



# Ways of Developing Young People's Environmental Awareness, Green Competences and Ambassadorship

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## Introduction

Climate change and the depletion of natural resources require urgent action. The growing need for people to improve and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live, work and act in a sustainable manner. In June 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a Recommendation on Learning for Green Transformation and Sustainable Development.

Green Competences refer to a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live, work, and act in a sustainable and resource-efficient manner. These competences are essential for addressing environmental challenges and promoting a healthier planet. Simply put, green skills encompass the knowledge, abilities, values, and attitudes needed to support a sustainable and resource-efficient society.

*The study focuses on the ways of developing young people's environmental awareness, green competences and ambassadorship.*

The paper aims to answer a number of questions: In what ways are environmental awareness and green competences developed? Who are the "Green" people - they are few and far between among young people. What issues do they address and how?

The study carried out in the context of International Project - 2021-1-HU01-KA220-HED-000027563 GreenCool - Let me influence your green self! - Skill development in the encouragement of mindset towards environmental awareness and sustainable development in the alliance of EcoC.

Study carried out in partnership with project partners: University of Pannonia – Faculty of Business and Economics (Hungary), Militos Consulting S.A. (Greece), West University of Timisoara (Romania), Vytautas Magnus University – Bioeconomy Development Faculty (Lithuania) ir University of Tartu (Estonia).

## Methodology

The research was carried out using methods of analysis and synthesis of scientific literature, comparison, structuring, interview and other research methods. The study and its data cover the period 2014-2023.



## Results

The Recommendation on Learning for Green Transformation and Sustainable Development (2022) notes that environmental awareness and green competences are important for the sustainability of our society and the well-being of the environment. It identifies a number of ways in which these competences can be developed.

**Table 1. The ways in which green competences can be developed**

The ways in which green competences can be developed	Explanation
<b>Knowledge dissemination and education</b>	Schools and universities can organise specific courses, seminars or projects on environmental education. This will help pupils and students to understand environmental challenges and possible solutions.
<b>Practical work</b>	Taking part in eco-projects, sustainability initiatives or voluntary work can help you gain practical knowledge and experience. This could include activities in nature conservation organisations, composting projects or forest management activities.
<b>Environmental values and attitudes</b>	Raising environmental awareness means developing positive attitudes towards the environment and conservation. This can be promoted through discussions, books, documentaries or simply by socialising with others who share similar values.
<b>Innovation and technology</b>	Green competences also include the ability to use the latest technologies and innovations for the benefit of the environment. This may relate to the use of renewable energy, the sustainability of food sources or clean transport choices.
<b>European programmes and funding</b>	The European Union is focusing on green transformation and sustainability education. The Erasmus+ programme also supports this area to promote environmental awareness and sustainability

One of the objectives of the study is to research the practices of Green Influencers, gathering information on the tools and techniques of influencers (opinion leaders), the means and methods of communication, and the channels of youth communication that might be available in the 21st century.

The study revealed that young people use a variety of social networking platforms to publish their thoughts and communicate their feelings, to follow opinion leaders, friends and trends, and to seek information on various topics. Instagram is the most preferred platform, followed by Facebook, You Tube and TikTok, although the latter varies from country to country. Interestingly, WhatsApp, Telegram and Twitter are only used in specific countries. In terms of communication methods, which Instagram finds creative, TikTok finds funny but very powerful when it comes to specific videos (e.g. green themes), You Tube is perfect for storytelling that is relevant and gives the audience what they want instantly. It is noticeable that FB sub-groups are for information and sharing events. Younger people, children use Snapchat and mainly in Lithuania, while LinkedIn and Pinterest are very rarely used.

## Results

The research found that an influencer is a person who shares an opinion or makes and acts to influence others to share further or take specific actions. The influence of influencers is highest in Hungary and lowest in Estonia. Interesting topics, quality photos and entertaining content are the main reasons why young people choose to follow influencers. The most influential opinion leaders are those who inspire people, build trust and share unique experiences. Interestingly, most of the influencers surveyed do not consider themselves influencers, but rather opinion sharers or opinion leaders who have the knowledge and skills to mobilise others and lead by example on an important societal issue such as the Environment.

Based on the results of the research carried out, the ECOC Greenfluencer programme proposes to include 12 communication tools and 10 green issues. Based on the results of the conducted research, it is proposed to include 12 communication tools and 10 green issues in the ECOC Greenfluencer programme (Table 2).

**Table 2. Communication techniques, structure of discourse, green topics**

Communication techniques and structure of discourse	Green topics
1. Storytelling on and offline	1. Nutrition and food-waste
2. Blogging/glossary writing	2. Sustainable fashion
3. Short film, video (You Tube, TikTok)	3. Urban lifestyles, sustainable public living
4. Instagram, Tik Tok techniques offline-acting	4. Responsible consumption: small household habits, individual's responsibility
5. How to create powerful picture content	5. Energy saving and alternative energy: air and water quality and quantity
6. Elevator pitch	6. Collective social responsibility: individuals, companies and institutions
7. Pecha Kucha	7. Critical recycling techniques, waste management and circular economy,
8. Oxford debate	8. Climate-phobia and anxiety,
9. TED talk	9. Greenwashing and ethical thinking
10. Gamification	10. Green mobility
11. Communication with art and music	
12. Round-table discussion	

## Main conclusions

The green economy is growing much faster than other sectors. New jobs are being created by young people, the future leaders of the green economy, who are using their competences and skills to educate the public and promote sustainable living.

The main categories of competences that are in high demand in the context of the green economy have been identified: 1) Cognitive competences: understanding of the environment, willingness to learn about sustainable development and new technologies. These skills are needed to assess and understand the need for innovation and change; 2) social competences. Coordination and business management skills - to navigate between economic, social and environmental objectives; communication and negotiation skills - to reconcile conflicting interests in complex contexts; green marketing skills - to promote greener products and services; 3) personal competences. These include adaptive skills, transferable skills to help workers learn and apply new technologies necessary to "green" their work, and entrepreneurial skills to master innovative technologies; 4) technological competences related to knowledge of green, clean technologies, and the implementation of innovative production processes.

