

# IncludeYOU

## Youth and the Environment



Project No: 2023-3-EL02-KA154-YOU-000184071

[www.includeyou.eu](http://www.includeyou.eu)

[www.fifty-fifty.gr](http://www.fifty-fifty.gr)



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# INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges, particularly climate change, represent one of the greatest threats to humanity. Youth across Europe are increasingly stepping up as leaders, innovators, and activists in the fight for a sustainable future. In this module, we will look at:

1. Climate change and youth activism in Europe.
2. Sustainable lifestyles and community initiatives.
3. Youth engagement in shaping the EU Green Deal.

## CLIMATE CHANGE: A GLOBAL CRISIS

Climate change is no longer a distant threat. Europe faces rising temperatures, biodiversity loss, extreme weather events, and energy insecurity. These changes affect jobs, health, migration, and future opportunities for young people. Youth recognize that they will live longest with the consequences, making their voices crucial in shaping environmental responses.



## THE RISE OF YOUTH ACTIVISM

In recent years, young people have become the most visible faces of climate activism. Movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion Youth mobilized millions across Europe. Their message is clear: governments must act with urgency. Activism empowers youth, builds solidarity, and pressures institutions to adopt ambitious climate targets.





## YOUTH ACTIVISM IN EUROPE

- **Fridays for Future (FFF):** Began in Sweden, now present in nearly every EU country.
- **Youth for Climate:** National movements demanding stronger climate laws.
- **European Youth Forum's Green Agenda:** Structured dialogue with EU policymakers.

These movements illustrate how grassroots activism can shape mainstream political debate and push climate issues to the top of the EU agenda.

# BEYOND PROTESTS: CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVISM

Youth activism is not only about demonstrations. Young people also engage in:

- Policy consultations at EU and local levels.
- Climate assemblies and citizens' panels.
- Innovative projects on renewable energy, zero waste, and circular economy.

This constructive engagement shows that youth can both challenge and co-create solutions.



## YOUTH AND CLIMATE ANXIETY

While activism is empowering, climate change also generates eco-anxiety among youth. Surveys show that many young Europeans feel worried or powerless about the future. Addressing this requires creating participatory opportunities where their voices lead to tangible change, reducing frustration and building hope.



## EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Schools and universities play a critical role in preparing youth for environmental challenges. Environmental education, integrated into curricula, provides knowledge about ecosystems, climate science, and sustainable practices. Partnerships with NGOs and local governments expand learning into practical actions, from school recycling programs to renewable energy projects.



# SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

Sustainability starts with daily choices. Young people are embracing:

- Low-carbon transport: cycling, public transport, electric mobility.
- Sustainable diets: reducing meat, promoting local and plant-based food.
- Circular consumption: upcycling, second-hand fashion, and waste reduction.

Youth-led consumer behavior shifts markets and demonstrates that sustainable living is both possible and desirable.



## COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

Local communities are powerful drivers of sustainability. Examples include:

- Urban gardens that reconnect citizens with food systems.
- Youth cooperatives promoting renewable energy and zero-waste shops.
- Local clean-up campaigns and biodiversity restoration projects.

These initiatives create solidarity, teach practical skills, and deliver visible environmental impact at the community level.

# GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Young Europeans are also turning sustainability into business opportunities.

Startups led by youth are focusing on:

- Green technologies.
- Sustainable fashion.
- Eco-tourism.
- Social enterprises reducing waste and emissions.

By merging innovation with environmental values, youth entrepreneurs contribute to Europe's green transition.



## EU POLICY FRAMEWORK

The European Green Deal (2019) is the EU's roadmap for becoming climate-neutral by 2050. It covers:

- Clean energy transition.
- Sustainable mobility.
- Biodiversity protection.
- Circular economy and zero pollution.

Youth are not passive observers of this agenda; they are essential partners in shaping and monitoring its progress.



## YOUTH AND THE GREEN DEAL

Youth organizations have actively influenced the Green Deal. Through consultations, petitions, and structured dialogues, they have:

- Demanded stronger emission reduction targets.
- Advocated for climate justice and social fairness.
- Proposed green job programs for young workers.

Their participation ensures the Green Deal reflects not only institutional priorities but also the voices of future generations.



# EU YOUTH DIALOGUE AND CLIMATE

The EU Youth Dialogue process provides platforms for structured discussions between youth and policymakers. Recent cycles have focused on sustainability and climate action. Youth delegates contribute directly to Council recommendations, ensuring that the environmental dimension is central to EU youth policy.



# YOUTH IN POLICY-MAKING

Examples of youth engagement include:

- The Conference on the Future of Europe, where youth demanded stronger climate action.
- Youth Climate Councils established in several EU states.
- Representation in UNFCCC COP summits as EU youth delegates.
- Such mechanisms transform activism into concrete influence on policies.

## CHALLENGES IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Despite progress, challenges remain:

- Limited resources for youth organizations.
- Difficulty accessing decision-making spaces.
- Risk of tokenism, where youth voices are heard but not acted upon.

Overcoming these requires commitment from EU institutions to make youth participation meaningful, continuous, and well-resourced.

## CASE STUDY: ERASMUS+ PROJECTS

Through Erasmus+ Youth Participation Activities, projects like IncludeYOU also integrate environmental themes. They bring together youth councils, NGOs, and policymakers to discuss green policies, sustainable lifestyles, and youth's role in the Green Deal. Such initiatives show how education, empowerment, and sustainability can be linked across Europe.



## EXPECTED IMPACTS

Youth engagement in environmental action leads to:

- Stronger democratic legitimacy for climate policies.
- Increased innovation in sustainable solutions.
- Greater public awareness of climate issues.
- Empowered young leaders who influence both local and European agendas.



## LONG-TERM BENEFITS

A generation of environmentally conscious youth ensures:

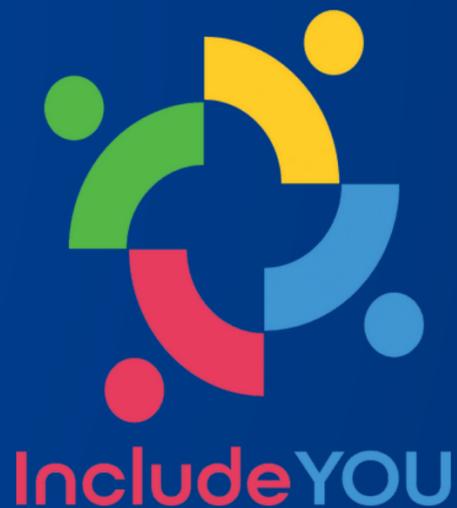
- A sustainable and climate-neutral Europe.
- A shift towards green economies and jobs.
- Communities resilient to environmental change.
- A culture where sustainability becomes the norm rather than the exception.



# CONCLUSION

Youth are not only victims of climate change but also leaders of solutions. Through activism, sustainable lifestyles, and participation in EU policymaking, they are reshaping Europe's environmental future. By empowering youth to engage meaningfully with the Green Deal, Europe takes a decisive step towards a fairer, greener, and more sustainable society.





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