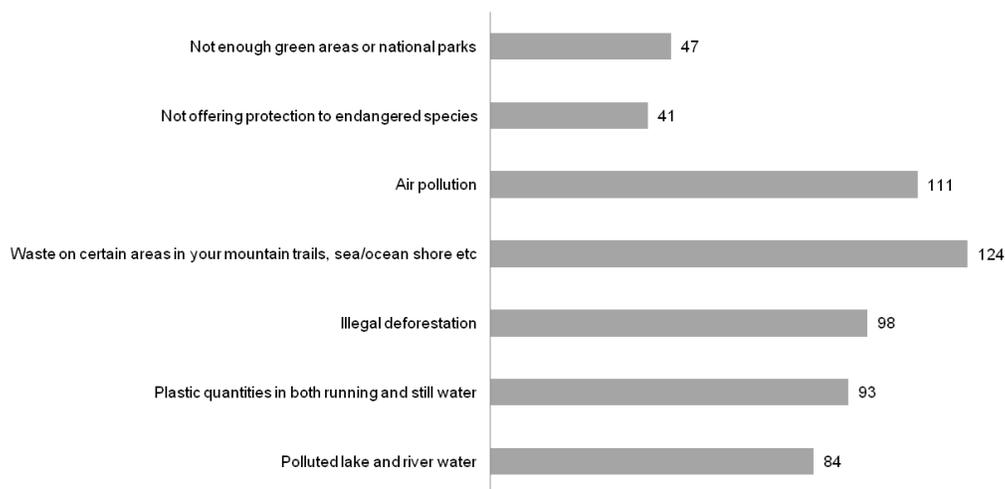
2.2.2. Policies Actions in Local Community

Regarding the Policies Actions in Their Community, we noticed that 93% of the inquiries claimed they have separated waste containers while 4% said they didn't, mostly in Romania. When it comes to drinkable tap water, the answers were not as great as we could have expected since 24 correspondents (11%) said they do not have drinkable tap water, mainly in Cyprus, meanwhile, 8% don't know if they have. Romania (41), Lithuania (37), Portugal (34) and Slovenia (33), were the countries with the higher number of participants claiming access to drinkable tap water.

Finally, when asked about which entities should be the main ones responsible for doing something to improve ecological awareness at a local level, the great majority of the participants chose the local authorities, though most assumed that the Non-governmental Organizations and Associations as the most active in this subject. Additionally, the 3 primordial ideas to improve ecological awareness among the local community provided by the young people were School Education, Fines for violators and penalties for non-compliers, and Campaigns. Here the answers didn't include Cyprus as it wasn't possible to fit the question in the form.

2.2.3. Law and Policies Actions at National Level and EU Level

At the National and EU Level, participants started by answering which main ecological problems they thought they would have in their country. In graph 4 below are the seven main problems mentioned by the young people from 5 out of 6 countries, as it was not possible to include the data collected in Slovenia. Nonetheless, Slovenia's results were quite similar to those expressed in the graph.

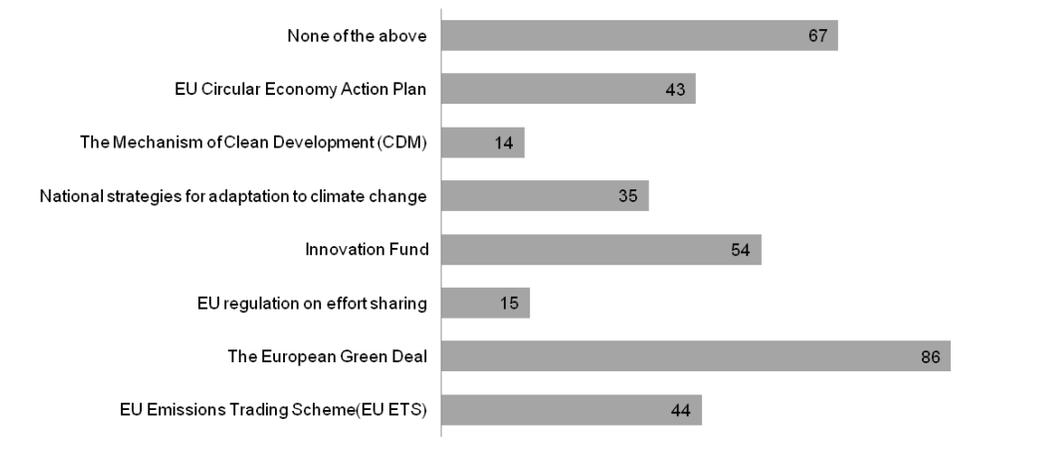


Graph 4. Main Ecological Problems in the countries at National Level, according to the answers in the questionnaires.

Then, about whether the government in your country was applying the EU environmental protection policy related to the changes to a circular economy, waste management, and climate change, most answers were neutral (55%), though the second reply was “disagree” (23%), particularly concerning in Romania (19/50). Similar results were shown for the questions related to the appliance of the environmental protection policy related to the protection, preservation, and consolidation of natural capital and health assurance and qualitative lifestyle for the citizens.

From the perspective of their influence on the national environmental policies, 42% of the people confessed to neither believing nor disbelieving they could have an impact on the decisions. The disbelief was stronger in Cyprus, Portugal and Romania, whereas the confidence was slightly higher in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia.

As for whether they didn't know any Environmental Initiatives in the European Union, 19% assumed they knew any and The European Green Deal and the Innovation Fund were the most commonly known, as can be seen in the graph below. In these results, Slovenia's data couldn't be added, yet the outcome was again very equivalent.



Graph 5. The most known Environmental Initiatives in the European Union.

Finally, regarding the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 71% of the participants considered them important or very important. To be more precise, in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania, the most common answer was “very important”, whilst in Lithuania and Slovenia, the most frequent answer was “important”. Yet, regardless of their strong conviction, the participants steadily agree (74%) that they haven’t seen any action or change from their governments towards achieving the EU Sustainable Development Goals.

2.2.4. Infographics

Lastly, the infographics with the main conclusions from the analysis of the questionnaires can be seen in the pages below.

2022

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Overview of the research done in all 6 Partners countries on the environmental education and awareness and the level of knowledge and skills of young people.



PERSONAL ACTIONS

45%

Says it's important to be environmentally aware.



32%

Often use eco bags for groceries

Where
Cyprus & Romania
use less than other countries.

Around 2 in 5 persons

are using recycled products

POLICIES ACTIONS IN THEIR COMMUNITY



93% Claim their city has separated waste containers



11% Don't have drinkable tap water in their city!



Top 3 ideas mentioned to improve ecological awareness in the local community?



FINES FOR NON-COMPLIERS

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

2022

greenACT

Overview of the research done in all 6 Partners countries on the environmental education and awareness and the level of knowledge and skills of young people.



Total 228 people

LAW AND POLICIES ACTIONS AT NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL

The 3 main ecological problems identified:



Environmental Initiatives in the European Union that are most known by these EU countries are:

The European Green Deal & Innovation Fund

But, **19%** Don't know any of them.

42%

Neither believe nor disbelieve that they can influence their national environment policies.

However believe even less in their impact and believe more in their impact

Most of the people think the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** are important for their country.



Although, **74%** didn't noticed any change in their country related to these goals.

3. CONCLUSIONS ON THE CROSS-NATIONAL FINDINGS

Even though all countries showed somehow steady progress in different stages, overall, they shared similar concerns on major subjects such as water management, waste management and environmental protection. In this comparative report, it seemed clear that the prioritization, implementation and management of laws and legislation are still weak with major gaps in these sectors and, in most of the countries, far from the European Union targets.

Moreover, topics like eco-innovation, energy efficiency and circular economy were often mentioned among the consortium's countries, in similar slow steady progress and with plenty of room for improvement as the topics mentioned above. These sustainable-related matters showed an overall weak transition to green energy with low incentives for eco-friendly alternatives. However, in the circular economy, some countries showed some improvements, where at least two presented employment rates above the EU-28 average and strong civic support in a circular economic system.

Nonetheless, there were some good examples of practices implemented by some countries, particularly in the use of funds in numerous governmental programs and non-governmental projects and initiatives. Some of the most mentioned funds were the Environmental Fund, the EU Cohesion Policy for several Operational Programs, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the Connecting Europe Facility, the Horizon 2020 and the LIFE Program. Likewise, environmental education seemed to deserve great attention with few good examples of integration of environmental and sustainable subjects in public schools.

Furthermore, possibly the bigger accomplishment among all countries is the public awareness and willingness to contribute to environmental protection, strongly supported by non-governmental environmental organizations, which showed to be the main actors of action and change.

In the questionnaires, which were conducted among 18-30-year-olds in the 6 European countries on environmental education and awareness and a variety of environment-related issues, were obtained 228 responses, Romania (50), Lithuania (45), Portugal (35), Slovenia (34), Bulgaria (31), and Cyprus (30).

Through the analysis of the overall answers, we could see that most young people among the 6 countries showed great concern about environmental awareness and protection, and an important percentage of them assumed to be active in implementing personal changes. On the other hand, the results also showed great disbelief in the policies at local and national levels. Though some participants confessed to seeing some actions at the local level, for example, the separation of trash and access to drinkable tap water, they claimed that Non-Governmental Organizations are the main influence and active in directing efforts to environmental awareness and protection.

When considering the national level, the doubtfulness increased as 74% of the people didn't notice any change in their country related to the sustainable development goals. To make matters worse, 42% of the questioned youngsters didn't believe they could not influence their national environmental policies.