European Youth and Climate Change

A Community Baseline



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People and Planet: A Common Destiny

Pan-European campaign to mobilise youth citizens and *glocal* (global + local) authorities in the fight against climate change

Our project

With the existing Climate Change scenario, by 2030, water scarcity in some arid and semi-arid places will displace up to 700 million people worldwide. Even though these are speculative numbers, the following years will be dramatic for our planet. It is a global problem that will affect every part of the world and its inhabitants. Therefore, we call on every citizen to understand their place in this process, to recognise how impactful their actions are, and to realise their power to make a change in our common destiny.

To raise awareness, empower and mobilise Young European citizens and decision-makers, our project will implement activities in 8 EU Member States (Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain) and Cape Verde between 2020 and 2024.

It aims to contribute positively to the sustainability of development policies at the glocal level and promote the participation of youth citizens as change-makers.

Our goals

Our project intends to raise awareness among European youth citizens about the challenges and consequences arising from climate change and, in this way, encourage them to take the lead in adopting more sustainable lifestyles.

Simultaneously to the mobilisation of European youth citizens, it also focuses on strengthening local decision-makers capacities to build more sustainable development policies while deepening their abilities to understand the intertwined relations established at the *glocal* level.

Our activities

A widespread pan-European awareness campaign named #WaterOfTheFuture focusing on the challenges and behaviours related to climate change, that plans to influence 59 million European youngsters and will be implemented in 8 EU Member States. From this general campaign, several other activities will emerge, namely street actions, advisory councils, activism labs, surveys and exchange programmes, focusing on the full spectrum of the SDGs.

A structured and sustainable coalition of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations will work together towards the informing and mobilising of its citizens regarding climate change and sustainable lifestyles.

Using innovative communication tools, dynamic methodologies for non-formal education, training and experience-sharing between partners, the project aims to contribute to:

- i. The enhancement of Local Authorities' potential in building and leading successful actions concerning the SDGs;
- ii. The promotion of Local Authorities' visibility as key actors in the implementation of national development strategies;
- iii. The support of initiatives aiming to establish stronger relations and links between Local Authorities and Non-State Organisations.

Our path

Our strategy, through participatory methodologies, directs its attention to the mobilisation of European youngsters calls on them to become key actors in the development and dissemination of campaigns about sustainability. This mobilisation strategy also considers the role of local decision-makers as key actors in disseminating sustainable values among their citizens.

The project will benefit multimedia tools and social media for the contact with the youth and will use methodological techniques suitable for training with Local Authorities personnel. Building the widespread campaign will consider all the information gathered and conclusions taken from previous projects on these topics and the contributions of the partners' experience.

Our impact

Implementation of a pan-European awareness campaign named #WaterOfTheFuture focusing on the challenges and behaviours related to climate change, that plans to influence 59 million European youth citizens and will be implemented in 8 EU member states and a structured and sustainable coalition of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations from 8 EU member states and Cape Verde that will work together towards the information and mobilisation of its citizens regarding climate change and sustainable lifestyles.

With the creation of a European Local Authorities coalition aware and capable of promoting development policies coherent and aligned with the SDGs and the mobilisation of a large group of European youth citizens capable of promoting and encouraging sustainable lifestyles and behaviours, this project aspires to mitigate or even halt the ongoing environmental degradation of the Planet Earth.

The European Commission's Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme (DEAR) supports projects that engage the European Union public in worldwide social, economic, and environmental development issues.

Our campaign

Water scarcity is one of the great challenges we must face now and in the years to come. "We are not camels" is the motto of the #WaterOfTheFuture campaign, launched on March 22nd 2022. It aims to address issues in the public agendas, helping to change consciences and, above all, each person's behaviour.



Brief descriptionof the national context

How is Germany doing: GHG emissions

As one of the largest economies in the world, Germany has contributed 4.6 per cent to global warming since the beginning of industrialisation around 1850. Currently, Germany is responsible for almost two per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and is thus among the top 10 countries with the highest greenhouse gas emissions. Germany's annual per capita CO2 emissions are around 8.5 tonnes, which is 3.6 tonnes higher than the global average of 4.9 tonnes.

Between 2009 and 2017, emissions in Germany barely fell. In recent years, Germany has been able to further reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.7 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019 and by 40 per cent compared to 1990.³

Current government action to tackle climate change and water scarcity (key policies and action plans, national and within EU)

In autumn 2019, the German government adopted the Climate Protection Programme 2030. The core elements of the programme are

- CO2 pricing for heat and transport as of 2021
- emission reduction measures for the energy, industry, buildings, transport, agriculture, forestry and waste management sectors; and
- the first Federal Climate Protection Act. With this law, Germany's climate protection targets for 2030 are legally binding for the first time at the federal level. It defines how measures to combat global warming must be implemented and monitored.

In May 2021, the Federal Government submitted an amendment to the Climate Protection Act. The following changes and thus new climate targets are envisaged:

- Previously, 55 per cent of CO2 emissions were to be saved by 2030; now, it is 65 per cent.
- By 2040, 88 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions are to be saved.
- Germany is to be climate-neutral by 2045 (previously 2050).⁴

Climate change is also a huge challenge for water management. Summers in Germany are getting hotter and drier. Heavy rainfall is becoming more frequent, snow less frequent. Groundwater levels are falling, soil moisture is decreasing, and drought threatens crops and forests. According to an analysis of official data by the WWF, more than one third of German groundwater is in poor chemical condition. The main reason for this is the high nitrate inputs from agriculture, caused by an excess of fertilisers. The analysis also states that Germany is failing to meet the targets of the EU Water Framework Directive.

To master these challenges, the Federal Ministry for the Environment presented a draft of the "National Water Strategy" in 2021. It is based on the results of a two-year National Water Dialogue where multiple stakeholders compiled the most significant challenges and goals for the development of water management. The National Citizens' Dialogue on Water contributed further ideas and collected the people's demands on politicians. Ten different strategic steps are intended to help keep groundwater and water bodies cleaner, avoid overloading water resources, and adapt existing water management to the consequences of climate change and changing demographics. The steps shall be implemented by 2050.⁵

Role of youth in this context (e.g. organisation of youth consultation for VNRs or other government-led initiatives)

Protecting the environment and climate is a top issue for young people in Germany. They expect politicians to do more for the climate and the environment. And they see potential in every individual to behave in a more environmentally friendly way. These are some of the representative youth study "Future? Ask Youth" results published on behalf of the Federal Environment Ministry and the Federal Environment Agency in January 2020.

Germany's most significant climate action group is Fridays for Future (FfF). Inspired by Greta Thunberg, the movement consists mainly of pupils and university students. Fridays for Future has inspired some spin-offs, such as Scientists for Future and Parents for Future. Aside from the school strikers, active climate groups in Germany include the direct-action group Extinction Rebellion and the anti-fossil fuel activists of Ende Gelände, known for blocking coal mines.

In April 2021, the Federal Constitutional Court declared the Federal Government's Climate Protection Act unconstitutional in parts, thus strengthening climate protection in Germany. The law must now be amended by the end of 2022 at the latest. The lawsuit was mainly filed by young people who were supported by several environmental associations. Climate activists from Fridays for Future have also presented a list of demands for the first 100 days of a new German government.⁶

http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/en/CO2-emissions

https://www.bmuv.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pools/Broschueren/klimaschutz_zahlen_2021_bf.pdf

https://www.bmuv.de/pressemitteilung/treibhausgasemissionen-sinken-202

https://www.lpb-bw.de/klimaschutz-deutschland#c72176

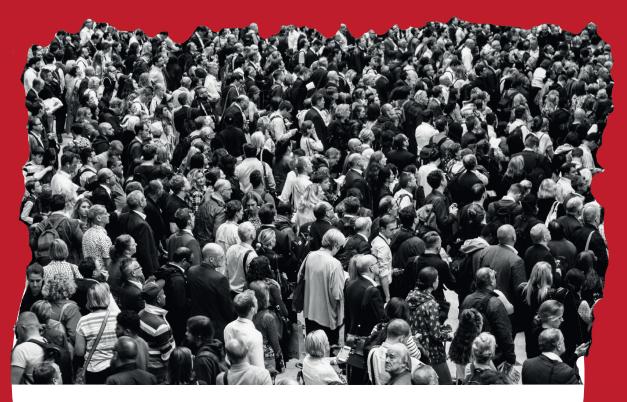
5 https://www.bmuv.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Download_PDF/Binnengewaes ser/kurzfassung_wasserstrategie_bf.pdf

https://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/fluesse-seen/wasser-politik-maerkte/wasserrahmen-richtlinie/zustand-der-gewaesser-in-deutschland

https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/klimaschutzgesetz-bundesverfassungsg ericht-101.html

https://www.cleanenergywire.org/dossiers/youth-climate-movement-pushes-germany-step-ambition

https://www.ioew.de/vortrag/jugendstudie_zukunft_jugend_fragen_ergebnis se_einer_studie_mit_14_bis_22_jaehrigen_zu_umwelt_und_klimathemen



Demographic characteristics of survey participants

By opting to use an online survey, there is always some level of sample skewness, as it is a convenience sampling method. The dissemination process partially explains the gender imbalance of the sample (a convenience sampling created through the partners' communication channels). The vast majority of the survey participants are female (65%).

However, interesting insights from different sources also address gender equity. The Women's Forum for Economy and Society barometer on gender equity (AAVV, 2021) found that women — more often than men — have changed their behaviour to decrease their carbon dioxide emissions by recycling, buying local, and reducing water and meat consumption.

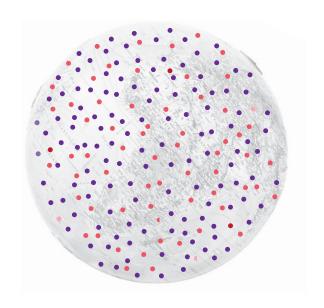
On average, women are slightly more likely than men to be concerned about the environment and have stronger pro-climate opinions and beliefs. Scholars have proposed several explanations for this gender gap, including differences in gender socialization and resulting value systems (e.g., altruism, compassion), perceptions of general risk and vulnerability, and feminist beliefs, including a commitment to egalitarian values of fairness and social justice (Ballew, Marlon, Leiserowitz and Maibach, 2018).

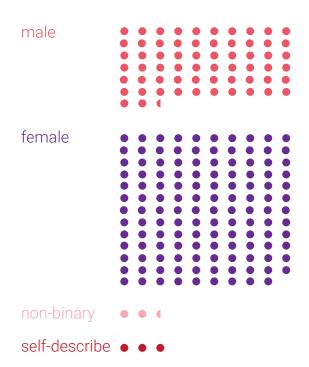
Women's Forum proposes that we examine different stages to properly understand the degree of gender equality in the decision process.

These should include research, technical, and development policy recommendations.

Having equal male and female decision-makers will include:

- The high value and richness of diversity.
- The different perceptions and attitudes in front of the same problem.
- Therefore valuing different sensitivities in the development of solutions.





Base: All respondents (N= 616)

Chart 1.1.
Baseline survey results.

Demographic characteristics
of survey participants.

Gender



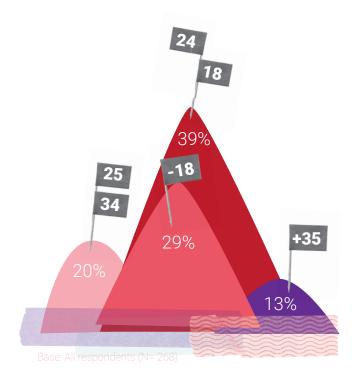


Chart 1.2. Baseline survey results. **Demographic characteristics of survey participants. Age**

According to the project's goals, our sample includes 87% of young European citizens (YEC - under 35 years), and the most significant group age is from the population aged between 18-24 yo (38.5%).

According to the UN's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change Outcome Report (AAVV, 2020), working together has multiple facets for the youth:

- First, it is about sharing ideas and practices in climate education.
- Secondly, it gives no actor a free pass on not delivering on their climate commitments.
- Thirdly, working together requires ample intergenerational dialogue, a racially diverse discussion, inclusion of LGBTQ+, indigenous and traditional people, people with special needs, refugees and IDP (internally displaced people).

According to the Youth Study by TUI Stiftung (2019), most young people are quite optimistic about their expectations for the future. Young people perceive the issues of Climate protection and environmental policy (55%) and Digitisation (45%) rather as opportunities than as a threat (AAVV, 2019: 6).

Most of the participants are students (44%) either non-working (32%), with a full-time job (2%) or a part-time (11%). There is also a significant amount of participants that work full or part-time without any other secondary occupation (28%). The remaining participants are volunteers (8%), are doing an internship (1%) or actively looking for a job (1%).

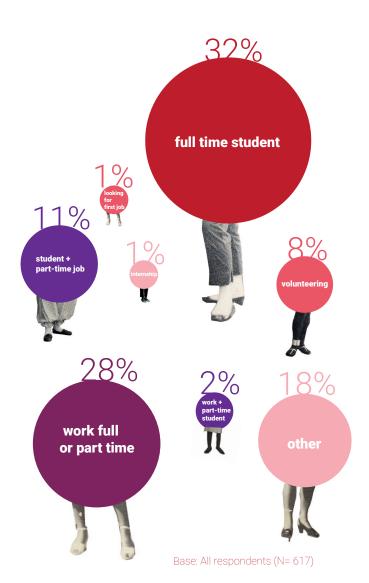


Chart 1.3. Baseline survey results.

Demographic characteristics
of survey participants.

Main occupation





Individual action

Geiger et al. (2018) define sustainable consumption as a behaviour associated with a long-term understanding of the consequences of individual consumption. It is a deeply personal and complex decision-making process related to changes in consumer behaviour - such as purchasing certain products (Chen et al., 2018) and reducing consumption (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

According to Capiene et al. (2021), pro-environmental and pro-social consumer engagement starts with changes to personal behaviour expressed through consumption.

This substantiates in three distinct dimensions:

- Participation (e.g., in events related to pro-environmental and pro-social issues);
- Social connections (by interacting and engaging others);
- And the conscious focusing of attention (interest in pro-environmental and pro-social issues).

never sometimes

always

Voluntary ecological year. Survey participant,18-24 yo, student

The most common pro-environmental activities among the participants seem to be related to water saving, since 96% of the participants say that they always turn off the tap while brushing the teeth and 90% assume taking showers instead of baths. Our results suggest that recycling is also an important activity, with 70% of participants stating that they do it always and 28% sometimes. The less common activities are the active participation in environmental campaigns (11%, always) and the consumption of local (25%, always) or fair trade products (22%, always).



Kola-Olusanga (2018) refers to the importance of educational campaigns to contextualise environmentally conscious young people. According to this researcher, it is essential to provide theoretical knowledge and environmental experiences to have a behavioural impact.

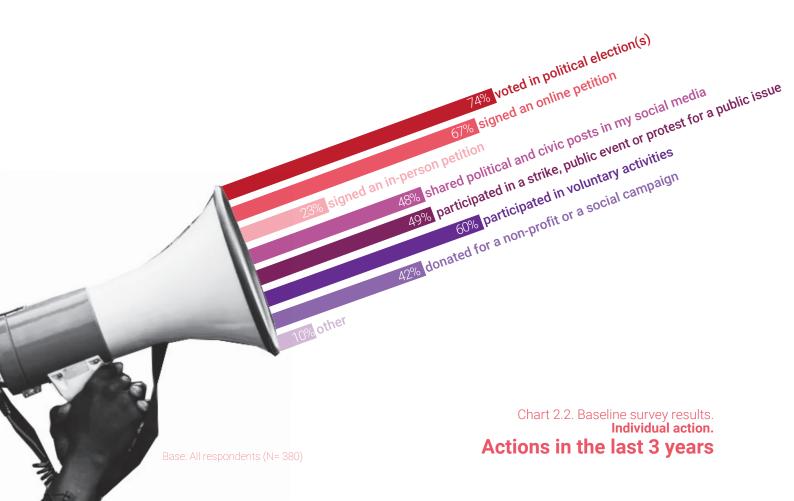
Global agendas and policies seem to have a more lasting impact on the survey participants. These findings concur with Kola-Olusanga's research, describing how young adults generally agree that the term "climate change" refers to an increase in temperature resulting from the trapping of carbon dioxide and atmospheric pollution that poses a great danger to the continuation of life and the survival of planetary functions.

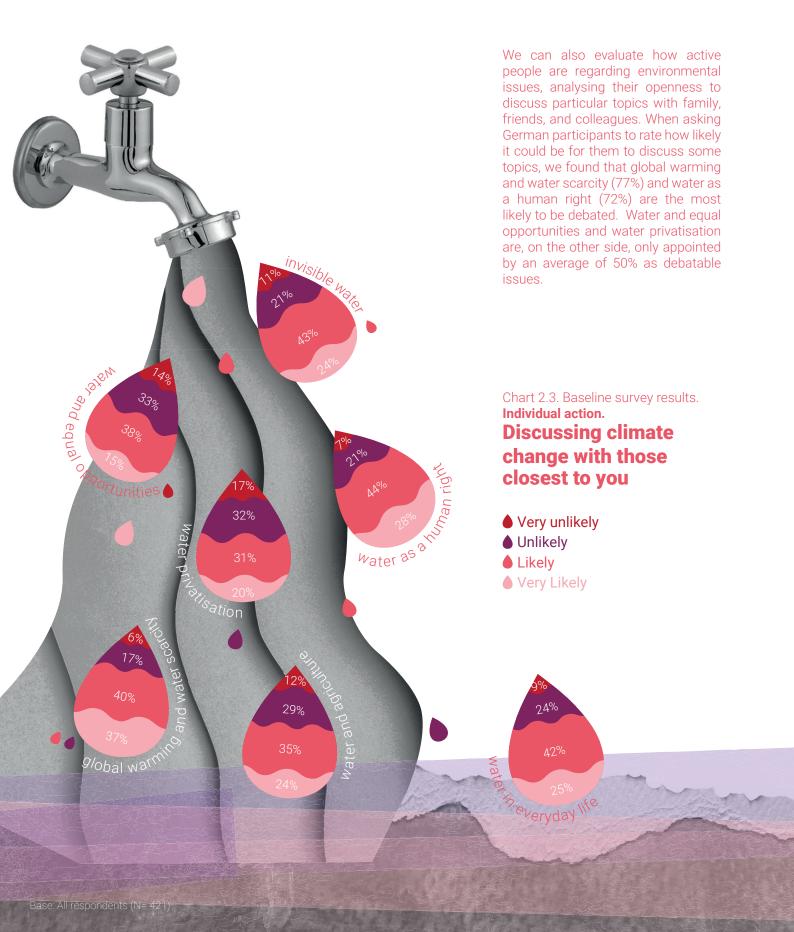
In September 2019, the Global Youth Climate Action Declaration (22) called for urgent action to achieve the long-term goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement (23) through ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to efficiently reduce carbon emissions and reach the net zero target by 2050. (24) Young activists recognise their key role in mobilizing governments and decision-makers to deliver on the NDC targets at the national level and to ensure accountability for climate action across all the SDGs (AAVV, 2021).

Organize Climate Change Festival annually on a fixed day in all cities in Germany --> invite people from various fields to present their work at a booth, e.g. local politicians, farmers, mobility representatives, representatives of an energy cooperative, teachers, students.... --> think together: What do we want/can we do/change locally? How would we like to live? --> different actions e.g. put up a climate tree: Hang cards onto it --> What do I do for the climate? What would I like to see from politicians and companies in terms of action against climate change?

Survey participant,18-24 yo, student

Regarding public actions related to climate issues, the German sample reports significant levels of participation, namely by voting in political election(s) at the local, regional, national, or EU level (74%), joining online petitions at the local, regional, national, or EU level (67%) or, to a lesser extent, by collaborating in voluntary activities (60%). On the other hand, the activities that the respondents assume to have joined less in the last three years we can find the in-person petitions (23%) as well as non-profit or a social campaign donation (40%).







Free online courses for students. Sharing information on climate change and suggestions on how to take action against it as an individual (or as a community).

Survey participant, under 18 yo, student

- A) Build striking mountains:
- 1) Pile up the discarded products from supermarkets inside a radius of 1 km
- 2) Compare 3 mountains: food in packaging, food only, packaging only
- B) Microscopic life in water in time-lapse: compare water with and without cigarette butts on a screen.

Survey participant, 35 yo or older, employed

Climate change is the topic that joins more consensus amongst the survey participants as a topic worth joining advocacy campaigns (81%). The other topics gathering high referral are pollution (66%) and discrimination (60%). Accounting for the age distribution of our sample, it is particularly interesting to find that access to education is mentioned as a topic worthwhile joining an advocacy campaign for 51%.

These findings are consistent with the research undertaken by Kaiser and Byrka (2011) and Kadic-Maglajlic et al. (2019), that distinguish two simbiotic types of engagement in sustainable consumption: pro-environmental and pro-social engagement.

Yet, children and young people have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes in all parts of the world. A paradigm shift is occurring, as society is starting to recognise them as social actors and citizens. The importance of hearing their voices individually and collectively is beginning to be felt within development policy and practice, local governance, education systems (O'Kane, 2003).





Knowledge and perception about climate change



Base: All respondents (N= 461)

Chart 3.1. Baseline survey results. Perceptions about Climate Change. Statements concerning climate change. Average

According to the Eurobarometer, we can outline three ideas for the future of Europe that are central for young people:

- The promotion of critical thinking and the ability to search for information to combat fake news and extremism;
- Easy access to information for young people who want to move and work abroad to encourage youth employment;
- Promoting behaviour change through environmentally friendly projects such as sustainable transport or recycling systems across Europe.

Our participants from Germany are aware of the impact of climate change in all aspects of global life. The items more believed more to be true refer to the knowledge that Climate change has had an impact on every ocean and every continent over the last few decades (95%) and those relative to human role either as the origin of climate change (92%) but also as able to deliver change (92%).

The EU should not allow imports that are not produced in a climate-neutral way!
Survey participant, 35 yo or older, pensioner

It is also relevant to understand how these perceptions about the climate change phenomena are affecting the participants personal lives and experiences. To address such conceptions the survey included questions that specifically request the participants to evaluate the perceived impact in a number of dimensions. The results are insightful about the participants concerns, revealing that, in average, 89% of the participants recognize some kind of impact of the listed climate change phenomena.

The items selected as more impactful, meaning that they are classified as having a major impact more often, are the Rising temperatures (67%), the Declining in the bee population (67%) and the Air pollution (58%). Probably related to the geographical position of Germany, with a short coastline, almost a quarter of the sample does not recognize the rising sea levels as affecting them personally. In the same manner, the Melting of the glaciers and Water scarcity are classified as active stressors by "only" 85% of the sample.

When requested to rate how worrisome the same phenomena related to climate change are from a national perspective, the participants from Germany believe that the Declining bee population (82%), Soil degradation (78%) and Rising temperatures (75%) are the most impactful phenomena for their country.

Overall, the German participants recognise the major impact of climate change both at a personal and at a national level. Acknowledging the environmental issues that we are facing may be seen as a very important step, since it may ground future climate advocacy and action. In the following we will present results related to these shared perception about whom is best equipped to fight climate change.

Chart 3.2.1. Baseline survey results.

Perceptions about climate change.

Climate change impact
in your own life
and the people closest to you

Chart 3.2.2. Baseline survey results.

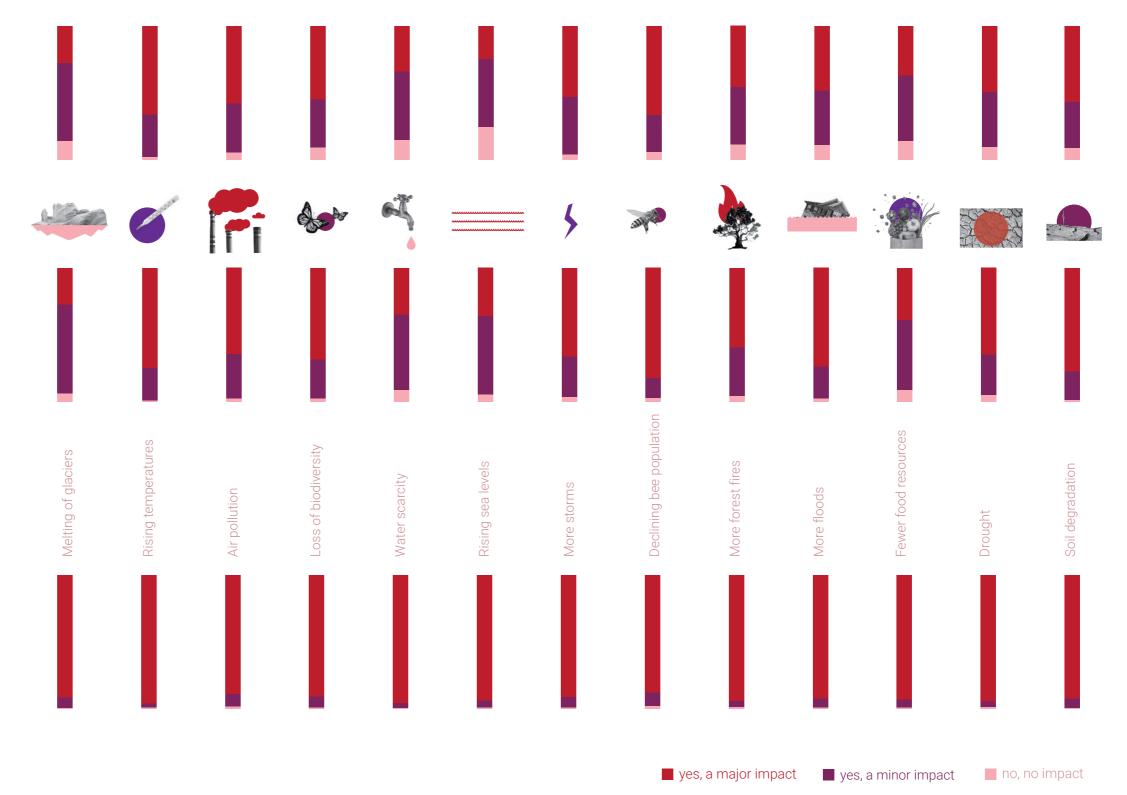
Perceptions about climate change.

Climate change impact in your country

Chart 3.2.3. Baseline survey results.

Perceptions about climate change.

Global climate change impact



Rase: All respondents (N= 450





Policy awareness and action

Since policy awareness is crucial for social advocacy to exist, we investigated participants' knowledge at this policymaking level. To some extent, the level of knowledge that each participant has may limit or enhance their potential as a young activist, with individual advocacy priorities and action capabilities.

German participants believe to have policy awareness, with almost 90% stating that they know global policies or activities to reduce climate change.

Such level of awareness decreases when the question is framed at a national level, with only 73% recalling policies of actions implemented by Germany to address climate change.

Such result may be due to the active targeting of children and younger citizens by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, such positioning regarding the youngsters is clearly present in the following statement from Agenda 2030:

"The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation, who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible"

In my opinion, waste separation must be mandatory in all public institutions, especially schools, universities, train stations etc. Educational institutions in particular should set a good example.

Survey participant, 25-34 yo, student and part-time emploeyed

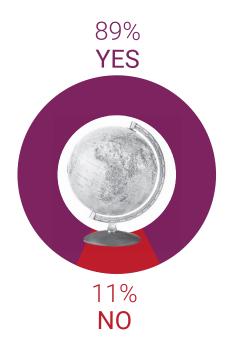


Chart 4.1. Baseline survey results.

Policy Awareness and Action.

Participants' knowledge about global policies or initiatives to reduce climate change



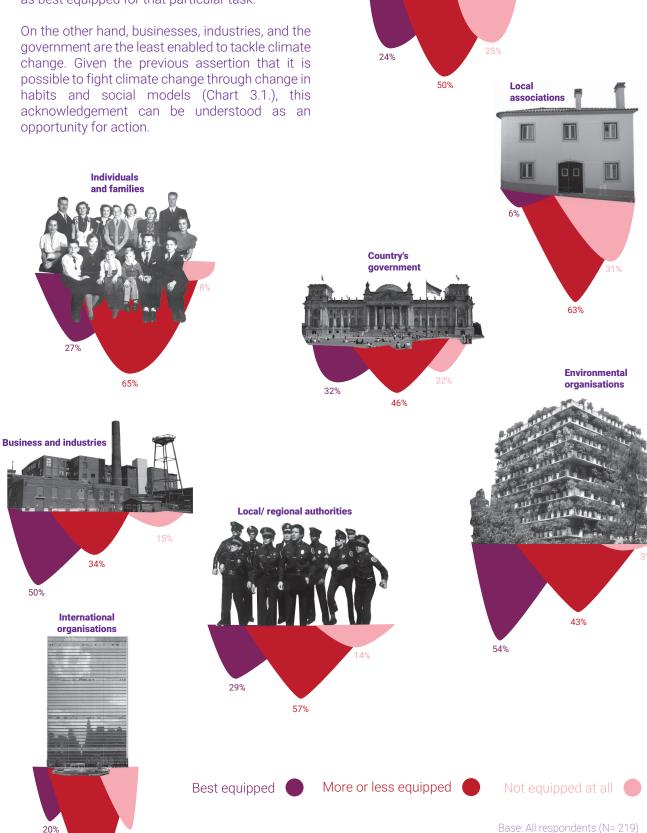
Chart 4.2. Baseline survey results.

Policy Awareness and Action.

Participants' knowledge about environmental policies in your country

The survey participants seem to link expertise and capacity to fight climate change, as they identify the environmental and international organisations as best equipped for that particular task.

54%



European Institutions

Base: All respondents (N= 219)

Chart 4.3. Baseline survey results. **Policy Awareness and Action.** Who is best equipped for fighting climate change



Through education and school curricula



58%

Large-scale
campaigns





Other 28%

Base: All respondents (N= 452)

Chart 4.4. Baseline survey results.

Policy Awareness and Action.

What would motivate people to act on climate change

Multiple answers possible

According to the UN's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change Outcome Report (AAVV, 2020), investments in green jobs are prioritized on the youth agenda, as climate anxiety is currently intertwined with uncertainty about the future of jobs, and these can be enhancers of both sustainability and competitiveness credentials of their countries.

81% of the German participants believe that Education and scholar curricula could motivate people to become more active about climate change, 58% believe that large scale campaigns could be effective and 48% highlight the need for scientific information sources to provide more information. On a more punitive manner 60% believe that this change in behavioural patterns could be triggered by an increase in fines and other penalties.

Also, to enhance population mobilization and action, participants were requested to state how can local authorities can support sustainability campaigns and other related initiatives by youngsters. The most referred measures relate to the need to engage this group in community based funded projects (66%) and special youth committees (64%). Importantly, only 7% of the participants believe that youngsters are not interested in any kind of support.



Participatory or community-based funding projects



Financial support



Participation in decision and policy-making through special youth committees



Capacity building and networking events



Facilities for meetings and activities



Participation in decision and policy-making through general committees



Young people are not interested in these means of support

Chart 4.5. Baseline survey results. **Policy Awareness and Action.**

How can local authorities support young people's sustainability campaigns and other sustainable activities

Multiple answers possible

Base: All respondents (N= 406)

From the advocacy suggestions, the majority of respondents highlight the need for effective communication, for example, a clear, simple and relatable transmission of information, in which anyone, regardless of their experience, understands it. Also, importantly, the need for proper schools and adequate education was the second most mentioned suggestion, meaning that besides having access to information, people need the ability to grasp such information.

Posters with short, concise and drastic messages that shake up the people who still believe that this is not THEIR problem. Unfortunately, they can only be won over by the argument of money or health. So no lecturing, but facts and figures: what will happen in five, ten years (most people can't think in the long term) if we don't stop this, how many heat deaths? migration? Link to Corona: what will happen if we invade more and more habitats and exploit nature? In my surroundings, I experience this every day: due to the 'threat' being not real nor drastic enough for many, they think that it's funny that I don't eat meat, and that's where it stops. Looking away has to be made more difficult.

Survey participant, 35 yo or older, employed

Project week with an everyday focus - statistics on carbon footprint and ways to reduce it (in a simple way); organize school activities:

organize school activities:
Collect plastic waste within a week and
evaluate what could be left out//
Avoid plastic waste by everyone making a
conscious effort to bring reusable boxes/
bottles;...

Survey participant, 25-34 yo, employed

-Do not punish young people for participating in demonstrations and strikes -More education in schools about climate change and climate-just solutions -Do not start projects that individualize the climate crisis.

Survey participant, under 18 yo, student

At last, possible conservation themes were suggested by the participants.

The most referred themes relate to areas where the individuals and the households can intervene directly, such as water, food and waste management, transportation and sustainable mobility and the 4 R's.

Also, in the top of the mind of our respondents is the forest conservation.



Useful resources





Useful resources for individual action

considering national, European and international

77 climate protection tips for individuals in the German language

https://www.nabu.de/umwelt-und-ressourcen/klima -und-luft/klimawandel/06740.html

The Voluntary Ecological Year is a voluntary service in nature and environmental protection in Germany. Young people between 16 and 27 years old can complete it

https://foei.de/foei-2/

Background information on climate change and migration from finep

https://finep.org/finep-macht-projekte/hochschule-u nd-globale-nachhaltigkeit/linkliste-klima-und-migrati on/

Signing petitions that can have an impact on regional, national or European policies

Participate in local or regional youth (climate)

Youth participation service unit Germany https://www.servicestelle-jugendbeteiligung.de/

Voting in local, regional, national and European elections

Useful resources for community action

considering national, European and international



Activist groups

Fridays for Future, Parents for Future, Scientists for Future.

Only Germany

Extinction Rebellion, Ende Gelände, RobinWood, German Zero, Transition Town

Environmental NGO's

Greenpeace, Germany Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union Germany (NABU)

Join NGOs that engage in water topics, such as Viva con Agua

https://www.vivaconagua.org,

Fight climate change by drinking tap water The German non-profit association a tip: tap advises organisations, companies or municipalities on switching from bottled to tap

https://atiptap.org/projekte/wasserwende/

Participate in the movement of Blue Communities

https://canadians.org/bluecommunities

Participate in Community Supported Agriculture

