

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:

- o To promote the idea of establishing SUMMER SCHOOLS for raising young people's environmental awareness;
- o To set up the GreenACT MOVEMENT (a network of young activists) for coordinating their actions and engaging citizens;
- o 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.
- o To equip youth workers with new sustainable environmental skills in order to empower more young people;
- o 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 National Report template will be developed in each partner country with the purpose of presenting young people's knowledge and perceptions and the gaps in Environmental policies in each partner

country. The following report is going to be based on the results gathered from the questionnaire and the desk research that were conducted in each partner country.

The National Report template follows the below given structure, proposed by the Intellectual Output leader partner, D.G.T. Association, in order to allow an easier comparability of reported information and outcomes across GreenACT partner countries and includes the following chapters (that each will have 3 subchapters):

- o Chapter 1: Survey findings based on the environment issues and protection in Cyprus
- o Chapter 2: Desktop research results detailed as well as the background research on the policies in Cyprus
- o Chapter 3: Conclusions and further impact on a national level

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the Desk research and the survey findings, Cyprus still faces challenges in terms of policies on nature protection, waste and water management. The Ministry of Environment in Cyprus needs to: a) eliminate challenges presented on the designation of the terrestrial and coastal part of the Natura 2000 network, b) establish an adequate network of facilities and equipment that would effectively manage all of its waste in order to reach higher recycling rates, c) take action and reduce the over-abstraction of groundwater, monitor any changes in water quality effectively, and review the results of the new legal framework on water pricing (if it encourages users to use water efficiently). Furthermore, Cyprus environmental governance needs to better inform the public and especially young people on environmental issues, such as climate change, the benefits of adopting an eco-lifestyle, but also support NGOs that work with young people in organizing more social initiatives and awareness raising campaigns.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY [IN GREEK]

Με βάση τα αποτελέσματα από την έρευνα (βιβλιογραφική και ερωτηματολόγιο), η Κύπρος εξακολουθεί να αντιμετωπίζει προκλήσεις όσον αφορά τις πολιτικές για την προστασία της φύσης, τη διαχείριση των αποβλήτων και των υδάτων. Το Υπουργείο Περιβάλλοντος στην Κύπρο πρέπει: α) να εξαλείψει τις προκλήσεις που παρουσιάζονται για τον προσδιορισμό του χερσαίου και παράκτιου τμήματος του δικτύου Natura 2000, β) να

δημιουργήσει ένα επαρκές δίκτυο εγκαταστάσεων και εξοπλισμού που θα διαχειρίζεται αποτελεσματικά όλα τα απόβλητά του, προκειμένου να επιτύχει υψηλότερα ποσοστά ανακύκλωσης, γ) να αναλάβει δράση και να μειώσει την υπερ-άντληση υπόγειων υδάτων, να παρακολουθήσει αποτελεσματικά τυχόν αλλαγές στην ποιότητα των υδάτων και να αναθεωρήσει τα αποτελέσματα του νέου νομικού πλαισίου για την τιμολόγηση των υδάτων (εάν ενθαρρύνει τους χρήστες να χρησιμοποιούν αποτελεσματικά το νερό). Όσον αφορά τους τρόπους αλληλεπίδρασης της κυβέρνησης με τους πολίτες, η περιβαλλοντική διακυβέρνηση της Κύπρου πρέπει να ενημερώνει καλύτερα το κοινό και ιδιαίτερα τους νέους για περιβαλλοντικά ζητήματα, όπως η κλιματική αλλαγή, τα οφέλη από την υιοθέτηση ενός οικολογικού τρόπου ζωής, αλλά και να υποστηρίζει ΜΚΟ που συνεργάζονται με νέους ως προς την οργάνωση περισσότερων κοινωνικών πρωτοβουλιών και εκστρατειών ευαισθητοποίησης.

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this National report is to present Young People's attitudes towards climate crisis, eco-lifestyle and the current environmental policies in the 6 countries by presenting:

- the questionnaire's data on the topic of environmental protection and awareness based on the answers of young people in Cyprus
- the desktop research findings on gaps in policies related to environmental protection and awareness in the 5 partner countries and whether there are any good practices or not.

Ultimately, the National Report will lead to the development of a targeted FRAMEWORK (IO1) indicating the objectives, topics, and learning outcomes of a ready-to-use EDUCATIONAL PACK to be used by youth workers consisting of learning material to be offered on/offline with teaching guidelines, videos, and presentations for training young people on environmental issues (climate change, global warming, water scarcity, droughts, deforestation, pollution, eco-friendly lifestyle, sustainable urban cities, and eco-activism).

- a) Regarding the survey, an easy to understand questionnaire was developed targeting 18-30 years old, with multiple choice and close-ended questions, for testing the knowledge of young people on a variety of issues related to the environment, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, waste management, energy consumption, green living.

The survey has been answered by 30 people between 18 and 30 years (9 males and 22 females) with the most responders to be between 25-30 years old (21 respondents), followed by the age group of 20-25 years old (8 responders) and 16-20 years old (1 responder). Most of the survey participants were employees (24 out of 30), followed by students (5 out of 30) and 1 unemployed person (1 out of 30).

The most common ways of spreading the survey for collecting answers, were:

- Through the organization's Facebook page
- Through emails
- Through Instagram

The main problem encountered during the distribution of the questionnaire is that many young people weren't interesting in participating in this survey.

1. SURVEY FINDINGS ON THE TOPIC OF ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION BASED ON THE ANSWERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CYPRUS

Key findings of Chapter 1:

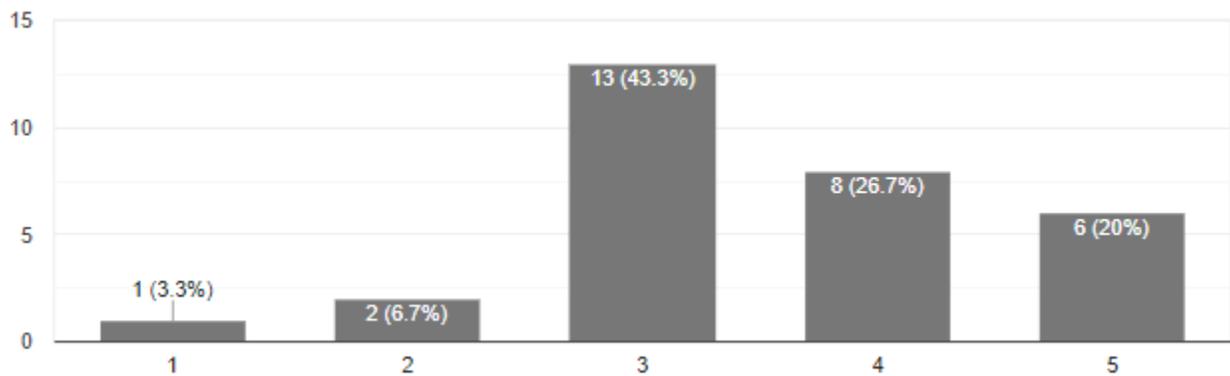
- They are aware of the main European policies such as the European Green Deal, and are willing to participate in environmental events.
- There is a need for creating more green spaces within the cities
- They are not so confident in adopting an eco-lifestyle and in getting involved in any environmental actions.

1.1. Survey findings in Cyprus

Local community actions

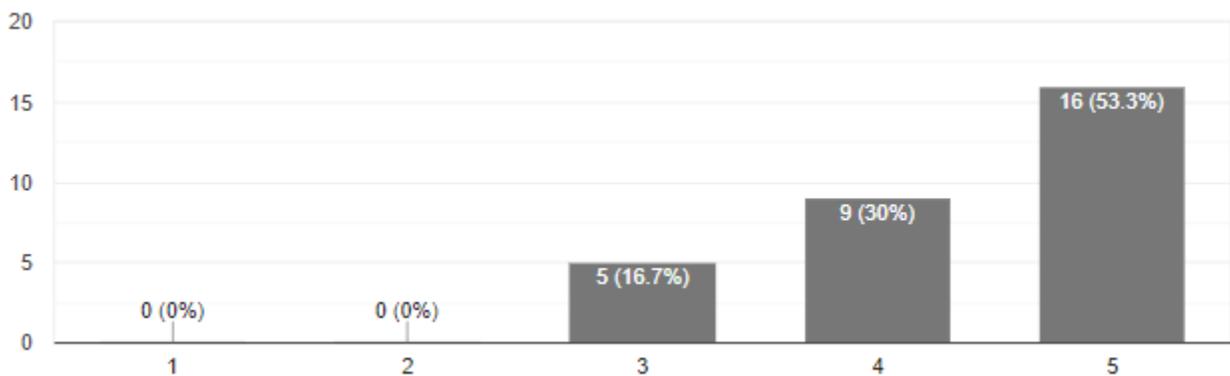
a) “How would you rate your ecological awareness and knowledge?”

The majority evaluated themselves with as above average.



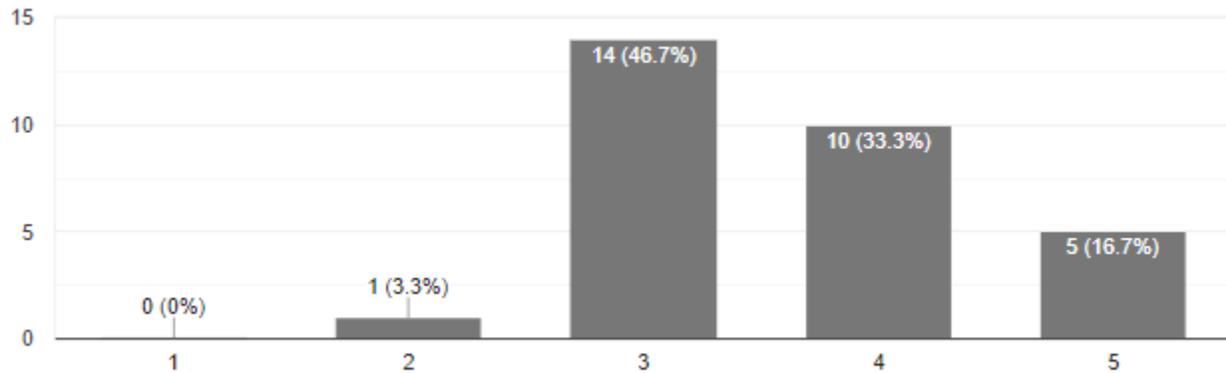
a) “How important is it for you to be environmentally aware?”

Almost 54% of them consider being environmentally aware as very important.



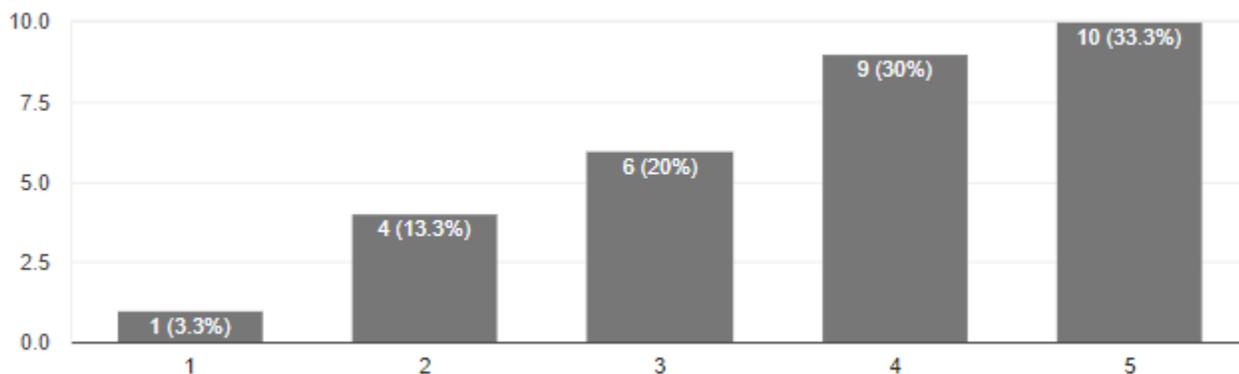
b) "How often do you try to improve the environment in your local community?"

On a scale of 1 to 5 (5- always), almost 50% (14 participants) stated that they sometimes try to improve the environment in their country.



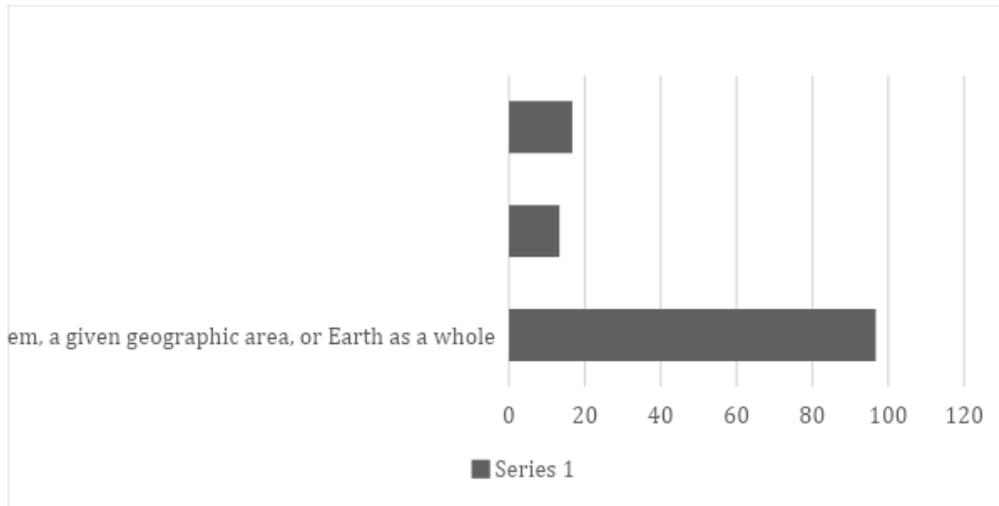
c) "How often do you sort your home waste?"

On a scale 1-5 (5-always), almost 34% of the participants is sorting their home waste into different categories like i.e. Glass, Plastic, Paper etc.



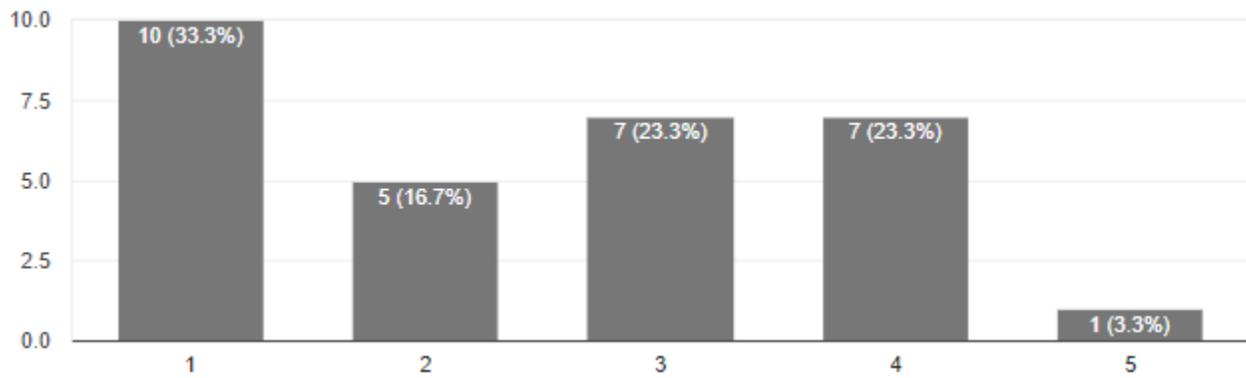
d) "What does the term "loss of biodiversity" mean?"

29 out of 30 participants answered correctly. It seems that most of the respondents are aware of the meaning of the *loss of biodiversity*. This can imply that young people in Cyprus are aware of main environmental terms.



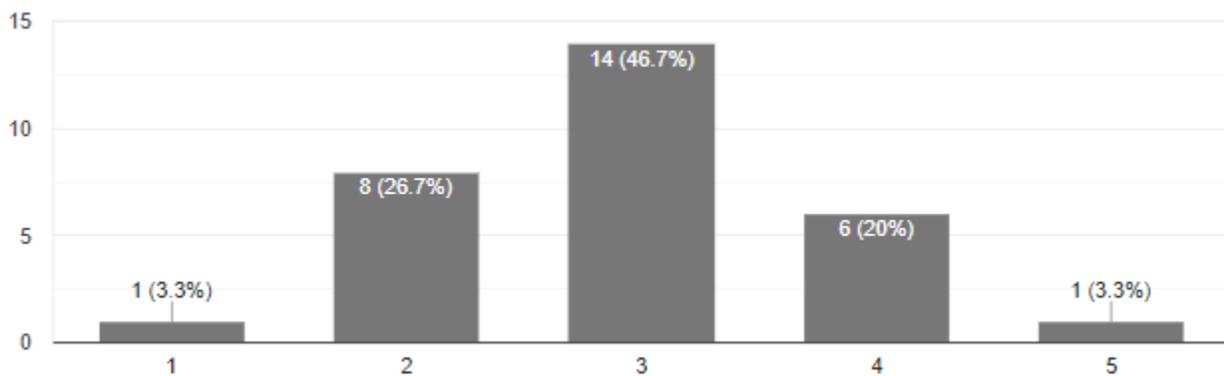
e) "How often do you use linen or eco-bags when grocery shopping?"

Most of the responders (33.3%) stated that they never use eco-bags when they go for shopping.

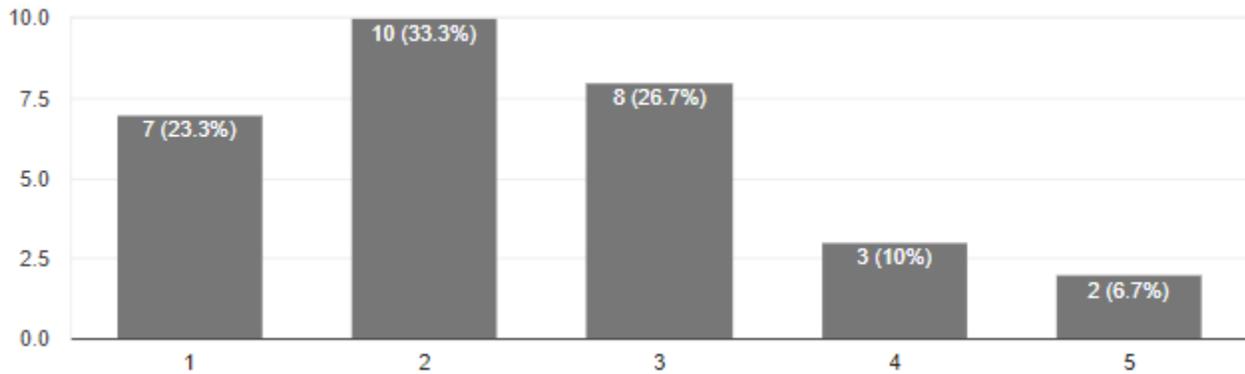


f) "How often do you use recycled products?"

Half of the responders, use recycled products sometimes.

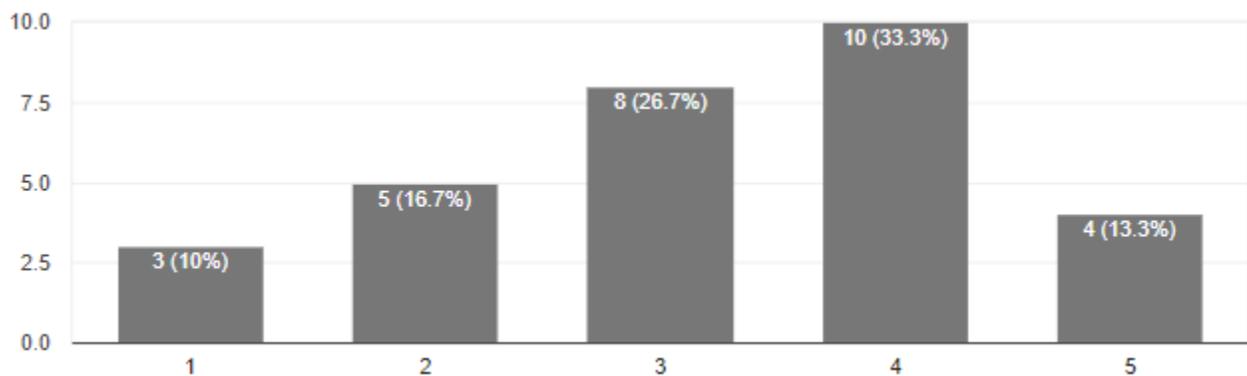


- g) "How often do you participate in tree planting activities or other environmental initiatives?"
33.3% of the responders stated that they participate in tree planting activities or other environmental initiatives very rarely.



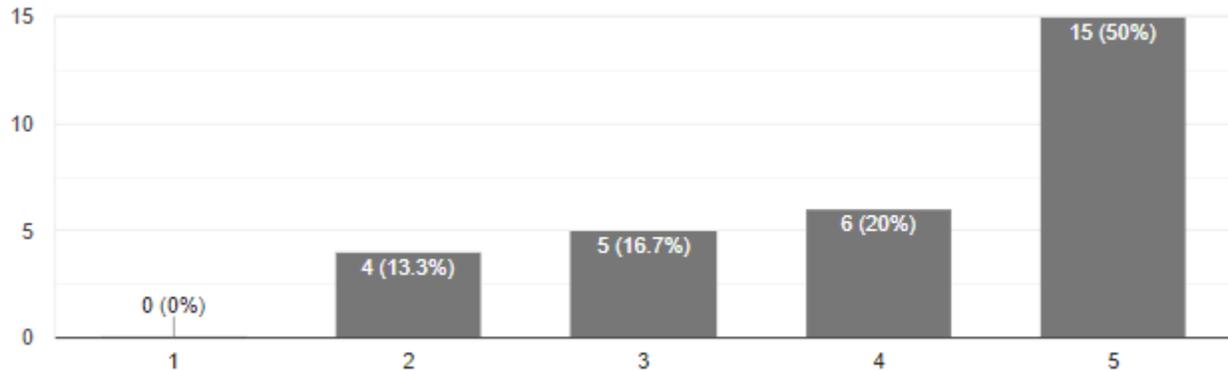
- h) "How often do you pick up trash from the street that was not yours?"

33.3% answered that are picking up trash from the street that are not theirs very often.



- i) "Do the climate changes affect your life?"

50% of the participants stated that climate changes affect their life negatively.



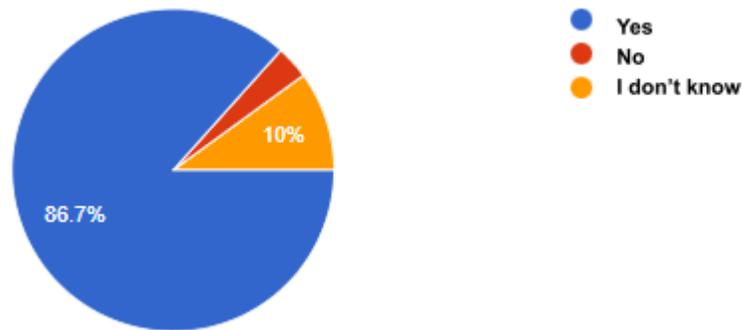
Some of them explained how climate change affects their life:

- Some areas are most often affected by extreme weather and rainfall, while others are affected by intense heatwaves and droughts. We are exposed to heat waves and/or floods
- Rising temperature, pollution of the atmosphere
- Fear
- Sudden changes in temperature, extreme weather events, worries about the future
- It affects the health of all of us
- Very high temperatures that did not exist before. Dust in the atmosphere.
- I believe that if the ice melts, we will all die!!
- Personally, I am not directly affected at the moment, but the people around me are affected. Many economically weaker countries, such as Bangladesh, which is less than 6 meters above sea level, are severely affected. High sea levels and fluctuations in temperature have resulted in natural disasters that threaten human lives.

Regarding to policies-actions in their community for solving environmental problems:

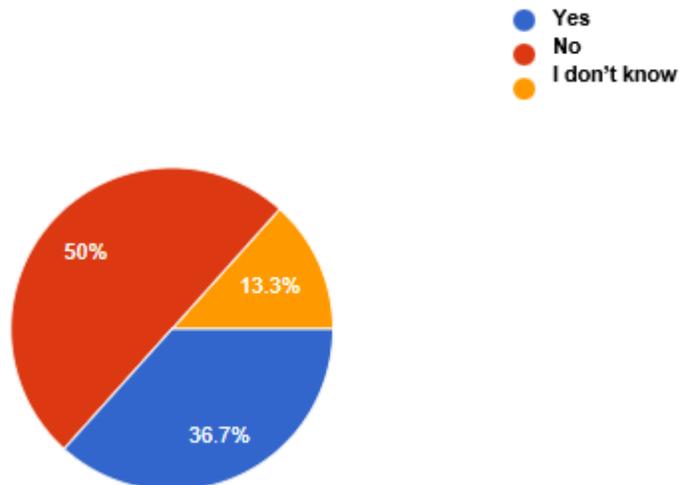
a) “Does your town have separate waste containers?”

86.7% answered positively. It seems that in Cyprus there is a sorting waste policy which promotes high quality recycling.



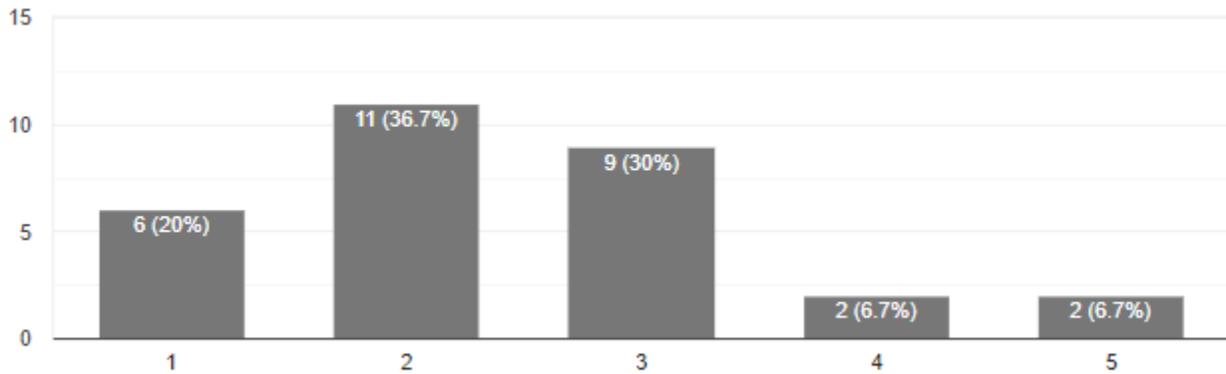
b) “Does your town have drinkable tap water?”

Half of the participants answered negatively. Young people are aware that in Cyprus there is not drinkable tap water.



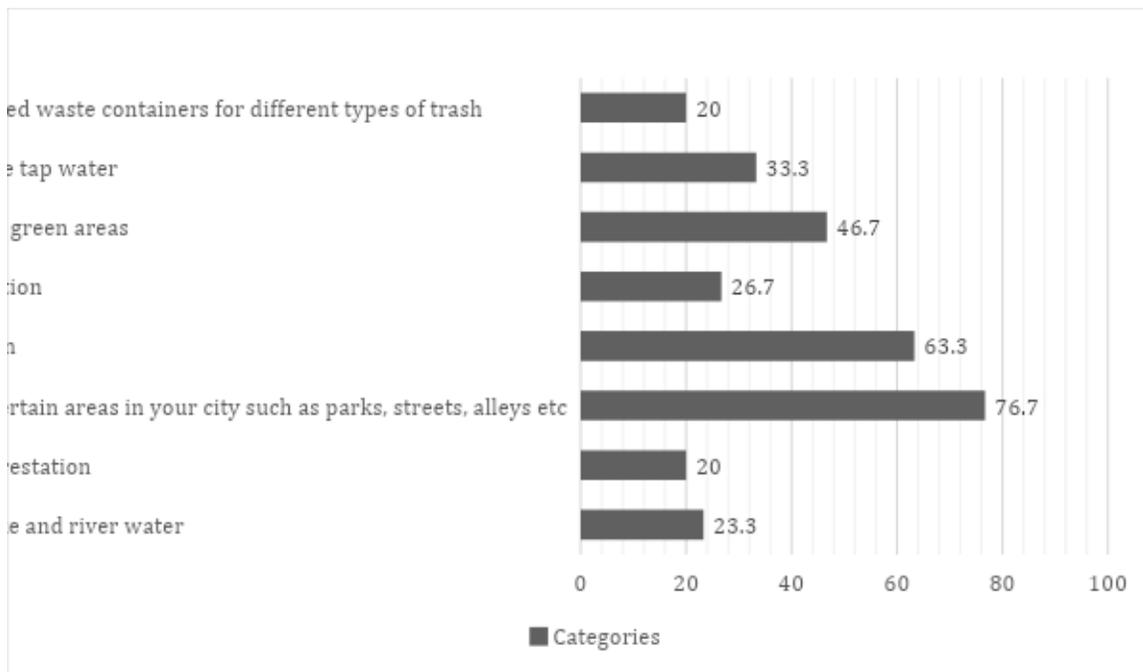
c) “How frequent is the alternative transport (walking, biking, bus, train, carpooling, car-sharing, electric vehicles) promoted in your area?”

Based on the answers, it seems that alternative transport (walking, biking, taking the bus, electric vehicles and etc.) is not promoted in Cyprus.



d) “Please select the 3 main ecological problems on your local level”

According to participants, the main problems in Cyprus are air pollution (63.3%), garbage on parks, streets, alleys etc. (76.7%), the absence of green spaces (46.7%) and the fact that the tap water in Cyprus is not drinkable (33.3%).

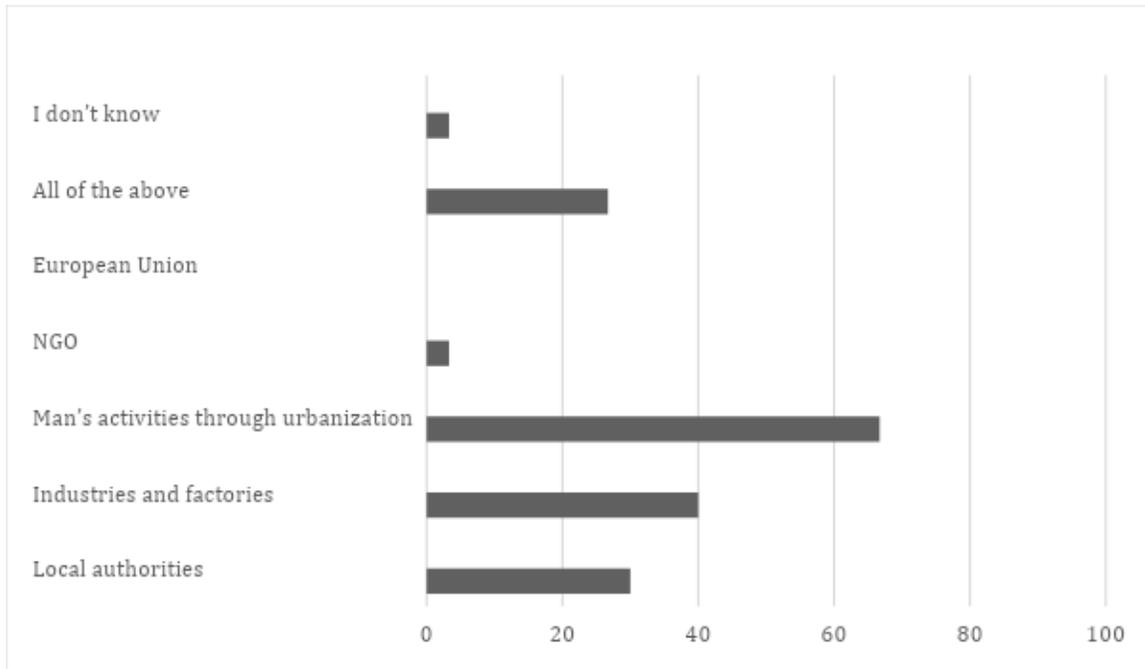


In the *Please explain why you chose the above*, the participants stated:

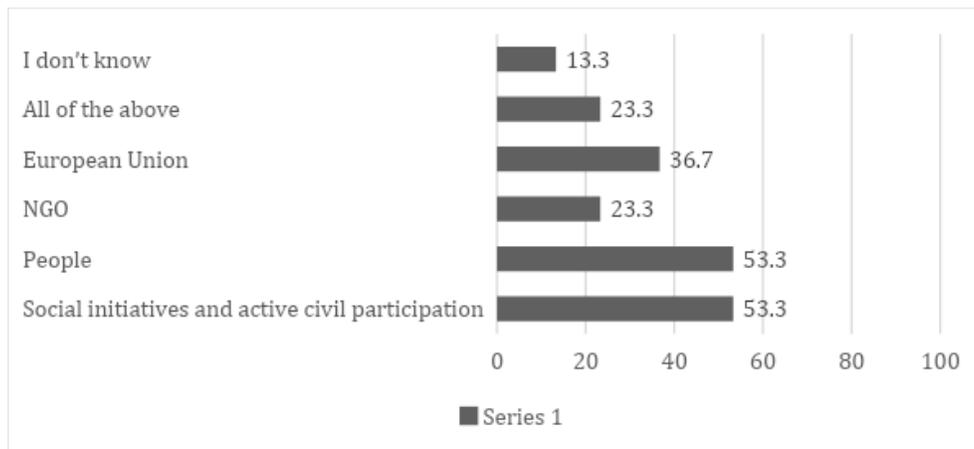
- These are the main ecological problems in my area.
- I think if there was more space for garbage, the problem would improve. The nearest recycling point is a 15-minute drive away. More recycling bins should be placed around the city

- Because they affect me immediately.
- Airborne dust and air pollution in general cause many health problems and there is no other way to avoid it other than closing your house. Waste is unfortunately everywhere and affects our environment and our health. Recycling bins had to be in every neighborhood, not just in every area.
- Our country is one of the few in the EU where there is no drinking tap water. As for the rest, there are problems to some extent I just think green spaces and garbage are the biggest problems at the moment.
- Dust in the atmosphere, lack of parks.
- It is extremely important to plant trees which clean the air from the pollution that is created in the boulevards.
- There are no recycle bins exclusively for glass in my area.
- Chemicals have been found in tap water from time to time (of course now they say it is drinkable, but who trusts them?).
- Litter in our seas.
- I see a lot of waste in Strovolos area where I live. There is also terrible noise pollution.
- They were the most relevant.
- From personal observation.
- The most important.
- I believe that trash cans for different types of rubbish should be increased in order to give, to those who are not particularly aware of recycling, all the means and facilities to do so.
- Nicosia and specifically the centre, , lack of trees and green spaces due to traffic congestion and this is the reason that is facing these problems.
- Most frequent occurred in my area.
- Because they are the ones I noticed.

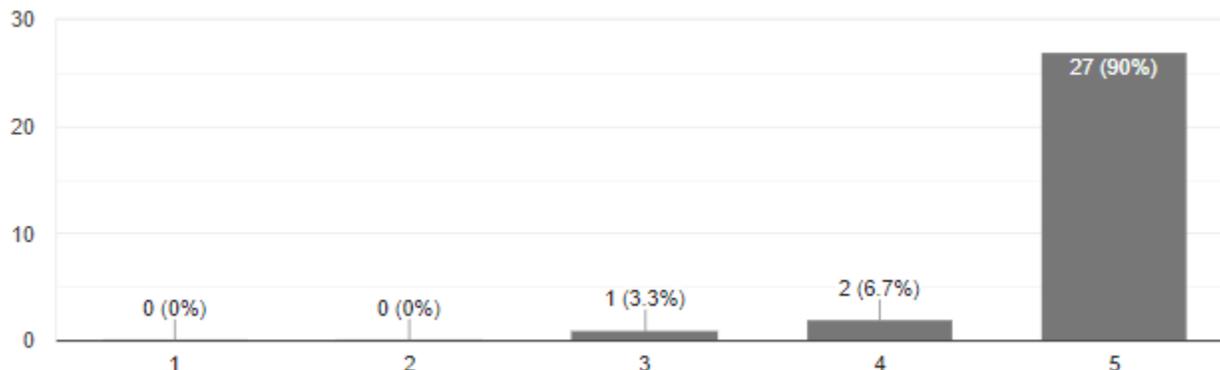
e) “Based on your opinion, who do you think is causing the environmental problems in your living area?”
According to participants, humans have negative impact on the environment (65%).



f) “Based on your opinion, who do you think is fixing the environmental problems in your living area?”
 Based on participants’ responses, social initiatives and active civil participation are able to fix any environmental problems in their living area.



g) “Do you think that local authorities should do something to improve ecological awareness?”



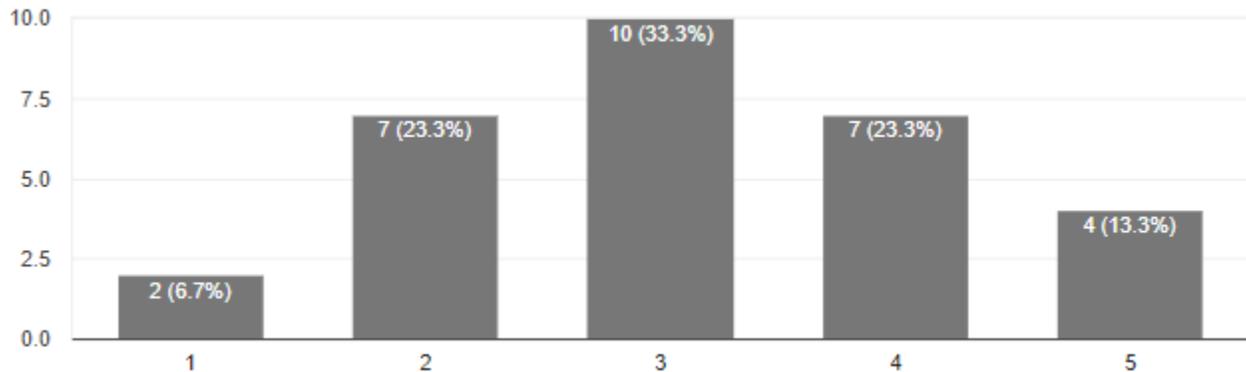
According to participants, local authorities have the responsibility to promote environmental awareness and organize initiatives (1-definitely not, 5-definitely).

h) “Please, provide us 3 ideas on how to improve ecological awareness among the local community?”
Over 50% of the participants stated 3 ideas for improving environmental awareness and promoting eco-lifestyle in the local community. Some of the statements are showed below:

- Tree planting, Placement of more baskets, Awareness from an early age
- More recycling points.
- Organisation of cleanups (i.e. beaches, public parks, events etc.)
- Training/information seminars
- Teaching at school, better information from local authorities
- Let the governments take action
- To motivate the citizens
- Unfortunately, with fines
- Informative events for young and old
- More frequent events locally
- Citizens' information, Citizens' participation in the decisions taken, organization of receptions or activities
- Reward program - e.g. kilos of recycling = reduction in municipal fees
- Education in schools, seminars, fines for offences
- Establishment, coordination and support of resident groups for voluntary actions-controls.
- Integrating Environmental Education subject as part of the school curriculum, incentives for residents, promotion of other means of transport and improvement of infrastructure for them
- Through the design and implementation of research-based social campaigns.
- Increase rubbish bins for different types of rubbish. To carry out a cleaning campaign in neighborhoods. We see campaigns being organised only on beaches and green spaces, however we forget the cities and the environment we live every day.

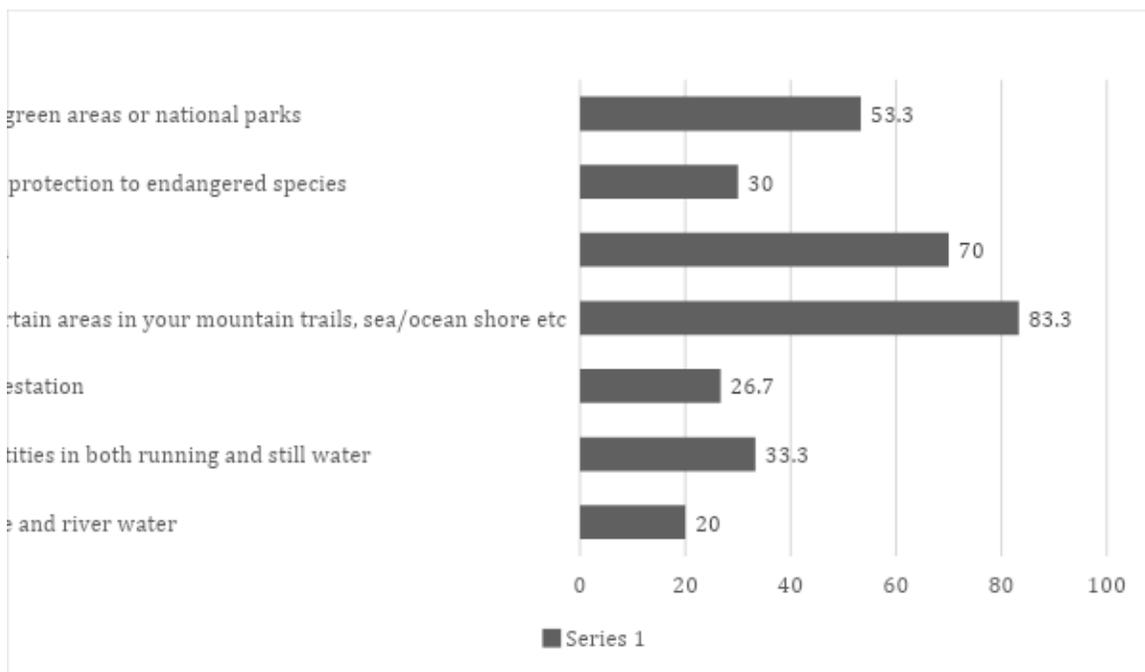
i) “Do you think you can influence the local environmental policies? (1-no, 5-definitely yes)”

It seems that participants do not strongly believe that they have the power and capacity to influence local environmental policies at a large scale.



Regarding law and policies actions at national and EU level:

a) “Please select the 3 main ecological problems in your country (at the national level)”



Participants stated that the 3 main environmental problems in Cyprus are:

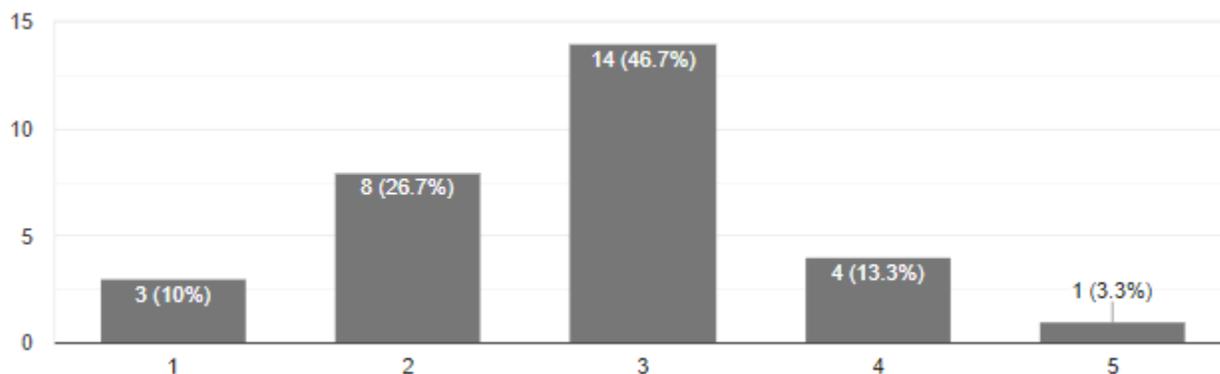
- Garbage-waste in parks, alleys, mountains, seas etc.
- Not enough green spaces or national parks
- Air pollution

b) “Could you think and briefly explain some solutions that tackle the above 3 picked problems?”

The solutions as described by the participants:

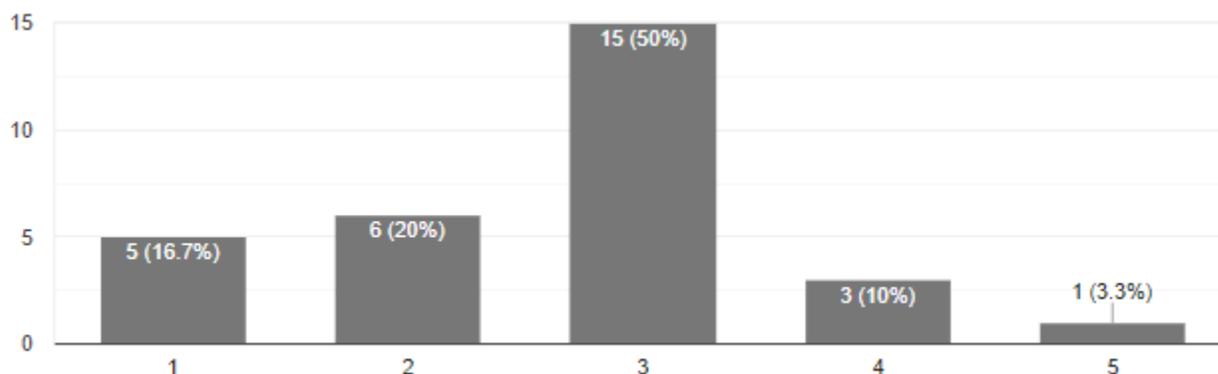
- More campaigns for raising awareness of citizens
- Organisation and volunteering for cleaning in various areas
- Work from home so that you don't need to use the car on a daily basis, thus polluting the atmosphere, and walking for short distances. Physical exercise.
- More frequent cleaning up of city's streets, use of public transport (bus), creation of bike lanes, creation of more parks and their better maintenance.
- Immediate political action
- More checks and penalties on people who leave rubbish
- Organise of tender by the government for a water-consultant company that will be able to deal with the problem of non-drinking water from the tap
- Construction of more parks locally or creation of a large park instead of shopping malls
- Enrichment of the legal framework for deforestation, larger state budget on environmental issues, e.g. cleaning of lakes, rivers, better sewerage systems that do not pollute the sea, NGOs and local authorities to organise events for citizens to collect waste, fines in offenders throwing garbage in nature
- Creation of urban parks or national parks in the provinces utilising public areas.
- Raising public awareness so that they do not dump garbage in public areas with days and at the same time compulsory social work a few hours a week.
- Tightening of rules and controls for delinquent behaviours such as hunting or exploitation of natural areas
- Improving infrastructure for other modes of transport, cultivating environmental awareness, incentives

c) “Do you think that the government in your country applied the EU environmental protection policy related to the changes to a circular economy, waste management, and climate changes? (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree)”



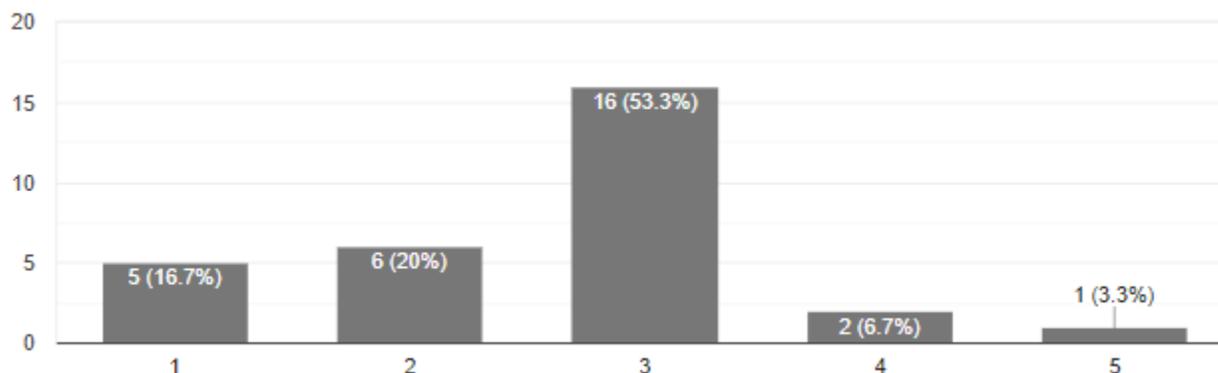
Based on the graph, most of the participants do not disagree either agree, which implies that the responders are not sure if Cyprus government has applied the EU environmental protection policy related to the changes to a circular economy, waste management, and climate changes.

d) “Do you think that the government in your country applied the EU environmental protection policy related to the protection, preservation, and consolidation of natural capital? (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree)”



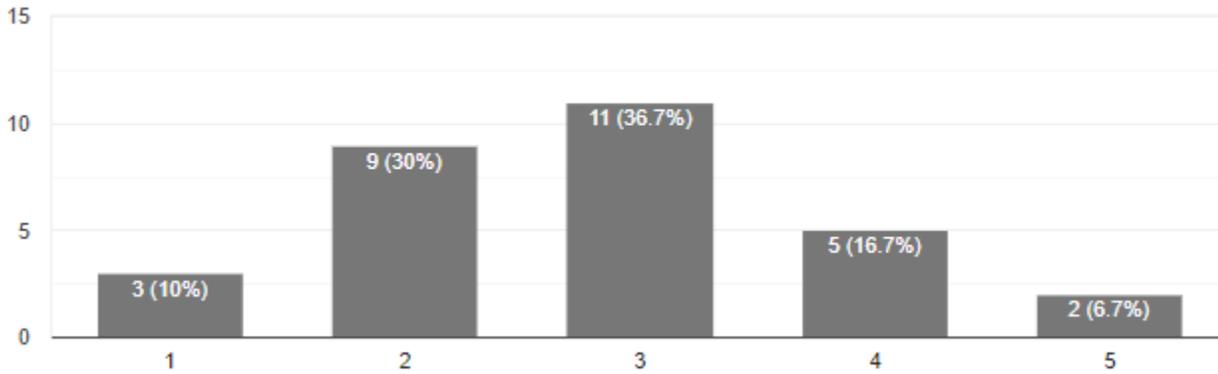
Based on the graph, most of the participants do not disagree either agree, which implies that the responders are not sure if Cyprus government has applied the EU environmental protection policy related to the related to the protection, preservation, and consolidation of natural capital.

e) “Do you think that the government in your country applied the EU environmental protection policy related to health assurance and qualitative lifestyle for the citizens? (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree)”



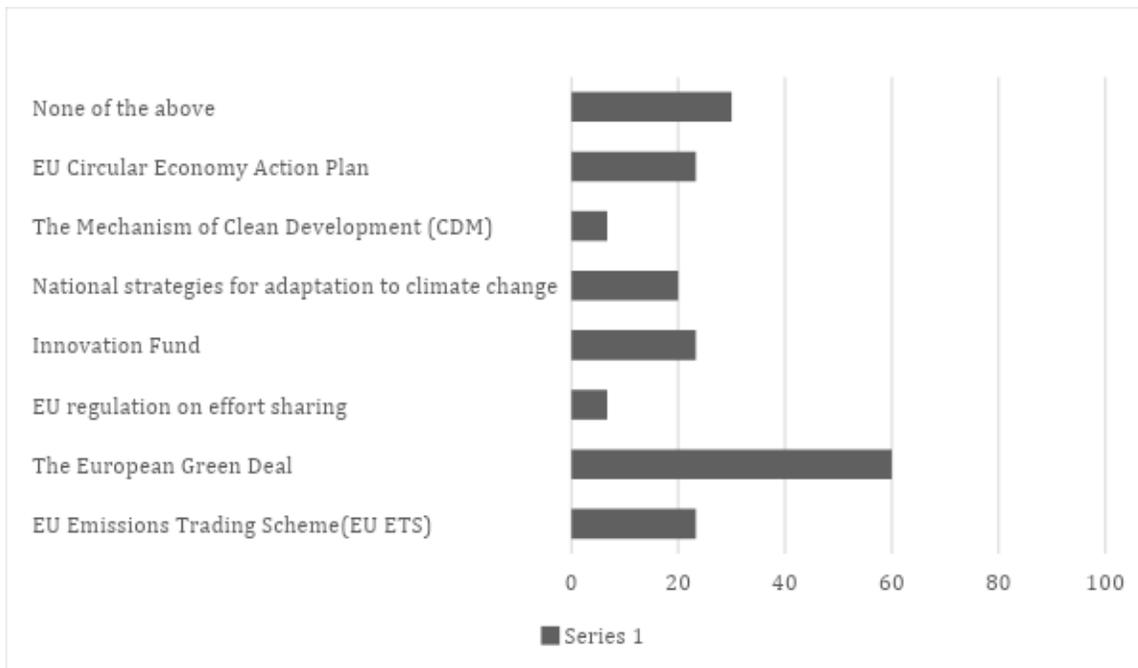
Based on graph, most of the participants do not disagree either agree, which implies that the responders are not sure if Cyprus government has applied the EU environmental protection policy related to the health assurance and qualitative lifestyle for the citizens.

f) “Do you think you can influence the national environmental policies? (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree)”



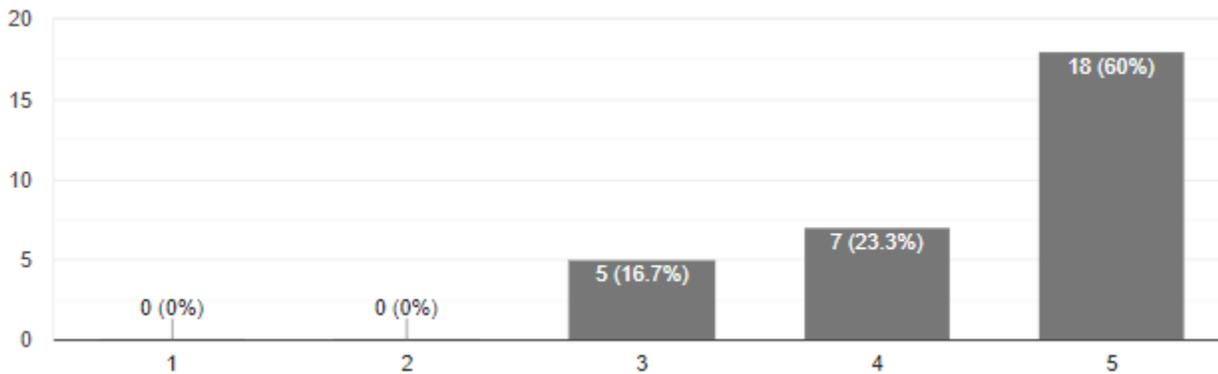
Based on the graph, in terms of young people’s capacity to influence the environmental policies at national level, 11 out of 30 participants are not sure on how they can influence the government.

g) “Which of the following environmental initiatives in the European Union have you heard about?”



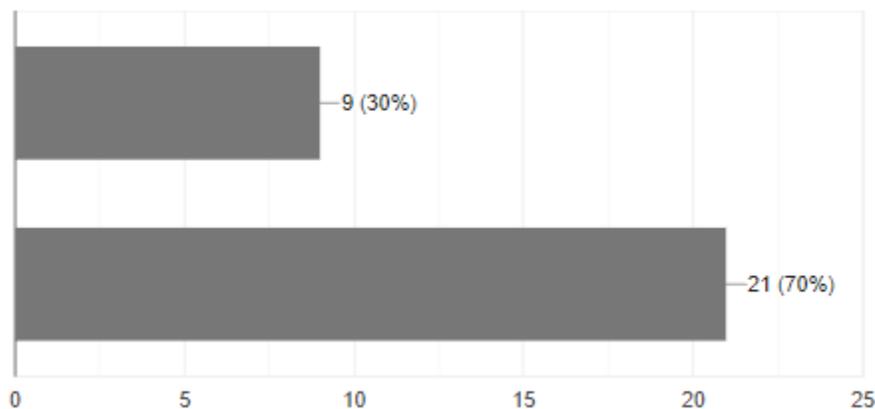
Based on the graph, most of the participants are aware of the European Green Deal initiative.

h) “How important do you think that the 17 sustainable development goals are for your country? More information about these SDGs <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (1-not important, 5-very important)”



According to participants' answers, 60% of the participants believe that the 17 SDGs are of very high importance for Cyprus.

i) “Have you noticed any changes in your country related to the sustainable development goals mentioned above?”



Most of the participants believe that no changes were noted in Cyprus in achieving the 17 SDGs since many challenges are still remaining. **Some participants mentioned that some changes were noted:**

- in terms of Industry Innovation and gender equality to a very small extent though
- in terms of affordable and clean energy
- in terms of efforts made by local authorities in various cities to turn the cities into smart cities, which is expected to have a positive impact on the environment.

1.2. Future impact of those findings and knowledge of the young population in Cyprus

In general, it seems that young people in Cyprus:

- are aware of the main European policies such as the European Green Deal, are willing to participate in environmental events,

- are aware of the meaning of loss of biodiversity
- believe that the government and local authorities need to invest more in organising trainings, campaigns for raising awareness of citizens, creation of more green spaces within the cities and impose stricter fines and controls for environmental offenders.

However, in the question:

- "How often do you use linen or eco-bags when grocery shopping?" most of the responders (33.3%) stated that they never use eco-bags when they go for shopping.

- "How often do you use recycled products?" half of the responders, rated the question with 3 (meaning sometimes).

- "How often do you take any kind of action in order to improve the environment and your surroundings?" on a scale of 1 to 5 (5- always), almost 50% (14 participants) stated that they sometimes take actions aiming to improve the environment in their country. It can be assumed that young people are not so confident in adopting an eco-lifestyle, and in getting involved in any environmental actions.

Based on the fact, that these numbers are quite high, an extra effort is needed by the non for profit and for profit organizations that are working with young people and have the capacity and the knowledge to play a crucial role in helping to address the gaps by facilitating social dialogue with the civil society for helping people to live more sustainable lifestyles.

In that way, we can assume that the future impact of these findings will be remarkable as they provide the consortium with an in-depth view on the needs/gaps that young people have and an idea for which competences should be developed as part of the Competence Framework.

2. DESKTOP RESEARCH RESULTS DETAILED AS WELL AS THE BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON THE POLICIES [CYPRUS]

2.1. Desktop Research in Cyprus

Regarding the desktop research, based on a given template by Partner No1, Asociatia DGT, all partners conducted a desk research aiming to introduce the gaps and best practices in terms of environmental protection and awareness. In the case of Cyprus, the main source of information used for its preparation is the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) 2019 for Cyprus, a tool to improve the implementation of EU environmental law and policy. The main problems encountered during the development of this research were the limited online resources regarding recent (2020-2021) reports on environmental policies/gaps/challenges/practices in Cyprus.

Key findings:

In terms of gaps, Cyprus needs to:

- o Set up a more efficient and effective waste management system
- o Improve nature conservation
- o Make more efforts in dealing with water scarcity and over-abstraction.
- o Consider the establishment of more environmental taxations
- o Improve overall environmental governance system

2.2. Background research on the policies in Cyprus

Already existing gaps in Cyprus

According to the Environmental Implementation Review 2019 for Cyprus, despite some progress, Cyprus need to do more for the protection of the environment, particularly in:

- **Policy for Waste management:**

- a) Illegal landfills must close and put in place the necessary infrastructure for an effective waste management system:

Municipal waste is still significantly higher in comparison to 2017 EU average (637 vs around 487 kg/y/inhabitant). Although there has been a decrease in landfilling and a slight increase in recycling and composting in Cyprus, the illegal landfilling rate increased again in 2016. In 2019, the illegal landfills at Kotsiatis and Vati closed down as part of the government's environmental policy to reduce the

uncontrolled disposal of waste in landfills. This was an obligation based on European directives for the management of waste. Cyprus faced fines due to the delay to close the landfills, ordered by the EU in 2013. Although many large landfills have closed, people are still creating 'illegal landfills' in Cyprus, i.e in Filousa, in the Paphos district¹.

Furthermore, Cyprus does not tax landfills or MBT (Mechanical and Biological Treatment), so no economic incentives encourage citizens to recycle. Cyprus must make significant efforts to improve the performance of its waste management system and meet the EU's waste targets, by increasing separate collection and recycling, and putting an end to the illegal landfilling of waste.

Cyprus still faces difficulties in implementing the relevant EU waste policy. This is mainly due to: (i) the lack of infrastructure and equipment for collecting recyclables and diverting biodegradable waste and (ii) lack of coordination at the national level of the administrative system and lack of capacity at the local level. Some measures to address these weaknesses have been introduced, including the implementation of ongoing capacity building training and the establishment of technical assistance programmes for public administration, local authorities, stakeholders and the public.

In general, there has been some progress on developing a national waste management plan, as the strategic framework for waste is been developed, new economic instruments have been set out in the national waste management plan, but there is a significant delay in their adoption and implementation. Only in one Municipality in Cyprus, the pay as you throw scheme has been applied.

According to the Country Review report, Cyprus needs to:

- a) Introduce and increase landfill taxes for eliminating landfilling of recyclable and biodegradable waste.
- b) Improve and extend a separate collection of waste, including bio-waste. Establish minimum service standards for separate collection (e.g. frequency of collections, types of containers, etc.) in municipalities to ensure higher recyclable waste.
- c) Use economic instruments such as 'pay-as-you-throw' scheme, and set mandatory recycling targets for municipalities with fines for non-compliance.
- d) Develop and run support programmes for municipalities to help them implement separate collection policies and increase recycling rates.

- **Policy for Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital (Cyprus' stock of natural resources, such as geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms)**

Regarding the setting up of a coherent network of Natura 2000 sites, Cyprus' terrestrial Natura 2000 network which covers 28.8 % of the national land under the Birds and Habitats Directive is now largely completed. Cyprus has designated 63 Natura 2000 sites, (40 Sites of Community Importance-SCIs under

¹ Illegal landfills creation in Cyprus: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/04/14/illegal-dump-blights-picturesque-reservoir/>

the Habitats Directive and 30 Special Protection Areas-SPAs under the Birds Directive. Despite its size, there are still a number of shortcomings on the terrestrial part of the Natura 2000 network. There are also significant shortages at sea, both for SCIs and SPAs, especially in the offshore marine areas. The six-year period set out in the Habitats Directive to designate the SCIs - Sites of Community Importance as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and establish appropriate conservation objectives and measures have expired for all 40 SCIs. Until July 2018, only 29 SCIs have been designated as SACs.

A major challenge in managing the Natura 2000 areas effectively is protecting them from activities or developments that degrade them, especially the protected areas located within private land. The sound management of these areas is also undermined by the lack of understanding and acceptance of Natura 2000 rules by some local communities and private land owners as a big part of Natura 2000 areas is private land.

Another major challenge is the illegal trapping of wild birds. Although progress has been achieved through controls and fines through the new national legislation approved in July 2017, the trapping numbers still remain unacceptably high.

In November 2019, the European Commission sent a letter of formal notice to Cyprus, required by the government to make the needed actions and correct this 'systemic failure' to protect its Natura 2000 sites. According to the letter, Cyprus, since its accession to the EU, '*failed to ensure that its authorities subject plans or projects to appropriate assessment of their implications on the Natura 2000 sites and/or that it has agreed to plans or projects without having ascertained that they will not adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site concerned*'.

In general:

Despite some progress in regards to Nature 2000 zones and offshore marine areas and tackling illegal bird trapping, challenges still exist on the designation of the terrestrial part of the Natura 2000 network. Moreover, there are significant insufficiencies at sea, especially in the offshore marine areas, where incompatible activities i.e. marine litter caused by shipping or developments that fragment or degrade those areas, remains a problem.

Based on the report, Cyprus needs to:

- a) Complete SCI and SPA designations, especially in offshore marine waters.
- b) Set up a broad awareness raising campaign among target stakeholders (farmers, hunters, tourism sector, private owners, etc.) and the public on Natura 2000 and its benefits.
- c) Eliminate illegal bird trapping by establishing stricter penalties, and monitoring the situation more efficiently, through more effective controls and inspections in restaurants and in trapping fields, enhancing the capacity and means of authorities involved, and increasing the awareness of judges.

- **Policy for improving water management**

The major problem in Cyprus is the over-abstraction of groundwater. Due to the country's warm, Mediterranean climate, Cyprus has limited water resources, resulting in water scarcity. To tackle the issue,

the Cyprus government invests in the desalination and recycling of water. More efforts are needed in order for Cyprus, to deal with water scarcity and over-abstraction.

- **Environmental taxation**

Cyprus could reconsider the implementation of taxes, such as water abstraction tax, and landfill tax.

- **Making cities more sustainable**

Transport emissions are also a major concern, as they are increasing in Cyprus (by 8 % from 2013 to 2016). This is due to the fact that in terms of urban mobility, the majority of the citizens uses cars (81%). The remaining percentage uses buses and trolley buses. As it seems, cars remaining the preferable mean of transport. As a result, traffic congestion is a huge problem in the large cities, especially in Nicosia. Although the buses are safe and low cost, buses are of limited use, especially by Cypriots. Based on the above, there is a need to encourage people to get out of their car and take the bus as cars are a major contributor to environmental pollution, but also in causing thousands of deaths and illnesses every year. By catching the bus instead of driving, citizens will contribute to the reduction of emissions caused by pollution from burning fossil fuels.

- **Overall environmental governance**

According to a World Bank Report strategic planning and environmental policy integration are generally weak in Cyprus and need improvement. It is of crucial importance that environmental information is shared efficiently and effectively towards the public. The participation of the public allows authorities to make decisions based on citizens' concerns. Also, the government need to allow citizens and NGOs to use national courts to protect the environment.

For example, the Environmental Authorities in Cyprus need to:

- Better inform the public about their rights to access justice, notably in relation to air pollution and nature.
- Ensure that there is legal standing for environmental NGOs to bring legal challenges on air pollution and nature before the courts
- Better inform the public about compliance promotion, monitoring and enforcement by (i) ensuring that online information about how to comply with obligations on nitrates and nature is available to Cypriot farmers; (ii) providing online information on inspection plans and reports on inspections; and (iii) making it easier to file environmental complaints.
- Publish information on outcomes of administrative and criminal enforcement actions
- Improve the collection and publication of information about environmental damage.

Best practices in policies related to environmental protection and awareness [Cyprus]

Key findings of Chapter 1:

- ° Cyprus made progress in minimising the creation of waste, pollution and carbon emissions

- The majority of Cypriots are concerned about the negative impact of humans on the environment
- The majority of Cypriot SMEs, has included the implementation of green practices in their operations
- Cyprus made progress with the completion of the Natura 2000 Network.
- Regarding ensuring citizens' health and quality of life, the Cypriot government proceed with the development of an Air Quality Portal.
- Cyprus has assigned the 22.8 % of the ERDF for making cities greener.
- Cypriot municipalities are generally involved in EU urban initiatives on environment protection and climate change.
- A course called Environmental Education–Education for Sustainable Development (E.E.-E.S.D.) was officially included in the curriculum of Cypriot primary schools.

The Environmental Implementation Review 2019 report highlighted the following examples of good practices in Cyprus:

- **Regarding measures towards a circular economy, an economic system based on the principles of reusing, sharing, repairing, refurbishment, remanufacturing and recycling to eliminate waste, pollution and carbon emissions dominate.**
 - a) The number of people employed in the circular economy is above the EU-28 average (1.99 % of total employment in 2016 vs the EU-28 average of 1.73 %).
 - b) According to the 2017 Special Eurobarometer on attitudes of EU citizens towards the environment, 92 % of Cypriot people said they were concerned about the environmental pollution caused by plastic products and the impact of chemicals. Cypriots appear to strongly support circular economy system and environmental protection strategic planning.
 - c) SMEs and resource efficiency: Cypriot SMEs continue to perform above the EU-28 average for the environmental aspects of the small business act. Although fewer companies invest in resource efficiency measures, and the number of SMEs in Cyprus that receive public support to produce green products is one of the lowest in the EU, Cyprus has one of the highest percentages of SMEs that have more than 50% of their revenue comes from the development green products or services. More and more SMEs offer green products and services.
- d) A wide range of national, regional and EU funds help drive **eco-innovation** (any innovation resulting in significant progress towards the goal of sustainable development, by reducing the impacts of our production modes on the environment, enhancing nature's resilience to environmental pressures, or achieving a more efficient and responsible use of natural resources).
 - The Action Plan for the implementation of S3Cy - Smart Specialisation Strategy of Cyprus carried out by the programme "RESTART 2016-2020", allocates 142 million EUR for Research and Innovation in several sectors, such as energy and environment.

-Numerous of projects under the LIFE programme, the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action have been implemented in Cyprus by public administration, local authorities, SMEs, NGOs etc. such as "SmartPV - Smart net metering for promotion and cost-efficient grid-integration of PV technology in Cyprus", "LIFE-FOR BIRDS- Improving lowland forest habitats for Birds in Cyprus", "UrbanProof - Climate Proofing Urban Municipalities", the "Oroklini Project for Restoration and Management of Oroklini Lake Special Protection Area in Larnaca" etc.

-Numerous of projects developed by NGOs, SMEs, Research Centres etc. are also being implemented in Cyprus using EU funds such as Erasmus+, Research and Innovation Foundation Cyprus and others:

1. The ASTROTOURISM, a 36-month long project funded by the Research and Innovation Foundation in Cyprus. Astrotourism's research objective is to initiate a new section in the Cyprus tourism industry by increasing the number, the quality, the expenditure of the tourists and the number of local jobs in the periphery. Within this objective, the project aims to research and create direct and indirect experiences within real, virtual and blended augmented reality environments where the visitor could expand his/her astronomical knowledge in a practical, simple and efficient way. This experience will be an added value tool for Cyprus, where the weather conditions secure clear skies for most of the days and nights.

2. The SEANERGY PROJECT, implemented by CYMEPA, the Center for Research and Research AKTI together with the restaurant chain Ocean Basket. Within the project, partners announced the launch of the action Fishing for Litter, on July 2020 in collaboration with the Association of Fishermen of Paphos. The aim was to inform fishermen, the authorities and the public of Cyprus about the issue of marine litter. The action "Fishing for garbage" is considered by the European Commission as a good practice for reducing marine litter. It started in a port in the Netherlands and today is implemented in over 70 fishing ports throughout Europe.

3. GARDENS OF THE FUTURE initiative, which aims to enable locals become agro-entrepreneurs in the heart of Nicosia, so that the city can become a catalyst for sustainable action. Gardens of the Future is a collective initiative to install the first pilot garden, in the heart of the old city and transform it into a green paradise open to public access, where people gather, co-create, learn and experiment, share stories and experiences together. As a result, the initiative promotes sustainable entrepreneurship and strengthens social cohesion among neighbors and communities.

4. BALANCE: An E+ project which aims to develop and provide SMEs decision-makers with an innovative program, based on ECVET, that will help them transform into greener operations while improving their financial literacy and enhancing their environmental awareness.

5. **SCHOOLS GO GREEN:** An E+ project which aims to provide an upskilling pathway programme for teachers in order to strengthen their profiles in dealing with environmental and green issues, so that they can support young pupils (pre-primary and primary) aged 5-12 years old to explore environmental issues, engage in problem-solving, and take action to improve their community and school environment.

6. **SEALIVE,** a HORIZON 2020 project, which aims at demonstrating innovative circular strategies for bio-based plastics in land and sea applications. The project is driven by economically and technically sustainable business models based on materials with advanced properties, design for circularity techniques and end-of-life solutions. The project establishes a partnership of raw material providers, converters, end-users, recyclers, policy experts, certification organizations and NGOs to demonstrate solutions within a shared vision for circular plastic strategies. Solutions for reusable, recyclable and biodegradable bio-based plastics to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds will be demonstrated in four pilot territories (Cyprus, Ireland, France and Denmark, or Non-European site) and will be applied to 8 end-applications with high potential for pollution reduction of soils and water media: rigid food containers, flexible packaging, agricultural films, fish crates, fishing nets and aquaculture mesh bags.

- **Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital:**

a) Setting up a coherent network of Natura 2000 sites

Cyprus' terrestrial Natura 2000 network under the Birds and Habitats Directive is now considered to be largely complete. Cyprus has used LIFE funds to effectively establish its designated 63 Natura 2000 sites: 40 sites of Community importance (SCIs) under the Habitats Directive and 30 special protection areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive.

b) Invasive alien species: Cyprus has informed the Commission that it is working on a risk assessment for lionfish (*Pterois miles*) pufferfishes *Lagocephalus sceleratus* and *Torquigener flavimaculosus*.

- **Ensuring citizens' health and quality of life**

a) Water quality: According to the European Environment Agency report on European bathing water quality, in 2017, 97.3 % of Cyprus' 113 bathing waters were of excellent quality.

b) Cyprus' revenue from environment-related taxes is above the EU average. Revenues from consumption and environmental tax are high, increasing Cyprus' tax structure and making it more environmentally friendly.

c) On environmental information, the first-rate air quality portal can be used as an example for other environmental areas such as energy, waste management etc.

- **Making cities more sustainable:**

a) Financing greener cities:

Cyprus has assigned EUR 68.25 million or 22.8 % of its allocation under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to sustainable urban development. Furthermore, the country participates in the European Urban Development Network, a network of cities that includes more than 500 EU cities responsible for carrying out integrated practices based on sustainable urban development strategies financed by ERDF in 2014-2020.

b) Participation in EU urban initiatives and networks

Municipalities in Cyprus are generally involved in EU initiatives on environment protection and climate change. Cyprus is involved in the URBACT programme for sustainable urban development. Several Horizon 2020 network projects have also contributed to the sustainability of Cypriot cities. 24 Cypriot cities are involved in the EU Covenant of Mayors' initiative. As of May 2018, eight of them have already implemented their action plans and they, currently, monitoring the results. Another 16 municipalities and communities have at least presented their climate action plan and their commitments to deliver by 2030. In 2017, 8.8 % of the Cypriot population living in cities said that their neighbourhood was affected by pollution, grime or other environmental problems, a lower rate from 9.3 % in 2016.

- **Environmental Education in Cyprus**

From 2011, a course called Environmental Education–Education for Sustainable Development (E.E.-E.S.D.) was officially included in the curriculum for Cypriot primary schools. The authority which is in charge of the course is the Unit for Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD), under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. The Unit aims to monitor the implementation and updating of the National Strategic Planning for Environmental Education, focusing on Sustainable Development, in formal and non-formal education.

Some of the key actions of the EESD Unit are:

- ✓ Management of the (7) Environmental Education Centres in Cyprus
- ✓ Professional development of teachers in matters of teaching and methodology of ESD, in the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs of the United Nations Agenda 2030.
- ✓ Implementation of the Curriculum for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD),
- ✓ Implementation of educational programs for the environment and sustainability in schools and communities,
- ✓ Production of educational material on the SDGs,
- ✓ Promotion of a sustainable school based on a holistic school approach.

- **In terms of waste management,** the first pay-as-you-throw scheme was applied in the Municipality of Aglantzia from January 2021. This “Holistic Waste Management” program, aims to transform waste into valuable raw materials, by increasing the types and amount of waste that can be recycled. At the same time, the fixed, annual waste collection fee charged to every citizen is abolished. a variable new payment method is being introduced, with the amount of

charge to be relative only to the amount of mixed waste that is not diverted to recycling streams.

3.CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FURTHER IMPACT

Based on the findings from the survey and the desktop research, in Cyprus there are many environmental challenges that the government needs to address. As the survey participants reported, the main problems in Cyprus are air pollution (63.3%), garbage on parks, streets, alleys etc. (76.7%), the absence of green spaces (46.7%) and the fact that the tap water in Cyprus is not drinkable (33.3%).

Most of the participants believe that no changes were noted in Cyprus in achieving the 17 SDGs. First of all, the environmental governance needs to design and pilot test most targeted policies and initiatives, i.e.:

- Enforce stricter penalties for environmental offenders (hunting in prohibited area, littering including food waste, cigarette butts, not cleaning up after your dog, etc.)
- Organise awareness raising campaigns addressed to the general public especially for young people for increasing awareness of environmental issues and encouraging sustainable behaviour from an early age.
- Invest more in the waste and water management infrastructure for increasing separate collection and recycling bins, putting an end to the illegal landfilling and invest more in dealing with over-abstraction of groundwater and water scarcity, which are major challenges.
- Make Environmental Education compulsory in primary schools

However, some participants mentioned that some changes were noted:

- in terms of Industry Innovation and gender equality to a very small extent though
- in terms of affordable and clean energy
- in terms of efforts made by local authorities in various cities to turn the cities into smart cities, which is expected to have a positive impact on the environment

The consortium will make every effort in providing the needed material to youth workers and increasing their capacity in educating young people on environmental issues and inspiring them in having a positive impact in their communities as active environmental agents.