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SUSTAINABLENGOs

RESEARCH REPORT

How the Youth NGOs See and Practice Sustainability



AUGUST 2023

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



This study aimed to understand (youth) **NGOs' views on sustainability** and their efforts to promote sustainable development and environmental preservation. We investigated their experiences in areas such as government engagement, green skills, youth participation in environmental causes, and best practices for sustainability. This research was a part of the Sustainable NGOs KA220 Erasmus+ project (2022-2-SI02-KA220-YOU-000094226).

The research consisted of two components: a **quantitative analysis** and a **qualitative analysis**. The quantitative analysis was done through a Google Forms online survey which included both open-ended questions to gather more details about the NGOs' knowledge, intentions, opinions and experiences, as well as closed-ended questions with single or multiple-choice answers to observe statistical trends.

The qualitative analysis involved conducting **interviews with selected individuals from NGOs**. This allowed them to provide insights into their organisation and offer a broader perspective. We also examined their personal approach to sustainability and how it related to the practices of the organisation. The interviews were conducted both in-person and online.

The research activities were carried out **between May 11th and May 31st 2023**. We aimed for a diverse selection of individuals, interviewing representatives from NGOs involved in environmental issues, as well as those with different purposes. This allowed us to explore how sustainability is integrated into their overall actions and specific projects.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study revealed that the **respondents generally had some knowledge about sustainability**, SDGs, as well as practices of the government, NGOs and education. However, they were usually unable to provide specific details or to confidently identify cause-effect links.

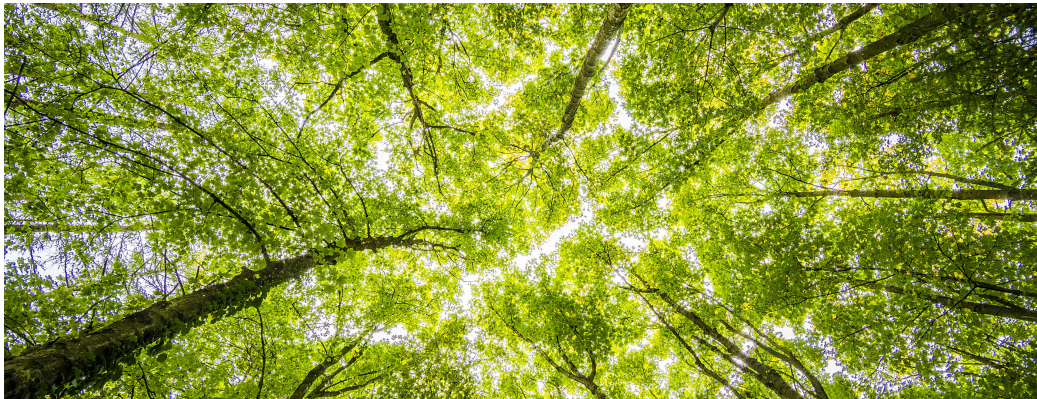
The three countries shared common concerns regarding environmental issues, with a noteworthy emphasis on recognising importance of their rising visibility thanks to both media coverage and the actions of environmental activists.

Moreover, the top-priority action recommended for the Government was to "Educate the public on sustainability." This measure is closely aligned with EU guidance outlined in the **European Green Deal** and **Greencomp** frameworks.

As green initiatives have become increasingly prominent in recent years, the expectations of the (young) NGO representatives have expanded across diverse directions:

- **Personal Skill Enhancement:** Improving their green skills and integrating them into projects and organisations.
- **Educational System Upgrade:** Aiming to modernise formal education to reflect the latest sustainability trends and better educate the youth on sustainable development.
- **Government Involvement:** Expecting support for stakeholder groups and active participation in reducing carbon emissions, adopting sustainable policies, and funding green infrastructure.

Among young people, the increasing importance of green causes is resulting in stronger **environmental activism**. The youth and youth workers also share concerns when it comes to **greenwashing and accountability**.



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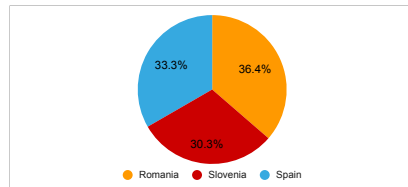
Contributing organisations:

Viitor Plus, Asociația Națională a Surzilor din România, VIP România, Gene Dobrogene, Ambasada Sustenabilitatii in Romania, Asociația pentru Ecologie și Turism Montan EcoXtrem, Agrodinamo, Juniors Santa Teresa de Jornet, Joventut Montserrat, CMJ Cabanyal-Canyamelar, Mladinski svet Slovenije, Zveza brez Izgovora, Taborniški rod Luis Adamič v Grosuplju, Podeželska mladina, Študentski klub Groš, Mladinska postaja Moste

RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Country

Romania	36%
Slovenia	30%
Spain	33%

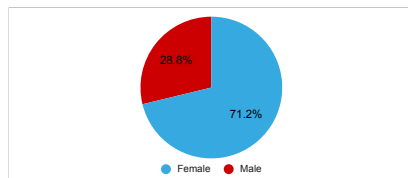


Comments

Based on the participant data (66 responses), it can be concluded that the distribution of respondents was balanced between the three countries.

Gender

Female	71%
Male	29%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to say	0%

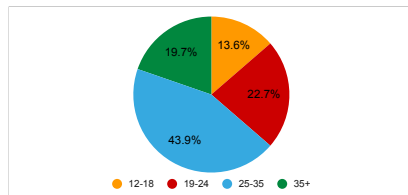


Comments

A significant majority of participants (71%) identified as women, while men comprised 29% of the total respondents.

Age range

12-18	14%
19-24	23%
25-35	44%
35+	20%

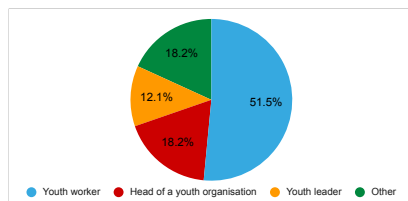


Comments

In terms of age distribution, the participants can be categorised as follows: 14% were aged between 12 and 18, 23% fell within the 19 to 24 age range, 44% belonged to the 25 to 35 age bracket, and 20% were over 35 years old.

Your role in your organisation

Youth worker	52%
Head of a youth organisation	18%
Youth leader	12%
Other	18%



Comments

The participant roles were diverse, with the majority being "Youth workers" (34), followed by 12 "Heads of youth organisations," and 8 "Youth leaders." Additionally, 12 participants held various other roles within their respective organisations, such as "Junior Expert," "Project Manager," "Member," "Student," "Activity Coordinator," and "Environmental Educator."

The "other" section included roles like "All of the above, but in different organisations," "Junior Expert," "Project Manager," "Member," "Student," "Activity Coordinator," and "Environmental Educator."

0. THE ABC OF SUSTAINABILITY

0.1. Are you aware of the meaning of SDGs?

The results indicate that a majority of respondents (44) are aware of the meaning of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and possess a certain level of understanding regarding their complexity and purpose. These individuals recognise that SDGs are a set of global objectives established by the United Nations, intended to address social, economic, and environmental challenges.

However, a notable portion of respondents (15) indicated their lack of knowledge or awareness of SDGs, while an additional 7 respondents expressed some level of familiarity but not a complete understanding.

These findings suggest the need for increased education and awareness regarding the significance and implications of SDGs for achieving sustainable development. Based on the interviews as well, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a common framework for promoting sustainability in all three countries (Romania, Spain, and Slovenia).



"The word sustainability is often misused and the problem is focusing on certain narrow aspects of it. Things often do not go beyond words." (Interview, Romania)

0.2. Do you know what the ecological footprint is? Do you measure yours and/or that of the organisation you are in?

The responses indicate that a majority of respondents (36) have knowledge of the ecological footprint and understand its meaning.

Among those who answered, 12 respondents mentioned that they have measured their own or their organisation's ecological footprint, demonstrating a proactive approach towards environmental impact assessment, but the results of the qualitative research showed that this is not a regular process (perhaps they have done it once in the past, but they do not practice it on a continuous basis). Furthermore, a higher number of respondents (15) indicated that they do not possess knowledge of the ecological footprint, while 3 respondents did not provide a clear response.

These findings highlight the importance of promoting further education and awareness regarding the concept of ecological footprint and its measurement for individuals and organisations. Encouraging more individuals to actively measure their ecological footprint can contribute to a greater understanding of personal and collective environmental impact and facilitate efforts towards sustainability. Based on the interviews, individuals in Romania, Spain, and Slovenia actively contribute to sustainability in their daily lives by engaging in actions such as recycling, minimising waste, conserving resources, and participating in initiatives that promote sustainable practices. However, there is no specific mention of measuring ecological footprints.

1. THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY

1.1. At the international level, there are many environmental challenges. What do you think are the top 3 environmental problems in your country?

Air and water pollution	50%
Climate change	42%
Deforestation and forest degradation	47%
Chemical pollution and hazardous waste	29%
Biodiversity loss	36%
Land degradation and desertification	18%
Water scarcity	17%
Marine pollution and overfishing	20%
Soil erosion and nutrient depletion	9%
Ozone depletion	5%
Other	2%

The participants' opinions varied in response to the question about the top three environmental problems in their country.

However, based on the survey results, the identified top three environmental problems are as follows: air and water pollution, which accounted for 50% of the responses; deforestation and forest degradation, which were cited by 47% of the participants, and climate change, which was mentioned by 42% of the respondents.

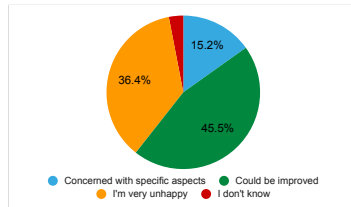
Among the countries surveyed, there were slight variations in the identified primary problems. In Romania, the foremost concern was "deforestation and forest degradation." Meanwhile, in Slovenia, participants highlighted "air and water pollution" as well as "climate change" as significant issues. In contrast, in Spain, the most pressing problem identified was "biodiversity loss."

These issues reflect the concerns of the respondents regarding the environmental challenges in their country. The interview outcomes align with the questionnaire results regarding the ranking of existing environmental issues.

Other: Pollution from traffic and overconsumption of energy

1.2. What is your opinion on your government's approach to sustainable development and environmental protection in your country?

Excellent	0%
Good	0%
Concerned with specific aspects	15%
Could be improved	45%
I'm very unhappy	36%
I don't know	3%
Other	0%



Regarding the participants' opinions on their government's approach to sustainable development and environmental protection in their country, the responses indicate a range of sentiments.

None of the respondents rated their government's approach as excellent or good. Instead, 15% expressed that they were concerned with specific aspects, while 46% believed that the government's approach could be improved. A significant portion, 36%, expressed unhappiness with the government's approach. A small percentage (3%) indicated not knowing or provided other responses.

Overall, the majority of participants expressed a desire for improvement in their government's approach to sustainable development and environmental protection. Based on the interviews, there is a shared sentiment of dissatisfaction with the government's approach to sustainable development and environmental protection in Romania, Spain, and Slovenia. Collaboration with the government is desired to enhance environmental education, implement effective policies and regulations, and ensure more visible actions and penalties.



"Government measures are protectionist. They view nature as a museum, erasing the history of sustainable human intervention in it." (Interview, Spain)

1.3. Choose 3 measures that you would propose to encourage the government to become more involved in promoting sustainable development.

Promote green infrastructure	33%
Educate the public on sustainability	52%
Support renewable energy development	38%
Invest in sustainable technologies	26%
Encourage sustainable agriculture	38%
Foster sustainable urban development	26%
Encourage sustainable business practices	29%
Develop and enforce environmental regulations	36%
Support international cooperation for sustainable development	11%
Other	3%

The participants' opinions on measures to encourage the government's involvement in promoting sustainable development can be summarised as follows: 52% emphasised the need to educate the public on sustainability, 38% suggested investing in renewable energy development, and 36% supported the idea to develop and enforce environmental regulations.

These percentages reflect the participants' belief in the importance of these measures for achieving sustainable development goals. By prioritising these proposals, the government can actively contribute to addressing environmental challenges and fostering a more sustainable future.

By country, the top 3 are as follows:

- Romania: educate the public on sustainability, support renewable energy development; and promote green infrastructure;
- Slovenia: encourage sustainable business practices (bit.ly/42ANQRl), support renewable energy development (bit.ly/3nEzukl), promote green infrastructure (bit.ly/3LJkc69);
- Spain: educate the public on sustainability, develop and enforce environmental regulations, and encourage sustainable agriculture (bit.ly/3BaqJlJ)

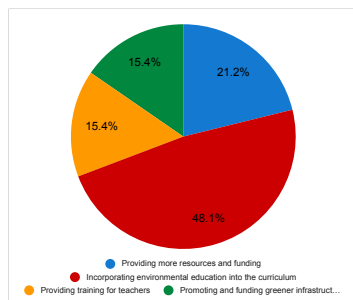
From the interviews, it emerges that there is a desire for the government to implement effective policies and regulations, ensuring more visible actions and sanctions to actively engage in promoting sustainable development.

1.4. What should be the main focus for the government to further support environmental education in schools?

Providing more resources and funding	21%
Incorporating environmental education into the curriculum	48%
Providing training for teachers	15%
Promoting and funding greener infrastructure	15%
Stimulating partnerships with the NGOs	0%
Stimulating partnerships with the media	0%
Stimulating partnerships with the companies	0%
Other	0%

According to the participants' responses, the main focus for the government to further support environmental education in schools should be on incorporating it into the curriculum (48%) and providing more resources and funding (21%). This indicates the participants' belief that integrating environmental education as a core component of the curriculum and allocating adequate resources is crucial for fostering environmental awareness and knowledge among students.

Additionally, stimulating partnerships with NGOs (18%) and providing training for teachers (12%) were also considered important in enhancing environmental education. These findings highlight the participants' call for comprehensive measures to promote environmental education in schools, including curriculum integration, resource allocation, teacher training, and collaboration with NGOs.



Throughout the interviews, the significance of collaborating with the government to enhance environmental education was underscored. This collaboration would involve the creation of educational resources, courses, webinars, and advocacy efforts. It was also noted that specialised environmental NGOs and youth-led organisations would play a crucial role in this joint effort.



"If we want to change something, we don't start from the negative side, we start from the positive side, and then it will itself lead to the change we wanted in the first place." (Interview, Slovenia)

1.5. What can youth organisations do to support environmental education/green action/transition to sustainability in schools?

Organise workshops, seminars and conferences on environmental topics	34%	The participants' responses shed light on numerous ways youth organisations can contribute to environmental education, green initiatives, and the transition to sustainability within schools.
Develop partnerships with local businesses and organisations to support green initiatives	20%	
Foster student-led initiatives and projects that promote sustainability	18%	
Create educational campaigns and awareness-raising events	14%	
Lobby school administrators and policymakers to adopt sustainable practices	9%	
Provide resources such as books, videos, and online courses on sustainability	5%	These diverse approaches showcase the potential of youth organisations to play an active role in promoting environmental education and sustainability within the school system. By implementing these suggestions, youth organisations can contribute to building a more environmentally conscious and sustainable future.

During the interviews, it was suggested that youth organisations can collaborate with the government and NGOs specialised in environmental topics to enhance environmental education. They can also provide additional education on sustainability and actively participate in projects and initiatives related to green action and sustainability. Furthermore, the NGOs can support and supplement the education system, but the education system itself should be improved as well, since NGOs cannot do the job instead of it.

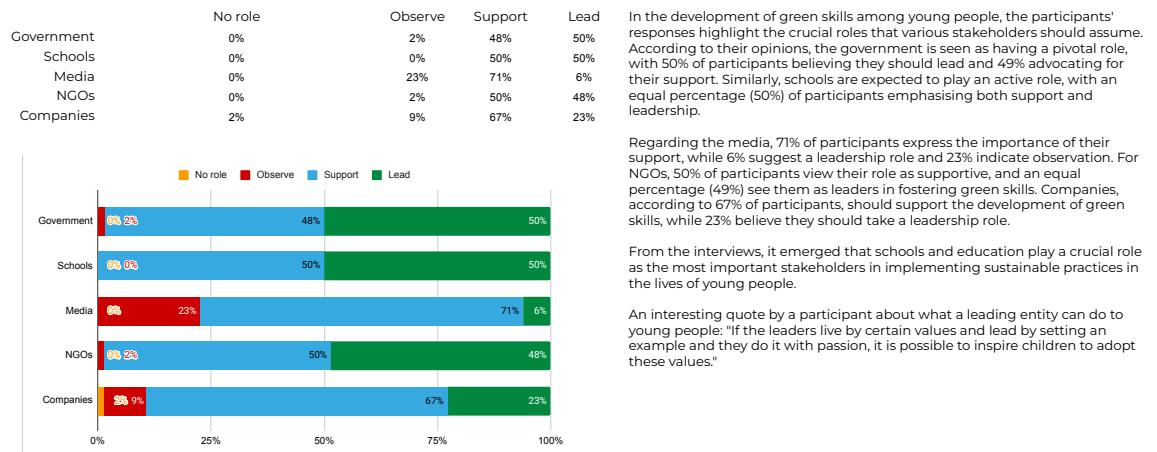
An interesting quote by a participant about the implication on young people in awareness campaigns: "Emphasising prevention-focused campaigns not tied to consumerism is essential. Teaching people to prevent waste rather than solely focusing on recycling can improve the campaigns." —Alexandra Scoruz



"It is important the youth see the effects and impact of their actions, see improvements, tangible changes - this is a strong motivator to get involved further." (Interview, Slovenia)

2. GREEN COMPETENCIES

2.1. What role should the following stakeholders have in developing the green skills of young people?



2.2. Name 3 educational programmes you know in your country that are educating for sustainable development.

In Romania, educational projects promoting sustainability include [Eco-Schools Romania](#), which encourages schools to adopt sustainable practices and integrate environmental education. The [Green School Program](#), led by the Romanian Green Building Council, supports primary and secondary schools in implementing sustainable initiatives. [Caravana Verde](#), organised by WWF Romania, travels to schools, raising environmental awareness through workshops and exhibitions.

In Spain, the [Programa 50/50](#) fosters environmental education, while [Escuela Rural Activa](#) revitalises rural schools by integrating sustainability into the curriculum. Furthermore, [Proyecto Libera Im2](#) engages schools and communities in cleaning campaigns.

In Slovenia, the youth movement [Mladi za podnebno pravičnost](#) empowers young people to take climate action, the NGO [Ekologi brez meja](#) promotes environmental education through workshops and campaigns, and the NGO [Umanotera](#) provides resources on sustainable consumption and renewable energy. These NGOs and their projects aim to raise awareness, encourage student participation, and empower the younger generation to create a more sustainable future.

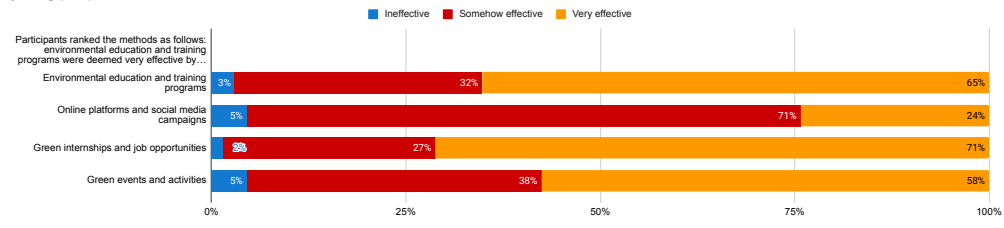
2.3. Rank the effectiveness of the methods presented below that could be implemented in the future to enhance the green skills of young people.

Participants ranked the methods as follows: environmental education and training programs were deemed very effective by 65% of participants, online platforms and social media campaigns were considered somehow effective by 71% of participants, green internships and job opportunities were seen as very effective by 71% of participants, and green events and activities were regarded as very effective by 58% of participants.

	Ineffective	Somehow effective	Very effective
Environmental education and training programs	3%	32%	65%
Online platforms and social media campaigns	5%	71%	24%
Green internships and job opportunities	2%	27%	71%
Green events and activities	5%	38%	58%

During the interviews, the importance of **environmental education and training programs** was emphasised as the most effective methods that can be implemented and developed in the future to enhance the green skills of young people.

2.3. Rank the effectiveness of the methods presented below that could be implemented in the future to enhance the green skills of the young people.

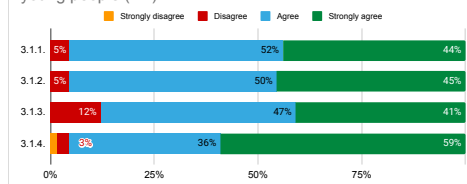


3. YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN GREEN CAUSES

3.1. Do you agree with the statements below regarding young people (YP)?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
3.1.1.	0	5%	52%	44%	YP should be involved in lobby and advocacy
3.1.2.	0	5%	50%	45%	YP should get involved in politics to advance the green agenda
3.1.3.	0	12%	47%	41%	YP should create green businesses
3.1.4.	2%	3%	36%	59%	YP should have a more sustainable lifestyle

3.1. Do you agree with the statements below regarding the young people (YP)?



The majority of participants strongly agree or agree that young people should have a more sustainable lifestyle (95%), be involved in lobbying and advocacy (96%), and get involved in politics to advance the green agenda (96%).

Regarding the statement that young people should create green businesses, there is some level of disagreement, with 41% strongly agreeing, 47% agreeing, and 12% expressing disagreement.

During the interviews, the significance of involving young people in lobbying and advocacy was mentioned, along with the importance of adopting a more sustainable lifestyle and contributing ideas and initiating projects.

A quote about young people adapting to a more sustainable lifestyle: "Young people are generally familiar with renewable energy, but they don't fully comprehend the underlying processes. They also need knowledge in human psychology because people don't immediately embrace environmental solutions." —Oana Pirjolea

3.2. Do you have any examples or comments for the statements in question 3.1?

From the answers provided, the general opinions were that young people have a strong inclination towards fairness and sustainability. They actively reject practices that are detrimental to long-term well-being and show eagerness to protect the environment. It is widely believed that collaborative efforts and robust government regulations are necessary for significant progress in sustainable development. Comprehensive support, including financial aid, mentoring, and partnerships, is deemed crucial in empowering young individuals to achieve their sustainable goals.

However, it was recognised that the responsibility for sustainability should not solely rest on young people. Instead, it should be approached as a collective endeavour that involves individuals of all ages. This inclusive approach emphasises the importance of intergenerational cooperation and sharing the burden of sustainability. By providing equal opportunities and platforms for engagement, society can harness the passion and energy of young people to create a more sustainable future for everyone.

During the interviews, it was highlighted that young people's involvement in protests can be effective **when the environment is friendly and respectful—focusing on delivering a clear message, rather than just showing opposition towards the governmental policies.** Additionally, they should embrace sustainable practices, pass them on to others, and take initiative by generating ideas and starting projects, all while displaying seriousness and commitment to see them through to completion.

An interesting quote about how should we get young people to get involved in sustainable causes in the first place is: "I think we need to question the youth in particular, make them feel part. We need to talk about their territories, their neighbourhoods, their families. Environmental sustainability means taking care of the community." —Tamara



"To make a real change happen, it is not enough just to offer something that organisations can implement if they choose to, but to find out their needs, then work with them closely, set an action plan, support the process and evaluate the results." (Interview, Romania)

3.3. How do you think educational projects can be improved to be more effective in engaging youth in green causes?

From the research results, it is clear that educational projects can be improved to effectively engage youth in green causes. One key approach is to adopt a "learning by doing and reflecting on it" initiative, encouraging hands-on experiences, field trips, and practical activities that directly connect young people with the environment. It is essential to take an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond environmental issues, emphasising personal growth and community relationships. Involving young people in the design and decision-making processes of these projects is crucial for their success.

Increased funding from grant officers and greater media visibility can provide the necessary resources and recognition. Practical activities that can be easily implemented at home should be included to promote individual action. Engaging materials and professional trainers can enhance the learning experience. Collaboration with the private sector, sharing best practices between schools and countries, and incorporating interactive and relatable elements are also important.

Furthermore, projects should have mandatory enforcement, accessible language, and visual engagement, while empowering youth and providing tangible outcomes. The interviews suggested that educational projects can be improved by adapting them to the specific realities of individuals, establishing a meaningful connection, and conveying the significance of sustainable actions.

3.4. What are the main obstacles encountered by young people in being more sustainable?

Lack of awareness or interest	24%
Lack of resources	26%
Lack of education or training	19%
Resistance to change	8%

The main obstacles encountered by young people in being more sustainable, as identified by the participants, include a lack of awareness or interest (24%), insufficient resources (26%), limited education or training (19%), resistance to change (8%), and political and social barriers (24%). These findings underscore the multifaceted challenges that young people face in their pursuit of sustainability. Additionally, the mention of "other" obstacles highlights the importance of promoting inclusive and rational dialogue while avoiding the marginalisation of different perspectives. It emphasises the need for balanced discourse that transcends extremism and activism to foster a more holistic approach to sustainability.

Political and social barriers	24%
Other	1%

During the interviews, it was mentioned that the main obstacles encountered by young people in becoming more sustainable are attributed to the lack of consistency and interest, as well as the lack of promotion of environmental education in their surroundings. The promotion of narrow opinions and the favouring of popular viewpoints, even if they lack common sense, often lead to discrimination against individuals with different perspectives.

3.5. What benefits have you observed from involving young people in adopting sustainable practices?

Increased engagement and ownership	21%
Fresh perspectives and innovative ideas	33%
Education and awareness	24%
Long-term impact	13%
Diversity and inclusivity	10%
I did not observe any benefits	0%

The involvement of young people in adopting sustainable practices has yielded several observed benefits, as indicated by the participants.

These include increased engagement and ownership (20%), fresh perspectives and innovative ideas (32%), and long-term impact (13% and 10% respectively). These findings highlight the significant value that young people bring to sustainability efforts. By actively engaging in sustainable practices, they contribute fresh insights, innovative approaches, and a sense of ownership, leading to long-lasting positive impacts.

It is noteworthy that only a marginal percentage of participants did not observe any benefits, emphasising the overall positive outcomes associated with young people's involvement in adopting sustainable practices.

The benefits extracted from the interviews are: fostering ownership, creating a sustainable mindset, and ensuring continuity by involving young people in adopting sustainable practices.

4.COMPENDIUM OF GREEN GOOD PRACTICES

4.1. What are, in your opinion, the types of negative environmental impacts connected with your activity?

Choose the 3 most important ones at the personal level and the 3 most important ones at the organisational level.

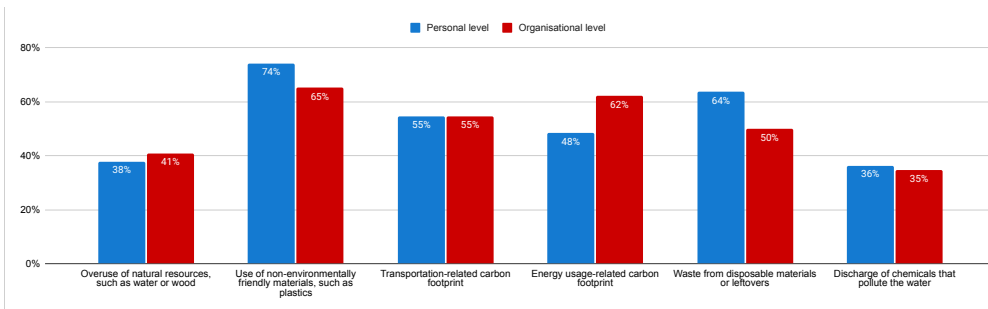
	Personal level	Organisational level
Overuse of natural resources, such as water or wood	38%	41%
Use of non-environmentally friendly materials, such as plastics	74%	65%
Transportation-related carbon footprint	55%	55%
Energy usage-related carbon footprint	48%	62%
Waste from disposable materials or leftovers	64%	50%
Discharge of chemicals that pollute the water	36%	35%

The participants' opinions highlight key environmental impacts at the personal and organisational level.

At the personal level, overuse of natural resources, use of non-environmentally friendly materials, and transportation-related carbon footprint are significant concerns.

Organisational impacts include overuse of natural resources, use of non-environmentally friendly materials, and energy usage-related carbon footprint. Waste from disposable materials or leftovers is a concern for 64% at the personal level, while the discharge of chemicals polluting the water is emphasised by 35% at the organisational level. These insights emphasise the importance of addressing these environmental impacts to promote sustainability both personally and within organisations.

From the interviews, it emerged that the greatest environmental impact within organisations is primarily attributed to occasional air travel. Energy and material consumption, on the other hand, were not considered significant issues as they are carefully monitored and utilised in appropriate quantities.



4.2. Is there someone in your office who already has some knowledge of sustainability and is taking any action toward implementing changes in the organisation?

Yes, there is.	53%
Yes, there is but more training is needed for adequate expertise	26%
No, there isn't but we are searching for someone.	9%
No, and we're not ready to take any action towards implementing sustainable changes	8%
Other	5%

The statistics from this question reveal that 53% of respondents stated there is someone in their office who already has knowledge of sustainability and is taking action to implement changes within the organisation. Many organisations struggle with fulfilling this role due to other ongoing commitments, lack of funding or lack of adapted expertise tailored for NGOs.

Additionally, 26% mentioned that there is someone in their office, but further training is needed for adequate expertise. On the other hand, 9% of respondents indicated that there is no one in their office with sustainability knowledge, but they are actively searching for someone. Furthermore, 8% stated that there is no one in their office and they are not ready to take any action towards implementing sustainable changes. Finally, 4% provided other responses.

From the interviews, it became evident that while there are individuals who are more focused on sustainability within organisations, overall, everyone contributes in their own way through small gestures of good practices.

Based on the answers provided for "other", it is noted that information sharing regarding sustainability has not played a significant role in decision-making and operations up until now.

4.3. Do you recycle waste at home and/or in your organisation?

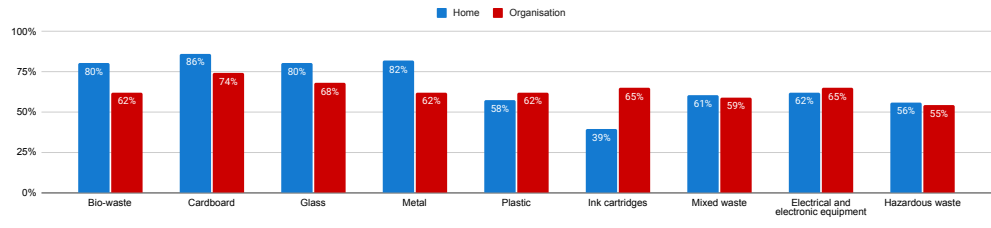
	Home	Organisation
Bio-waste	80%	62%
Cardboard	86%	74%
Glass	80%	68%
Metal	82%	62%
Plastic	58%	62%
Ink cartridges	39%	65%
Mixed waste	61%	59%
Electrical and electronic equipment	62%	65%
Hazardous waste	56%	55%

At home, the majority of respondents engage in recycling various types of waste, the top-ranked ones being cardboard and paper, metal, glass, and bio-waste.

Within organisations, recycling efforts are also notable. Ink cartridges are recycled by 65% of respondents, while cardboard and paper (74%), glass (68%), plastic (62%), and electrical and electronic equipment (65%) are also recycled.

From the interviews, it emerged that people recycle within the organisation, but mostly, they strive to use resources exactly as needed to avoid having a surplus that would require recycling.

4.3. Do you recycle waste at home and/or in your organisation?



4.4. Do you choose collaborators and services for your organisation based also on the sustainability level of their operations?

For work-related events (sustainable catering service, waste etc.)	24%	<p>When choosing collaborators and services for their organisations, a significant portion of the participants consider the sustainability level of their operations.</p> <p>Specifically, 24% prioritise sustainability when selecting work-related event services, such as sustainable catering and waste management. Additionally, 23% take sustainability into account when deciding on work-related travel, focusing on sustainable transportation options. A smaller percentage, 12%, also consider sustainable accommodation options for work-related travel. Furthermore, 15% of participants extend their sustainability criteria to other work-related services, such as checking whether the service provider considers environmental issues in their products or services. While 2% stated that sustainability is not a selection criterion for their operations, 22% provided other responses.</p> <p>Based on the interviews, it became clear that people make an effort to choose catering suppliers in a sustainable and organic manner, taking into account everyone's preferences, but especially ensuring they order only what they need to minimise waste. These findings indicate a notable awareness and consideration of sustainability when choosing collaborators and services, emphasising the importance placed on environmentally responsible practices within organisations.</p>
For work-related travel (sustainable transportation options)	23%	
For work-related travel (sustainable accommodation options)	12%	
Other work-related services (When using external services, do you for example check whether the service provider takes environmental issues into consideration with regard to the product and/or service it provides?)	15%	
Sustainability is not a selection criterion for our operations	5%	
Other	22%	



"I think we need to question the youth in particular, make them feel part of it. We need to talk about their territories, their neighbourhoods, their families. That environmental sustainability means taking care of the community." (Interview, Spain)

4.5. What are some measures of sustainable operation you practice in your organisation?

Regular practices

From the answers provided, it is evident that organisations are implementing a variety of measures to promote sustainable operations. These initiatives include reducing paper usage by adopting digital options, establishing recycling programs for segregating and disposing of different waste materials, and promoting water and energy conservation. Additionally, organisations are actively engaged in waste separation, avoiding single-use plastics, introducing composting initiatives, and raising awareness through offline and online events and workshops.

Sustainable transportation practices, such as sharing vehicles and using public transport, are encouraged, along with prioritising the use of resources made with recycled materials and consuming local products.

Innovative/less frequent practices

Renewable energy sources like solar panels are being utilised, and measures such as opting for biodegradable and eco-friendly materials and promoting conscious resource use are being implemented. These actions aim to minimise waste, conserve resources, and raise awareness about sustainability within organisations.

Based on the interviews, it became apparent that individuals within their organisation make conscious efforts to minimise the use of single-use products, procure appropriate quantities of food and materials, adopt a flexible work approach (online or physical) while prioritising public transportation for commuting, and diligently sort waste for recycling. These sustainable operational measures were consistently mentioned during the interviews.

While waste separation has become a common practice in Slovenia and Spain, in the case of Romania, there is still a significant lack of knowledge on waste separation. As a result, it is still considered innovative in many places, with either limited adoption or improper implementation.

An interesting quote by a participant about how to implement sustainable practices in organisations: "To make a real change happen, it is not enough just to offer something that organisations can implement if they choose to, but to find out their needs, then work with them closely, set an action plan, support the process and evaluate the results."



SUSTAINABLENGOs

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