



ACT NOW

Policy & Practice
Recommendations for living
a more sustainable lifestyle
at the national and EU Level



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Table of contents

Rationale and background	4
About the ACT NOW project.....	5
Good examples to increase of knowledge and commitment of youth for the environmental and sustainable development.....	6
<i>Climate Changing me – Italy</i>	6
<i>Hungarian Ecoschool Network - Hungary</i>	7
<i>The Star Alliances for the Circular Economy - Bulgaria</i>	7
<i>Tiganokinisi – Cyprus</i>	8
<i>CIFAL Malaga “Certified ODS” – Spain</i>	8
<i>LIFE-IP AdaptInGR - Boosting the implementation of adaptation policy – Greece</i>	9
Recommendations by practitioners.....	10
<i>Short-term recommendations</i>	12
<i>Long-term recommendations</i>	12
Recommendations for and by policymakers	13
<i>Policy recommendations</i>	16



Rationale and background

The current *Policy & Practice Recommendations for living a more sustainable lifestyle at the national and EU Level* represent the final step about the ACT NOW project, a sum-up document to improve understanding for informing, educating and/or engaging through training and/or raising awareness on climate change as a global transformational challenge with consequences and changes/ actions required at the societal and individual level. The Policy & Practice Recommendations will provide a comparative analysis of lessons learned throughout the implementation of ACT NOW project, as well as main challenges linked to Youth Work in promotion sustainable lifestyles.

The document is divided into 3 parts:



About the ACT NOW project

There is a significant gap between scientific and public understanding of the risks posed by climate change (J. N. Rooney-Varga, 2018). Continuing warnings from the scientific community are not strong enough to generate the individual and governmental actions necessary to meet international climate goal. At a European level, for the first time, **climate change is ranked as the top priority with 32% by European citizens**. However, only 12 EU member countries consider it as a top priority while in many countries this percentage was significantly lower.

Based on recent studies (Prof. John Sterman 2018), this societal and political inactivity/idleness is justified by the fact that "showing people research does not work". Data from several studies find that the majority of people across the world increased their motivation to combat climate change through participation in simulation (based on real scenarios and variables) role games regarding climate change and the UN climate talks.

It is worth mentioning that the European Union and the Member States have taken several actions in order to activate and empower young people youth to act as agents of change for environmental and sustainable development. A flagship initiative that has been taken by EC is to develop mechanisms for upgrading the role of youth and achieve a society in which all young people are environmentally active, educated and able to make a difference in their everyday lives (European Youth Strategy of 2019-2027).

The **project objectives** are fully aligned with the EU priorities and are to:

1. Develop a broad set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to sensitize, recruit, mobilize and adequately support youth workers and the youth to critically reflect on climate change as a major environmental challenge that requires immediate action;
2. Build the capacity of front-line youth workers professionals and educators to use bespoke Mobile Augmented Reality and Simulations Games;
3. Provide youth workers and youth professionals with the tools and methodology to implement, evaluate and assess key competences of young people through action research based;
4. Make use of the existing AR and Simulation games platforms and provide youth workers with the necessary technical knowledge to create their content for fostering young people key competences through learning about Climate Change;
5. Develop knowledge and critical understanding of climate change and sustainable development issues.

Good examples to increase of knowledge and commitment of youth for the environmental and sustainable development

In this section some of the main initiatives carried out across Europe linked to the adaptation and mitigation of Climate Change will be presented.



Climate Changing me – Italy

The [Climate Changing me](#) campaign was conceived by a group of young activists from different parts of the world and combines the international experience of social organizations from Europe, Asia, America and Africa. This international context has allowed the campaign to articulate itself from different and broader perspectives on climate justice, claiming more space for civil society to act autonomously from states and corporations.

The process initiated to counter climate change, in addition to being inadequate, runs along undemocratic, top-down logics and excludes direct participation by populations affected by its effects. To reverse these dynamics that have brought society to the brink of climate disaster, the campaigners believe that there is the need to give a voice to those who are not being heard and provide tools to mobilize citizens, communities, and youth in particular.

The young activists prepared a manifesto, through which they appeal to all organizations, associations, and formal and informal collective groups active for environmental and social justice and invite them to join to promote together an initial collective action through the Climate Changing Me by supporting the campaign on social media, organizing direct action events and forums and extending this call to other groups around the world to make their voices and to demand a real change in the society.



Hungarian Ecoschool Network - Hungary

The [Hungarian Ecoschool Network](#) co-ordinates, informs, organizes in-service teacher trainings and programs for those schools that put the principles of sustainability in the centre of their operation. The Network is open to every Hungarian institution for public education, which can have access, every year, via a tender for Ecoschool title, and they can renew their title in every three years by reporting their developments and update their plans.

The flexible programme, developed by the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (HIERD), was established in 2000 with 40 pilot schools. It uses a whole-school approach to introduce the principles of sustainability in a practical way as well as through study subject matter.

Activities range from excursions to environmental projects and exhibitions made for the local community to school patrols where students check and collect data on energy consumption and local Green Parliaments where students are involved in real decision-making with local town halls. The programme also extends beyond the school gates. Since 2015 criteria for the title includes community service which empowers teenagers to transform themselves and the community they live in.

The Star Alliances for the Circular Economy - Bulgaria

The [Star Alliance for the Circular Economy](#) is an initiative that unites companies, industry, business and non-governmental organizations, municipalities, educational and scientific organizations that have made a voluntary commitment to respect the principles of the circular economy and work towards their implementation.

The initiative is part of the project "Circular economy for a sustainable future - civil society in Bulgaria for the European Green Pact".

The main objectives of the project are:

1. to increase the knowledge of civil organizations and businesses about the circular economy and their motivation and participation in the public dialogue on key documents and topics at the national level related to the circular economy;
2. to catalyse behavioural change and implementation of sustainable circular economy models among stakeholders.

The project objectives will be achieved through a variety of actions, including: organizing public discussions and information campaigns, conducting training consultations, presentation and exchange of good practices, initiation and application of innovative models in the sphere of the circular economy. The trainings include three modules as follows:

1. "Circular economy - challenges and opportunities"
2. "Circular economy - good practices".
3. "The mobilization of national and European funds for circular economy"





Tiganokinisi – Cyprus

The Tiganokinisi is an educational, environmental programme for the collection of used cooking oil that has been successfully implemented in more than 400 schools in Cyprus. Through Tiganokinisi, we are converting frying oil from waste to biodiesel and providing resources for environmental education activities and environmental infrastructure support for schools and students all over Cyprus!

Tiganokinisi started with a pilot implementation in 2011 in 10 schools, of all levels, in the municipality of Aglantzia and since September 2013 it has been implemented on a nationwide basis. The programme is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and is implemented in cooperation between the Ministry, the Pedagogical Institute and the non-profit organization AKTI, Centre for Studies and Research. It is an innovative approach to environmental education, which includes hands-on activities and teaching, learning by doing and the implementation of environmentally friendly practices.

It's a programme that allow young people to act as agents of change in society and to transfer environmentally conscious habits to their families. Local authorities and businesses are involved as they concretely share their used oil to schools as part of their corporate social responsibility programme

CIFAL Malaga “Certified ODS” – Spain

Certified ODS provides everyone with the necessary tools to achieve the 2030 Agenda in light of the current challenges. It develops various educational programmes:

- ODS JUNIOR. Aimed at primary and secondary school students, this is a certified educational programme that aims to reach many students and accompany educational institutions interested in certification as a differential value of their educational model. It is based on curiosity and play, with a methodology based on challenges, where collaboration, creativity, empathy, research and values are very present. Learning is structured in Missions related to the context we are living in after the COVID19 pandemic and the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to maintain peace in the world, protect the planet, ensure that all people have better living conditions, end poverty and hunger and that all children have access to education. The activities are gamified and are complemented with immersive technology through the Xtended Learning APP.

- EXPERIENTIAL SDGS. Modular programmes that work on the 17 SDGs in an experiential way in order to train and generate a positive impact on both participants and their environment. Among them, they organise the ODS Experience Camp, a camp focused on the SDGs. Training in sustainability by professionals for young people with experiences in agriculture, organic livestock farming, recycling, water treatment, infrastructure design for the conservation of the natural park, sport and adventure in the heart of nature.





ACT NOW

www.actnow-europa.eu

LIFE-IP AdaptInGR - Boosting the implementation of adaptation policy – Greece

The integrated project "LIFE-IP AdaptInGR - Boosting the implementation of adaptation policy across Greece" is the most important project for the adaptation of Greece in the effects of climate change. The specific program of the Ministry of Energy and Environment with the Academy of Athens, which is scientifically responsible, aspires to strengthen the implementation of the National Strategy and the 13 Regional Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change, during the current 1st climate change adaptation cycle (2016-2025) and to prepare the transition to the 2nd adaptation policy cycle (2026+), with appropriate actions at national, regional and local level.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has included in the educational process thematic skills workshops on climate change and the environment, in order to further achieve and promote the philosophy and culture for dealing with climate change and to educate people to be capable of understanding the interdependence of all life on the planet and the effects their actions and decisions have and will have on natural resources, the global and local economy and society, in the climate, in the environment, in life. They encourage active participation and creative interaction within the school environment, for students and teachers, adopting the term "education for a sustainable future" to highlight the need for education to lead to social transformation and lifestyle change, to approach the natural, social and cultural environment with a sustainable perspective.

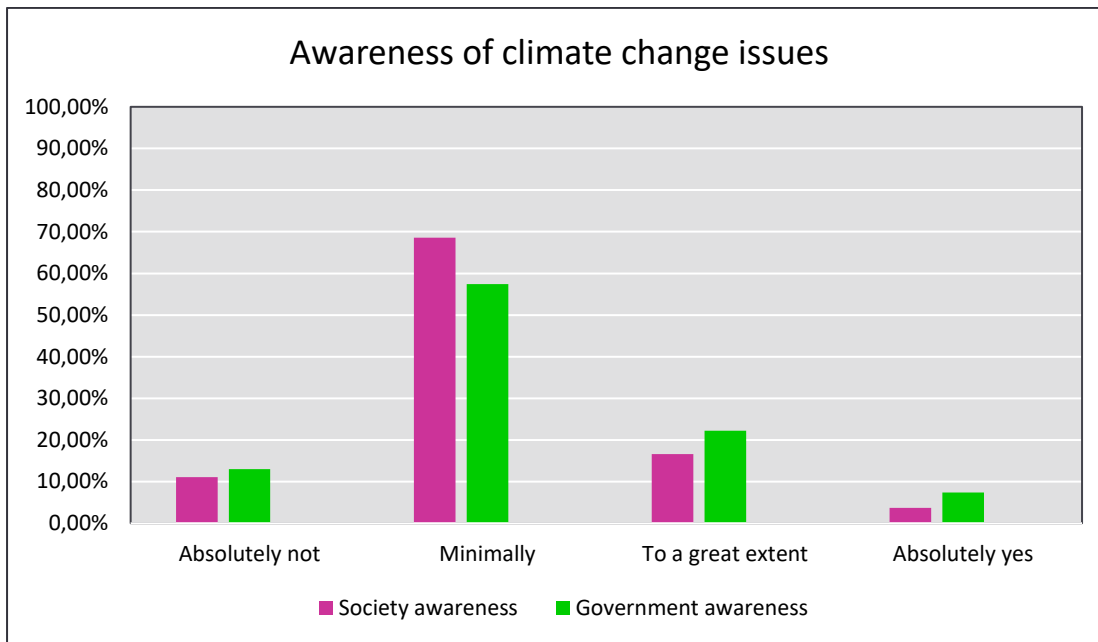


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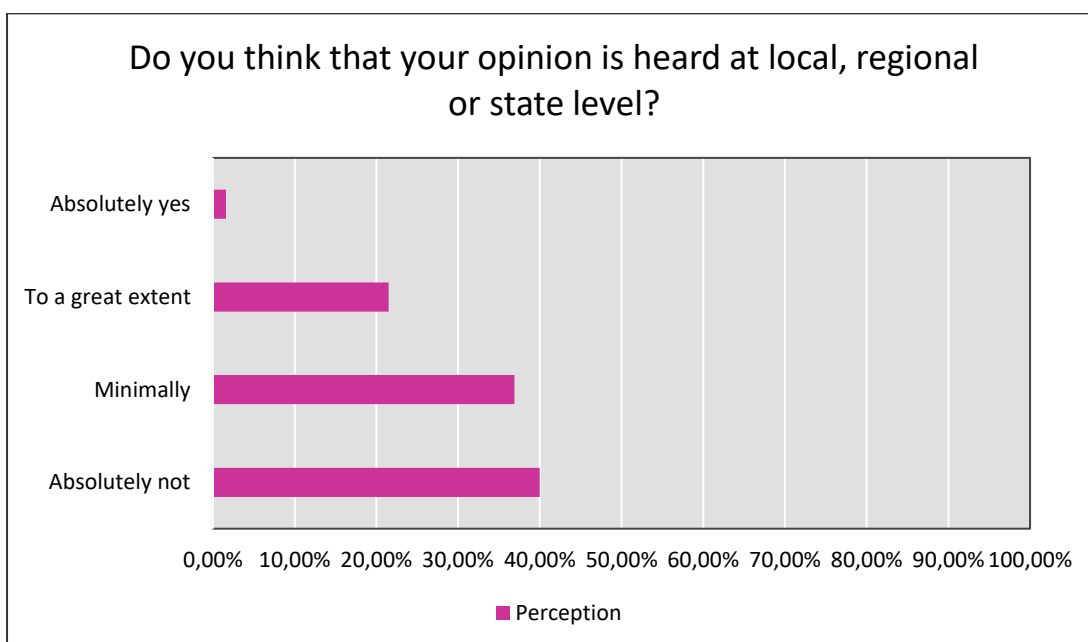
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Recommendations by practitioners

A questionnaire has been prepared to be shared on social media to collect feedback of youngsters and youth workers about the main criticalities and main perspectives linked to the environmental and climate change. Some results are shown taking into account the national different results.

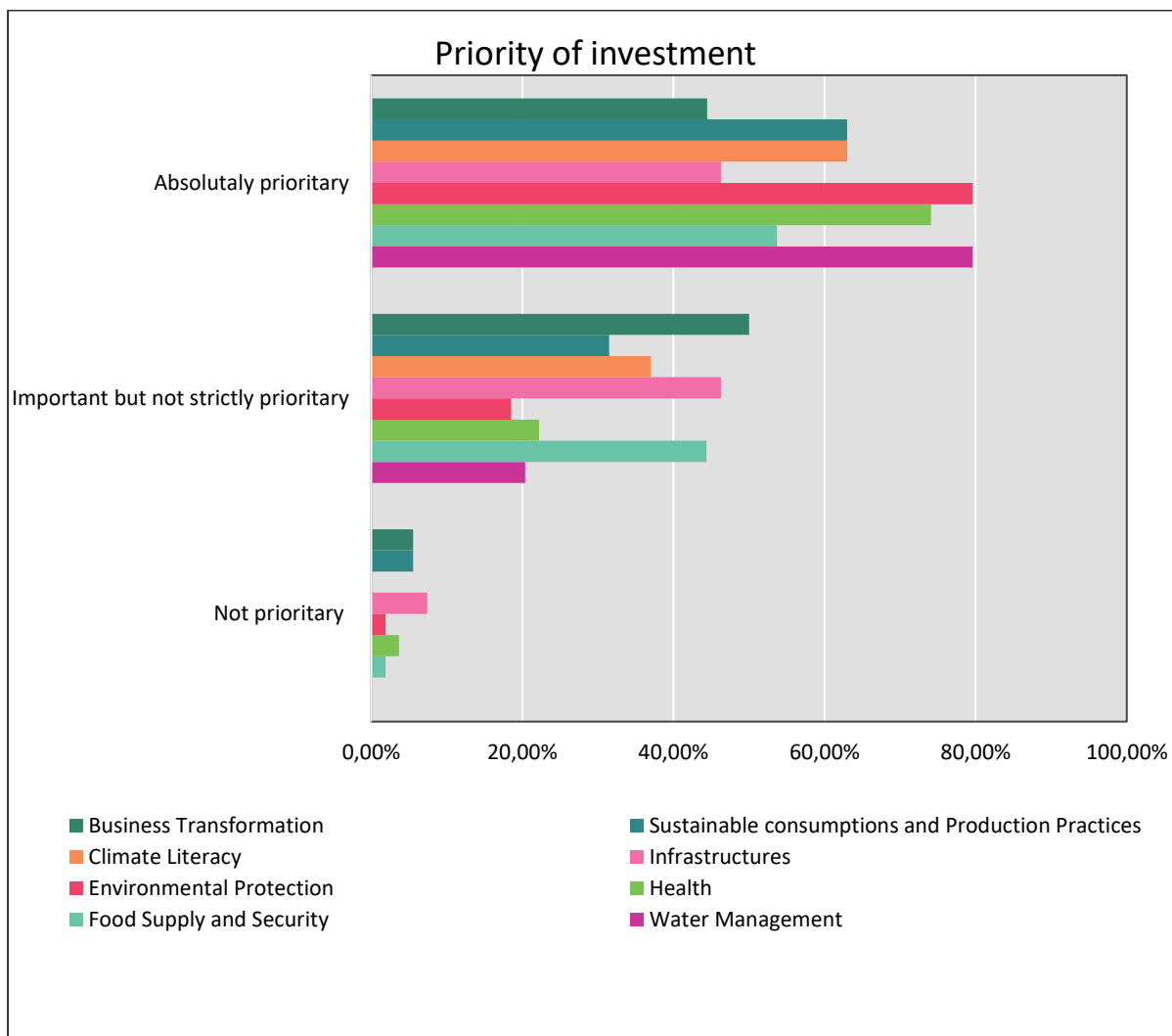


Data shows a trend that if carried over to larger numbers would signal a worrying sign that society, unlike governments, is seen as less aware of climate change issues. Only 20% of respondents think that society has a good level of awareness of climate change phenomenon, while almost 70% think that there is a minimal perception of the problem.





Moving on the degree of confidence that youth and youth workers can be effectively heard as concerns climate change issues, the data shows an important lack of trust. 40% don't believe at all that their voices are heard at any level of government, while 37% thinks that their voices can minimally influence climate change interventions. This could in a long-term perspective to a potential fracture within the society.



Finally analyzing the priority of investments, the data shows that the 3 top results are investments in Water Management, Environmental Protection and Health, followed by Climate Literacy and Sustainable consumptions and Production Practices. According to the respondents, the less important topic to be address is Business Transformation.

Short-term recommendations

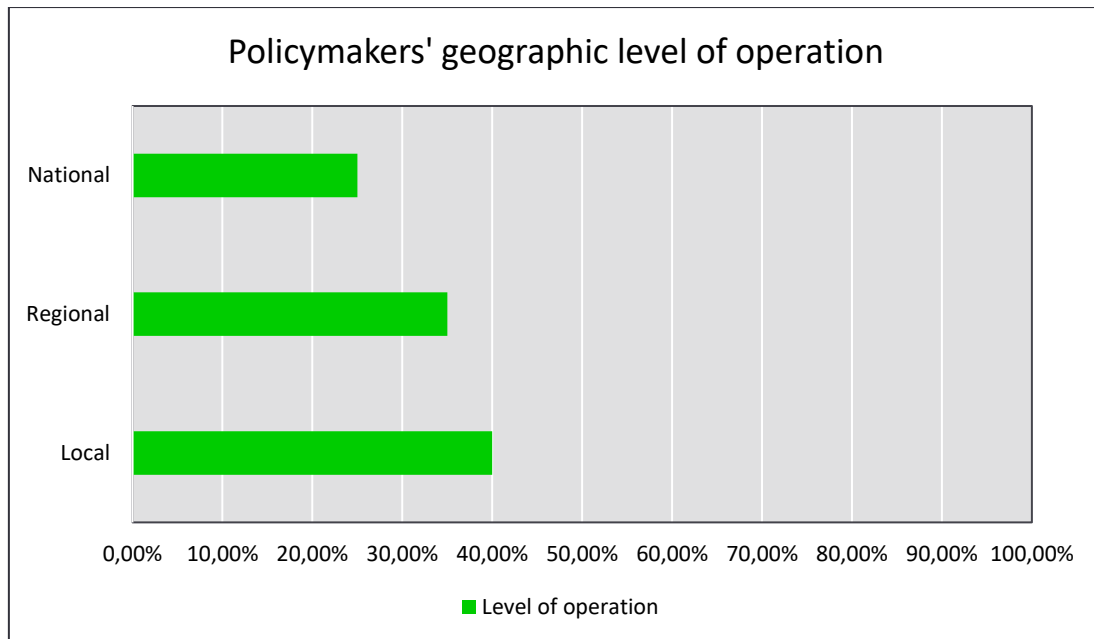
1. *Promote the idea that overconsumption is killing our land and that reducing consumption is important.*
2. *Decision makers and youth organizations should work together and support each other's work. The recommendations work at both levels and complement each other with different activities.*
3. *Focus on real recycling, with investments in the development of technological innovations and the introduction of "repair and reuse" practices.*
4. *Investments on green urban infrastructures and building, leading to a wide spread of green cities models.*
5. *Reduce emissions from transport, encouraging alternative modes of urban transport and/or providing economic incentives for non-thermal vehicles.*
6. *Promote sustainable food supply, encouraging and informing about access to local products and reduce the excesses of current consumption.*
7. *Increase the information and awareness raising activities, especially towards adult sector of society, considered the less interested in the countering of climate change drivers.*
8. *More serious and adequate engagement of policy and decision-makers to implement regulations and adopted policies.*

Long-term recommendations

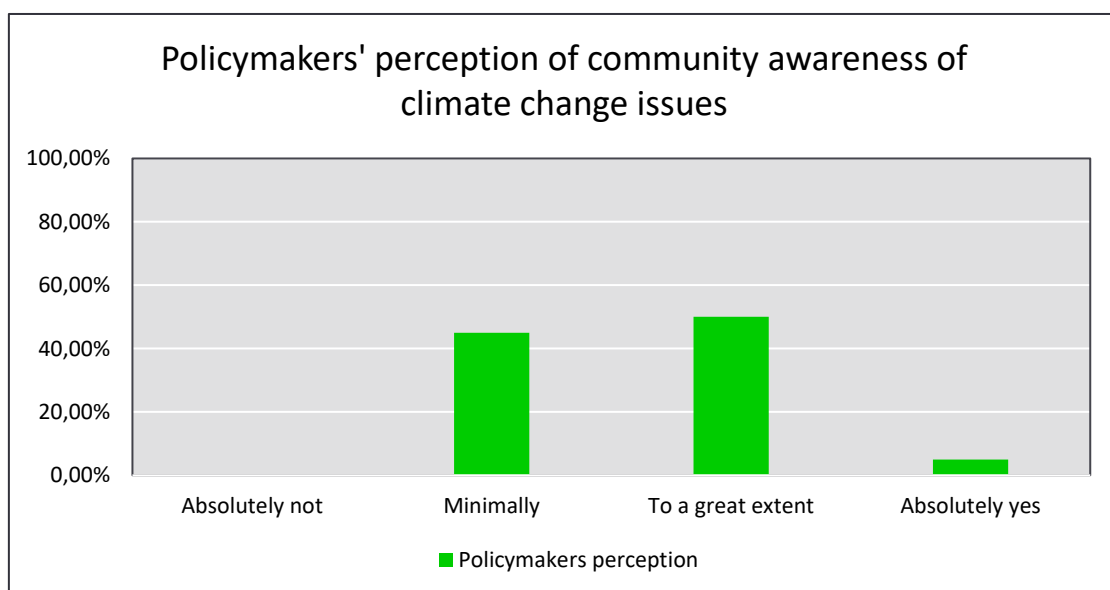
1. *Long-term plans should focus more on shaping legislation and national strategies, but NGOs working with young people also should have an important role to play.*
2. *Introduction of education in environmental protection and sustainable development from the earliest possible age with gradual deepening of theoretical and practical knowledge until completion of secondary education.*
3. *Changing business models and business structures*
4. *Draw on successful examples from other countries where the voice of young people is heard and taken into consideration in decision-making processes.*
5. *Encourage agriculture that preserves and stimulates soil life, such as permaculture, rather than the artificial food production*

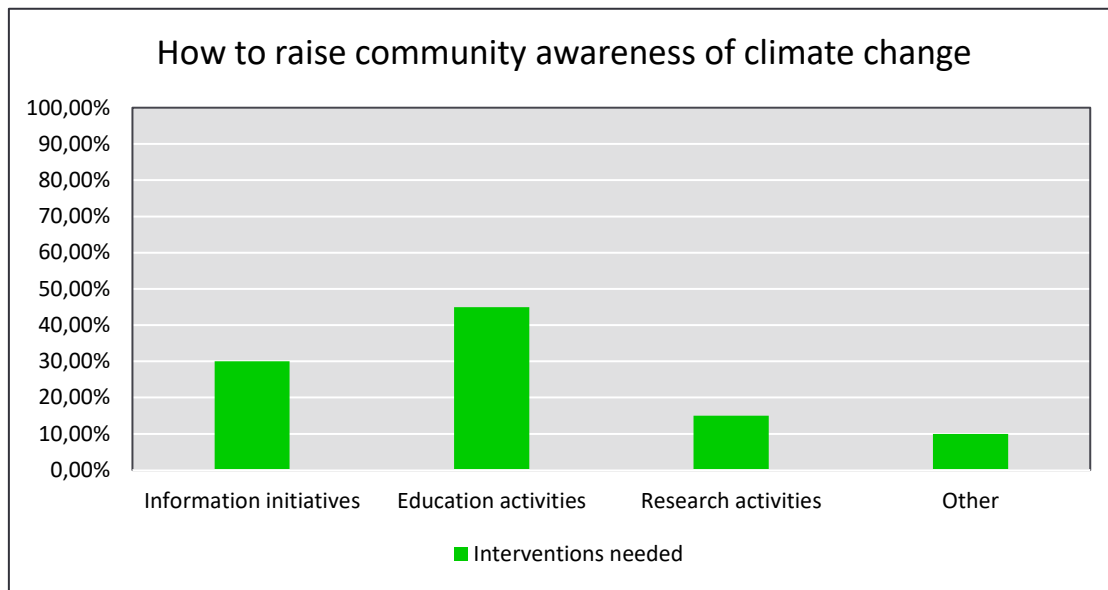
Recommendations for and by policymakers

A specific questionnaire has been prepared to address policymakers. They were asked to present initiatives, if relevant, aimed to address climate change drivers, to prioritize the sector where to invest and to implement most of the initiatives and the steps needed to guarantee a sustainable and secure future for those who will inherit the environment. Results and some quotes are reported below.

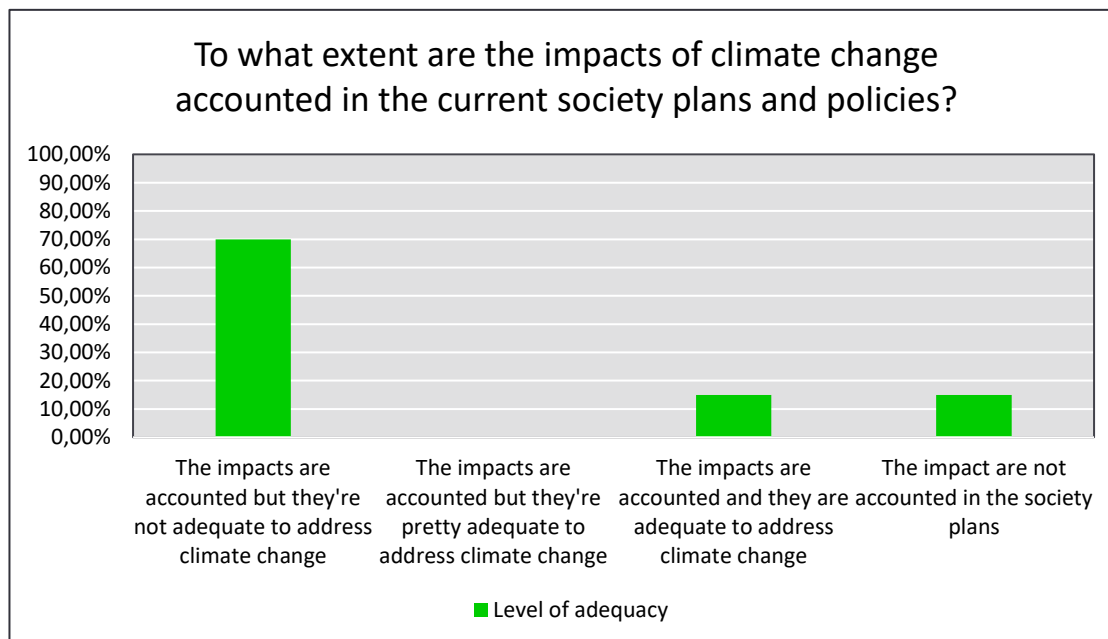


The first elements we tried to analyze were their perception of society awareness and the initiatives that could lead in a long-term perspective to involve and actively engage the community as agent of change in the tackling of climate change drivers.





The two charts show an incongruence and an element of continuity with the data that emerged from the questionnaire aimed at youth and youth workers. As concerns the level of awareness there is an important difference to mention: according to policymakers' perspective, the communities they manage are aware of climate change issues, while the perception of the youngsters and youth workers was opposite. The element of continuation is the relevance of the role of education in the policy implementation: about 50% of respondents consider education activities the main intervention to potentially increase the community's level of awareness.





The chart shows data that can open a topic of discussion: only 15% of policymakers who responded the questionnaire thinks that the impact of climate change are accounted and adequate to address the phenomenon, but the interesting data is that **70% of them believe that the impacts are accounted but they're not adequate to address climate change.**

Finally, the policymakers were asked to openly express about the following statement:

*“Countering climate change with the transition to an equitable and sustainable system cannot happen without the transformation of finance, also going against the phenomena of **greenwashing**”*

Below some of the comments

Big companies take advantage of the image wash that green washing gives them while perpetuating **unsustainable policies** in other areas of society.

Climate transition must take place in all areas and especially in finance, since it is finance that will finance projects and determine the **profitability of the investment.**

Greenwashing is unfortunately common and several measures should be applied, like the building of the so-called **environmental state.**

Policy recommendations

1. *All people must have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Better agrifood policies are crucial to improving global food security.*
2. *Sticking to small habits. In this way, we can create in children the need to want to protect the environment themselves through a series of daily actions which may in their eyes have little importance. When a child is effectively impressed with the message we want to convey, the only thing certain is that he will follow our example, even when we are not present.*
3. *In order to achieve the direct promotion of sustainable development, existing institutions should be strengthened or new institutions should be created which will be aware of the internationalized economy, macroeconomic policy and the need to maintain social cohesion and general well-being of both the current as well as future generations.*
4. *Individual blame cannot be placed as the change needed is structural, so without the intervention and awareness of governments and big business, real change is a long way off.*
5. *A comprehensive approach with a complete transformation in all spheres is needed, given their interconnection and interrelation.*
6. *Much more and better coordinated educational programs are needed. Environmental education is inevitable and should start from as young an age as possible. Different age groups should be offered different approaches, with continuous opportunities for age-appropriate involvement.*
7. *The reduction of energy use, selective waste collection should be awarded. Today's high energy prices are not driving green solutions, but a return to coal and wood heating, which is further worsening air quality. Instead, solar and other renewable energy sources must be made available to all.*
8. *Environmental legislation should be improved, addressing phenomena that are not under control, such as deforestation which needs to be stopped and become illegal.*
9. *Media and digital technologies must cover a pivotal role in the activity of awareness-raising, not only conveying negative messages, but also presenting immediate and simple solutions already tested and verified.*
10. *Involvement of economic players is most important because of the longer decision making process, so it would be necessary to encourage industrial players to reduce emissions and minimize waste and unused raw materials in production, thus reducing the environmental burden.*