

Climate Survey Results

This survey was conducted from February to April 2021 and is part of the first Intellectual Output of the KA2 Community Challengers project.

Respondent Profile

- There were a total of 365 responses, mostly from KA2 project partner countries: Latvia, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Serbia, and Belgium. Other represented countries were Albania, Montenegro, Turkey, France, Greece, Bosnia & Herzegovina, the United Kingdom, Azerbaijan, Brazil, and the USA.
- The most prominent age groups were 20 - 24 year olds (23%) and 25 - 29 year olds (17%).
- 53% of respondents were students and 68% identified as female.

Level of knowledge and concern regarding climate change

Majority of the respondents have some knowledge about key environmental issues. When asked about their level of knowledge regarding these issues, 74% gave ratings between 5 - 8 (on a 10 point scale).

Similarly, majority of the respondents are highly concerned about climate change. 82% gave ratings between 7 - 10.

Awareness of key environmental issues

Key environmental issues that the respondents were most aware of were pollution (86%), global warming and climate change (82%), industrial and household waste (75%), and deforestation (73%). Issues of least awareness were acid rain (36%) and urban sprawl (22%).

Respondents reported a strong desire to learn more about the loss of biodiversity (51%) and urban sprawl (50%).

Awareness of environmental initiatives

Among international environmental initiatives, the Paris Agreement (60%) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (46%) were most recognised.

The knowledge of the main strategic European documents on climate issues European Green Deal (44%), and the Green New Deal (23%) was rather limited.

When asked to rank their optimism regarding reaching the goals of the Paris agreement, 28% of the respondents gave scores of 5, expressing very cautious optimism. Higher rankings (scores of 8 – 10) received the lowest scores.

The role of individuals

Respondents show a good degree of confidence in the role of individual citizens in reducing the effects of climate change. 94% agree that young people have a particular role to play in this. However, there remains strong need for intergenerational and interdisciplinary cooperation.

When asked about the significance of their individual roles in reducing the effects of climate change, a high percentage (85%) rated their roles in the upper scale with scores between 5 - 10. Moreover, majority (98%) were willing to change their habits to help the environment.

Promoting action at the local and community level

Most of the respondents identified the effects of climate change on their community, such as extreme weather patterns, water contamination, deforestation, and pollution. When asked how they could promote climate action in the local level, cultural, practical, and political layers were outlined. Starting with personal education and habit change, they could then engage in advocacy by informing others. Suggestions were involving the local community and the youth, engaging their networks, utilising social media, and engaging in discussions with government stakeholders.

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Respondents profile

- The survey was launched online in February to April 2021.
- 356 responses received in total, mostly from KA2 project partner countries Latvia (101), Portugal (96), Italy (68) and Croatia (46), Serbia (6), Belgium (4). Other responses were received from Albania, Montenegro, Turkey, France, Greece, Bosnia & Herzegovina, UK, and a few from Azerbaijan, Brazil and USA. The survey in Italy was conducted separately in Italian. The results are incorporated in this summary.
- 206 interviewees (58%) were young people, 88 (25%) youth workers, 57 (16%) both and 9 (2%) other (youth related organisations and public bodies).
- The age groups represented most were 20-24 y.o. (23%), 25-29 y.o. (17%), as well as 14-16, 17-19 y.o. and 30-39 (15% each). In Italy, almost half of the respondents (48%) were young people between 17-19 y.o.
- 53% of respondents were students, 39% employed or self-employed, 5% unemployed and 3% with “other” status.
- 68% were female, 29% male, 3% other/did not want to tell.

Level of knowledge about climate change

When asked about their level of information about climate change, 74% of respondents rated their knowledge with 5 to 8 points on a scale 0 - Nothing to 10 - I am well informed. It means most of the respondents have at least some information about the key environmental issues. 82% of respondents are quite concerned about the climate change (7 to 10 points out of 10), including 28% who is very concerned (10 out of 10 points).

What key environmental issues are you aware of, and what would you like to know more about?

Aware:	Want to learn more:
86% - pollution	51% - loss of biodiversity
82% - global warming and climate change	50% - urban sprawl
75% - industrial and household waste	43% - acid rain
73% - deforestation	42% - overconsumption, including opportunities for advocating and investing in long-term products and modular component systems for repairing products based on circular economy
67% - overconsumption	41% - industrial and household waste, including options for lower waste and global impact of renewable energy services during the overall cycle of manufacturing, implementation, storage and maintenance
62% - overpopulation	35% - global warming and climate change
61% - loss of biodiversity	34% - deforestation
57% - depletion of the ozone layer	30% - depletion of the ozone layer/pollution
36% - acid rain	Other:
22% - urban sprawl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ local issues in my country/community ✓ impact of using GMO in agriculture
Other:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ soil erosion ✓ diseases outbreaks ✓ ocean level rising ✓ noise pollution in the seas ✓ ocean acidification ✓ ocean micro plastic crisis ✓ coastal erosion 	

International environmental initiatives

Among the most important initiatives at the international level, the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals were most recognized (60% and 46% respectively). The knowledge of the main strategic European documents on climate issues European Green Deal, and the Green New Deal was rather limited (44% and 23%, respectively, including 23% and 12% in Italy). Several respondents also cited other relevant initiatives, which were a combination of local or community level (Radi Vidi Pats, Climate Strike, Touch Festival in Zagreb), national (Zaļā brīvība and Dabas Fonds in Latvia, Adriatic Without Plastic in Croatia, Let's Do It in Romania), transnational (European Youth Goals), and international (Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, Glasgow Agreement) examples. These initiatives represented varying mediums, such as apps (Too Good to Go, Stairway to SDG), podcasts (Mothers of Invention, Climate & Outrage), website, and social media channels.

When asked to rank their optimism regarding reaching the goals of the Paris agreement concerning the limitation of global warming, the majority (28%) of the respondents gave a score of 5 on a scale 1 to 10, expressing very cautious optimism. Higher rankings (scores of 8 - 10) received the lowest scores.

Main challenges to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement

Several main challenges to achieving environmental goals were identified by the respondents and grouped into particular themes. One is **the lack of information** or the spread of misinformation. People are unaware or unable to understand the dangerous and irreversible effects of climate change. Furthermore, they are not aware of the steps that can be taken to mitigate these:

Make people aware, disseminate knowledge, fight ignorance, move the focus from the environment conservation to the humanity conservation.

Another challenge is the unwillingness of people to change. This entails not only that individual people have to adjust their behaviors and lifestyles towards sustainability, but corporations, industrial sector, agriculture and governments must also take action and rearrange their priorities. This calls for a rapid change in the way consumers, markets, and economic systems work. This great shift requires a lot of motivation and change on the side of individuals, corporations, and political will of the governments.

No more postponing, create an institution for the control of true engagement of the governments, fight against the interests of lobbies and criminal organizations.

However, there is a lack of pressure on the governments to create and commit to sustainable policies. In addition, many people are comfortable with the way things are and do not believe in the effects of climate change.

Role of individuals

Those who participated in the survey show a good degree of confidence in the role individual citizens can play to reduce the effects of climate change and environmental issues: 94% of them think that young people have a particular role to play in this.

However, there is still a strong need for intergenerational and interdisciplinary cooperation.

When asked to which extent their personal role could be significant in reducing the effects of climate change and environmental issues, 85% rated their role in the upper scale between 5 and 10 on a scale of 10. 21% of respondents gave a score of 7.

When asked if they are involved in any environmental campaigns and movements, majority (68%) said no. Those who said yes are/were involved in several different initiatives, such as World Scouts, Trees for the World, CNE Escuteiros, etc. Some participated in short programmes implemented by organisations (e.g. youth organisations, local organisations, Erasmus+). Some considered their lifestyle as a way of supporting and involving themselves in environmental movements (e.g. zero waste lifestyle, no plastic, waste recycling).

Promoting action at local level

When asked how the respondents would advise their peers to promote climate action at local level, different layers were identified: cultural, practical and political. First, is starting with personal education and habit change. By learning the facts and the actions that can be taken to mitigate climate change, it is more likely that individual behavior can be changed. Behavioral change that focuses less on consumption and more on transformative action was a central theme. Some actions that were mentioned were specific advice related to the daily life: eating locally produced food, recycling, buying sustainable products, using public transportation, and joining groups and programmes for climate action, e.g. cleaning beaches and green areas, fighting for reduction of emissions from big industries. The second layer is advocacy. Once personal change is started, informing and involving other people and leading by example is the next step. Suggestions that were given were involving the local community and the youth, engaging their school, friends, and family networks, utilizing social media, and discussing with government stakeholders.

Communities & climate change

When asked how your community is affected by environmental issues and climate change, most respondents pointed out changing extreme weather patterns, e.g. hotter summers, warmer winters, droughts, floods, storms, earthquakes, fires, as well as soil erosion, water contamination from agriculture, diseased trees/deforestation, air pollution in the cities illegal trash dumps in the nature, e.g. sea, forests, on the beaches and in the cities, desertification and negligence of rural areas.

We suffer from floods in winter season in the rural area of Municipality of Ulqin, Montenegro, and we also have dry summers with really hot temperatures.

Latvia is blessed enough not to have very harsh and loud signs. Maybe that's one of the reasons why many people still don't take this too seriously. But there are a lot of signs - smaller snow blanket, extreme temperatures, more storms, some species are disappearing, others are appearing.

The challenges are both practical and educational: insufficient number of waste-sorting islands, lack of infrastructure for waste recycling, improper waste disposal system, large vehicle-individual ratio, as well as low level of information and a scarce sense of responsibility as citizens. The environmental issues are part of an environmental cycle, and misbalance results in negative health effects on vulnerable groups, infection diseases transported by the insects, heat stress, etc., decrease in work productivity, particularly in agriculture, infrastructure and construction sector, a decrease in other economic activities (trade, communal services), increased electricity consumption (estimated up to 22%), increased water consumption, restricted availability of drinking water due to droughts, loss of biodiversity / extinction of animals, plants, insects due to monoculture-based agriculture; crop declines, destruction of living, financial debts.

A few respondents mentioned that their community is not directly affected by environmental issues and that just a small part of their communities is aware about climate

change and acts responsibly, and that maybe due to Covid-19 increase in poverty, the people are more vulnerable to choose things less environment-friendly.

My community is in a rural environment, there are several green areas and weeds, but for the agricultural projects, the land is cleared to plant hundreds of apple trees that are treated with immense pesticides. There is an orchard at the foot of a small dam that supplies water to the population, so the water is contaminated with pesticides. The same dam in summer is very empty because it hardly rains. In the summer the heat is increasing and in the winter the temperatures are lower and lower. People leave a lot of garbage everywhere and it is sad to see garbage containers blown by the wind and that garbage is spread out for weeks in a given location.

Change of habits

Would the interviewees be willing to change their habits, if this would help the environment? For the 98% of them, the answer is “yes”. What changes could they decide to make? Most respondents said they are already trying to lead a zero waste lifestyle, change to environmentally-friendly transport, bicycle, train, e.g. to avoid flying, switch to vegetarian/vegan lifestyle, use less water, save energy while not using the electronic device, change to energy-efficient light bulbs, consume more local products, encourage their peers and children not to pollute and to choose eco-friendlier products, avoid single-use plastic, living simply, e.g. sharing, making, fixing, upcycling, repurposing and composting, buying second-hand clothes, reducing carbon footprint. Some pointed out that they don't always have those options, e.g. sorting glass and plastic.

Some respondents believe the first step needs to be done by big corporations and industries and that their own personal footprint is insignificant and there needs to be a structural change.

What specific questions regarding the environment and climate change need to be covered in this Handbook?

Knowledge

- Factual answers to the most known false facts about climate change.
- How climate change impacts directly our community.
- Link between individual actions and climate change.
- Impact of corporations and big industries.
- The consequences of not achieving the 2020 and 2050 goals

Call for actions

- How to change individual habits towards green lifestyle (different ways an individual could help battle climate change), e.g. zero waste, recycling, water usage, second hand clothing; solutions for different budget
- Small daily actions (show simple and practical solutions that can help the environment in our daily life)
- Practical guidance and examples linked to young people's local reality and daily-life from schools, neighbourhood, bars venues, beaches and forests they know
- How to get involved in advocacy.
- Where to study environmental science in the EU, what organisations work in the field

"The Handbook should be easily accessible, should be more a tool for reflection and lesser a guideline and it should pick people up in the life situations and contexts they are in".

Skills and competences needed by the respondents to take climate action:

- Fostering critical thinking (38%).
- Connection to like-minded peers (18%).
- Negotiation skills (12%) & Advocacy (10%). In Italy, the importance of advocacy is even higher - mentioned by 34% of respondents.
- Expression through arts (11%).
- All of the above.

What would you like to gain from a project like that?

Knowledge

- More knowledge to speak louder about this problem.
- Practical advice for daily life.
- Scientific, political, economic, social, ethical and cultural perspectives on climate change.
- "Mainstream" reflections on climate change etc. in all sectors of society and education, make climate change being seen as a priority by the big powers in the world.
- More awareness of the environmental world situation and on the actions undertaken by governments and enterprises in order to tackle the problems.

Call for action

- A possibility to take action and make a change in my daily life to have a REAL impact on climate change.
- A Facebook group in which you post stuff like " Spring cleaning in __, come and join, free tea for everyone ".
- A guide for daily actions to always have handy.
- Actions that can be done immediately and what can be done gradually in terms of harm reduction and habit change.

