YOUTH4 GREEN

TOOLKIT

Youth4Green: Digital Leaders for a Sustainable Europe

Our aim is to strengthen youth workers with new knowledge and skills on the European Green Deal, encourage them to take practical steps in their communities, and support them in guiding young people towards a more sustainable future.

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Erasmus+ Framework

How this project happened?

The Erasmus+ Programme is the European Union's flagship initiative for education, training, youth, and sport. It empowers young people and youth workers to strengthen their skills, cultural understanding, and civic engagement while promoting inclusion and sustainability across Europe.

"Youth4Green: Digital Leaders for a Sustainable Europe" was implemented under Key Action 1: Mobility of Youth Workers (KA153-YOU).
The project aimed to foster environmental education, digital literacy, and civic participation among youth leaders through non-formal learning and intercultural exchange.

Supported by the Turkish National Agency, the project gathered 40 youth workers from six countries to co-create sustainable social campaigns and share innovative practices that align with the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As part of the project, one of the outcomes was this toolkit that was created by participants.

01. **Coordinated by:**
ANKA GLOBAL (Türkiye)

02. **In partnership with:**
- BRAVO (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- TUDOKIS (Hungary)
- TTB (Norway)
- Asociația Tinerii 3D (Romania)
- SIEYG (Azerbaijan)

03. **Location:**
Silivri, Istanbul, Türkiye

04. **Dates:**
19–26 September 2025

Acknowledgements

This Toolkit was developed through the collaborative efforts of youth leaders, trainers, facilitators, and partner organizations from six European countries.

We express our sincere gratitude to:

- The European Commission and Turkish National Agency for funding and guidance.
- The trainer and facilitators for their dedication in designing inclusive and experiential learning sessions.
- The participants for their energy, creativity, and genuine commitment to sustainability.
- The partner organizations, whose expertise and passion ensured the project's success

Consortium:

ANKA GLOBAL	Türkiye	Coordinator
BRAVO	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Partner
TUDOKIS	Hungary	Partner
TTB	Norway	Partner
Asociația Tinerii 3D	Romania	Partner
SIEYG	Azerbaijan	Partner

Notes:

"Youth4Green represents the next generation of leaders shaping Europe's sustainable future where digital creativity meets environmental responsibility." - **Project Coordinator, ANKA GLOBAL**

03

Executive Summary

Youth4Green is more than a project - it's a journey of collective learning, intercultural dialogue, and digital empowerment for sustainability.

Through workshops, discussions, cultural activities, and practical campaigns, participants explored how to:

- Transform the European Green Deal into actionable local youth projects.
- Use digital tools for environmental advocacy and storytelling.
- Build cross-border partnerships that promote sustainable lifestyles.

Over seven days in Istanbul, youth workers learned, experimented, and implemented strategies for climate action, circular economy, and social innovation.

The outcomes include:

◆ **Social Campaigns**

6 national social campaigns addressing local sustainability issues. These camapigns will be implemented in all partner countries and other EU countries.

◆ **Trained Youth**

40 youth trained in green leadership and digital communication. These youth were trained by expert and professionals for the best project results.

◆ **Beneficiaries**

Over 1,000 indirect beneficiaries were reached through dissemination and local events. In the next 6 months we are expecting that we will reach over 100 000 beneficiaries.

> "Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind."
> - Samuel Ullman

Why This Toolkit?

This Toolkit serves as both a learning resource and a practical guide for educators, youth workers, and NGOs who wish to replicate or adapt the Youth4Green model in their own contexts.

It combines theory, practice, and inspiration - presenting:

- Pedagogical frameworks (GreenComp, DigComp, NFE)
- Detailed session outlines and facilitation notes
- Campaign blueprints and tools for local adaptation
- Participant stories that illustrate impact

The Toolkit follows a holistic logic - from awareness (understanding sustainability) to activation (engaging others) and action (leading change).

At its heart lies the belief that every young person can become a digital green leader - influencing communities through creativity, empathy, and critical thinking.

The European Green Deal and Youth Engagement

Youth are recognized as key drivers of the Green Transition, contributing to awareness, policy input, and innovation.

The Youth4Green project aligns with the following EU Green Deal priorities:

- Clean Energy for All Europeans
- Sustainable Mobility and Smart Cities
- Circular Economy and Waste Reduction
- From Farm to Fork Strategy
- Preserving Biodiversity

Youth4Green builds bridges between policy and practice - translating EU ambitions into community action.

05 Competence Frameworks

The Toolkit is grounded in two major European frameworks:

GreenComp – The European Sustainability Competence Framework

Developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, GreenComp identifies 12 key competences under four dimensions:

1. Embodying Sustainability Values – Responsibility, empathy, integrity

2. Embracing Complexity – Systems thinking, critical reflection

3. Envisioning Sustainable Futures – Futures literacy, strategic thinking

4. Acting for Sustainability – Action competence, collaboration, and problem-solving

DigComp 2.2 – Digital Competence Framework

To ensure digital readiness, the project also applied DigComp elements:

1. Digital communication and collaboration　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　-

2. Information literacy and data awareness

3. Digital content creation and ethical use of media

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

Aligned with the Council Recommendation (2018), the project focused on developing the following lifelong competences:

1. Multilingual competence through intercultural teamwork

2. Civic competence via youth-led community initiatives

3. Digital competence through social media campaigning

4. Personal, social, and learning competence through reflection and Youthpass

5. Cultural awareness and expression through intercultural nights and storytelling

Non-Formal Education (NFE) Approach

The Youth4Green learning process relied on non-formal education methods that make participants active creators of knowledge. Using the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle, sessions were structured around:

- **Experience** – interactive exercises, simulations, fieldwork

- **Reflection** – group discussions, journaling

- **Conceptualization** – connecting learning to EU policies

- **Application** – designing campaigns and actions

Methods Applied:
- *Group work and peer learning*
- *Simulations and role-play (e.g., UN Climate Simulation)*
- *Visual thinking and gamification*
- *Field interviews and storytelling*
- *Debrief and self-assessment*

MAIN PROJECT TOPICS

Global Warming and Climate Change

Global warming is the long-term rise in Earth's average surface temperature driven by human-emitted greenhouse gases (GHGs). Climate change is the broader set of shifts this causes—heatwaves, changing rainfall, sea-level rise, glacier/ice loss, and ecosystem impacts. The IPCC states the human cause is "unequivocal.

How much warming so far?

- Earth has warmed ~1.1 °C (2011–2020 average) above 1850–1900 pre-industrial levels.
- 2023 was the warmest year on record, at ~1.45 °C ±0.12 °C above pre-industrial. (Nine warmest years were 2015–2023.)

Why this matters: Every tenth of a degree sharply increases risks of extreme heat, crop losses, and coastal flooding, according to the IPCC synthesis.

What's driving it?

Rising greenhouse gases
- CO_2: Mauna Loa records show CO_2 at >423 ppm in 2024, continuing the Keeling Curve's rise.
- Emissions trend: The Global Carbon Budget (2024) projects fossil CO_2 at ~37.4 $GtCO_2$, a new record, with total CO_2 (incl. land-use change) ~41.6 $GtCO_2$. No sign of a peak.

Where emissions come from
- IPCC & Our World in Data show major sources include energy supply, industry, transport, buildings, and AFOLU (agriculture, forestry, land use). Industry alone is ~34% when counting indirect power/heat.

How we know it's changing (observations)
- **Temperature:** Record-high global surface and ocean temperatures in 2023.
- **Sea level:** Satellite altimetry shows acceleration, ~2.1 mm/yr (1993) to ~4.5 mm/yr by 2024; NASA notes a step-up from 2022→2023.
- **Extremes:** Increasing frequency/intensity of heatwaves, heavy rainfall, drought, and extreme fire weather reported in 2023.

Impacts at a glance (evidence-based)
- **Water and food security:** Heat and rainfall extremes disrupt harvests; marine heatwaves damage fisheries. (IPCC synthesis findings.)
- **Coasts & cities**: Rising seas + storm surge raise flooding risk for low-lying urban areas (trend accelerating).
- **Ecosystems:** Glacier and ice-sheet loss, biodiversity stress, wildfire seasons intensifying

The carbon budget (how much "room" is left)

IPCC indicates the remaining 1.5 °C budget is small and rapidly shrinking; recent assessments warn at current emissions, the budget could be exhausted within a few years without rapid cuts.

Solutions (mitigation levers with co-benefits)
- **Power:** Replace coal/oil with renewables + storage; accelerate grids and efficiency.
- **Transport:** Electrify vehicles, shift to public/active mobility, logistics efficiency.
- **Buildings:** Insulation, heat pumps, efficient cooling, smart controls.
- **Industry:** Electrification, efficiency, material circularity; for hard-to-abate, emerging hydrogen/CCUS; demand-side material efficiency.
- **Land (AFOLU):** Protect forests/peatlands, climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry, restoration. Large co-benefits but manage trade-offs carefully.

Adaptation (living with the change already "baked in")
- Heat-ready cities (cool roofs, shade trees, early warnings), flood management (nature-based solutions), drought resilience (efficient irrigation), health systems for heat/smoke events. (IPCC AR6 Synthesis.)

Why this chapter matters for Youth4Green

- It frames your campaign blueprints (water saving, local food, circular economy, plastics reduction) with hard numbers and current science.
- Use these statistics on your infographic pages and session intros to set context, then connect to local actions and SDGs (4.7, 11.6, 12.5, 13.3, 17.17).

Quick stat box:
- +1.45 °C: 2023 global temperature above pre-industrial.
- >423 ppm: CO_2 concentration (2024).
- ~37.4 $GtCO_2$: projected fossil CO_2 in 2024 (record high).
- Sea level rise: rate ~4.5 mm/yr (2024), doubled since 1993.

Sources:
- *https://podaac.jpl.nasa.gov/*
- *https://wmo.int/*
- *https://www.ipcc.ch/*

Environmental Pollution — Problems and Solutions

Environmental pollution refers to the contamination of the natural environment by substances or energy that cause harm to ecosystems, human health, or the climate. It occurs when waste, chemicals, or noise exceed nature's capacity to absorb and neutralize them.

Pollution can affect air, water, soil, and the biosphere, leading to degraded ecosystems and rising global health and economic costs.

According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP, 2024):
"More than 9 million premature deaths each year are linked to environmental pollution, making it the world's largest environmental health risk."

Major Types of Pollution

Type	Description	Main Sources	Global Impact
Air Pollution	Presence of harmful gases and particulate matter (PM2.5, NO_2, O_3) in the atmosphere.	Fossil fuel combustion, transport, agriculture, industry.	Causes ~6.7 million deaths annually (WHO 2023); contributes to global warming.
Water Pollution	Contamination of rivers, oceans, and groundwater by chemicals or waste.	Industrial effluents, plastics, agriculture runoff.	80% of global wastewater discharged untreated (UNESCO 2023).
Soil Pollution	Accumulation of pesticides, heavy metals, plastics, and waste in soil.	Agriculture, landfills, mining.	Threatens 30% of global arable land (FAO 2023).
Noise Pollution	Excessive or harmful levels of noise in urban areas.	Transport, construction, industry.	Affects sleep, stress, and mental health.
Plastic Pollution	Waste accumulation of single-use plastics in land and oceans.	Packaging, textiles, fishing gear.	8–12 million tonnes enter oceans yearly (UNEP 2024).

Key Global Statistics (2024–2025)

- **Air quality:** Over 90% of the world's population breathes air exceeding WHO safety limits.
- **Oceans:** The Great Pacific Garbage Patch now covers 1.6 million km², twice the size of Türkiye.
- **Plastics:** Global plastic production surpassed 400 million tonnes per year, with only 9% recycled.
- **Greenhouse gases:** CO_2 concentration reached 423 ppm (highest in 800,000 years).
- **Economic loss:** Pollution costs amount to >6% of global GDP annually through health, agriculture, and ecosystem loss (World Bank 2024).

Pollution and Climate Change – The Connection

Climate change and pollution are deeply interconnected:
- Fossil fuel combustion emits both CO_2 and air pollutants like particulate matter and sulfur dioxide.
- Black carbon (soot) from incomplete burning accelerates Arctic ice melt.
- Industrial agriculture emits methane and nitrous oxide while polluting soil and water.

The same sectors causing pollution are responsible for three-quarters of global GHG emissions (IPCC 2023).

The Situation in Europe

Europe has made significant progress, yet challenges persist:

- **Air quality:** The European Environment Agency (EEA, 2024) reports 253,000 premature deaths annually from fine particulate pollution (PM2.5).
- **Water:** 60% of Europe's rivers and lakes are not in good ecological status.
- **Waste:** Each EU citizen generates ~530 kg of municipal waste per year, though recycling rates have improved to 48% (Eurostat 2024).
- **Marine litter:** 75% of beach litter is plastic, mostly packaging and bottles.

EU policies like the Zero Pollution Action Plan (2021–2030) aim to cut air, water, and soil pollution to levels "no longer harmful to human health and natural ecosystems."

Causes of Environmental Pollution

Sector	Example Pollutants	Contribution to Pollution
Energy & Industry	CO_2, SO_2, NO_x, particulate matter	~60% of air pollution & major GHG source
Transport	Vehicle exhaust, tire dust, noise	25% of EU GHG emissions
Agriculture	Pesticides, fertilizers, methane	92% of EU ammonia emissions
Waste Management	Landfill leachate, incineration gases	12% of total pollution sources
Urbanization	Noise, heat, light, construction dust	Major local-level pollution factor

Health and Social Consequences

- **Respiratory Diseases**: Air pollution increases asthma, COPD, and lung cancer cases.
- **Cardiovascular Problems:** PM2.5 linked to strokes and heart disease.
- **Neurological Impacts:** Studies associate long-term exposure to pollutants with cognitive decline.
- **Inequality:** Low-income communities face higher exposure and fewer resources for adaptation - an environmental justice issue.

According to the Lancet Planetary Health (2023), pollution-related mortality is highest in low- and middle-income countries, accounting for 92% of total pollution deaths.

Sustainable Solutions and Best Practices

Approach	Examples	Impact
Clean Energy Transition	Shift to renewables, phase-out coal, improve efficiency	Cuts emissions and air pollutants simultaneously
Circular Economy	Recycling, eco-design, product reuse	Reduces waste and raw material extraction
Green Transport	Public transport, e-mobility, cycling infrastructure	Cuts air and noise pollution
Nature-Based Solutions	Urban forests, wetlands restoration	Filters air/water naturally, improves biodiversity
Legislation & Enforcement	EU Zero Pollution Action Plan, Basel Convention	Establishes legal accountability and standards
Youth and Community Action	Clean-up drives, awareness campaigns	Promotes ownership and behavioral change

The Role of Innovation and Technology

New technologies can help monitor and mitigate pollution:
- IoT sensors detect air and water quality in real time.
- AI and satellite imaging track deforestation, urban heat, and waste flows.
- Green chemistry develops biodegradable materials and cleaner processes.
- Blockchain can trace supply chains to ensure sustainable production.

Youth4Green's digital literacy approach can integrate these technologies into green campaigning and community monitoring.

Youth4Green and the Fight Against Pollution

Youth4Green integrates the above solutions through its 6-country campaigns:

- **Türkiye:** *Water conservation through* **#5MinutesForIstanbul**
- **Norway:** *Anti-plastic awareness via* **#RentFjord** *clean-ups*
- **Romania:** *Circular economy through upcycling drives*
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**: *Urban greening and air quality improvement*
- **Hungary:** *Local food and biodiversity protection*
- **Azerbaijan:** *Renewable energy education in schools*

Through these actions, the project contributes directly to:

- SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities)
- SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production)
- SDG 13 (Climate Action)
- SDG 15 (Life on Land)

Key Data Summary Box

Indicator	Global	Europe	Youth4Green Relevance
Premature deaths from pollution	9 million/year	253,000/year	Awareness-raising and advocacy
Plastic waste entering oceans	8–12 Mt/year	2–3 Mt/year	Plastic-free campaigns
Global CO_2 emissions	41.6 Gt (2024)	3.5 Gt	Renewable energy, mobility
Municipal waste per capita	750 kg	530 kg	Circular economy campaigns

To make clear reflection and open discussion, we were working with participants on the next questions:

1. *What forms of pollution do you notice in your own city or school?*
2. *How can small daily changes reduce your carbon and pollution footprint?*
3. *Which sectors (energy, food, waste, transport) are most polluting locally, and what can be done?*
4. *How can youth organizations use digital tools to monitor and report pollution?*

The European Green Deal and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Introduction - A Global and European Vision for Transformation

In the 21st century, humanity faces a dual challenge: ensuring prosperity for a growing global population while safeguarding the planet's ecosystems. The past 200 years of industrialization have produced unprecedented technological progress but also unprecedented environmental degradation. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion now threaten the stability of societies and the sustainability of our economies.

In response to these global challenges, two transformative policy frameworks have emerged: the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, and the European Green Deal, launched in 2019. Together, they represent a roadmap for a new social contract between people, economy, and nature, ensuring that progress in one area does not come at the expense of another.

The European Green Deal - A Roadmap for a Climate-Neutral Europe

What is the European Green Deal?
The European Green Deal (EGD) is the European Union's strategic plan to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

It is not a single law but a comprehensive policy framework that integrates climate, energy, industry, agriculture, biodiversity, and finance under one unifying goal: achieving sustainable prosperity within the planet's ecological boundaries.

Launched by the European Commission in December 2019, the Green Deal aligns all EU policies with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It introduces a "systemic change" approach, transforming every sector of the economy while ensuring that the transition is just and inclusive, leaving no person or region behind.

Key Targets of the European Green Deal

1. **Climate Neutrality by 2050:** Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.
2. **Emission Reduction by 2030:** At least 55% lower than 1990 levels (the "Fit for 55" package).
3. **Circular Economy Transition:** Shifting from linear "take-make-waste" models to closed-loop systems.
4. **Zero Pollution Ambition:** Reducing air, water, and soil pollution to non-harmful levels by 2030.
5. **Biodiversity Restoration:** Protecting at least 30% of EU land and sea areas.
6. **Sustainable Mobility:** Electrifying transport and promoting public, shared, and active mobility.
7. **Green Energy Transition:** Increasing renewable energy share to over 42.5% by 2030 (new 2024 Directive).

The Logic of Transformation - From Growth to Regeneration

IThe Green Deal represents a paradigm shift from the old economic model of unlimited growth based on resource extraction, to one based on regeneration, circularity, and resilience.
Its vision is often summarized as "Decoupling growth from resource use."
The guiding principle is that economic success must reinforce environmental and social well-being, not undermine it.

For example:
- *Renewable energy and energy efficiency create new jobs while reducing emissions.*
- *Circular economy industries (repair, reuse, recycling) reduce waste and stimulate local economies.*
- *Biodiversity protection ensures ecosystem services, clean water, pollination, soil fertility essential for agriculture and health.*

This transformation requires cooperation across all levels of society: governments, businesses, cities, research institutions, and most importantly, citizens and youth.

"The Green Deal is not only an environmental policy, it is a new growth strategy for Europe."
- Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, 2020

Education, Youth, and the Green Deal

Education is central to the success of the Green Deal. The European Commission emphasizes the role of schools, NGOs, and youth organizations in shaping environmental awareness and green skills.

The Education for Climate Coalition (2021) and the European Sustainability Competence Framework (GreenComp) were launched to integrate sustainability values into lifelong learning. These initiatives promote the development of:

- **Knowledge:** Understanding complex environmental systems.
- **Skills:** Critical thinking, systems thinking, and problem-solving.
- **Values:** Empathy, justice, and responsibility for current and future generations.
- **Action:** Capacity to design, implement, and evaluate sustainable solutions.

Youth programs like Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, and Youth4Green play a direct role in translating Green Deal principles into everyday action. By combining mobility, intercultural learning, and digital tools, young people can co-create sustainable solutions and influence local policy.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - A Universal Agenda

The Birth of the SDGs

In 2015, all 193 United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a comprehensive framework of 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals replaced the Millennium Development Goals and expanded the focus from poverty reduction to a holistic vision of prosperity, peace, and planet.
The SDGs address global priorities ranging from poverty and health to climate, energy, gender equality, and justice.

They apply to all countries - developed and developing - and emphasize partnership and shared responsibility.

The 17 Goals Explained

IBelow is a short theoretical overview of each goal, highlighting its connection to environmental sustainability and Youth4Green's themes:

1. **No Poverty (SDG 1):** Eliminating poverty in all its forms by ensuring access to resources, social protection, and decent work.
2. **Zero Hunger (SDG 2):** Ending hunger through sustainable agriculture and resilient food systems.
3. **Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3)**: Reducing pollution-related health risks and improving environmental determinants of health.
4. **Quality Education (SDG 4):** Promoting inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning, critical for climate literacy.
5. **Gender Equality (SDG 5):** Empowering women in environmental leadership and green innovation.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6):** Ensuring sustainable water use, treatment, and ecosystem protection.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7):** Expanding renewable energy and efficiency central to climate mitigation.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8):** Promoting green jobs and sustainable tourism.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9):** Developing resilient infrastructure and eco-innovation.
10. **Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)**: Ensuring fair transitions and access to opportunities in the green economy.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)**: Creating green urban spaces, clean transport, and affordable housing.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)**: Minimizing waste, pollution, and overconsumption through circular models.
13. **Climate Action (SDG 13):** Strengthening resilience and education on climate change.
14. **Life Below Water (SDG 14):** Reducing marine pollution and protecting ocean ecosystems.
15. **Life on Land (SDG 15):** Restoring forests, combating desertification, and conserving biodiversity.
16. **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16):** Promoting good governance and environmental justice.
17. **Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17)**: Mobilizing global partnerships and financing for sustainable development.

Linking the Green Deal to the SDGs

Green Deal Area	Related SDGs
Climate neutrality & clean energy	7, 13
Circular economy & waste reduction	8, 9, 12
Farm to Fork Strategy	2, 3, 12, 15
Biodiversity Strategy	14, 15
Zero Pollution Action Plan	3, 6, 11, 12
Sustainable Mobility	9, 11, 13
Just Transition & Green Finance	8, 10, 17

Challenges and Opportunities for Europe and Youth

Europe is globally recognized as a leader in sustainable policy, yet implementation remains complex.

Challenges include:
- Dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- Social inequalities in access to green jobs and technologies.
- Slow transitions in agriculture and transport sectors.
- Need for large-scale behavioral change at individual and institutional levels.

However, these challenges also represent unprecedented opportunities for youth engagement.

The shift to a low-carbon economy will create an estimated 1 million new green jobs by 2030 (European Commission, 2024). Fields like renewable energy, circular economy, eco-design, data analysis, and digital communication will define future employability.

Youth organizations, therefore, are key agents of the just and digital green transition - acting as educators, innovators, and advocates.

Youth4Green and the European Green Deal in Practice

Through its educational design and campaigns, Youth4Green translates high-level policy into tangible local action:

- **Türkiye:** Water conservation directly supports SDG 6 and SDG 13.
- **Romania**: Circular economy upcycling aligns with SDG 12.
- **Hungary**: Sustainable food systems reinforce SDG 2 and SDG 15.
- **Norway:** Plastic reduction and ocean stewardship promote SDG 14.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Urban greening supports SDG 11.
- **Azerbaijan:** Renewable energy education contributes to SDG 7.

By merging environmental education with digital literacy, Youth4Green operationalizes SDG 4.7, which calls for all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development.

Conclusion - From Policy to Action

The European Green Deal and the UN SDGs provide a shared moral and strategic compass for the global sustainability transition. They remind us that every decision, personal, political, or economic, affects the planet's health and humanity's future.

The Youth4Green project stands as a microcosm of this vision: a practical demonstration that education, creativity, and youth participation can turn abstract goals into concrete actions.

"The future of Europe's Green Deal lies in the hands of its young citizens. Their knowledge, passion, and innovation are the true engines of change." - European Commission, Education for Climate Coalition, 2023

Model United Nations (MUN) Simulation on Environmental Pollution

The Model United Nations (MUN) Simulation on Environmental Pollution is one of the flagship experiential learning activities of the Youth4Green – Digital Leaders for a Sustainable Europe project.

This session places participants in the roles of global policymakers, diplomats, and civil society actors who must negotiate solutions to complex environmental challenges focusing particularly on air, water, and plastic pollution and their relationship to climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By recreating the structure and dynamics of a real UN assembly, the MUN helps participants understand how international environmental governance works, and why it is both essential and difficult to achieve global consensus on ecological issues.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the simulation, participants will be able to:

- Understand how multilateral environmental negotiations are conducted within the United Nations framework (UNEP, UNFCCC, and COP processes).
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills by representing their assigned country's position and interests.
- Identify links between environmental pollution, climate policy, and sustainable development.
- Experience firsthand the complexity of global decision-making, including trade-offs, alliances, and compromises.
- Strengthen their understanding of the European Green Deal, Paris Agreement, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) through debate and policy design.

Theoretical Background

The activity is based on the principles of simulation-based learning and non-formal education, which foster learning through experience, reflection, and application.

MUNs are widely used in international education to develop:

- Civic and global competence, aligned with the EU's Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.
- Action competence for sustainability, a key dimension of the GreenComp Framework (JRC, 2022).
- Collaborative problem-solving and negotiation skills, which are essential for sustainable governance.

In the context of Youth4Green, the MUN acts as a bridge between theory and practice - linking earlier sessions on climate change and pollution with policy action and international cooperation.

Structure of the Session

Phase	Description	Duration
1. Preparation and Role Assignment	Participants are divided into country delegations (2–3 persons each). Each delegation receives a country brief containing data on environmental challenges, GDP, energy mix, and pollution levels. Roles include delegates, media representatives, and the Secretary-General.	60 minutes
2. Opening Session	The Secretary-General introduces the theme: *"Global Action Against Environmental Pollution and its Impact on Climate Change."* Each delegation gives a 1–2 minute opening statement outlining their country's position.	45 minutes
3. Committee Debate	Delegations discuss the root causes of pollution and propose solutions. Countries may form alliances (e.g., EU bloc, developing nations). A moderator ensures fair discussion and timekeeping.	90 minutes
4. Draft Resolution Writing	Working groups prepare clauses for a joint resolution. Each clause must address prevention, adaptation, or cooperation mechanisms (e.g., funding, technology transfer).	60 minutes
5. Voting and Resolution Adoption	The committee votes on each clause and the final resolution. The goal is to adopt a shared framework to combat pollution globally.	30 minutes
6. Reflection and Debrief	Participants discuss what they learned about environmental diplomacy, compromise, and leadership. Facilitators link the exercise back to SDGs and the European Green Deal.	45 minutes

Example Resolution Topics

Participants may focus their draft resolutions on:

- Reducing plastic pollution through global bans or deposit systems.
- Creating an international fund for clean air and water technologies.
- Enhancing data sharing and monitoring of pollutant emissions.
- Supporting developing countries in waste management infrastructure.
- Integrating environmental education into all national curricula.

The facilitator encourages balance between ambition and realism, guiding delegates toward consensus.

Materials and Resources
- Country briefing sheets with environmental and economic data (based on UNEP, World Bank, and UNFCCC reports).
- Role cards (delegates, media, Secretary-General, moderator).
- Conference-style nameplates, microphones, and flags.
- Template for the Draft Resolution on Environmental Pollution.
- Timer and gavel for session management.
- Optional: digital collaboration tool (Google Docs or Miro) for writing clauses collectively.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Cognitive Outcomes
- Knowledge of international environmental policy mechanisms.
- Understanding of the interconnectedness of pollution, energy, and climate systems.

Social and Emotional Outcomes
- Empathy for multiple perspectives (developed vs. developing countries).
- Conflict resolution and negotiation confidence.
- Experience in leadership and public speaking.

Behavioral Outcomes
- Motivation to engage in advocacy or volunteering for environmental causes.
- Ability to translate global problems into local youth actions (e.g., campaigns, policy proposals).

Debriefing and Reflection Questions

At the end of the simulation, facilitators guide participants through reflective dialogue such as:
1. Which arguments were most convincing in your debate, and why?
2. What compromises were necessary to reach a common resolution?
3. How did your country's interests shape your negotiation strategy?
4. What parallels do you see between this simulation and real-world UN or EU environmental policies?
5. How can you apply what you learned to local environmental challenges in your community?

These reflections reinforce critical thinking, empathy, and systems understanding - the hallmarks of sustainability competence.

PUBLIC AWARENESS METHODS

Communicating the Green Deal

The European Green Deal is not only a legislative and economic transformation—it is, above all, a cultural and behavioral transformation.

For this transition to succeed, it requires citizens who are informed, motivated, and empowered to act on climate and sustainability goals in their everyday lives.

The European Commission has repeatedly emphasized that "no policy can succeed without people's participation." Awareness is therefore not a secondary communication activity—it is a strategic pillar of environmental governance.

Public awareness methods are the bridge between complex scientific and policy information and everyday citizen understanding. They translate the Green Deal's ambitious goals - such as climate neutrality, zero pollution, and circular economy - into concrete, relatable messages that inspire behavioral change and collective action.

In the **Youth4Green** project, public awareness methods are used as educational tools, communication strategies, and instruments of civic engagement. They transform young participants from passive recipients of information into active multipliers and community influencers.

Theoretical Background: From Information to Transformation

Raising public awareness is more than disseminating facts—it involves changing attitudes, values, and behaviors.

According to the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2023), successful environmental communication follows a "4C Model":

Comprehension → Connection → Commitment → Change.

1. **Comprehension:** People must first understand the issue (knowledge building).
2. **Connection:** They need to see how it affects them personally or their community.
3. **Commitment:** Awareness must trigger emotional engagement or responsibility.
4. **Change:** Knowledge and emotion together lead to sustained behavioral action.

> ❝
>
> "People protect what they love, and they love what they understand."
>
> Jacques-Yves Cousteau

This framework builds on theories from environmental psychology, social marketing, and non-formal education. Campaigns that connect emotionally, visually, and socially are far more effective than those based solely on scientific information.

Awareness as an EU Priority under the Green Deal

The European Green Deal explicitly recognizes the role of communication, participation, and education in building the social mandate for transformation.

Several EU-level strategies embed awareness as a core objective:

- **European Climate Pact (2020)** – invites citizens and organizations to pledge climate actions and share stories.
- **Zero Pollution Action Plan (2021)** – includes citizen engagement as a driver of behavior change.
- **New European Bauhaus (2021)** – promotes creative storytelling to visualize sustainable living.
- **Education for Climate Coalition (2022)** – mobilizes schools and youth organizations to teach climate literacy.

These initiatives acknowledge that information alone does not produce change—people must be inspired, enabled, and empowered to participate.

Types of Public Awareness Methods

Awareness can be achieved through multiple communication and educational methods. Each serves a distinct purpose and target group.

Below are the five principal categories, each connected to Youth4Green's approach:

1. Informative Methods (Cognitive Engagement)

These aim to increase knowledge and understanding. Examples include:
- Policy briefs, infographics, posters, or fact sheets explaining climate issues.
- Workshops or lectures that simplify EU climate policies for youth audiences.
- Exhibitions, school talks, or citizen science presentations.

In **Youth4Green**, this corresponds to the Climate Change and Environmental Pollution sessions, where participants learn scientific and policy fundamentals before designing campaigns.

2. Persuasive Methods (Emotional and Behavioral Engagement)
These methods aim to change perceptions, beliefs, or habits by using emotional narratives or moral appeals.

Examples include:
- Storytelling videos, testimonials, or documentaries showing human impacts of pollution.
- "Challenge-based" campaigns like #5MinutesForIstanbul (Türkiye), encouraging water conservation.
- Posters and digital content featuring powerful imagery and slogans.

Psychological research (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2022) shows that narratives combining emotion with empowerment are far more effective than fear-based messages.

3. Participatory Methods (Collective Engagement)

Participation creates ownership. When people co-create messages or events, awareness turns into empowerment.

Examples include:

- Community clean-up actions or tree planting days.
- Co-design workshops for local sustainability solutions.
- Youth-led public consultations or policy dialogues.

In **Youth4Green,** this method is embodied in the Model United Nations Simulation, where participants negotiate real-world environmental challenges, understanding global cooperation and local relevance.

4. Digital and Media-Based Methods (Social Engagement)

Digital media are essential tools for awareness in the 21st century. They transform communication from one-way information delivery to interactive storytelling and community building.

Typical methods include:

- Social media challenges (TikTok, Instagram Reels) highlighting small eco-actions.
- Podcasts and livestreams with experts and activists.
- Online petitions or virtual campaigns (hashtags, pledges, infographics).

The **Youth4Green** digital leadership component trains participants to design online campaigns using the principles of social marketing, focusing on target audience, message tone, and measurable impact.

5. Cultural and Artistic Methods (Aesthetic Engagement)

The New European Bauhaus and cultural dimension of the Green Deal emphasize creativity as a driver of transformation.

Art, music, design, and performance can convey complex sustainability messages in ways that transcend language barriers.

Examples include:

- Theatre plays or performances on pollution and waste reduction.
- Street murals, exhibitions, and eco-fashion shows.
- Storytelling nights, poetry, and music festivals with environmental themes.

Cultural approaches connect directly to people's identities and emotions, building empathy and shared values.

Psychological Foundations of Awareness

Sustainability communication is most effective when it appeals to both the rational and emotional dimensions of human behavior.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Norm Theory, people are more likely to adopt sustainable habits when:

- They believe the behavior is socially desirable.
- They feel capable of making a difference.
- They receive reinforcement from peers or community leaders.

Youth4Green applies these insights by creating positive peer pressure through group commitments, social media visibility, and public pledges.

Youth-Led Awareness in the European Context

The European Union recognizes youth as "ambassadors of sustainability."
 Young people not only communicate climate action—they redefine it through creativity, digital innovation, and activism.

 Examples of youth-driven awareness in Europe include:

- The Fridays for Future movement, raising global awareness about climate urgency.
- The European Climate Pact Ambassadors, where young volunteers engage local communities.
- Local Erasmus+ projects like Youth4Green, using storytelling and digital campaigns to educate peers.

Youth-led initiatives reflect the democratization of environmental knowledge, where awareness is no longer top-down but co-created horizontally through communities.

Linking Awareness to the Green Deal and SDGs
Public awareness is a core enabler of multiple Green Deal priorities and SDGs:

Awareness Theme	Green Deal Priority	Relevant SDGs
Pollution prevention	Zero Pollution Action Plan	SDG 3, 6, 11, 12
Climate education	Climate Neutrality & Adaptation	SDG 4.7, 13
Sustainable consumption	Circular Economy Strategy	SDG 12
Biodiversity and ecosystems	EU Biodiversity Strategy	SDG 14, 15
Social inclusion and participation	Just Transition Mechanism	SDG 10, 17

Case Studies from Youth4Green

- **Türkiye – "Don't Let the Future Flow Away"** - Engaged 5,000 students through short-shower challenges and social media content emphasizing water scarcity.
- **Norway – "Our Fjords Are Heritage, Not Plastic"** - Combined cleanup events with storytelling videos showcasing local biodiversity.
- **Romania – "Don't Throw Away the Old, Bring It to Life" -** Used repair cafés and youth art competitions to raise awareness on e-waste and circular economy.

Each campaign demonstrated that when young people are given the tools to communicate creatively, they can mobilize hundreds of citizens in days—an impact that traditional policy channels often struggle to achieve.

Conclusion – Awareness as Empowerment

Public awareness is the entry point to transformation. It turns passive understanding into active citizenship and aligns local action with the European Green Deal's global vision.
Through informed storytelling, creative campaigns, and participatory education, projects like **Youth4Green** demonstrate that awareness is not the end goal—it is the beginning of change.

"Knowledge enables choice; awareness inspires action; action builds the future."

"With the spirit of youth and the power of green, we shape a sustainable tomorrow."

TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPANTS

"I saw that people are very friendly. I also learned some new things about the project. It was very nice to talk to people and learn from them. I want to make new friends and learn about other cultures. I am excited to join the activities and work with the group. I want to walk in the city, see new places, and try local food." - *Simge Yaman (Türkiye*

"People talked to me and helped me. They were very kind. I did not expect them to be so open. I felt happy and safe on the first day. I am excited to learn more about other cultures and join group activities. It is wonderful to meet new friends from different countries and to work together for the environment." - *Elif Su Çakıcı (Türkiye)*

"The biggest challenge was overcoming language barriers and the initial hesitation of some participants who were afraid of being judged for their language skills. To address this, we encouraged participation in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. Over time, these strategies helped foster trust and collaboration within the team." - *Erna (Bosnia and Herzegovina)*

"I didn't know what to expect from the activities since I had never attended an exchange like this before. However, the activities are neither complicated nor confusing; in fact, we explore a lot of topics we have never dealt with before, which is very useful." - *Hana (Bosnia and Herzegovina)*

"What really surprised and inspired me in the presentations was learning about different perspectives from various countries. I also gained insight into the new projects they are working on in science and climate change. With their knowledge and perspectives, we created an incredible harmony around the project topic." - *Gunel (Azerbaijan)*

Name	Question	Response
Rümeysa	How can we save electricity at home?	"We turn off the lights in empty rooms."
Esma	What can schools do to be more green?	"Save electricity, use less paper, recycle, and plant trees."
Arda	Which do you prefer, electric or gasoline cars?	"Electric cars, because they are better for nature."
Murat	What can the government do to make cities cleaner?	"Make the rules stricter."
Nazlı	What small changes can every family make to save nature?	"They can walk or ride bikes instead of using cars."
Betül	Does climate change affect Türkiye?	"Yes, summers are hotter and it rains less."
Aslı	How can young people help the Green Deal?	"Protect nature, recycle, and plant trees."
Mustafa	What green project would you start as mayor?	"I would plant more trees and build parks."
Leyla	Why is clean air important?	"Because we need it to breathe and stay healthy."
Kenan	How do you notice climate change?	"It doesn't snow as much as before."

SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

Bosnia and Herzegovina - "Be the Breath for Sarajevo"

1. Thematic Focus

Air quality, urban mobility, and clean energy awareness.

Sarajevo faces one of Europe's most severe winter air pollution problems, largely due to household heating, vehicle emissions, and outdated energy systems. The "Be the Breath for Sarajevo" campaign empowers youth to reclaim their right to clean air through behavioral change and collective action.

2. Campaign Concept

The campaign introduced the initiative "Car-Free Fridays", encouraging citizens to leave their cars at home once a week. Through this simple act, participants visibly demonstrate that individual choices lead to collective impact.

3. Educational & Communication Strategy

The campaign integrates:
- School Seminars; training Clean Air Ambassadors to explain air pollution data and advocate for greener transport.
- Radio & Social Media Outreach; local youth-hosted radio shows, eye-catching infographics, and social media challenges using #BreathForSarajevo.
- City Information Stands; public booths in downtown Sarajevo providing air quality education.

4. Results & Expected Outcomes
- **Target**: 15% reduction in particulate matter (PM2.5) during Car-Free Fridays.
- **Engagement**: 25+ school clubs formed, 1000+ social media interactions within the first month.
- **Long-term Impact**: Policy advocacy for pedestrian zones and permanent bike lanes.

5. Theoretical Impact

This campaign aligns directly with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). It operationalizes European Green Deal priorities for Zero Pollution and Sustainable Mobility, while using behavioral insights and community psychology to reinforce habit change.

"Dreams are the seeds of change. Nothing ever grows without a seed, and nothing ever changes without a dream." - Haemin Sunim

Azerbaijan - "Green Sumgayıt Starts with You"

1. Thematic Focus

Urban re-greening, community participation, and sustainable urban development.

Sumgayıt, historically an industrial hub, is now becoming a model for urban transformation. The campaign aims to restore the city's ecological balance through youth-led urban greening initiatives.

2. Campaign Concept

The slogan "Grow the Future, Not the Concrete" reflects a shift from industrial to ecological progress. Youth identify abandoned urban spaces and convert them into pocket parks and community gardens.

3. Implementation and Activities
- Phase 1 – Mobilization: Engaging youth (15–25 years old) and local authorities to identify target sites.
- Phase 2 – Planning: Co-designing pocket parks with residents and architects.
- Phase 3 – Plant a Sapling Too: A mass event encouraging families to plant saplings together, symbolizing renewal.

4. Communication Strategy
- Local TV & Press: Highlighting youth environmental leadership.
- Social Media (#GreenSumgayit): Visual storytelling, before/after transformations, and volunteer spotlights.
- Neighborhood Networks: Collaboration with muhtars (local administrators) for ground-level engagement.

5. Results & Long-Term Vision
- 5 pilot pocket parks created within three months.
- 200+ youth volunteers and 10 institutional partners engaged.
- A city-level policy dialogue initiated for integrating urban greening in the local development plan.

6. Theoretical Framework

The campaign embodies Community-Based Environmental Management (CBEM) and Urban Ecology principles, connecting micro-scale action with systemic city resilience. It supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) under the EU's Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

"Young minds + green action = a world where both people and planet thrive."

Türkiye - "Don't Let the Future Flow Away"

1. Thematic Focus

Water conservation, responsible consumption, and climate adaptation.

Türkiye faces growing challenges from water scarcity and climate-induced droughts. The "Don't Let the Future Flow Away" campaign raises awareness on efficient water use and clean water systems .

2. Campaign Concept
The campaign encourages citizens to monitor daily water use and introduces the challenge "5 Minutes for Istanbul", motivating people to limit showers and water waste.

3. Implementation Tools
- Workshops on Water Footprint — demonstrating how consumption habits affect water resources.
- Infographics and TikTok Challenges — short videos illustrating "hidden water" in daily life.
- Partnerships with Local Schools and Municipalities — installing water-saving devices and sharing educational posters.

4. Measurable Outcomes
- Over 1500 students reached through school presentations.
- Social media reach exceeding 10,000 impressions across platforms.
- Pilot introduction of water-saving aerators in 50 homes.

5. Policy Relevance
Supports EU Water Framework Directive and Green Deal's Zero Pollution Ambition. Encourages behavioral change through social marketing, focusing on emotional messaging and collective responsibility.

Romania - "Don't Throw Away the Old, Bring It to Life"

1. Thematic Focus

Circular economy and sustainable consumption.

The Romanian team's campaign advocates for reusing, repairing, and repurposing objects rather than discarding them .

2. Campaign Concept
Through creative upcycling workshops and digital storytelling, youth encourage communities to see waste as a resource, not a burden. The campaign slogan underlines intergenerational responsibility and creativity.

3. Key Activities
- Repair Cafés: Locals bring old clothes or electronics to be fixed with youth mentors' help.
- "Upcycle Challenge" Online Contest: Participants post before/after transformations.
- Street Art Installations: Public art built from reused materials conveying environmental messages.

4. Impact
- 300+ repaired items, reducing waste and promoting circular skills.
- 50 youth participants trained in design thinking and sustainability communication.

5. Theoretical Connection
This campaign demonstrates Applied Circular Economy Models and Design for Sustainability principles. It contributes to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and EU Circular Economy Action Plan.

Hungary - "Eat Local, Let the Tisza Live"

1. Thematic Focus

Sustainable food systems and river conservation.

This campaign addresses pollution and biodiversity loss along the Tisza River, connecting it with the food chain and local economy .

2. Concept and Slogan
The campaign links local food choices to the health of ecosystems, urging consumers to support nearby farmers and reduce plastic packaging.

3. Activities
- Local Farmers' Fairs: Showcasing regional organic products.
- Awareness Stands at Markets: Demonstrating how local food supports cleaner rivers.
- "Tisza on My Plate" Digital Challenge: Social media contest promoting meals made from local produce.

4. Measurable Impact
- Partnerships with 10 local food vendors and schools.
- Reduction in single-use plastics at events by 70%.
- Strong youth engagement with 500+ participants in the online campaign.

5. Relevance

Supports the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, emphasizing the connection between food systems, water resources, and ecosystem health.

Norway - "Our Fjords Are Heritage, Not Plastic"

1. Thematic Focus

Marine protection and plastic waste reduction.

This campaign emphasizes collective responsibility for preserving Norway's fjords, one of Europe's most iconic natural ecosystems.

2. Concept
With the slogan "Heritage, Not Plastic," the campaign blends environmental stewardship with national identity.
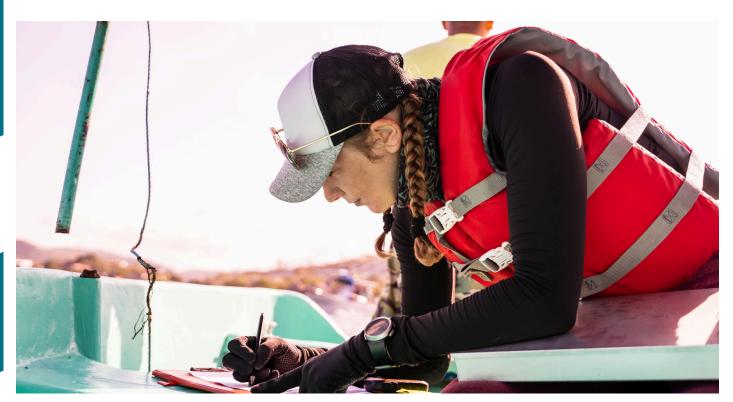
3. Activities
- Coastal Clean-Ups: Youth and families collect marine litter and record data through the "Clean Coast" app.
- Educational Workshops: Sessions on microplastics and recycling innovations.
- Photography Contest: Documenting the beauty of fjords and the threats they face.

4. Results
- Over 1.5 tons of waste collected in initial clean-up actions.
- Collaboration with local NGOs and schools engaging 400+ volunteers.

5. Broader Significance

The campaign supports EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and SDG 14 (Life Below Water), demonstrating the power of local environmental identity in promoting behavioral change.

Comparative Analysis: Shared Vision, Diverse Approaches

Country	Core Theme	EU Policy Link	SDG Contribution
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Air quality & sustainable mobility	Zero Pollution Action Plan	SDG 11, 13
Azerbaijan	Urban greening & community participation	Biodiversity Strategy 2030	SDG 11, 15
Türkiye	Water conservation	Water Framework Directive	SDG 6, 13
Romania	Circular economy & reuse	Circular Economy Action Plan	SDG 12
Hungary	Sustainable food & river health	Farm to Fork Strategy	SDG 2, 14, 15
Norway	Marine protection	Marine Strategy Framework Directive	SDG 14

Conclusion - Local Actions for a Continental Change

Each campaign reflects the essence of the European Green Deal: a shared commitment to sustainability expressed through local creativity. From urban green spaces in Sumgayıt to clean air in Sarajevo, plastic-free fjords, and circular economies, the Youth4Green initiative shows that Europe's transition to a sustainable future is built from community action upward.

> "Our generation doesn't wait for change; we plant it, design it, and share it."
>
> "Let every young voice be a green voice. Let every young action be a green action."

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This Toolkit was developed through the collaborative efforts of youth leaders, trainers, facilitators, professors and partner organizations from six European countries. Big thanks to all participants that have contributed for this toolkit creation

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