

CLIMATE ACTION



Climate action

Successful experiences and promising practices from the 2021 EESC Civil Society Prize



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Foreword



Climate change is a defining challenge for humanity in the 21st century and we are now at a critical time: we must stop it, and this will require an immense effort from all nations and all actors.

The active participation of all parts of society – enterprises, researchers, consumers, communities, citizens and their organisations – is crucial in mobilising the transition to climate neutrality. It requires a shift from consultation and top-down engagement towards a model of co-design, co-creation and empowerment. It calls for direct dialogue on the importance of transitioning to more sustainable societies and healthier communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that joining forces and coordinating responses has added value. Positive stories are key to engaging people and organisations in the climate journey, giving them faith that the battle is far from lost.

This brochure presents a range of such positive stories. The outstanding examples of civil society engagement highlighted here demonstrate beyond any doubt that there is a will to bring about change, a wealth of ideas among our fellow citizens and the expertise to make it a reality. This is a shared challenge and only by working together can we rise to it. Let us use what we have learned from the COVID-19 crisis and use the recovery as an opportunity to tackle the climate crisis. We still have time to avert some of the worst consequences and to prepare for what is to come.

We offer our sincere congratulations to the winners of the 2021 Civil Society Prize, and our thanks to all the applicants and those who spread the word about the prize.

Cillian Lohan
EESC Vice-President

Towards a just transition

As the voice of organised civil society in Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) brings together employers, trade unions and the diverse interests represented in the economic, civic, professional and cultural fields. By enabling civil-society organisations from the Member States to express their views at the European level, the EESC contributes to strengthening the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the European Union and helps to ensure that European policies and legislation are a better fit with the economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground.

For more than 60 years, the Committee has fostered dialogue and consensus between the sectors that make up European society. EESC members represent a vast range of interests: community and youth organisations, consumer and professional associations, environmental campaigners, associations of disabled people, and many more.

It was to recognise civil society's best efforts towards European identity and citizenship that the EESC launched its annual Civil Society Prize back in 2006. The EUR-50 000 prize focuses on a different topic every year. This year's theme is climate action, celebrating effective and creative initiatives that promote a just transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

The EESC received over 50 entries from 24 EU Member States. They demonstrate value and creativity in a variety of areas, including reforestation, sustainable tourism, greening of industrial zones, youth activism, inclusion of people with disabilities, and cooling overheated cities. This brochure presents the five winning projects and gives an overview of the innovative approaches that civil society organisations are taking to tackle the climate emergency.



Breakdown of applications by country

Member state	Number of applications RECEIVED
Austria	1
Belgium	4
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	5
Cyprus	0
Czechia	2
Denmark	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
France	2
Germany	2
Greece	1
Hungary	3
Ireland	3
Italy	5
Latvia	1
Lithuania	1
Luxembourg	1
Malta	1
Netherlands	0
Poland	1
Portugal	3
Romania	3
Slovak Republic	2
Slovenia	3
Spain	5
Sweden	0

A time for cooperation

A [Eurobarometer survey](#) published in July 2021 shows that European citizens believe climate change is the single most serious problem facing the world. Climate change clearly threatens us all, but it has the most damaging effect on the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. It is therefore vital that the transition to a greener economy leaves no one behind.

The EESC strongly supports the [European Green Deal](#): the ambitious strategy for making the EU's economy sustainable, reaching climate neutrality in Europe by 2050 and ensuring the transition is just and inclusive. These ambitions will not be achieved by EU decision-makers alone. Delivering on its promises is a collective responsibility that calls for collaboration between and active participation across government, business and civil society. Whether farming, consumers, youth, liberal professions or social organisations, every socio-economic sector must be empowered to play a role in designing and implementing solutions.



Eurobarometer survey: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2273>

European Green Deal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

Citizen commitment and ambition

In its work, the EESC seeks to strengthen the voice and engagement of civil society. The Climate Pact – an EU initiative inviting communities and organisations to help shape a greener and more sustainable Europe – will focus on spreading awareness and supporting action while building on existing initiatives and empowering citizens to support systemic change. The EESC has called for the pact to enable climate action via education, capacity-building, removing barriers and facilitating access to finance.

With this in mind, the Committee has published multiple articles and opinions on climate change and the urgency with which it must be addressed. It believes citizens have the right to a healthy environment and to expect their governments to act.

In its [January 2021 opinion](#), the EESC insisted on increasing efforts to achieve intermediate targets in the EU's 2030 climate ambition, speeding up the process and placing citizens at the centre. Failure to do so threatens the EU's goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050. Ahead of the April 2021 Leaders' Climate Summit, the [EESC called for an ambitious and systemic approach](#) to ensure no one is left behind.

The Committee has also [called for greater youth involvement](#) in the move towards a more sustainable future. Implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals through the European Green Deal requires a new, intergenerational approach and a more inclusive governance model with young people at the heart of climate strategies. The EESC's Your Europe, Your Say 2021 event, which was modelled on the COP26 summit, invited students to share ideas on how to deal with the climate crisis and meet the 2050 goals. In July 2021, the Committee hosted the first round table bringing together young activists and EU decision-makers to discuss climate and sustainability policy. And for the first time, the EESC delegation to COP26 in November 2021 included a youth delegate.

'Talking and dialogue is essential, but the real measure of the success of this proposal will be in reflecting back to civil society that the youth sector has been heard and that consequential action has been taken. Europe, and the world, need ambition, leadership and action,' said Cillian Lohan, Vice-President of the EESC.

The challenge of responding effectively to the climate crisis has only just begun. But as the applications for this year's EESC prize demonstrate, citizens across the EU are committed to rising to the challenge and ensuring a fairer, greener future for all.

January 2021 opinion: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/stepping-europes-climate-ambition-communication>

The EESC called for an ambitious and systemic approach: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/adaptation-climate-change-vital-protecting-european-citizens-lives-and-livelihoods-eesc-calls-ambitious-and-systemic>

Greater youth involvement: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/without-youth-climate-strikes-europe-would-not-have-green-deal-today-its-time-now-give-youth-seat-table-stresses-eesc>

The Five Winning Projects

1st prize: Grootouders voor het Klimaat (Grandparents for the Climate) – BELGIUM

There are 2.4 million grandparents in Belgium, and elderly people's assets amount to an estimated EUR 910 billion. **Grootouders voor het Klimaat** is trying to harness these assets and invest them in a more sustainable future. The group is an association of grandparents in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, which works with Youth for Climate and other environmental organisations to boost support for an ambitious, fair climate policy at every political level. Winning the EESC prize means significant moral and financial support for its campaign.

The group's starting point is that everyone can contribute to addressing climate change, and that the older generation can be a huge part of the solution. To help make this happen, it promotes climate awareness among grandparents and financial literacy among pupils, encourages sustainable financial behaviour from investors and institutions, and calls for a shift from governments and banks towards sustainable finance and a climate-neutral society.



Its campaign 'Our Savings for Their Future' was launched in March 2021. In-depth analysis, a campaign video, open letters, a series of meetings and the website onzecennten.be followed. Based on the knowledge gathered during this process, the group is developing a climate scan that will allow grandparents to define their sustainability goals, assess their portfolio and speak to their family and financial intermediaries about redirecting their savings to more sustainable projects.

'We are proud of the research we have delivered and the data we've analysed concerning the potential financial impact of over-55s on growing the sustainability of their investments,' says spokesperson Guy De Koninck. 'We're also proud of the quality of the local and national campaign we launched, with a broad positive response in the press and among over-55s organisations. This is leading to an appeal for sustainability from older investors to financial intermediaries and politicians.'

Partly as an outcome of the group's efforts, financial institutions have strengthened their sustainability criteria for investment funds. The next steps include publishing a sustainable investment guide for individuals and organising seminars on the subject for over-55s organisations and schools. The project can easily be replicated elsewhere: a sister organisation exists in the French-speaking region of Belgium, and there is interest from a group of grandparents in France who would like to follow the example.

'Each of us and all together we are able to save and invest our money in a substantially more sustainable way,' says De Koninck. 'Our voices can be heard by decision-makers, resulting in an important positive impact on the future of our planet and of our children and grandchildren.'

www.grootoudersvoorhetklimaat.be



2nd prize: Associació Catalana Enginyeria Sense Fronteres (Engineers Without Borders Catalonia) – SPAIN

About 11% of Spanish households – 5.1 million people – are unable to keep their homes sufficiently heated in the winter, according to a 2016 report by the Spanish Environmental Science Agency.

For **Associació Catalana Enginyeria Sense Fronteres**, however, energy poverty is much more than a question of whether people can afford to heat their homes. Access to basic utilities is a fundamental human right, and the association believes any debate on the climate emergency must include disadvantaged people and empower them to fully exercise their rights: the right to water, to energy and, above all, to full participation in society.

The association comprises professionals, teachers and students who are mainly volunteers. Via a series of assemblies or meetings, the organisation offers both a secure space and a mechanism for participation in civil society. These assemblies enable marginalised groups and individuals to be more resilient and raise their voices about their own situation, increase awareness among the public and change social perceptions.

The aim is to promote a fairer, more sustainable energy model, and to work for climate justice based on human rights. Consumers are encouraged to modify their behaviour towards adequate, secure and empowered consumption.

‘Women and women-led households are disproportionately affected by energy poverty, yet women are strong actors in tackling energy poverty,’ says spokesperson Mònica Guiteras Blaya. ‘Moving from a perspective of victims to a perspective of being key actors of change has allowed a major improvement of their situation and a change in social perceptions of people affected by energy poverty.’

The network model and tools the group has created can be replicated in other countries and contexts, contributing to greater access to secure energy for everyone.

‘Together, the members of the different vulnerable groups and collectives are very strong and the impact on their self-esteem and independence is fortified through the network,’ explains Guiteras Blaya. ‘We organise collective advisory assemblies to offer not only the tools needed to address energy poverty but also to provide a common and empowering narrative for them and for the public to understand complex situations. The initiative has had a high level of dissemination in the media thanks to testimonials from affected women, allowing us to connect with different audiences and media.’

Recognition via the EESC prize will allow the group to reinforce and promote practical solutions and spaces of empowerment and to implement wider advocacy for policy solutions at all levels. Ultimately, it will help them equip those most affected to lead the change.

www.esf-cat.org



3rd prize: Ateliere Fara Frontiere (Workshop Without Borders) – ROMANIA

By employing marginalised people in its workshops, **Ateliere Fara Frontiere** is tackling social injustice alongside the climate emergency. Its 'educlick' initiative collects waste electrical and electronic equipment. The equipment is refurbished and provided to schools, NGOs and public institutions working with children from disadvantaged communities. During the process, the project raises awareness of the advantages of a circular economy and offers a model of good environmental practice.

'The most important element we want our beneficiaries to understand is that they represent the core solution to all the social issues our project is trying to tackle,' says spokesperson Costin Dragne. 'We give a voice to teachers and children from vulnerable communities and support them with digital equipment with which they can transform their ambitions and imaginations into reality. We provide the chance for our colleagues in the work integration programme to give themselves a better life, but also to the young generation from rural and most often forgotten communities.'

While many private companies and individuals throw out IT equipment because it is more convenient to buy new devices, schools from disadvantaged areas lack the necessary computers for a decent education in the 21st century.

Educlick gathers computers that would otherwise be dumped in landfill and refurbishes them with the help of employees who often lacked the chance of a good education themselves.

In its 13 years, educlick has provided job opportunities for almost 300 adults from a disadvantaged background. Employees include members of the Roma community, people with a history of addiction or homelessness, and victims of violence. At the same time, almost half a million pupils have benefited from the computer donation programme and have become more aware of the positive impact on the climate of using refurbished digital equipment.

'We build long-lasting relationships by integrating our beneficiaries into the team and transforming them into colleagues,' says Dragne. 'And we want to make sure young generations understand that an everyday action can turn the fight against climate change if we act as a community.'

The project leaders are now looking for ways to expand their support to the education sector, increase learning opportunities for employees through their work integration programme, and become more active in environmental advocacy.

Dragne says: 'Winning the EESC prize acknowledges the fact that each member of society is important, putting a spotlight on disadvantaged people who have defeated past difficulties and are now enjoying a free and independent life thanks to their hard work and desire to achieve happiness.'

www.atelierefarafrafrontiere.ro



4th prize: Prostoroz – SLOVENIA

The **Prostoroz** non-profit studio has mobilised citizens to improve living conditions in Ljubljana, one hot spot at a time. By inviting residents to highlight public spaces that reach particularly high temperatures, it makes the effects of climate change more visible and puts pressure on authorities to take mitigating action. As citizens see their concerns noted and acted on at the local level, it also results in a renewed trust in public involvement.

The Hot Spots project asked a simple question: which locations in town are the hottest? A digital map made it easy to indicate the relevant sites, and in just three weeks, the organisers received nearly 700 responses from the city's 280 000 inhabitants. Analysis of the responses showed that during summer, people tend to completely avoid certain locations due to the heat. Furthermore, some respondents said they prefer to travel by car rather than by foot or by bike to avoid the heat, further exacerbating the problem.

Residents have very clear ideas about what needs to be done to save the city from overheating. Many have also provided their own proposals for improving the city's climate. These include calls for more trees, larger trees to provide shade, less asphalt, less concrete and fewer car parks.

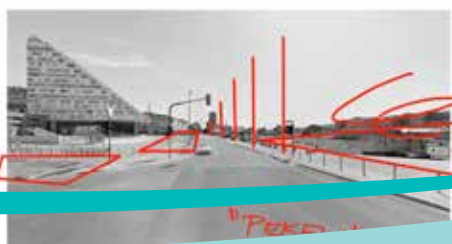
'The feedback we received from the inhabitants was extraordinary: they showed us that they intimately understand and know their local environment and that they realise the need to adapt to climate change,' says spokesperson Naja Kikelj.

Prostoroz drew up a series of proposals for cooling measures for the locations that received the most votes and presented them to the city's authorities. Given the level of citizen feedback, the authorities could not ignore the issue; less than a year later, new trees are being planted to provide shade for one of the city's hottest streets.

However, the organisers feel the city's actions could be further strengthened. They are working on establishing climate change as a key urban subject for the authorities. They also aim to continue developing digital participation methods to further involve citizens in the debate on public spaces.

'What we've learned from the project is that communicating environmental challenges to the public should be done by communicating the "here and now" of the issues, the tangible issues that affect their everyday lives. In this way, participants can address their current worries, but they are also invited to think about the future,' Kikelj says. 'Participatory research such as this can support other scientific research with methods that measure the response of the "man on the street". Sadly, there is more and more data backing the effects of climate change in Ljubljana, which is becoming one of the fastest warming cities in the world.'

www.prostoroz.org



5th prize: Estonian Green Movement/Estonian Fund for Nature/Estonian Environmental Law Centre – ESTONIA

Ending Estonia's oil-shale industry will require major socio-economic transformation in north-east Estonia where it is mined and processed. The region is socially volatile with a large Russian-speaking population and high unemployment. A lack of open discussion about how to solve this issue and a shortage of information about the energy transition have exacerbated the situation. In that context, the challenge taken on by the winning project was to bring all sides together constructively and promote the use of alternative fuel sources.

Estonia's rate of renewable electricity generation is among the lowest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and its carbon footprint one of the biggest. While the country's parliament pledged in 2017 to reduce emissions by at least 80% and make transition to mostly local renewable energy production by 2050, more specific measures are needed to reach these goals.



The aim of the project was to draw up a plan for as smooth and quick a transition as possible, giving everyone an opportunity to express their views, to identify the socio-economic risks of the transition and discuss possible solutions. Finally, the project team sought government input and support.

'We have seen a lot of disbelief due to the fact that renewable energy sources are fundamentally different in their working principle from fossil fuels – so people tend to think this approach cannot succeed, until they see it with their own eyes,' says Madis Vasser, project spokesperson and Estonian Green Movement board member. 'The same is true with the phasing out of polluting forms of energy: even though it's clear that such sources will fall from competition soon, it's only after this has happened that people accept it. We have taken the approach of sharing relevant information relentlessly, so it becomes harder to ignore.'

The approach was fourfold: creating an NGO network to exchange information; facilitating dialogue between all stakeholders; carrying out studies to identify knowledge gaps; and raising awareness of climate issues among the public. A nationwide petition calling for climate neutrality by 2035 was signed by more than 3 000 people and was discussed in parliament, with the support of many politicians. As standard, all the materials were translated into Russian, reflecting the fact that the Russian-speaking community will be disproportionately affected by an exit from oil-shale mining.

'Our project was remarkable for its timing – we started talking to all the stakeholders about a just transition well before this was a hot topic in Estonia,' says Vasser. 'Even though we, the conveners, were environmental organisations, we kept a neutral and open tone and managed to get all different sides of the issue around the same table to discuss and learn together.'

www.roheline.ee

www.elfond.ee

www.k6k.ee



Climate emergency challenge inspires innovative approaches

By taking climate action as the theme for this year's prize, the EESC is turning the spotlight on the defining issue of the 21st century, a challenge that requires urgent action at every level of society and government. The innovation, commitment and creativity demonstrated in the applications received reflects the urgency of the climate crisis and a real desire among Europe's citizens to make a difference.

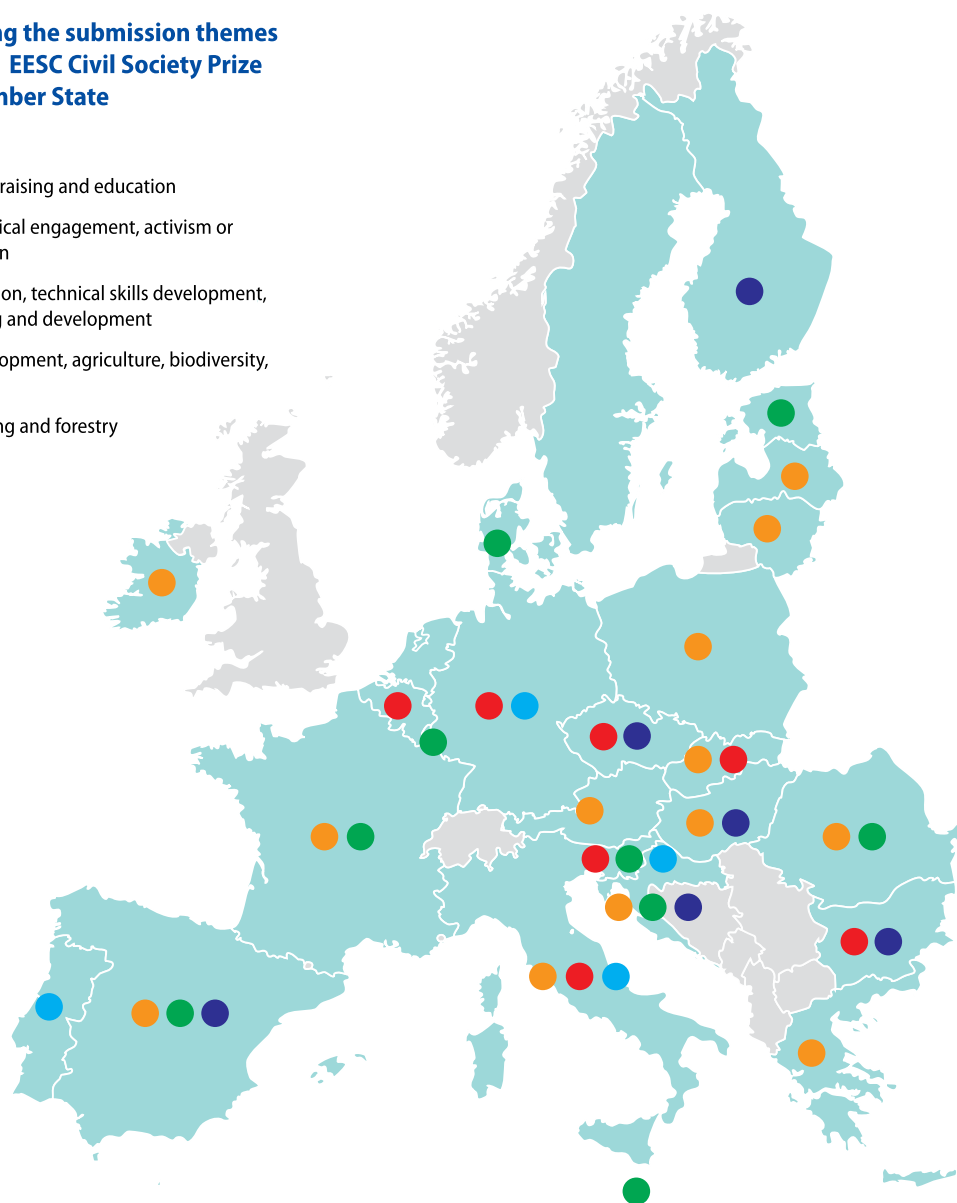
Submissions came from individuals and established organisations, young and old, from 24 Member States. The applications can be divided into five thematic areas: broadly, awareness-raising and education, direct political engagement, just transition, rural development and forestry.

Many projects touched on more than one issue while others focused on specific local issues, showing both the importance of a cross-cutting universal strategy and how different contexts require targeted intervention. The following highlights some of these excellent examples of civil society in action – a recognition of their success, even though they did not receive an award.

Map showing the submission themes for the 2021 EESC Civil Society Prize in each Member State

Legend:

- Awareness raising and education
- Direct political engagement, activism or mobilisation
- Just transition, technical skills development, job training and development
- Rural development, agriculture, biodiversity, and nature
- Tree planting and forestry



Awareness-raising and education



A large number of projects from 13 Member States focused on raising awareness of climate change and educating people about the challenges and potential solutions.

Their focal points and targets varied considerably. While some dealt with schoolchildren, others worked on wider community outreach. Others focused on particular issues, such as fashion and excessive consumption, while some took a broader view of climate change. And a number of projects developed apps and other technological tools for sharing information and increasing citizen engagement.

In Lithuania, **VšĮ 'Už švarią Lietuvą' (Hike 'Go for Clean Lithuania')** staged a large-scale cross-country hike to draw attention to excessive consumption and its environmental and social consequences.

The 1 300-km walk around the country stopped in 40 small communities where organisers took part in meetings and talks with citizens and local businesses and held workshops and cultural events. Along the way, participants collected litter from which they created an artwork called the 'Mosaic of Consumption' to demonstrate the long-term impact of waste on the environment. They also made a documentary about the hike.

Through a series of webinars and conferences and creating a network to share best practices in Hungary, **Dr Gabriella Ilona Mányi Walek** put the issue of fast fashion on the table. She organised numerous creative on- and offline activities during the Global Sustainable Fashion Week – an annual event in Budapest that she founded and leads – to bring attention to climate justice and workers' rights in the fashion industry.

In Croatia, the **KLIK energy cooperative** is playing its part in helping the city of Križevci to become energy-independent by 2030. KLIK is doing so through a variety of activities which encourage citizens of all ages to get involved in climate-related projects and be part of a community that brings about change. Besides transforming the local energy economy, KLIK seeks to show other cities how to take control of resources and engage people in the implementation of climate policies at the local level.

Among the applications targeting young people were Austria's **ClimaTalk** which aims to demystify EU climate policy by providing an accessible platform and news portal to foster participation and awareness. Another is the **FERAL** project's writing competition for students in France. In Latvia, the **Pasaules Dabas Fonds** focused on advocacy, showing young people the importance of being active citizens, while the **Mitroulakis** project in Greece promoted creative thinking and awareness of social and environmental issues by upgrading school buildings.

Also noteworthy was the creation of Poland's first zero-waste campaign, by journalist **Katarzyna Górna-Drzewosz**, to educate citizens of all ages about environmental protection and sustainable lifestyles. In Romania, **Teodora Iacob's Nature Talks** comprised a 'mobile environmental school' teaching students about climate issues. And in Spain, where public bodies such as the **Biodiversity Foundation** have been working for decades to raise awareness of climate change and promote resilience, adaptation and sustainable solutions, the **Fundación Vida Sostenible (Sustainable Life Foundation)** created a tool that allows people to measure and reduce their own carbon footprint.

Other projects in this area

Alberto Diaz – Spain

Charles Wani – Ireland

Deborah Pastore – Italy

Društvo za oblikovanje održivog razvoja
(Society for Sustainable Development Design) – Croatia

Education@Internet – Slovakia

EFdeN Sustainable City – Romania

Direct political engagement, activism or mobilisation

Ten of the projects submitted centred on political engagement, activism or public mobilisation. They involved direct efforts to influence decision-makers or laws, to mobilise broad political opinion or to engage directly in electoral politics.

Projects took a variety of approaches. These included more traditional efforts to build coalitions and organisations, informing voters, making legal appeals and contributing to specific consultations.

Some groups took a broad approach to climate and sustainability issues to build coalitions for change, while others focused on recovery and resilience funding, climate finance laws and urban planning.

A recurring topic was catalysing young people's concerns around climate change and channelling their efforts toward shifts at the political level. They are examples of the rise in youth activism in changing Europe's political framework around climate change.

This feature was observed in the project submitted by **Youth and Environment Europe** in Czechia, for example, which promotes engagement in decision-making processes on climate and environment policies at every political level, ensuring that legislation considers the long-term impacts on future generations.

Similarly, the **Rise for Climate Belgium** initiative put pressure on Belgian and European politicians through monthly rallies and conferences with climate experts. By means of a series of well-publicised intergenerational events, it aims to inspire young Belgians and demonstrate that activism can make a difference on a global scale.

In Slovakia, **Zelený reštart (Green Restart)**, submitted by Lucia Szabová, coordinated the activities of climate movements in Slovakia after the 2019 wave of climate strikes and called for an ambitious recovery plan.

The campaign **Giudizio Universale – Invertiamo il processo (The Last Judgement: Let's Reverse the Process)** by the non-profit organisation A Sud - Ecologia e Cooperazione took an original approach to political influence by mounting a legal strategy to promote more ambitious climate policies in Italy. It also sought to recognise the human right to a stable and secure climate.

The **BlueLink Foundation**, meanwhile, focused on raising awareness of European climate law adoption and its implications for Bulgaria, via research, advocacy and journalism.

Other projects in this area

Bundesbündnis Bodenschutz GbR – Germany

Center for UN Constitutional Research (CUNCR) – Belgium

Legambiente Nazionale APS ONLUS – Italy



Just transition, technical skills development, job training and development

Nine projects explored various aspects of a just transition to a low-carbon economy, including skills development and job creation. Some advocated for the rights of marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or those at risk of energy poverty.

Others focused on developing new businesses and sharing skills in the renewable energy industry, retrofitting buildings and providing good jobs in those sectors. Several projects set out to engage people from across society in community projects to build resilience and foster dialogue with the aim of ensuring no one is left behind.

For example, the **Alpe Adria Green project** in Slovenia upgraded electric wheelchairs to run on sustainable energy, trained students and teachers at technical secondary schools and involved students with disabilities in the process, providing them with enhanced mobility. Elsewhere, the **Malta Employers' Association** spoke to businesses about the impact of transport on the environment and initiated cooperation between academia and industry to create courses for entrepreneurs in new vehicle technologies.

A project in Denmark, **VedvarendeEnergi (SustainableEnergy)**, worked with groups of older men, inviting them to use their skills to repair items for the community. The initiative enabled the men to engage with their community, provide a valuable service, reduce waste and pass on their skills to new generations for a more circular economy.

The vision of renewable energy cooperative **Zelena energetska zadruga** is to enable 100 000 solar roofs by 2030, meaning one in five households in Croatia can produce their own energy. To support householders struggling to find accurate information about installing solar panels, the cooperative launched 'On the Sunny Side', a platform that connects citizens with trusted installers and ensures support and value for money. In Luxembourg, meanwhile, the building sector training institute **IFSB** launched a pilot programme of urban greenhouses.

Other projects in this area

Claude Boulanger: Nothing About Us Without Us! – France



Rural development, agriculture, biodiversity and nature

The seven submissions in this field dealt primarily with action on rural development and agriculture or biodiversity and nature. This was an area particularly of interest to Portuguese candidates, as all three applications from this Member State focused on these themes. The initiatives included land-use planning, sustainable food consumption, sustainable tourism promotion, citizen science, landscape protection and promoting biodiversity in urban areas.

Climate action in agriculture is particularly difficult to implement. As part of efforts to tackle this challenge, **Terra Maronesa: climate-positive agriculture and territorial regeneration** developed a systematic regional plan for the Alvão region, a particularly rural area with structural environmental, economic and social challenges. The initiative designed and participated in a variety of activities based on a set of well-researched climate-positive agricultural practices aimed at environmental, social, cultural and economic regeneration, with a systemic approach to climate action via a collaborative, innovative, democratic and flexible community.

In Slovenia **Greening of the Industrial/Business zone Beltinci** dealt with the intersection of land-use planning and biodiversity in an urban context. The project, carried out by the Association of Pomurje Beekeeping Societies, brought together stakeholders to plan an efficient, business-friendly new industrial zone that prioritises biodiversity and sustainability. Based on a study and collaboration among stakeholders, the area will be developed using an innovative method of growing dense, indigenous trees and solutions to promote biodiversity and climate adaptation while limiting the negative environmental and noise impacts.

A recurring focus area was sustainable rural tourism. **Danube Guides Action** in Germany trained guides to build a sustainable model of tourism in the region, and focused on an international, transboundary region across six countries. Becoming a guide gives participants the chance to work in a sustainable and eco-friendly field and to make an impact on local society and the transition to greener tourism.

Launched in Italy, the **Associazione XXX Ottobre's United Mountains of Europe** initiative involved four women trekking, cycling, climbing, caving, kayaking and horse-riding across Europe's mountainous regions to highlight the importance of mountain protection and sustainable tourism. Through the foreseen Declaration of Mountains' Rights, the initiative also contributes to the conversation currently growing around the rights of nature.

Other projects in this area

Plantar Uma Árvore – Associação – Portugal

Rio Neiva – Environmental NGO – Portugal

Future Food Institute – Italy



Tree planting and forestry

Tree planting and forestry were the focus in seven projects across Europe. Tree planting is valuable for both mitigation and adaptation and offers a number of social, economic and environmental benefits, such as biodiversity and reducing pollution. These projects took various approaches to involve a broad cross-section of the community and build awareness of climate change.

Some offered tools for individuals or companies to offset their emissions. Others used tree planting as a tool to build broader awareness of sustainability and climate change, while one focused on education concerning the role of sustainable forests and the wood industry.

The **10 Milliő Fa (10 Million Trees)** project in Hungary took a bottom-up approach by involving community groups from across the country. In its first year, the project planted 100 000 trees in 160 towns and villages. The group also takes care of the maintenance of the trees once they have been planted.

Following wildfires in 2017, seen as among the worst in Croatian history, the **Scout and Guide Association of Croatia** started an awareness and reforestation campaign called Boranka (Paint it Back).

Over three years, 7 000 volunteers have planted more than 85 000 trees. A creative element of the campaign was Boralica – a crayon made from the ashes of pine trees burned in wildfires in Dalmatia and distributed throughout Croatia. Citizens draw a tree using the crayon and upload it to a virtual forest designed for the campaign (www.boranka.hr). For each virtual tree planted, volunteers plant a real one in the burned area.

The **Taimiteko – Seedling Action** implemented by the Finnish 4H Federation is focused on afforestation rather than reforestation. Its aim is to plant 10 000 new hectares of forest by 2030 – the volume of forest lost every year in Finland. By employing young people, it promotes life skills and positive work experiences alongside the chance to earn a living.

Finally, **Slavonian Oak** in Croatia worked to educate the population on the role of forests and wood products in a sustainable economy. It raised awareness among young people about the possibilities for education and employment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines with a focus on wood products and technologies. The approach aims to help ensure sustainable future forest management.

Other projects in this area

Fundación Bosques de la Tierra - Instituto de Investigaciones Ecológicas / Forests of the Earth Foundation - Ecological Research Institute – Spain

Sdruzhenie Gorichka – Bulgaria

The Agricultural Forum Foundation – Czechia



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