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GREEN HANDBOOK FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is one of the outcomes of the Erasmus+ project titled "Greenwashing = Brainwashing,.". The project has a total value of €60,000 and involves the participation of three organizations: the non-profit organization "BACKSLASH" from Valencia, Spain, overseas organization "Caribbean Education and Culture Foundation" based on the Caribbean island of St. Maarten and Udruga Zaželi (Wish Association) from Zagreb, Croatia. This project has multiple objectives aimed at promoting sustainable development, combating greenwashing, and fostering climate-neutral practices in youth work. It aims to strengthen participating organizations, establish collaborative networks, and develop innovative digital tools for measuring ecological footprints. The project also seeks to raise awareness about greenwashing among youth organizations and develop a handbook to improve the quality of work in these organizations. Additionally, a declaration for climate-neutral activities will be created and signed by European organizations. The project aims to achieve international collaboration, expand networks, support green transformation, and increase awareness among young people. By promoting active citizenship and empowering youth, the project strives to create a more sustainable future and address the challenges of greenwashing in society.



Objectives of the handbook

The main objective of this handbook is to provide a comprehensive understanding of sustainable development and its importance. This involves defining sustainable development and explaining its principles, emphasizing the need to meet present needs without compromising future generations. The handbook aims to create awareness about the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors in achieving sustainability and encourages responsible and holistic approaches to address climate change, environmental degradation, and social equity.

Another objective is to educate readers about carbon footprint and its reduction strategies. The handbook defines carbon footprint as the total greenhouse gas emissions resulting from individual or organizational activities and emphasizes the importance of reducing it. Practical knowledge and strategies are provided to reduce carbon footprint, including information on energy consumption, transportation, waste management, resource usage, and adopting sustainable practices.

Furthermore, one of the principal objectives of this handbook is to raise awareness about greenwashing and enable readers to identify instances of deceptive environmental claims. Greenwashing involves misleading consumers about the environmental practices or sustainability of a product, service, or organization. The handbook provides information on greenwashing, its implications, and common strategies used. It equips readers with the knowledge and tools to identify signs of greenwashing and offers insights into sustainable alternatives and practices.

One of the core focuses is to enhance awareness and knowledge of climate change, its causes, impacts, and potential solutions, particularly among youth. The handbook provides relevant information about climate change, explaining underlying processes, human contributions, and consequences. It emphasizes the urgency and significance of addressing climate change and offers practical actions and solutions.

Additional objective is to promote critical thinking and the ability to recognize greenwashing. The handbook provides guidance on developing critical thinking skills related to sustainability and offers strategies for evaluating information and identifying reliable sources. It helps readers recognize greenwashing tactics through examples and interactive exercises, empowering them to make informed decisions and support genuine sustainability efforts.

The handbook also aims to provide best practice examples and guidelines for organizations to undergo green transformation. It showcases successful organizations that have implemented sustainable practices and offers step-by-step instructions and frameworks for integrating sustainability into operations and decision-making processes.

The objective of the handbook is also to inspire readers by sharing successful stories of working with youth in the field of sustainability. It showcases projects, initiatives, and collaborations involving young people, highlighting their positive impact. These examples serve as motivation for readers to involve youth in sustainability initiatives within their organizations or communities. Moreover, by providing best practice examples and guidelines, this objective encourages organizations to adopt sustainable practices and become agents of change in promoting a greener future.

Overall, the handbook aims to inspire readers to consider their own carbon footprint, make informed choices, and implement practical solutions for reducing emissions. It also empowers readers to recognize and navigate through greenwashing tactics, promoting the support of genuinely environmentally responsible products, services, and organizations.

The goal is to create a more educated and aware society that actively challenges greenwashing, demands transparency, and promotes genuine sustainability efforts. The handbook empowers individuals and organizations to take action, make informed decisions, and contribute to a more environmentally responsible future.





KEY CONCEPTS

Definition of sustainable development and its importance

Sustainable development, as defined in the 1987 Brundtland report "Our Common Future" by the World Commission on Environment and Development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It strives to harmonize economic development with the preservation of a balanced social and environmental framework.

In 2001, the European Union (EU) adopted a sustainable development strategy, which was later revised in 2006. This revised strategy outlined a long-term vision where economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental protection work in harmony, mutually supporting one another.

A review of the strategy by the European Commission in 2009 emphasized the ongoing challenges posed by unsustainable trends and the necessity for increased efforts in addressing them. However, it also acknowledged the EU's progress in integrating sustainable development principles into various policies, including trade and development. Additionally, the EU was recognized for its leadership in addressing climate change and advocating for a low-carbon economy.

Sustainable development was formally established as one of the European Union's long-term objectives under Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union. The first importance of climate neutrality and sustainable development is the mitigation of climate change. Climate change is a pressing global issue resulting from the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, primarily due to human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. Climate neutrality refers to achieving a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and their removal from the atmosphere. By striving for climate neutrality, we actively work towards reducing our carbon footprint and minimizing our impact on the climate system. This is crucial because climate change has far-reaching and detrimental consequences, including rising global temperatures, more frequent and severe extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and disruption of ecosystems. These impacts can have severe implications for human health, food security, water availability, and overall planetary stability.

Sustainable development, which encompasses environmental, social, and economic aspects, is intimately linked to climate neutrality. It emphasizes the need to meet present needs while ensuring the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. By adopting sustainable practices, we aim to strike a balance between environmental protection, social well-being, and economic growth. In the context of climate change, sustainable development calls for transitioning to renewable and clean energy sources, promoting energy efficiency and conservation, implementing sustainable land and resource management, and fostering sustainable consumption and production patterns. These actions contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and slowing down the rate of climate change. By mitigating climate change through climate neutrality and sustainable development, we can help protect vulnerable ecosystems and species, ensure the availability of essential resources like clean air and water, and safeguard human well-being and livelihoods. It is an urgent and collective responsibility to address climate change through sustainable practices, as it affects not only the current generation but also the future generations to come. (Newton, Rogers 2020)

The second importance of climate neutrality and sustainable development lies in environmental stewardship. Sustainable development recognizes that the Earth's resources are finite and interconnected and that human actions can have significant impacts on the environment. By embracing sustainable practices, we can act as responsible stewards of the environment, safeguarding it for current and future generations. Environmental stewardship involves protecting and conserving natural resources, preserving biodiversity, and maintaining the integrity of ecosystems. It entails minimizing pollution, reducing waste, and ensuring sustainable land and water management. By adopting sustainable practices, such as promoting renewable energy, implementing sustainable agriculture, and preserving natural habitats, we can mitigate environmental degradation and preserve the health and resilience of ecosystems. Through climate neutrality and sustainable development, we can reduce the release of pollutants and harmful substances into the environment, mitigate habitat destruction and species loss, and promote the conservation of valuable ecosystems. This is essential for preserving the Earth's natural beauty, biodiversity, and ecological balance.




Furthermore, environmental stewardship is closely tied to human well-being. Healthy ecosystems provide a range of ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, fertile soils, and natural resources that support human livelihoods, food security, and economic activities. By practicing sustainable development and mitigating climate change, we help protect and maintain these essential ecosystem services, ensuring the well-being and quality of life for present and future generations.

In addition, environmental stewardship through climate neutrality and sustainable development fosters a sense of connection and respect for nature. It encourages a shift towards a more harmonious relationship with the environment, recognizing that human well-being is intricately linked to the health of the planet. By embracing sustainable practices, we can inspire a deeper appreciation for the natural world and cultivate a sense of responsibility and care for the Earth and its ecosystems (Falkner, R., & Buzan, B.,2019).

Environmental stewardship through climate neutrality and sustainable development is crucial for preserving the Earth's resources, maintaining ecosystem health, and ensuring the well-being of both present and future generations. By acting as responsible stewards of the environment, we can contribute to a sustainable and resilient planet for all living beings






The third importance of climate neutrality and sustainable development is social equity and justice. Sustainable development recognizes that environmental protection and social well-being are interconnected, and it emphasizes the need to address social inequalities and ensure equitable access to resources, opportunities, and a healthy environment for all individuals and communities.

Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including marginalized communities, low-income groups, and regions with limited resources. These groups often bear the brunt of the impacts, such as increased exposure to extreme weather events, food and water insecurity, and health risks. Climate neutrality and sustainable development aim to address these disparities and promote social equity and justice. By striving for climate neutrality, we work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimizing the impacts of climate change.

This contributes to creating a more equitable future by reducing the burden on vulnerable communities and protecting their well-being. Sustainable development also calls for inclusive decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices and needs of marginalized communities are heard and incorporated in climate and sustainability policies. Sustainable development also aims to provide equal opportunities and access to resources, ensuring that everyone can thrive in a sustainable and equitable manner. This includes access to clean and affordable energy, education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities. By adopting sustainable practices, we promote social inclusivity and address systemic inequalities that hinder social progress. Climate neutrality and sustainable development also foster community resilience. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, disaster preparedness, and climate adaptation measures, we can enhance the resilience of communities, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts. This helps reduce the disparities in the ability to cope with and recover from climate-related events.

Engaging in climate action and sustainable development also provides opportunities for skill development, capacity building, and innovation. By involving marginalized groups in the decision-making processes and providing them with the necessary resources and support, equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from are created. (Bechauf et al.,2022).



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In summary, climate neutrality and sustainable development promote social equity and justice by addressing social inequalities, protecting vulnerable communities, promoting inclusive decision-making, and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities. By prioritizing equity in our efforts, we can work towards a more just and sustainable world where all individuals can thrive and have an equal stake in shaping their future.

The fourth importance of climate neutrality and sustainable development is economic resilience and innovation. Embracing climate neutrality and sustainable practices can have positive impacts on the economy, promoting resilience, and driving innovation. Transitioning to a low-carbon and sustainable economy offers numerous economic benefits. By reducing reliance on fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy sources, countries can enhance energy security, reduce energy costs, and decrease their vulnerability to fluctuating fuel prices. Renewable energy industries also have the potential to create new job opportunities and stimulate economic growth.

Sustainable development encourages energy efficiency and resource conservation, which can lead to cost savings for businesses and households. By adopting sustainable practices in areas such as waste management, water conservation, and eco-friendly manufacturing processes, businesses can reduce operational costs, improve efficiency, and gain a competitive edge. Additionally, climate neutrality and sustainable development foster innovation. The need to address climate change and sustainability challenges has sparked advancements in renewable energy technologies, energy storage, sustainable agriculture, circular economy models, and other innovative solutions. These innovations not only contribute to mitigating climate change but also present economic opportunities, as they can drive business growth, create new markets, and attract investment in green industries.

Sustainable development also encourages responsible and ethical business practices. Consumers are increasingly demanding environmentally friendly and socially responsible products and services. By adopting sustainable practices, businesses can enhance their reputation, attract environmentally conscious consumers, and build long-term customer loyalty. Climate neutrality and sustainable development promote long-term economic resilience. They help mitigate risks associated with climate change, such as extreme weather events, resource scarcity, and supply chain disruptions. By incorporating climate risk assessments and adaptation measures into business strategies, organizations can better withstand and recover from climate-related shocks. By embracing climate neutrality and sustainable development, countries and organizations can position themselves as leaders in the global transition to a more sustainable future. They can seize opportunities in emerging green industries, attract investment, and enhance their competitiveness in a rapidly changing global economy (Fleetwood,2020).

Climate neutrality and sustainable development offer economic benefits such as cost savings, job creation, innovation, and enhanced resilience. By integrating sustainability into economic strategies, we can foster a more sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous economy that balances environmental protection, social well-being, and economic growth.



Fifth importance of climate neutrality and sustainable development is global cooperation and responsibility. Climate change and sustainability are global challenges that transcend national borders and require collective action and collaboration among nations, organizations, communities, and individuals worldwide. Addressing climate change and achieving sustainability goals necessitates international cooperation and multilateral efforts. Through global cooperation, countries can share knowledge, resources, and best practices to accelerate the transition to low-carbon economies and foster sustainable development.

International agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, provide a framework for collective action, setting targets and guiding countries in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate neutrality and sustainable development promote the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. While all countries have a role to play in addressing climate change, developed countries, historically the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, have a greater responsibility to take the lead in emission reductions and provide support to developing countries in their sustainable development efforts.

Furthermore, climate change impacts are not limited to national boundaries. Rising global temperatures, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events have transboundary effects, affecting ecosystems, communities, and economies across regions and continents. By working together, countries can better respond to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, protect vulnerable populations, and preserve shared natural resources. Global cooperation and responsibility also extend beyond governments to businesses, civil society organizations, and individuals. Businesses have a role in adopting sustainable practices, reducing emissions, and innovating climate-friendly technologies and solutions. Civil society organizations play a vital role in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and driving social and behavioral shifts towards sustainability. Individuals can contribute through their daily choices and actions, such as reducing personal carbon footprints, supporting sustainable products and services, and engaging in advocacy and collective action (Martin et al.,2020).

Climate neutrality and sustainable development provide an opportunity for countries, organizations, and individuals to come together, share expertise, collaborate on projects, and foster a sense of global citizenship. They remind us of our shared responsibility to safeguard the planet and its resources for present and future generations. By working together, we address the complex challenges of climate change and sustainability, promote knowledge sharing, support vulnerable communities, and foster a sense of global solidarity in building a more sustainable and resilient world.






Key terms related to climate change and environmental protection

There are numerous key terms related to climate change and environmental protection. Here are some of the most important ones:

1. **Climate Change:** Refers to long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind patterns, and other aspects of the Earth's climate system. It can result from natural processes or human activities, primarily the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
 2. **Greenhouse Gases (GHGs):** Gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O), that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, leading to the greenhouse effect and global warming.
 3. **Global Warming:** The long-term increase in Earth's average surface temperature due to the enhanced greenhouse effect, primarily caused by human activities.
 4. **Climate Action:** Efforts and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change, including policies, technologies, and lifestyle changes.
 5. **Mitigation:** Actions taken to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases, often through energy efficiency, renewable energy adoption, and carbon capture and storage.
 6. **Adaptation:** Strategies and measures to minimize the negative impacts of climate change, such as building resilient infrastructure, implementing water management systems, and developing climate-resilient agriculture.
 7. **Biodiversity:** The variety and variability of life on Earth, encompassing all species of plants, animals, microorganisms, and ecosystems, and their ecological interactions.
 8. **Deforestation:** The process of clearing forests for agriculture, infrastructure, or other land uses, which contributes to carbon emissions and loss of biodiversity.
 9. **Sustainable Development:** A development approach that balances economic, social, and environmental considerations to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
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10. **Renewable Energy:** Energy derived from sources that are naturally replenished, such as solar, wind, hydropower, and geothermal energy, which produce minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

11. **Carbon Footprint:** The total amount of greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, emitted directly or indirectly by an individual, organization, event, or product throughout its lifecycle.

12. **Eco-Friendly:** Products, practices, or actions that have minimal negative impacts on the environment and aim to reduce resource consumption and pollution.

13. **Sustainability:** The ability to maintain or improve the quality of life for current and future generations while preserving the integrity of the environment.

14. **Environmental Conservation:** Efforts to protect and preserve natural resources, ecosystems, and wildlife through measures like conservation areas, protected zones, and wildlife sanctuaries.

15. **Emission Reduction Targets:** Specific goals set by governments, organizations, or countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a certain percentage over a specified time frame.

16. **Carbon Neutrality:** Achieving a balance between the emissions of greenhouse gases and their removal from the atmosphere, often through measures like carbon offsetting and emissions reductions.

17. **Sustainability Reporting:** The practice of measuring, disclosing, and being transparent about an organization's environmental and social impacts, often in the form of a sustainability report.

18. **Paris Agreement:** An international treaty signed in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

19. **Circular Economy:** An economic model that focuses on reducing waste and reusing, repairing, or recycling products and materials to minimize environmental impacts.

20. **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** A process used to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of a proposed project, policy, or development.

These terms represent a broad spectrum of concepts and actions related to climate change and environmental protection, highlighting the complexity and importance of addressing these issues.



Carbon footprint and its reduction

A carbon footprint is a measure of the total amount of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), and other equivalent emissions produced directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event, or product throughout its lifecycle. It's a way to quantify the impact of human activities on the environment, especially in terms of contributing to global warming and climate change. Carbon footprints are typically measured in units of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) and can encompass various types of emissions, including those from energy consumption, transportation, industrial processes, and land use.

There are three main components of a carbon footprint

Direct Emissions: These are emissions from sources that are directly controlled by individuals or organizations. For individuals, this can include emissions from personal vehicles, home heating, and energy use. For organizations, it includes emissions from their operations, such as company-owned vehicles and on-site energy generation.


Indirect Emissions: Also known as "Scope 2" emissions, these come from the production of the electricity and heat that an individual or organization consumes. They are indirect because the emissions occur at the power plants that generate the electricity, not at the point of use.

Supply Chain Emissions: These are emissions associated with the production, transportation, and disposal of goods and services used by individuals and organizations. These emissions are often referred to as "Scope 3" emissions and can be substantial, especially for businesses with complex supply chains.

Reducing Carbon Footprint

Reducing carbon footprints is a critical step in mitigating climate change and working towards environmental sustainability. Some strategies for reducing carbon footprints:

1. **Energy Efficiency:** Improving energy efficiency in buildings, vehicles, and industrial processes can significantly reduce energy consumption and emissions. This can be achieved through better insulation, LED lighting, energy-efficient appliances, and optimized manufacturing processes.



2. **Renewable Energy:** Transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydroelectric, and geothermal power can greatly reduce carbon emissions associated with electricity generation.

3. **Transportation:** Using public transportation, carpooling, biking, walking, or driving fuel-efficient or electric vehicles can lower emissions from transportation.,

4. **Sustainable Agriculture:** Implementing sustainable farming practices, reducing food waste, and choosing locally sourced, seasonal foods can lower the carbon footprint of food production and consumption.

5. **Waste Management:** Reducing, reusing, and recycling materials helps decrease emissions associated with waste disposal. Composting organic waste can also help avoid methane emissions from landfills.

6. **Conservation and Afforestation:** Protecting and restoring forests helps sequester carbon dioxide. Planting trees and implementing afforestation or reforestation projects can offset emissions.

7. **Carbon Offsetting:** Some individuals and organizations choose to invest in projects that reduce or capture carbon emissions, such as reforestation initiatives or renewable energy projects, to offset their own emissions.

8. **Efficient Appliances and Technology:** Using energy-efficient appliances, smart thermostats, and other technology can reduce energy consumption in homes and workplaces.

9. **Sustainable Consumer Choices:** Opting for products with lower carbon footprints, such as those with eco-friendly packaging or made from sustainable materials, can contribute to overall emissions reduction.

10. **Policy and Advocacy:** Governments and organizations can implement policies that promote emissions reductions, such as carbon pricing, incentives for renewable energy adoption, and stricter emissions standards for industries.

Reducing carbon footprints requires a combination of individual, organizational, and governmental efforts. It involves making conscious choices to minimize energy consumption, shift to low-carbon technologies, and embrace sustainable practices across various aspects of daily life and business operations.




Greenwashing - deceiving the public about ecological sustainability

Greenwashing refers to the deceptive practice of companies and organizations projecting a false image of environmental responsibility to attract eco-conscious consumers. It involves making misleading or exaggerated claims about the eco-friendliness of products, services, or business practices without taking significant steps towards genuine sustainability. As environmental awareness and concern have grown among consumers, businesses have recognized the value of appealing to eco-friendly sentiments. However, while some companies genuinely embrace sustainability, others exploit this trend to boost their reputation and profits without making substantive environmental efforts. This chapter delves into the concept of greenwashing, exploring its history, common tactics and ways to identify and combat it.

While the term "greenwashing" is relatively new, the practice itself has roots that can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, environmental awareness was on the rise, and consumers began seeking eco-friendly products and services. In response, companies began incorporating environmental themes into their marketing to appeal to this growing sentiment. However, the focus on environmentalism was often superficial, with little to no genuine commitment to sustainability (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). The term "greenwashing" was coined by environmentalist Jay Westervelt in 1986 when he visited a hotel that encouraged guests to reuse their towels to "save the environment." Westervelt saw this as a clever ploy to save on laundry costs rather than a genuine environmental effort. This incident sparked the discussion around deceptive environmental claims and set the stage for the concept of greenwashing (Orange and Cohen 2010).

Greenwashing Tactics


In the era of growing environmental awareness, consumers are increasingly seeking out products and services that are eco-friendly and sustainable. In response to this demand, companies have embraced marketing strategies that emphasize their commitment to the environment. However, not all claims made by businesses hold up under scrutiny. Greenwashing, a deceptive marketing practice, involves misleading consumers about the environmental impact of products or services, creating a false impression of environmental responsibility. This part explores various tactics employed by companies engaging in greenwashing, shedding light on how they manipulate public perception and the potential consequences for consumers and the environment.



One common greenwashing tactic is the use of vague or meaningless terms such as "eco-friendly," "green," or "natural" without providing concrete evidence to substantiate these claims. Such terminology lacks clarity and fails to offer consumers any real insight into a product's environmental credentials. In the absence of specific information, consumers may be misled into thinking they are making a sustainable choice when, in reality, they are not. To bolster their green image, some companies resort to displaying certifications or labels that are unrelated to the actual environmental impact of their products. For instance, a product may carry a certification for "fair trade" or "organic," which, while important in their own right, might not necessarily reflect the item's overall sustainability. This tactic confuses consumers, leading them to believe they are purchasing a product that aligns with their eco-conscious values when, in fact, it does not.

Greenwashing also involves emphasizing a product's positive environmental aspects while overlooking its negative impacts. Companies might focus on a single eco-friendly feature while conveniently ignoring other significant environmental drawbacks. This misdirection paints a distorted picture of the product's overall sustainability and deceives consumers into making uninformed choices. Perhaps the most egregious form of greenwashing is making outright false or unsubstantiated claims about a product's environmental attributes. This tactic involves exaggerating or fabricating information to create a false image of environmental responsibility. Such dishonest practices not only mislead consumers but also undermine the credibility of legitimate sustainability efforts.

Manipulating data is another common method used in greenwashing. Companies may selectively highlight positive data or metrics while overlooking less flattering information about their products or services. By presenting a seemingly positive environmental profile, they aim to distract consumers from the product's true impact on the environment. Some companies use recycling symbols on their products, giving the impression that the items are recyclable and environmentally friendly. However, in reality, these products may not be recyclable or may come with excessive and wasteful packaging. Placing recycling symbols on such items serves as a deceptive tactic that misleads consumers and contributes to unnecessary waste. Greenwashing is not limited to product labels and certifications; it can extend to celebrity endorsements as well. Associating environmentally irresponsible products with eco-conscious celebrities creates a false image of sustainability and misleads consumers who trust these public figures' endorsements (KnowESG 2023)



Greenwashing represents a growing challenge in the modern consumer landscape, affecting individuals, businesses, and the environment alike. As the demand for eco-friendly products increases, the risk of greenwashing also rises. It is essential for consumers to remain vigilant and informed to make sustainable choices genuinely. By identifying and exposing greenwashing practices, consumers can influence companies to prioritize authentic sustainability initiatives. Additionally, stronger regulations and increased accountability can deter businesses from engaging in deceptive environmental claims. Ultimately, combating greenwashing is a collective effort that involves consumers, businesses, and governments working together to protect the integrity of environmental responsibility and create a greener and more sustainable future for all.

In addition to the concepts, consequences, and methods of greenwashing discussed earlier, there are several other important aspects to be aware of mentioned in RAUSP Management Journal (2019):

Greenwashing in Various Industries

Greenwashing is not limited to specific industries. It can be found across various sectors, including fashion, food and beverages, beauty and personal care, electronics, energy, and transportation. Companies from multinational corporations to small businesses may engage in greenwashing to varying degrees.

Regulatory Efforts

Governments and consumer protection agencies in different countries have taken steps to address greenwashing. Some countries have specific guidelines and regulations concerning environmental claims in advertising and labeling. For example, Third-Party Certifications-independent certifications from reputable organizations can help consumers identify genuine eco-friendly products and services. Consumers should look for labels like ENERGY STAR, Fair Trade, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Nordic Swan Ecolabel, and others that signify adherence to specific environmental standards. Companies that are genuinely committed to sustainability often publish annual CSR (corporate social responsibility reports) outlining their environmental initiatives, goals, and progress. These reports can provide valuable insights into a company's commitment to sustainability. It is also a common practice that transparent and responsive companies are more likely to address and rectify any misleading claims promptly. A lack of transparency in communications or unwillingness to engage with consumer concerns could be a red flag for greenwashing.



Life Cycle Assessments and Long-Term Commitment

Evaluating a product's environmental impact throughout its entire life cycle can provide a more accurate understanding of its sustainability. Greenwashing may ignore certain phases, such as resource extraction or end-of-life disposal, that have significant environmental implications. It is also important to know that genuine sustainability efforts require ongoing commitment and continuous improvement. Companies making real progress towards sustainability will likely have long-term sustainability goals and strategies.

Marketing Trends

Be aware of greenwashing tactics that may evolve with changing consumer preferences and trends. Companies may adapt their greenwashing strategies to capitalize on emerging eco-friendly buzzwords or new areas of interest in sustainability. The media plays a significant role in shaping public perception and trends which can amplify greenwashing efforts. Critical media literacy is essential for identifying misleading claims and understanding the broader context of sustainability initiatives.

Consumer Empowerment

Educating and empowering consumers to recognize greenwashing is crucial. Encourage open discussions about the issue, share information with friends and family, and support organizations working to raise awareness about greenwashing.

Academic discussions of greenwashing typically explore its motivations, methods, consequences, and potential countermeasures within the broader context of environmental marketing and corporate social responsibility.

A more academic breakdown of greenwashing:

Motivations: Researchers often examine the motivations behind greenwashing, which can include financial gain, improved corporate image, regulatory compliance, and competitive advantage. Understanding these motivations helps to analyze the root causes of greenwashing practices.

Methods: Academics explore the various methods and techniques used in greenwashing, such as vague or ambiguous language, selective presentation of information, green imagery, and the appropriation of environmental symbols and certifications. They may also delve into the cognitive psychology behind how consumers perceive and react to these methods.

Consumer Perception: Academic research often investigates how consumers interpret and respond to greenwashing. This includes studies on consumer awareness of greenwashing, the factors influencing their trust in green claims, and the effects of greenwashing on purchasing behavior.

Regulatory and Ethical Aspects: Academics may examine the legal and ethical dimensions of greenwashing, exploring the extent to which existing regulations and industry standards effectively prevent or penalize deceptive environmental claims. This can also involve discussions of corporate responsibility and ethical marketing practices.

Consequences: Academic analyses assess the consequences of greenwashing for both consumers and organizations. For consumers, this can include disappointment, mistrust, and disillusionment. For organizations, it can result in reputational damage and potential legal repercussions.

Countermeasures: Researchers explore strategies and countermeasures to combat greenwashing, such as the role of third-party certifications, transparent reporting, and corporate disclosure. They may also evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks and advocate for stronger enforcement.

Industry and Sector-Specific Studies: Academic investigations often extend beyond the general concept of greenwashing to examine how different industries and sectors engage in greenwashing practices and how these practices may vary based on context.

Sustainability Communication: Academic research may delve into the broader field of sustainability communication, including the challenges of effectively conveying accurate sustainability information to consumers while avoiding the pitfalls of greenwashing.

In an academic context, greenwashing is a multidisciplinary subject that draws from fields such as marketing, psychology, ethics, law, and environmental science. It is studied to gain insights into the complexities of corporate environmental claims, consumer behavior, and the larger sustainability discourse. Academic research on greenwashing contributes to a better understanding of how organizations communicate their environmental efforts and how consumers can critically evaluate such claims to make informed choices.



The term "greenwashing" is derived from the idea that it's like putting a fresh coat of "green paint" on a product or company to make it seem environmentally friendly, even when the underlying practices remain unsustainable.

Greenwashing is a concerning practice because it can erode consumer trust and hinder progress toward genuinely sustainable and eco-friendly practices. To combat greenwashing, consumers are encouraged to be critical and discerning, look for credible certifications, research a company's environmental track record, and support businesses that genuinely prioritize sustainability and transparency. Additionally, regulatory bodies in many countries have taken steps to address greenwashing through legal measures and guidelines to ensure that environmental claims are accurate and verifiable.





INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLANNING AND CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Objectives and steps in planning sustainable activities with youth

Engaging youth in sustainable activities is crucial for fostering environmental consciousness and empowering them to become active participants in building a greener future. Planning educational activities with youth requires a clear understanding of the objectives and a systematic approach to ensure effective outcomes. As Kwauk and Casey (2021) share in “A New Green Learning Agenda: Approaches to Quality Education for Climate Action”. By defining clear objectives, identifying the target audience, and establishing desired outcomes, we can create purposeful and impactful experiences for youth. Let's explore the key steps involved in planning sustainable activities with youth.

Defining Clear Objectives for Educational Activities

The first step in planning activities with youth is to define clear objectives. These objectives should align with the broader goals of sustainability and environmental consciousness. By clarifying the purpose and desired outcomes, we can ensure that the activities are focused and meaningful. In addition, it's really important to plan the objectives according to the interests of the youths. This aspect will generate a real meaning for the people involved.

For example, the objectives might include:

- Raising awareness about environmental issues and their impacts.
- Promoting sustainable behaviors and practices.
- Empowering youth to become advocates for sustainability in their region.
- Inspiring creativity and innovation in finding sustainable solutions for local problems.
- Creating spaces where the youth and their opinions are respected.

Identifying Target Audience and Desired Outcomes

Once the objectives are defined, it is crucial to identify the target audience. Understanding the specific needs, interests, and knowledge levels of the youth participants will help tailor the activities to their preferences and effectively engage them in the learning process.

Moreover, determining the desired outcomes will guide the planning process.


These outcomes may include:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of sustainability and eco-friendly concepts.
- Development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Adoption of sustainable behaviors in daily life.
- Enhanced confidence and motivation to take action.
- The production of local and small “green” actions with experts in the area.

Steps in Planning Sustainable Activities

To ensure the success of educational activities with youth, a systematic approach is essential. The following steps defined by Evans (1981) can guide the planning process:

- a. Research:** Conduct thorough research to gather relevant information on sustainability topics, best practices, and engaging activities. It's important to review all the investigations and examples that have already been conducted. This will help create a solid foundation for designing meaningful experiences.
- b. Resource Allocation:** Identify the necessary resources, including materials, equipment, guest speakers, and partnerships with organizations or experts. Allocate resources effectively to ensure smooth implementation of the activities.
- c. Communication and Logistics:** Clear communication and coordination with stakeholders, such as schools, parents, and community organizations, are essential. Plan the logistics, including scheduling, venue selection, materials, transportation, and safety considerations.
- d. Designing Activities:** Based on the defined objectives and desired outcomes, design engaging and interactive activities that align with the target audience's interests and learning preferences. Incorporate hands-on experiences, group discussions, simulations, and real-world applications to enhance learning.



e. Evaluation and Reflection: Establish mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and impact of the activities. Collect feedback from participants and stakeholders in every step of the activities to continuously improve and refine future initiatives.


By following these steps and keeping the objectives and target audience in mind, we can plan and execute educational activities with youth that promote sustainability and empower them to become responsible stewards of the environment.

Developing Awareness and knowledge of climate change

To empower youth to effectively address climate change, it is crucial to provide comprehensive education on the science, causes, and implications of this global issue. As Barreda (2018) mentioned in her article, “They are also the future agents of action who would implement climate change solutions. Therefore, the active participation of youth could provide an intergenerational viewpoint of present and future citizens (Narksompong & Limijirikan, 2015)” By offering a progressive understanding of the problematic nature of climate change, we can foster critical thinking and inspire youth to become agents of change. Key components of developing awareness and knowledge of climate change are found below.

The first step in developing awareness and knowledge of climate change is to provide a comprehensive understanding of its science and causes. This involves explaining the fundamental concepts and mechanisms behind climate change and sustainability, such as those mentioned in the last section of the manual (greenhouse gas emissions, the greenhouse effect, and the role of human activities in contributing to global warming).

By starting with a local perspective and gradually expanding to a global scale, youth can develop a contextual understanding of how climate change affects their immediate surroundings and the broader world. Local examples and case studies can help youth connect with the issue and recognize its relevance in their own communities. The search for local actions that are being developed by the communities and educational institutions can help the youth take part in different approaches to the sustainability world.



Once the foundation of climate change science is established, it is important to delve deeper into the problematic nature of the issue. This includes exploring the consequences of climate change, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, and impacts on vulnerable communities.

As Barreda (2018) writes, youth should be encouraged to explore the interconnections between climate change and other social, economic, and environmental challenges. This broader perspective helps them recognize the urgent need for action and understand the importance of addressing climate change as part of a larger sustainable development agenda.

To continue with the exploration of the problematic and its main causes, youth should explore the root causes and systemic factors contributing to climate change to deepen their awareness and knowledge. This involves examining the role of industries, energy consumption patterns, deforestation, and unsustainable agricultural practices. By understanding the complex web of factors driving climate change, youth can develop a more holistic understanding of the issue and recognize the need for transformative change. From that point, the young people involved should start promoting their own perspectives and looking for solutions.

Developing awareness of climate change is only complete with exploring solutions and fostering critical thinking. They should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate different mitigation and adaptation strategies, considering their effectiveness, feasibility, and potential impacts. Emphasizing the importance of innovation, collaboration, and collective action, youth can explore sustainable solutions and contribute to the development of a low-carbon, resilient future.

Furthermore, promoting critical thinking skills enables youth to challenge existing norms, question unsustainable practices, and envision alternative pathways toward a sustainable future. By cultivating their ability to think critically, they can become active participants in shaping sustainable policies, practices, and behaviors. This factor helps youth to see this problem as real and short-term life-changing and will produce a productive effect in their minds.

By providing comprehensive education on climate change, understanding the problematic nature of the issue, going deeper into its causes, and fostering critical thinking, we can equip youth with the knowledge and mindset necessary to address climate change effectively. But how can we produce such an education in youths nowadays? Different approaches and methodologies are needed to get youths' attention.



Methods and Tools for Involving Youth in the Topic of Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Engaging youth in the topic of climate change and sustainable development is essential for fostering a generation that is knowledgeable, proactive, and committed to addressing environmental challenges. To effectively involve youth in these issues, a range of methods and tools can be employed. This section, following what it's mentioned by Ki-moon (2016) in Sustainability-engaging future generations now, will explore various strategies for engaging youth in climate change and sustainable development.

Workshops and Interactive Session Techniques

These techniques are highly effective in engaging youth and fostering active participation. The sessions provide a platform for dialogue, brainstorming, and knowledge-sharing. By encouraging open discussions and collaborative problem-solving, young people can explore different perspectives, challenge their assumptions, and develop critical thinking skills. Moreover, these workshops can be adapted to the knowledge level of the group, ensuring that participants can actively contribute and grasp the concepts being discussed. For example, conducting brainstorming activities, role-playing scenarios, and group projects during workshops can foster creativity and enhance understanding.

Utilizing Real, Visual, and Multimedia Resources as Examples

Utilizing real, visual, and multimedia resources is instrumental in making the learning process more engaging and relatable. By incorporating real-life examples, videos, infographics, and interactive tools, educators can effectively communicate complex environmental concepts in a digestible and visually stimulating manner. These resources not only enhance comprehension but also evoke emotions, making the content more memorable and inspiring youth to take action in their daily lives.

For instance, showcasing the success stories of renewable energy projects or highlighting local initiatives tackling climate change can inspire youth to take similar actions in their own communities. As environmentalist Wangari Maathai mentioned in Ki-moon (2016), "In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources, and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy, and peace."

Experiential Learning and Field Trips (Local to Global):

Experiential learning and field trips offer unique opportunities for youth to immerse themselves in real-world experiences related to climate change and sustainability. Local to global field trips allow young people to witness firsthand the environmental challenges faced by different communities. By engaging with local organizations, experts, and indigenous communities, youth can gain deeper insights into the impacts of climate change and the diverse approaches to sustainable development. These experiences foster empathy, cultural understanding, and a global perspective, empowering young people to become global citizens and change agents. For example, organizing a field trip to a coastal area affected by rising sea levels or making research on how the nearest coast has changed in the last years, can help youth understand the urgency of climate action.

Mentorship and Role-Modeling:

These actions play a crucial role in inspiring and guiding youth. By connecting young people with mentors who are passionate about sustainability and climate action, they can receive guidance, support, and encouragement on their journey. Mentors can share their experiences, provide insights into various career paths related to the environment, and serve as role models for sustainable practices. These mentorship relationships create a sense of belonging and motivation, enabling young people to envision their own roles in environmental leadership.

Collaborative Guides with Experts:

By partnering with experts, educational institutions, and organizations, collaborative guides can be developed, providing young people with comprehensive and reliable resources. Collaborative guides with experts and institutions further enrich the learning process. These guides can offer step-by-step instructions, case studies, and practical tips on taking sustainable actions in different areas of their lives. They serve as valuable references for youth, empowering them to make informed decisions and implement impactful changes. For example, collaborating with scientists, educators, and sustainability practitioners can provide youth with credible information and access to cutting-edge research.



Project-Based Learning and Community Engagement:

The projects provide hands-on experiences that empower youth to take action and create tangible results. By working on sustainability projects within their communities, young people not only contribute to positive change but also develop essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication. Engaging with local communities and stakeholders fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, strengthening the connection between youth and their environment. Additionally, community engagement initiatives create opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and dialogue, facilitating the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and best practices. For instance, organizing a neighborhood recycling program or creating a community garden can promote sustainable practices and foster a sense of collective responsibility.

Digital Platforms and Social Media:

Harnessing the power of digital platforms and social media is crucial for reaching and involving youth in climate change discussions. Websites, blogs, and social media platforms provide spaces for sharing information, resources, and success stories. Online campaigns and challenges can be utilized to engage youth in taking sustainable actions and amplifying their voices on climate-related issues.

An aspect that should be considered in every action it takes place is the evaluation. Integrating evaluation at the end of workshops or activities provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on their learning experience and contribute to its improvement. Facilitators can invite feedback, suggestions, and ideas for future sessions, ensuring that the content and delivery methods are responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of the youth. This collaborative approach cultivates a sense of ownership and continuous improvement in the learning process.

In conclusion, the utilization of various methods and tools is essential in involving youth in the crucial topics of climate change and sustainable development. By implementing workshops, utilizing multimedia resources, providing experiential learning opportunities, offering mentorship and role-modeling, developing collaborative guides, and engaging in project-based initiatives, young people can gain a deep understanding of the challenges we face and actively contribute to solutions. It is through their active participation and empowerment that youth can become agents of change for a sustainable future.

Examples of sustainable Activities

When planning and conducting educational activities with youth, it is essential to prioritize practices that minimize carbon emissions and promote sustainable behavior. As Balundė & Perlaviciute (2020) mention in their study by incorporating sustainable activities with a minimal carbon footprint, we not only reduce environmental impact but also set an example for young individuals to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives.

In order to achieve this goal with youths, we have developed a couple of activities that could help to work on different topics and with different ages of children and young people. First of all, it's important to know which specific parts should an activity include. That is why we present two different activities with the specific worksheet, and then some other examples to work on.

Activity Name:

Nature walks

Objectives:

- To foster a connection between youth and nature
- To increase awareness and appreciation for the environment
- To educate about local flora, fauna, and ecosystems
- To promote sustainable behaviors and conservation practices



Description:

1. Introduction (10 minutes):

Gather participants with a presentation about ourselves and the activity, and provide a brief introduction to the nature walk we are going to do. Following, we will proceed with an explanation of the objectives and the importance of connecting with nature and understanding local ecosystems.

2. Guided Walk (60 minutes):

Lead participants on a guided walk through a natural environment. During the walk it's important to point out and discuss different plants, animals, and natural features encountered along the way. Encourage participants to ask questions and engage in discussions about the environment and some other topics related.

3. Activity or Observation (20 minutes):

During the path, look for a special location and conduct a specific activity or observation related to the environment. For example, participants could collect leaves for identification, observe bird behavior, or document animal tracks.

4. Reflection and Discussion (10 minutes):

At the end of the walk ask the participants for feedback and provide an opportunity for reflection and discussion. It's important to prompt participants to share their observations, insights, and thoughts about the importance of nature conservation.

Materials:

- Field guides or resources for identifying plants and animals
- Notebooks and pens for taking notes
- Binoculars
- Comfortable walking shoes and sunglasses
- Water bottles and snacks
- Sunscreen and insect repellent



Evaluation:

At the end of the nature walk, a brief evaluation can be conducted to assess the participants' experience and learning outcomes. The evaluation can include open-ended questions and prompts, such as:

1. What was your favorite part of the nature walk and why?
2. Did you discover any new plants or animals during the walk?
3. How did the nature walk contribute to your understanding of the local environment?
4. Did the nature walk inspire you to take any sustainable actions or conservation measures?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving future nature walks?

Activity Name:

Waste Reduction Campaign

Objectives:

- To raise awareness about waste generation and its impact on the environment
- To promote responsible waste management practices
- To encourage recycling, composting, and reduction of single-use items
- To foster a sense of collective responsibility for waste reduction

Description:

1. Planning and Preparation (timing can vary):

Form a campaign team comprising of youth participants, volunteers, and organizers. With them, set campaign goals and objectives, and determine the target audience and scope of the campaign. Once you have it clear, it's time to develop a timeline and plan activities accordingly. And to let it everything ready make a list of the necessary materials such as brochures, posters, recycling bins, or which educational resources are you going to use.

2. Awareness and Education:

There are different approaches, as we mentioned, to create these actions. So we would describe the most important like this:

- Conduct awareness sessions or workshops to educate youth and the community about waste reduction.
- Distribute informational materials and resources on recycling, composting, and waste management. Or set up recycling bins and composting containers with instructions in schools, community centers, or public spaces.
- Organize educational activities such as interactive presentations, games, or demonstrations in schools, youth organizations or events like festivals.

3. Engaging the Community:

In order to achieve a wider range of people involved in your actions, organize community events, clean-up drives, or swap meets to actively involve the community in waste reduction efforts. It's important as well, to encourage the participation of everybody and create opportunities for discussion and sharing of ideas on sustainable waste management.

4. Evaluation and Feedback:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign by measuring the level of participation, knowledge gain, and behavior change. After that, identify areas for improvement and future campaigns.

Materials:


- Informational brochures or pamphlets about waste reduction and recycling
- Posters or banners with catchy slogans and messages
- Recycling bins and composting containers
- Educational videos or presentations on waste management
- Art supplies for creating upcycled crafts or displays

Evaluation:

Throughout the waste reduction campaign, it is important to evaluate its effectiveness and impact. Evaluation methods can include:

1. Conducting pre- and post-campaign surveys to gauge participants' knowledge and attitudes towards waste reduction.
2. Monitoring the volume of recyclables and compostables collected during the campaign.
3. Observing the level of participation and engagement from youth and the community.
4. Soliciting feedback and suggestions for improvement from participants and stakeholders.





Here are some other examples of activities that can be produced following the structure used in the last two examples.

Community Gardens

Establish community gardens where youth can actively participate in growing their own organic produce. By engaging in gardening activities, they learn about sustainable agriculture, composting, and the benefits of consuming locally grown, seasonal food. These gardens can be designed using eco-friendly practices like rainwater harvesting, natural pest control, and organic fertilizers. It is important, to take into consideration the seasonal fruits and vegetables, so they can also understand the natural processes this type of food needs.

Energy Efficiency Challenges

Organize energy efficiency challenges that encourage youth to adopt sustainable habits at home and school. This could include activities such as tracking and reducing energy consumption, conducting energy audits, promoting the use of energy-efficient appliances, and implementing simple behavioral changes like turning off lights when they are not in use.

Sustainable Fashion Show

Host a sustainable fashion show to raise awareness about the environmental impact of the clothing industry and promote alternatives such as second-hand clothing, upcycling, and ethical fashion brands. Encourage participants to create innovative outfits using recycled materials or host clothing swaps to promote a circular economy approach to how they dress.

Eco-friendly Art Projects

Engage youth in eco-friendly art projects that use sustainable materials and promote environmental messages. This could involve creating artwork using recycled paper, natural dyes, or repurposed materials. Encourage participants to explore themes like climate change, pollution, or biodiversity conservation through their artistic expressions.

Local Environmental Cleanup

Organize community-led environmental cleanups to remove litter and restore natural habitats. These activities help youth understand the importance of maintaining clean and healthy environments. Ensure proper waste sorting and disposal during the cleanup, and encourage participants to bring reusable gloves and bags to minimize waste generation.

Sustainable Transport Challenges

Initiate challenges that promote sustainable modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, or using public transportation. Encourage youth to track their carbon emissions saved and promote alternative transportation options within their communities. This can include organizing bike tours or public transport awareness campaigns or walk tours in the neighborhood where they live.

Promoting these activities involves effective communication and outreach strategies. Utilizing various channels, such as social media, local community networks, and educational institutions, helps create awareness and generate interest. Engaging with local organizations, schools, and environmental groups can foster collaboration and widen the reach of the activities. Moreover, providing post-activity feedback and evaluation sessions allows for continuous improvement and better tailoring of future initiatives to specific areas and participant needs.

It is also essential to leverage leisure events as platforms for promoting sustainability. Incorporating sustainable practices and messaging into existing leisure events, such as festivals, sports tournaments, or cultural gatherings, offers an opportunity to reach a broader audience. Examples include setting up recycling stations, using eco-friendly materials for event decorations, or showcasing sustainable food and beverage options. By highlighting the connection between leisure activities and sustainable behaviors, participants can see firsthand how small changes in their everyday choices can contribute to a more sustainable world.

In conclusion, the examples of activities mentioned, such as nature walks, waste reduction campaigns, sustainable crafts, and renewable energy workshops, provide tangible ways to promote sustainability. These activities engage participants, raise awareness, and empower individuals to make sustainable choices in their communities. By tailoring these activities to specific areas, leveraging leisure events, and encouraging active participation, we can inspire a collective effort toward a greener and more sustainable future.



TRAINING WITH YOUTH ON THE TOPIC OF GREENWASHING

Greenwashing refers to the deceptive practice of companies or organizations making false or misleading claims about the environmental benefits of their products or services. Training youth on this topic is crucial as they are the future consumers, decision-makers, and leaders who will play a significant role in shaping sustainable practices and holding businesses accountable.

Such training workshops or programs aim to raise awareness among young people about the concept of greenwashing and its potential to mislead consumers into believing they are making eco-friendly choices when, in reality, they are not. Participants are taught how to identify common greenwashing tactics employed by companies, including vague or unsupported eco-friendly claims, irrelevant certifications, and the use of green imagery without substantive actions. Moreover, these training sessions equip youth with the necessary tools to critically evaluate environmental claims made by products, services, or advertisements, enabling them to determine the legitimacy of such claims. By fostering a culture of sustainable consumerism, the programs encourage responsible and conscious consumer behavior, empowering young individuals to make informed choices and support genuinely eco-friendly products and services.

Furthermore, the training seeks to instill in the youth a sense of advocacy for transparency and accountability from companies. By motivating them to demand honesty and openness in business practices, the programs aim to exert pressure on companies to adopt more sustainable practices and adhere to truthful advertising regarding their environmental impact.

In addition to consumer-oriented efforts, these workshops also promote the idea of ethical business practices. Young participants are encouraged to support businesses that genuinely prioritize sustainability and environmental responsibility, fostering a positive cycle of environmentally conscious decision-making both as consumers and potentially as future entrepreneurs or leaders. The training workshops offer a comprehensive approach to educate and engage youth in the ongoing global efforts towards building a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.





Introduction to greenwashing and its consequences

In today's world, environmental consciousness has become an integral part of our daily lives. As concerns about climate change, resource depletion, and ecological degradation continue to grow, consumers are increasingly seeking out products and services that align with sustainable and eco-friendly values. In response to this demand, businesses and organizations are quick to capitalize on the "green" trend by making claims about their products' environmental benefits. However, not all of these claims are genuine, and many companies engage in a deceptive practice known as greenwashing.

Greenwashing, as mentioned in previous chapter of this handbook, refers to the act of misleading consumers about the environmental impact of a product, service, or company through misleading advertising and marketing. These deceptive practices are designed to create a false perception of environmental responsibility and sustainability. In other words, greenwashing occurs when a company tries to portray itself as more environmentally friendly than it actually is, often to boost sales or improve its public image (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). While the term "greenwashing" emerged in the early 1990s, the practice itself has been around for much longer. As public awareness of environmental issues has grown, so has the prevalence of greenwashing across various industries. From the food we eat to the clothes we wear, and even the technology we use, greenwashing can be found in numerous aspects of modern life.

Consequences of Greenwashing

Greenwashing may appear harmless on the surface, but its consequences can be far-reaching and detrimental to both the environment and consumers. Understanding these consequences is crucial for making informed choices and holding companies accountable for their actions.

Here are some of the significant consequences of greenwashing:

Misleading Consumers

One of the most apparent consequences of greenwashing is the deception of consumers. When companies engage in deceptive advertising, consumers may make purchasing decisions based on false information, believing they are supporting environmentally responsible practices when, in fact, they are not. This erodes trust between consumers and businesses and undermines the efforts of genuinely sustainable companies.



Undermining Sustainability Efforts

Greenwashing undermines genuine sustainability efforts by diverting attention and resources from companies that are genuinely committed to eco-friendly practices. This diversion can slow down progress toward a more sustainable future and hinder the adoption of environmentally responsible business practices.

Disincentive for True Sustainability

Companies that engage in greenwashing may prioritize superficial green initiatives that require minimal effort, rather than implementing meaningful and substantive changes. This can create a disincentive for businesses to invest in genuine sustainability practices, as they may believe that surface-level green marketing is sufficient to attract eco-conscious consumers.

Wasting Resources,

Greenwashing often involves spending resources on misleading marketing campaigns rather than investing in actual sustainability initiatives. These wasted resources could have been used to implement authentic eco-friendly practices that benefit the environment.

Cynicism and Apathy

Greenwashing can lead to cynicism and apathy among consumers, who may become skeptical of all environmental claims made by companies. This skepticism can diminish the impact of legitimate efforts by genuinely sustainable businesses to communicate their environmental initiatives effectively.

Impact on Brand Reputation

If consumers discover that a company has engaged in greenwashing, it can severely damage the company's brand reputation and public trust. Recovering from a tarnished reputation can be challenging and may result in long-term financial and reputational consequences.

Legal and Regulatory Issues

Misleading environmental claims may lead to legal challenges and regulatory actions. Governments and consumer protection agencies are increasingly cracking down on companies that engage in deceptive marketing practices, imposing fines and sanctions for violating advertising standards.

Environmental Damage

Perhaps the most significant consequence of greenwashing is the potential for continued environmental damage. When companies promote false claims of eco-friendliness, they may neglect to implement genuine sustainability practices, contributing to pollution, resource depletion, and other environmental issues.

Greenwashing is a pervasive issue that demands attention and action from consumers, businesses, and policymakers alike. Understanding the consequences of greenwashing is essential for making informed choices as consumers and supporting genuinely sustainable businesses. To combat greenwashing effectively, consumers must become critical thinkers and seek out reliable information from trusted sources. Businesses, on the other hand, need to prioritize authentic sustainability initiatives, be transparent about their environmental practices, and adhere to truthfulness in advertising. Ultimately, by holding companies accountable and promoting genuine environmental responsibility, we can work toward a more sustainable future for ourselves and generations to come.



Examples of greenwashing

(Fast) Fashion

H&M

H&M, the second-largest global fashion retailer, has faced significant criticism for its contribution to textile waste and unsustainable practices in the fast fashion industry. With over 5,000 stores worldwide, the company has been accused of perpetuating a culture of rapid clothing turnover, imitating high-end fashion, and tolerating exploitative working conditions. Despite these controversies, H&M has made efforts to portray itself as a more sustainable and eco-friendlier brand. One of H&M's notable initiatives is its clothing collection and recycling program within its stores. The introduction of the "Conscious" collection in 2011, claiming to use at least "50% sustainable materials," and its public commitment to using only recycled and sustainably-sourced materials by 2030 are commendable steps. The brand's 2021 Sustainability Report indicates some positive outcomes, such as a significant increase in the use of recycled materials in garments and a reduction of nearly 28% in plastic packaging.

However, these sustainability initiatives should be viewed in the context of the fast fashion industry's inherent challenges. Fast fashion fosters excessive consumerism and a disposable mentality, leading to the production of an astonishing 3 billion garments annually. As a result, H&M's recycling efforts and encouragement for consumers to buy recycled items can only have a limited impact on the industry's overall environmental footprint.

Critics argue that H&M's sustainability claims often lack transparency and can be perceived as greenwashing – deceptive marketing tactics to portray a company as more environmentally friendly than it truly is. While H&M has taken some steps towards circularity, such as introducing recycling machines in stores and creating a virtual island in the game Animal Crossing to promote sustainability, these actions might be seen as performative without significant real-world impact.

To truly be accountable for its actions, H&M must go beyond superficial measures and implement more fundamental changes to its business model. Merely promoting recycling and using sustainable materials for a fraction of its products will not suffice. The company should take a holistic approach, addressing the environmental impact of its entire supply chain, including raw material sourcing, manufacturing processes, and transportation.

Transparency is a crucial factor in building trust with consumers and stakeholders. Critics have pointed out the lack of transparency in H&M's reporting on reducing its overall environmental impact and carbon emissions. Companies claiming to be environmentally responsible must set clear and measurable sustainability goals and provide open disclosure of their progress to avoid the perception of greenwashing. While H&M's sustainability efforts should not be dismissed entirely, they should be seen as part of a broader industry-wide challenge. To make a meaningful difference, H&M must take more ambitious actions and demonstrate a genuine commitment to reducing its environmental footprint. Relying on greenwashing tactics to create a favorable image is insufficient (Blesserholt, J.,2021).

In conclusion, H&M's sustainability initiatives, while commendable to some extent, raise critical questions about greenwashing and the need for genuine accountability. Encouraging consumers to recycle and incorporating sustainable materials in a limited range of products will not address the extensive impact of fast fashion on the environment. To become a truly sustainable and environmentally responsible fashion brand, H&M, like many others in the industry, must take greater responsibility for its actions, increase transparency in its practices, and prioritize substantial changes to its business model. Achieving a more sustainable future requires collaborative efforts from all stakeholders, including companies, consumers, and policymakers, to support genuinely sustainable practices and foster positive change within the fashion industry.

SKIMS

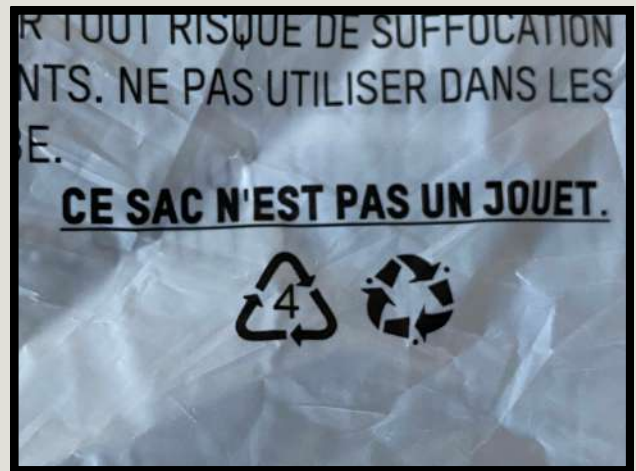
Kim Kardashian's SKIMS clothing brand has faced allegations of "greenwashing," a practice. The accusations came to light in a new investigation conducted by the Changing Markets Foundation, which found no substantial evidence to support the environmentally conscious claims made by SKIMS.

The heart of the issue lies in SKIMS' packaging claims. The brand delivers its products in film packaging boldly labeled with the statement "I AM NOT PLASTIC." The packaging further emphasizes that it is compostable and biodegradable, suggesting a commitment to sustainable practices. However, the investigation by the Changing Markets Foundation revealed that the packaging also includes a recycling symbol with the number 4, indicating that it is made from low-density polyethylene (LDPE), a type of plastic.

This contradictory packaging has raised concerns about greenwashing, as the brand seems to portray itself as environmentally friendly while still utilizing plastic materials. While the packaging may indeed be compostable and capable of decomposing, the fact that it is made from plastic contradicts the initial claim of being entirely non-plastic.


Moreover, this is not the first time SKIMS has faced scrutiny over its environmental claims. The platform Good On You, which evaluates the ethical and sustainable practices of brands, awarded SKIMS its lowest score, "We Avoid." The score was given because SKIMS lacks transparency in disclosing information about its commitment to sustainability throughout its supply chain.

Overall, the case of SKIMS highlights the broader challenge the fashion industry faces in navigating sustainability claims responsibly.



IKEA

IKEA faced a significant blow to its sustainability credentials when it was linked to illegal logging in Ukraine. The company's wood certification scheme, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), was accused of greenwashing the timber industry by failing to catch IKEA's sourcing of conflict wood. The investigative report by NGO Earthsight revealed that VGSM, the supplier responsible for providing chairs and chair parts to IKEA, was involved in cutting down trees in Ukraine. However, VGSM was operating under illegally issued licenses from the State Forestry Enterprise, which controls the forest regions marked for logging in Ukraine. As in other former Soviet bloc countries, forest regions designated for logging in Ukraine are managed by state-run enterprises. The majority of these "state forestry enterprises" are under the control of Ukraine's State Agency of Forestry Resources, including the one in Velkyy Bychkiv, a remote region in western Ukraine near the Romanian border. The issue sheds light on the challenges of sourcing materials responsibly in regions with weak regulatory oversight and corruption issues. Despite IKEA's association with the FSC, a respected certification body for sustainable forestry practices, the company was unable to prevent illegal logging practices in its supply chain.



This incident highlights the complexities and potential risks that multinational companies face when dealing with suppliers from countries with less robust regulatory frameworks. It underscores the importance of rigorous due diligence and continuous monitoring of supply chains to ensure that environmental and ethical standards are upheld.

For IKEA to maintain its sustainability reputation and address greenwashing allegations effectively, it must take stronger measures to ensure that its suppliers adhere to sustainable practices throughout the supply chain. Collaborating with organizations like Earthsight and other independent watchdogs can provide valuable insights and help identify and address potential issues promptly. By actively engaging with these issues and taking action against illegal practices, IKEA can demonstrate its commitment to genuine sustainability and ethical sourcing.

Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola, a global beverage giant, has faced scrutiny and accusations of greenwashing in relation to its plastic packaging claims. The Changing Markets Foundation's report singles out Coca-Cola for its promotion of bottles made from 25% marine plastic. While this initiative may seem like a step in the right direction, the report highlights the omission of crucial information Coca-Cola's status as one of the world's biggest plastic polluters.

The company's claim of using bottles with a percentage of marine plastic without mentioning its significant contribution to plastic pollution raises questions about the genuineness of its sustainability efforts. Critics argue that such claims might give consumers a false sense of the company's environmental responsibility while not fully addressing the broader plastic pollution crisis. In response to the report's findings, Coca-Cola asserted its commitment to being part of the solution. The company aims to make all its bottles in Great Britain 100% recyclable and has set a global goal of collecting and recycling a bottle or can for every one sold by 2030. Additionally, the company has undertaken innovative trials, such as developing sample bottles using recovered and recycled marine plastics, to explore scalable solutions for packaging reduction.

However, environmental activists argue that while these initiatives are a step forward, they might not be enough to tackle the growing plastic pollution problem. The report calls for more transparency and accountability from companies like Coca-Cola to ensure they take meaningful action to reduce plastic usage and its impact on the environment.

Coca-Cola's association with plastic pollution is not new. In recent years, the company has faced increasing pressure from consumers, environmental organizations, and governments to address its plastic waste footprint. Despite some progress, many stakeholders believe that the company needs to take more ambitious measures, including significant reductions in plastic packaging and investing in closed-loop recycling systems.

As consumer awareness of plastic pollution grows, companies like Coca-Cola face growing pressure to demonstrate genuine and substantial commitment to sustainability. The plastic crisis is a complex challenge that demands comprehensive solutions. Only through transparent and sustained efforts can Coca-Cola and other big brands earn the public's trust and contribute effectively to a more sustainable future.



Croatia

INA

Jumbo posters

The jumbo posters of the INA company with the message "Preserving the environment", "Making the Croatia green together!" and similar were displayed all across the country in the last few years. After all the scandals associated with INA in recent years (ecological and human tragedy in Sisak, unjustified fuel price increases, fuel impurities, insults from INA's director towards eco-activists), individuals believe that INA had no right to such an advertising campaign. The campaign by INA was seen as a clear example of greenwashing. The company seemed to be trying to manipulate the public through these posters, using neutral images of nature and animals that had no connection to INA's activities.

At a time when news about the planet's climate is becoming increasingly and it is no longer just a story told by environmentalists, INA's advertising methods, which grossly distorted the perception of CO₂, the main cause of the climate disaster, were seen as shamelessly irresponsible.



INA was accused of knowingly misinforming the public by using the terms "four-wheel drive", "intercontinental flight" and other through nature and animals in context of its own promotion.

The problem is harmful impact of each individual off-road vehicle is believed to be up to 4 times higher than that of a regular car (350 - 400 grams of CO₂ emitted per kilometer for off-road vehicles, compared to 100 grams for smaller cars). An airplane was known to produce up to 6 times more CO₂ per passenger than a car carrying 4 people. Despite climate warnings, off-road vehicles and cheap flights were becoming more popular. This advertising campaign was seen as indirectly supporting their popularity and was equivalent to unintentional wrongdoing. After some time, the intervention on the posters was done by the revolted individuals because of the belief they now reflected the truth.



"Natural gas"

It is widely known that the fossil fuel industries, such as INA, wants to convince us that natural gas is a climate-friendly fuel. They insist on using the manipulative term "natural gas," but that is far from its true nature. Just as coal and oil are not called "natural coal" and "natural oil," even though they also came from nature, gas shouldn't be referred to as "natural" but rather as fossil fuel. . For many years, public transport buses in Zagreb and Rijeka are displaying slogans like "Protecting the environment! Running on natural gas!" or "I drive on gas, I'm polite and kind towards nature!"

Gas is neither clean nor green, nor is it a transitional fuel. Like other fossil fuels, it is a significant source of CO2 emissions and methane – a gas that, when released into the atmosphere, is 84 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, measured over a 20-year period.



Spain

Repsol's "Greenwashing" Campaign

Repsol, a major Spanish energy company, faced criticism for its "Somos Repsol" campaign, which highlighted the company's commitment to renewable energy and environmental sustainability. However, environmental activists argued that Repsol's core business activities still heavily rely on fossil fuels, including oil and natural gas extraction. The campaign was seen by many as an attempt to greenwash its image while not fully transitioning away from carbon-intensive operations.

Zara's Sustainable Collection Controversy

Zara, a well-known Spanish fast fashion brand under the parent company Inditex, has faced accusations of greenwashing. They launched a sustainable clothing line called "Join Life" that emphasized eco-friendly materials and production processes. Critics argued that while the collection showcased sustainability, it did not address the broader issues associated with fast fashion, such as overconsumption and its environmental - impact.



St. Maarten

"Eco-Friendly" Resorts with Limited Sustainable Practices:

In St. Maarten, some resorts promote themselves as "eco-friendly" or "green" destinations to attract environmentally conscious travelers. They highlight features like energy-efficient lighting, linen reuse programs, and water conservation efforts in their marketing materials. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that these practices are often minimal, and the resorts do not have comprehensive sustainability initiatives in place.

Greenwashing Indicators:

- Lack of Transparency: Genuine eco-friendly resorts typically provide detailed information about their sustainability efforts, including data on energy and water savings, waste reduction, and community engagement. Green washers often lack transparency and specific data.
- Token Efforts: Some "eco-friendly" resorts implement only superficial changes, such as encouraging guests to reuse towels, while not addressing more significant sustainability challenges, such as responsible sourcing of food and building materials. Also sustainable waste-management.
- Absence of Certifications: Legitimate eco-resorts often seek certifications like Earth Check or Green Globe to verify their sustainability claims. Many of these resorts lack these third-party certifications or display fake ones.

Cruise Lines Promoting "Green" Cruises with Environmental Concerns:

Example: Cruise lines operating in St. Maarten have been criticized for greenwashing by marketing their cruises as eco-friendly while failing to address environmental issues associated with their operations. Some cruise companies highlight small-scale initiatives, like recycling programs on board or reduced fuel consumption, but do not adequately address concerns such as air and water pollution, waste generation, and the impact of large-scale cruise tourism on local ecosystems and communities.

Greenwashing Indicators:

- **Selective Information:** Greenwashing cruise lines tend to emphasize minor environmental initiatives without addressing the broader environmental impact of their industry, such as emissions from the burning of heavy fuels and disposal of sewage at sea.
- **Overstating Benefits:** Some cruise lines exaggerate the environmental benefits of their actions or use vague terms like "greenest cruise" without providing concrete evidence to support their claims.
- **Lack of Transparency:** Transparency is often lacking, with cruise companies not disclosing their environmental data or efforts to mitigate their impact fully.

To combat greenwashing in St. Maarten, consumers and travelers should look for clear and specific sustainability claims backed by third-party certifications when choosing resorts, cruises, or other travel experiences. Additionally, supporting businesses that genuinely prioritize sustainability and environmental responsibility can help drive positive change in the region.





Sustainable alternatives in combating greenwashing

Combating greenwashing requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders, including businesses, consumers, regulatory bodies, and NGOs. By adopting these sustainable alternatives, businesses can demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability and consumers can make informed choices to support environmentally responsible companies, ultimately helping to combat greenwashing and promote a more sustainable future. In the following text, you can find the basic criteria that must be met in the fight against greenwashing and the creation of sustainable alternatives as stated in the Journal of Consumer Behavior (2020.).

1. Transparency and Accountability

Companies must prioritize transparency by providing verifiable information about their sustainability practices and disclosing their environmental impacts. Third-party certifications and eco-labels lend credibility to sustainability claims, ensuring consumers can make informed choices.

2. Independent Audits and Reporting

Independent audits play a critical role in verifying the accuracy of sustainability claims and holding companies accountable. Standardized reporting frameworks like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) can guide consistent disclosure of environmental and social impacts.

3. Consumer Education

Empowering consumers with knowledge about greenwashing tactics and how to recognize genuine sustainability efforts is crucial. Encouraging research and verification of companies' claims before making purchasing decisions can help consumers avoid falling for deceptive marketing.

4. Regulate and Enforce

Strengthening regulations against greenwashing is essential to discourage misleading claims. Empowering regulatory bodies to enforce penalties on companies found guilty of deceptive marketing practices sends a clear message that such behavior will not be tolerated.

5. Collaboration and Collective Action

Fostering collaboration between businesses, NGOs, and government agencies is essential for developing standardized sustainability metrics and benchmarks. Supporting collective action initiatives, such as industry-wide sustainability programs, can drive real change across sectors.

6. Investing in Genuine Sustainability

Rewarding companies that demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability with support from investors, customers, and partners encourages a shift towards long-term sustainability goals rather than superficial, short-term marketing tactics.

7. Supporting Ecolabel Initiatives

Promoting the use of reputable ecolabels and certifications that independently verify sustainable practices. Governments and organizations can develop awareness campaigns to inform consumers about trustworthy ecolabels, helping them make informed choices.

8. Strengthening Corporate Governance

Integrating sustainability into corporate governance structures makes it a core part of business strategy. Appointing independent sustainability officers or committees to oversee and report on sustainable practices adds credibility to a company's sustainability efforts.

9. Collaborating with Advocacy Groups

NGOs and advocacy groups play a crucial role in scrutinizing corporate sustainability claims. Collaborating with them helps assess companies' environmental performance and ensures a more objective evaluation.

10. Green Procurement Policies

Governments and large corporations can lead by example through green procurement policies, which favor products and services from companies with credible sustainability practices, driving demand for responsible offerings.




Developing critical thinking and the ability to recognize greenwashing

Critical thinking can be defined as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication. It involves questioning assumptions, considering multiple perspectives, and examining evidence to arrive at well-reasoned and informed conclusions. At its core, critical thinking is about the ability to think critically and independently, avoiding hasty judgments and emotional responses. It goes beyond accepting information at face value and involves a deeper exploration of underlying assumptions, biases, and potential logical fallacies. Critical thinkers engage in analytical thinking, breaking down complex issues into smaller parts and systematically evaluating each component. They are open-minded, willing to consider different viewpoints, and are receptive to changing their opinions based on new evidence. By applying evidence-based reasoning, critical thinkers assess the credibility and relevance of information sources before incorporating them into their thought processes. They value accuracy and objectivity, seeking reliable data and avoiding unwarranted assumptions. Critical thinking is not limited to specific subjects or disciplines; it is a transferable skill that can be applied across various academic, professional, and personal contexts. It is an essential skill for problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, and lifelong learning. Overall, critical thinking equips individuals with the tools to navigate the complexities of the world, make well-informed decisions, and approach challenges with a logical and thoughtful mindset.

Critical thinking is of utmost importance for combating greenwashing because it enables individuals to discern between genuine sustainability efforts and deceptive marketing practices.

At the core of critical thinking lies the ability to analyze sustainability claims made by businesses. Critical thinkers approach these claims with a skeptical mindset, evaluating the evidence provided and seeking credible sources to support or debunk the assertions. By questioning assumptions and looking beyond surface-level statements, they can identify inconsistencies and misleading information.






Greenwashing often relies on vague, exaggerated, or emotionally charged language to create a perception of sustainability without substantial evidence. Critical thinkers are adept at recognizing such linguistic tactics and can see through the green facade. They look for concrete data and verifiable facts, rather than being swayed by flowery marketing language.

Companies genuinely committed to sustainability are transparent about their practices and disclose verifiable information. Critical thinkers value transparency and hold companies accountable for their claims. They seek out businesses that demonstrate a willingness to share data on their environmental impact and take responsibility for their actions. Another common tactic of greenwashing may involve highlighting minor green initiatives while downplaying or neglecting more significant environmental impacts. Critical thinkers are vigilant about selective reporting and consider the whole picture. They evaluate the entire lifecycle of products or services, from production to disposal, to uncover any hidden environmental consequences. On the other hand, some companies use reputable third-party certifications or eco-labels to validate their sustainability claims. Critical thinkers verify the authenticity and credibility of these certifications. They recognize that legitimate eco-labels provide independent assessments of a company's sustainability practices and are cautious of self-proclaimed labels lacking third-party verification. Critical thinkers also compare sustainability practices among companies within the same industry. If one company's claims seem disproportionately ambitious compared to others, it raises red flags. By considering the context and industry standards, critical thinkers can identify misleading exaggerations. Armed with critical thinking skills, consumers can make informed and responsible choices. They support businesses that genuinely prioritize sustainability and eschew greenwashed products. By voting with their wallets, consumers drive demand for transparent and environmentally responsible practices.

Critical thinking challenges companies to be more accountable for their environmental impacts. As consumers demand transparency and authenticity, businesses are incentivized to improve their sustainability practices genuinely. This heightened scrutiny fosters a culture of corporate responsibility and sustainable growth. By identifying and calling out greenwashing, public puts pressure on companies to improve their sustainability efforts genuinely. The demand for transparency and authenticity encourages businesses to align their actions with their marketing claims. As more businesses embrace sustainability genuinely, the collective impact can lead to real change at a global scale (Fernandes, Segev & Leopold, 2020).



Critical thinking empowers individuals to see through greenwashing tactics, differentiate between genuine sustainability and superficial claims, and make informed choices that contribute to a more sustainable future. By developing critical thinking skills, individuals can actively participate in combating greenwashing and promoting genuine environmental responsibility. Through careful analysis, evaluation, and scrutiny, critical thinkers hold companies accountable, promote sustainable consumer choices, and drive positive change towards a more environmentally responsible future. Embracing critical thinking is essential for individuals seeking to make a tangible impact in combating greenwashing and building a sustainable world for generations to come.

Interactive games and exercises on greenwashing

Greenwashing training

General objective:

To teach participants about the importance of sustainability and ways of „green“ lifestyle

Specific objectives:

1. To learn about the key terms and concepts such as climate change, carbon reductions, waste management etc.
2. To actively promote sustainability in local communities
3. To share best practices among organizations and participants
4. To learn about upcycling
5. To think and share ideas on how to live more „green“


Duration:

5 days

Target group:

Young people and youth workers





Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Introduction to the training course and getting to know	Learning about terms and critical thinking	Green transformation in youth organizations	One person's trash is another person's treasure	Ideas for future and closing down the training
Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break
Defining the key concepts	Sustainability in our community	Green transformation in youth organizations	Tips and tricks on how to promote green lifestyle among youth	Ideas for future and closing down the training

DAY 1

Session name

Introduction to the training course and getting to know

Objectives

- To get to know each other;
- To learn about the background of the participants and to learn about their motivation to join the training course;
- To set expectations participants have from the training course, and to present ways how they could contribute to the training course;
- To set working agreements for working together during the training course;
- To start the group building process.

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes with a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Cards with questions for getting to know each other, Dixit cards, a dice, all kinds of materials for building a bridge (papers, cardboard, tape, scissors, glue, balloons, etc.), flipchart paper, markers.

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Trainers welcome participants, tell them more about themselves and the venue (10 minutes)
2. Round of names - participants sit in the circle, tell their names and shortly explain how they arrived to the training course (10 minutes)
3. Getting to know each other - The four corners (35 minutes)

The trainer gives instructions that participants should divide themselves in 4 groups (each group consists of participants from different countries/communities/organizations). Each group starts their journey in one of the 4 corners of the room.



Each corner has a specific task for the group to get to know each other. The trainer explains what is there in each corner.

- Corner 1 has all kinds of different questions / topics on cards for participants to choose them and share about themselves. (Trainers can prepare their own questions, or use already ready-made cards. Possible questions: Where do I come from? What do I do? What is my professional background? What is my role in the organization? Who am I in my private life? What are my hobbies? What is my favourite book? Who is my role model? What did I have to leave behind to participate in this training course? Etc.).
- Corner 2 has one dice on it. Each participant throws the dice. The number they get on the dice stands for the number of photos from their phone they need to share inside of their group, and share a short story about the photos and why they are important to them.
- Corner 3 has a pile of Dixit cards (or any other type of cards with illustrations). Each participant chooses one card that describes them in any way. When everyone has chosen their card, each participant shows the card and shares a short story why s/he chose it.
- Corner 4 has a paper with a question written on it – What was your motivation to join this training course? Each participant shares their story.

4. Agenda of the training course and setting the expectations (35 minutes) – trainers present the programme of the training and invite the participants to write their expectations on the post-its and put them on the flipchart for everyone to see. Trainers comment on the expectations.

5. Building bridges – group building exercise (90 minutes) – check the detailed exercise here - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/building-bridges.305/>

Session name

Defining the key concepts

Objectives

- To familiarize with concepts such as sustainable development, environmental protection, carbon footprint
- To explore the term „greenwashing“ and its consequences

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes with a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Flipchart, post-its, markers, Internet, laptop, ppt presentation

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Sharing our realities (20 minutes) – participants are invited to share the examples of climate change in the local environment. This can be a small or big change. Trainers support and facilitate the discussion and write examples on the flipchart.
2. Participants are divided into 4 groups, each group get one term to explore further – write the definition, explore the history and current state of the term, find examples or take the from the flipchart from the previous discussion. These four topics are:
 - a. Sustainable development
 - b. Environmental neutrality
 - c. Climate change
 - d. Carbon footprintEach group presents their work and further discussion is encouraged (60 minutes)
3. Greenwashing (90 minutes) -trainers present the term of „greenwashing“and show examples of it. Participants are invited to share other examples, if the know any. The trainers explain in detail what are the greenwashing tactics, how to combat greenwashing and what are the sustainable alternatives to greenwashing.
4. Closing the day with a short reflection on all the topics and providing the info for the next day (10 minutes)

Required documents (e.g. ppps, working sheet,...)

Green Handbook for Working with Youth pdf

DAY 2

Session name

Learning about terms and critical thinking

Objectives

- Raising awareness about environmental issues and their impacts
- Provide participants with knowledge and a wider understanding of different concepts related to the environmental field.
- Develop the cooperation and expression skills of participants.
- Allow youth workers to explore and integrate different inclusive and creative approaches in their work with and for young people's education.

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes with a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Printed cards, Internet, examples of good practices and greenwashing

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Trainers start the day with a **short energizer**, explain the plan for daily programme and provide space for questions (15 minutes)
2. **ABC for environmental issues** (80 minutes)

the activity uses two digital tools:

- A spin wheel - composed of three different tasks - mime, speak and draw.
- A set of cards with concepts and definitions regarding the information you want to deliver - our set is about environmental concepts.

If you do not have an internet connection, you can put some notes with the different tasks and concepts/definitions in two different boxes that participants can use.



-The group can vary from 10 to 40 people.

You must split the group into two teams and, one by one, a participant spins the wheel, in order to get a task. After that, they take a card. The other participants cannot see the card content.

The participant takes a minute to think and understand the definition of the concept and has another minute to make their team guess the concept, by doing the task assigned by the wheel.

E.g. Mime climate change or Draw Biodiversity After each round each team receives points as follows:

1 point if the team guessed the concept. If the team does not guess, the other team has the chance to steal the point. They have one minute for consultation and are allowed to say only one answer. If the answer is correct, the point goes to them.

1 point if the participant is able to explain/define the concept correctly. This will give you (as facilitator/youth worker) the opportunity to make sure everyone understood the concept correctly.

Every participant must participate, so there will not be two rounds for the same participant unless everyone already participated. The rounds go one per team. More info and cards - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/abc-for-environmental-education.3260/>

3. Developing critical thinking and the ability to recognize greenwashing (90 minutes)

a. Trainers give a short theoretical input on critical thinking, why is it important and how to encourage it.

b. Trainers present the series of examples of greenwashing but also examples of good practices of companies promoting sustainability and „green “policy. Participants are invited to take a stand on either side of the room, whether they believe it is a greenwashing or a good practice. Trainers support discussion and provide more info on each example

Required documents (e.g. ppps, working sheet,...)

ABC for environmental issues - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/abc-for-environmental-education.3260/>

Session name

Sustainability in our community

Objectives

- To support critical thinking
- To encourage participants to think about the elements of sustainability in their own community
- To reflect on personal lifestyle choices and what can be improved

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes

Resources/material/equipment needed

Flipchart paper, markers, pens, colored markers, scissors, glue, internet

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Participants are divided into 4-5 small groups using a short energizer (5 minutes)
2. Each group is invited to discuss how would their ideal community look like. They are asked to write down elements which their ideal community would have (e.g., school, police, youth center, transportation etc.)
3. After that, each group is asked to add elements of sustainability to their community - how would their community live a green lifestyle and fight climate change
4. Each group is asked to draw their community including sustainable elements they listed before
5. Groups are asked to present their community to the whole group and trainers facilitate Q&A with questions:
 - What elements do you recognize in your own community?
 - Which elements are missing?
 - How can you live a sustainable lifestyle in your own community?
 - What can your organization do?
6. Short round of reflection on the daily programme and input on Day 3 (10 minutes)

DAY 3

Session name

Green transformation in youth organisations

Objectives

- To learn about „green “organizations
- To get inspired for future youth work
- To get ideas for green transformation and activities which promote sustainability

Duration (in minutes)

Whole day, including a lunch break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Transportation

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Day 3 of the training course is planned as a visit to NGOs which promote/encourage green transformation and green lifestyle.

Participants will visit 2 organizations which work with youth and volunteers who organize different activities for sustainability and green lifestyle. Participants will be able to ask questions and get ideas on how to incorporate different activities in their work



DAY 4

Session name

One person's trash s another person's treasure

Objectives

- To boost creativity
- To spread awareness about climate change
- To improve skills of each individual
- To practice upcycling



Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes including a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Whatever participants brought from home

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Trainers start the day with a short energizer and ask for feedback from the day before (20 minutes):
 - a. What did you learn yesterday?
 - b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
 - c. Can you apply anything you heard in your daily life and activities?
2. Continues by shortly explaining the next exercise and explaining the term „upcycling “.
3. Each and every participant will be told beforehand to bring an item from their home for which they no longer have a use for (before coming to the project place). They will each show what they had brought with them and the facilitators or trainers will divide them into teams based on what they brought as well as the diversity of the group. The facilitators or trainers will provide the participants with basic equipment usually found at home such as sewing kits and mechanical tools. (15min)

4. The participants will have some time to think about what they want to upcycle and how to do it. In ideal case every item that they had brought will be upcycled at the end of the session, but even if they do not find use for everything, it can still be considered a success. Then they will upcycle.(60min)

5. At the end of the session, every group will present the team(s) they were capable of making that day. We then shall reflect about what has been done that day and try to encourage participants to continue with upcycling in their day-to-day life. (30mn)

Session name

Tips and tricks on how to promote green lifestyle among youth

Objectives

- To brainstorm on ideas on how to live more green
- To promote „green “lifestyle
- To share good practices

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes including a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Flipchart paper, markers and post-its, laptop, internet

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Explain to participants that the next method will be „world cafe “. Divide the participants into 4 groups. In 4 corners of the room put the flipchart paper with one topic. Each group will have 10 minutes in each corner to add their ideas and insight, after which the trainer will give mark to move on to the next corner. Four corners/topics are:

- Office
- Mobility
- Food
- Waste management

Each group will have a task of brainstorming and adding their ideas on how to live more „green“ in each of the topics/categories mentioned above

2. After all the groups visited each corner, they are invited to present what they wrote
3. Trainers give a theoretical input and add information which might be missing on the posters. Information can be taken from here - <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/green-life.1991/>

Required documents (e.g. ppps, working sheet,...)

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/green-life.1991/>



DAY 5

Session name

Ideas for future and closing down the training

Objectives

- To discuss future cooperation
- To provide feedback on the training course
- To reflect on the training course and personal learning

Duration (in minutes)

180 minutes including a coffee break

Resources/material/equipment needed

Long rope, colorful paper, markers, pens, scissors, glue

Description step-by-step

(content elements, methods,... with division of time in minutes where applicable) + questions for debriefing if applicable

1. Trainers start the day with a short energizer (10 minutes)
2. Trainers ask participants to individually think about ideas for possible future cooperation. It can be in the form of a project or something else. Participants are asked to write ideas on post-it and put them on the flipchart so everyone can see them (20 minutes)
3. Participants are invited to approach each other if they like someone's idea and to discuss further (30 minutes)
4. Trainers give materials (colorful paper, scissors, glue, markers) to participants and ask them to draw/create a poster which will represent their learning during this training course. It is an individual task and only those willing can share and explain their poster (45 minutes)
5. Trainer ask participants to fill in an official evaluation form (30 minutes)



6. Final round – feedback with a rope – Everybody stands in a circle; trainer holds a rope. Trainer starts by telling his/hers feelings about the training course. While holding the end of the rope, trainer throws the rest of the rope to random person in the circle and asks for feedback. After that person shares their thought, he/she holds a bit of the rope and throws the rest to another person. In the end, everyone will share their final thoughts and the whole group will be connected with a single piece of rope (45 minutes)


Required documents (e.g. ppps, working sheet,...)

Official evaluation form



The image shows a light blue rectangular area with a torn-edge effect, serving as an evaluation form. It contains three rows of feedback options:

- Top row: A green crumpled paper ball with a happy face (two dots for eyes and a wide upward-curving mouth) next to a square checkbox with a checkmark inside.
- Middle row: A yellow crumpled paper ball with a neutral face (two dots for eyes and a straight horizontal line for a mouth) next to an empty square checkbox.
- Bottom row: A red crumpled paper ball with a sad face (two dots for eyes and a downward-curving mouth) next to an empty square checkbox.




BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR GREEN TRANSFORMATION OF ORGANIZATIONS

This chapter focuses on providing best practice examples and guidelines for the green transformation of organizations. In an era where environmental sustainability is of paramount importance, organizations play a crucial role in adopting sustainable practices and promoting a greener future. By mapping organizations that work with young people and have potential to embark on the journey of green transformation, offering tips for restructuring according to sustainable practices, and sharing inspirational examples of successful work with youth in the field of sustainability, this chapter aims to provide valuable insights and practical guidance for organizations seeking to embrace environmental responsibility.

The world is increasingly recognizing the urgency of addressing environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource depletion. Organizations, both large and small, have a unique opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a sustainable future. By embracing sustainable practices, organizations can reduce their ecological footprint, mitigate environmental impacts, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility.

The first section of this chapter focuses on mapping organizations that work with young people and with whom we will initiate the process of green transformation. By identifying and studying these organizations, we can gain valuable insights into the practical steps taken and the challenges encountered during their journey towards sustainability. Understanding their experiences and outcomes can provide valuable lessons and inspiration for other organizations aspiring to undergo a similar transformation.

The second section offers tips for restructuring organizations according to sustainable practices. This section provides practical guidelines and recommendations for organizations to align their operations, policies, and decision-making processes with sustainable principles. It covers various aspects, including energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable procurement, and employee engagement. By implementing these tips, organizations can gradually transition towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious approach.



The final section of this chapter shares inspirational examples and stories of successful work with youth in the field of sustainability. Recognizing that youth play a crucial role in shaping a sustainable future, this section highlights initiatives and projects that have effectively engaged young people in environmental awareness, education, and action. These success stories demonstrate the power of youth involvement and provide practical examples that other organizations can learn from and replicate in their own contexts.

By exploring the best practices, guidelines, and success stories presented in this chapter, organizations can gain valuable insights and practical knowledge to embark on their own green transformation journeys. By embracing sustainability, organizations not only contribute to a greener and more sustainable world but also position themselves as leaders in their respective fields, attracting socially and environmentally conscious stakeholders and customers.

The transformation towards environmental sustainability is an ongoing process that requires commitment, continuous improvement, and collaboration. Through the examples and guidelines shared in this chapter, organizations can take important steps towards building a greener and more sustainable future.

Green Claims Directive

The Green Claims Directive proposal was published by the European Commission on March 22, 2023. The European Commission has proposed the Green Claims Directive, aiming to address greenwashing and misleading environmental messaging in the EU market. The directive sets out rules for how companies should market their environmental impacts and performance. It will require significant changes in how companies evidence and communicate their environmental claims and manage their environmental credentials.

The directive is expected to apply to voluntary claims made to consumers in the EU about products, services, or organizations that imply positive environmental effects. It will not cover mandatory claims or claims already regulated, such as organic food labels or energy efficiency labels. Most EU operating companies, from SMEs to large public companies, will be affected, except micro-SMEs. Companies targeting EU consumers from outside the EU will also be subject to the rules.

The key requirements of the proposed directive include substantiating, communicating, and verifying environmental claims to consumers. Companies will need a robust environmental claims management framework focusing on integrity, transparency, and data verification. Life cycle assessments (LCAs) will be essential, and external verification by an accredited third party will be required.

Implementing these changes will require adjustments to companies' operating models, including processes, data management, technology, and organizational capabilities. Challenges such as knowledge gaps, data collection, and increased costs are expected. Companies should review governance processes, aligning the board with the new requirements.

Companies can build on existing processes but may face a significant compliance exercise. Meeting the requirements can enhance brand value, reduce reputational and liability risks, and support strategic planning and decision-making. However, some companies may choose to reduce or stop making environmental claims due to the burden of compliance. SMEs may face greater challenges, potentially affecting competition.

Companies should assess their current evidence and communication of environmental claims and consider developing an environmental claims management framework. Early action can leverage benefits, but there is a risk that the final rules may differ from the current proposal. Reviewing environmental claims and compliance requirements is important, as stakeholders beyond policymakers and regulators are concerned about greenwashing ("Directorate-General for Environment," 2023).





Tips for restructuring organizations according to sustainable practices


Restructuring organizations to align with sustainability principles not only mitigates environmental impact but also enhances overall resilience, competitiveness, and reputation in a conscious society. By implementing these sustainable practices, organizations can foster positive change, leave a lasting impact on their stakeholders, and contribute to a more sustainable world.

Here are some of the key considerations that pave the way for a successful sustainability transformation.

Assessing current practices

Begin by conducting a comprehensive assessment of your organization's current operations, policies, and practices. Identify areas where sustainability improvements can be made, such as energy consumption, waste management, water usage, supply chain, transportation, and employee engagement. Assessing current practices involves conducting a thorough evaluation of your organization's existing operations, policies, and practices to identify areas where sustainability improvements can be made. This assessment is crucial because it provides a baseline understanding of your organization's environmental impact and helps determine the most effective strategies for restructuring towards sustainable practices. To do so your organization can conduct an environmental audit to assess the organization's energy consumption, waste generation, water usage, greenhouse gas emissions, and other relevant environmental factors. This audit may involve reviewing utility bills, analyzing waste management processes, and measuring carbon footprint.

Also, it is quite important to gather relevant data and information regarding the organization's practices, processes, and resource consumption. This can include data on energy usage, waste generation, water consumption, procurement practices, transportation, and more. Analyze this data to identify patterns, trends, and areas for improvement. This will help you to identify the areas within the organization that have the most significant environmental impact or offer the most significant opportunities for improvement. This could include energy-intensive processes, wasteful practices, or inefficient resource utilization. Focus on areas where changes can yield substantial sustainability benefits.



Regulatory Compliances is another thing to be considered. assess the organization's compliance with environmental regulations and standards. Ensure that current practices align with applicable laws, permits, and certifications. Identify any gaps or areas where the organization can go beyond compliance to achieve higher sustainability standards. This also allows to determine where the organization stands in terms of sustainability performance compared to other organizations. It can also provide insights into innovative approaches and strategies that can be adopted (Zhang et al.,2023).

Setting clear sustainability goals

This refers to the process of establishing specific and measurable objectives that align with an organization's values and long-term vision for sustainability. These goals provide a clear direction and framework for implementing sustainable practices within the organization. The best way to do so is to ensure that the sustainability goals are consistent with the organization's values and long-term vision. Consider how sustainability aligns with the organization's mission, purpose, and overall strategic objectives. This alignment ensures that sustainability becomes an integral part of the organization's identity and decision-making processes. Instead of setting vague goals like "become more sustainable," be specific about what you want to achieve. For example, set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a certain percentage, achieve a specific energy efficiency rating, or decrease waste generation by a specific amount. These specific targets provide a clear benchmark for progress and enable tracking and evaluation of performance.

Another important thing is to prioritize sustainability goals based on their relevance and significance to your organization. Consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts of different goals and focus on those that have the most significant potential for improvement and positive change. Align your goals with the most pressing sustainability challenges and opportunities within your organization's context. Consider the organization's current baseline performance, available technologies, financial capacity, and the level of commitment and support from stakeholders. Setting overly ambitious goals that are beyond the organization's reach may lead to frustration and demotivation. Breaking down the goals into short-term, medium-term, and long-term targets can also help to create a sense of urgency and facilitates better planning and implementation. Set milestones and deadlines to track progress and ensure accountability. By setting clear sustainability goals, organizations provide a roadmap for implementing sustainable practices and measuring progress towards a more environmentally responsible and socially conscious future. These goals guide decision-making, resource allocation, and the overall direction of the organization's sustainability efforts (Kiselakova et al.,2020).



Involving employees

This guideline refers to actively engaging and empowering individuals at all levels of the organization in the process of implementing sustainable practices. It is important to encourage employees to actively participate in sustainability initiatives by involving them in decision-making processes, seeking their input, and valuing their ideas and feedback. Create opportunities for open dialogue, workshops, and brainstorming sessions to gather diverse perspectives and innovative solutions. As an organization try to foster a culture of sustainability by effectively communicating the importance of sustainability and its relevance to employees' roles and the organization as a whole. Provide regular updates on sustainability goals, progress, and achievements to keep employees informed and engaged. Raise awareness about the environmental, social, and economic benefits of sustainable practices and how individual actions contribute to the larger sustainability objectives.

Providing training and educational programs to enhance employees' understanding of sustainability concepts, practices, and their role in achieving sustainability goals is one of the essential steps on journey to sustainability. Offer workshops, seminars, and online resources to build knowledge and skills related to energy efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable procurement, and other relevant topics. This empowers employees to make informed decisions and integrate sustainability into their daily work routines. Through this collaboration and teamwork is promoted across different departments and levels of the organization. Encourage cross-functional teams to work together on sustainability projects, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective action. Recognize and celebrate successful collaborative efforts, highlighting the positive impact achieved through teamwork. It is helpful for organizations to establish mechanisms to continuously gather feedback from employees regarding sustainability practices and initiatives. Use this feedback to identify areas for improvement, address challenges, and refine sustainability strategies. Encourage employees to contribute to ongoing sustainability discussions and provide suggestions for enhancing sustainability efforts.

By involving employees in the sustainability journey, organizations tap into a valuable resource of knowledge, ideas, and commitment. Engaged employees become advocates for sustainability, driving positive change within the organization and inspiring others to take action. Their active involvement fosters a culture of sustainability and increases the likelihood of successfully achieving sustainability goals. (Imran et al.,2022).


Implementing energy-efficient practices

This involves identifying and adopting strategies to reduce energy consumption within an organization. By implementing energy-efficient technologies and promoting energy-saving behaviors, organizations can contribute to environmental sustainability and reduce operational costs. Organizations can conduct an energy audit or assessment to identify areas of high energy consumption and potential energy-saving opportunities within the organization. This assessment helps prioritize efforts and determine the most effective strategies for reducing energy usage.

Energy-Efficient Technologies are necessary tool in creating a more sustainable environment. This may include installing LED lighting systems, energy-efficient HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems, smart building automation systems, and energy-efficient appliances. These technologies help optimize energy usage and reduce wastage. This may also include Management Software that monitor and analyze energy consumption patterns in real-time. This data can help identify areas of inefficiency, set energy usage targets, and track progress towards energy reduction goals. Energy management software can provide insights and recommendations for optimizing energy usage and improving overall efficiency. One of the most important technology usage in sustainable development are renewable energy sources methods. Explore the use of renewable energy sources within the organization. This may involve installing solar panels, purchasing renewable energy certificates, or contracting with renewable energy providers. Incorporating renewable energy into the organization's energy mix helps reduce reliance on fossil fuels and contributes to a more sustainable energy footprint. Implementing energy-efficient practices not only helps organizations reduce their environmental impact but also leads to cost savings through reduced energy expenses. By adopting energy-efficient technologies, promoting energy-saving behaviors, and exploring renewable energy sources, organizations can contribute to a more sustainable future while enhancing their operational efficiency (Bórawski et al.,2022).

Embracing circular economy principles

Karobliene and Pilinkiene (2021) examine the role of the sharing economy in the context of Sustainable Development Goals. Some of key points related to this concept are rethinking resource management. Shift from a linear "take-make-dispose" model to a circular model that aims to reduce waste and maximize resource efficiency. This involves reevaluating how resources are used, identifying opportunities for waste reduction, and implementing practices such as recycling and reusing materials within your organization's operations. Implement strategies to minimize waste generation and promote



recycling. This can include setting up recycling programs, establishing waste segregation practices, and educating employees on proper waste management. Explore innovative recycling technologies and collaborate with recycling partners to ensure that materials are effectively recycled and reintroduced into the production cycle

Another interesting key point is reusing and repairing materials. Look for opportunities to reuse materials within your organization. Consider implementing systems for repairing and refurbishing products or components instead of discarding them. This can extend the life cycle of products, reduce resource consumption, and minimize waste.

Promoting sustainable procurement

This part involves evaluating and improving the sustainability practices within the supply of your organization. Assess the sustainability practices of your suppliers and vendors. Consider environmental impact, social responsibility, ethical sourcing, and compliance with relevant standards and certifications. Prioritize working with suppliers who share your commitment to sustainability. Collaborate with suppliers to encourage sustainable practices. Establish open communication channels to discuss sustainability goals and challenges. Foster long-term relationships with suppliers and work together to continuously improve sustainability performance.

Restructuring organizations according to sustainable practices is not just a trend; it is an imperative for businesses and institutions in the 21st century. By prioritizing environmental responsibility, resource efficiency, and social consciousness, organizations can mitigate their ecological footprint and contribute positively to the communities they serve. However, restructuring organizations towards sustainability is not without its challenges. It requires a paradigm shift in mindset, the breaking of traditional barriers, and the overcoming of resistance to change. Nevertheless, the potential rewards far outweigh the efforts involved.

As we move forward, it is crucial for organizations to adopt a holistic approach, considering economic, environmental, and social dimensions in their decision-making. Collaborative partnerships, knowledge sharing, and industry-wide initiatives can amplify the impact and accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices.



Inspirational examples and stories of successful work with youth in the field of sustainability

The Ocean Cleanup

The Ocean Cleanup is a prominent initiative that aims to tackle the problem of plastic pollution in the world's oceans. It was founded in 2013 by Dutch inventor and entrepreneur Boyan Slat, who was only 18 years old at the time. The initiative's primary goal is to develop advanced technologies to remove plastic debris from the oceans on a large scale.

The concept behind The Ocean Cleanup involves deploying floating barriers in strategic locations known as oceanic garbage patches. These barriers use natural ocean currents to concentrate and capture plastic debris, allowing for its subsequent collection and proper disposal. The initiative's technology is designed to be passive and autonomous, meaning it utilizes natural forces without requiring an external energy source. The Ocean Cleanup gained widespread attention and support through a highly successful crowdfunding campaign in 2014. This enabled the organization to conduct extensive research, testing, and development of its innovative cleanup technology. In 2018, The Ocean Cleanup launched its first cleanup system, System 001, also known as "Wilson," in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The initiative's work is driven by a combination of technology, innovation, and scientific research. It aims not only to remove existing plastic waste from the oceans but also to prevent further pollution by addressing the root causes. The Ocean Cleanup emphasizes the importance of developing sustainable waste management practices, promoting recycling and responsible consumption, and raising awareness about the environmental impact of plastic pollution. The initiative has garnered significant attention and collaboration from various stakeholders, including scientists, engineers, environmentalists, and volunteers. It continues to evolve and refine its technologies and methods through ongoing research and development efforts. The ultimate vision of The Ocean Cleanup is to achieve a world where plastic pollution is no longer a threat to our oceans and marine life.

The Ocean Cleanup serves as an inspiring example of youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship in the field of sustainability. It demonstrates the power of one individual's vision and the collective efforts of a dedicated team in addressing pressing environmental challenges on a global scale.



Turntoo

Turntoo is a concept and business model that promotes circular economy principles and sustainable resource management. It was developed by Dutch architect and entrepreneur Thomas Rau. The core idea behind Turntoo is to shift from a linear "take-make-waste" economy to a circular economy where products and materials are used in a closed-loop system.


In the Turntoo model, products are not owned by consumers or businesses but are instead leased or provided as a service. This means that manufacturers retain ownership of the products and are responsible for their maintenance, repair, and end-of-life management. The goal is to encourage manufacturers to design products that are durable, repairable, and easily recyclable, thereby reducing waste and resource consumption. The Turntoo model also emphasizes the concept of "material passports." Each product is assigned a material passport that contains detailed information about the materials used, their composition, and their origin. This information enables efficient and effective recycling and reuse of materials at the end of a product's life cycle. By implementing the Turntoo model, businesses can create a more sustainable and resource-efficient approach to production and consumption. It encourages collaboration among various stakeholders, including manufacturers, suppliers, and consumers, to ensure that products are used optimally and their materials are kept in circulation. Turntoo has been applied in various sectors, including construction, furniture, and lighting. The model has gained recognition and has been implemented in several projects and initiatives globally. It aligns with the principles of the circular economy, which aims to minimize waste, preserve resources, and create a regenerative and sustainable economy.

Overall, Turntoo represents a visionary approach to product design, consumption, and resource management, promoting a shift towards a more circular and sustainable economic system. It demonstrates the potential for innovative business models to drive positive environmental change and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Earth Guardians

Earth Guardians is a global youth-led environmental organization that focuses on empowering young people to become active leaders and advocates for environmental and social justice issues. The organization was founded in 1992 by a then 13-year-old youth activist named Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, who is of Aztec heritage.

Earth Guardians operates on the belief that young people have the power to create meaningful change and be at the forefront of environmental activism.




The organization's mission is to educate and empower youth to address pressing environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and social inequality. One of the notable aspects of Earth Guardians is its emphasis on combining the power of art, music, and storytelling with environmental activism. The organization uses creative mediums to engage and inspire young people, fostering a sense of connection and urgency around environmental issues. Earth Guardians' approach includes grassroots organizing, youth-led campaigns, education and training programs, and participation in international conferences and events. The organization encourages youth to speak out, take action, and collaborate with local communities, policy-makers, and organizations to implement sustainable solutions. Earth Guardians has a decentralized structure, with local chapters and groups around the world. These chapters work on a range of environmental and social justice initiatives, tailored to the specific needs and priorities of their communities. The organization also provides resources, support, and mentorship to young leaders who are passionate about making a difference. Over the years, Earth Guardians has gained recognition for its work and has been involved in various high-profile campaigns and initiatives. The organization has been actively engaged in international climate conferences, advocating for stronger environmental policies and the rights of future generations.

Earth Guardians serves as an inspiring example of youth empowerment and activism in the environmental movement. It highlights the importance of intergenerational collaboration, diverse perspectives, and collective action in addressing the complex challenges facing our planet. Through their work, Earth Guardians aims to create a more sustainable and just world for present and future generations.

Urban gardening projects

Urban gardening projects are initiatives that promote the cultivation of plants, fruits, vegetables, and herbs in urban or densely populated areas. These projects aim to transform underutilized spaces such as rooftops, balconies, community gardens, vacant lots, or even indoor areas into productive green spaces for gardening and food production. They can be found in many cities around the world. Urban gardening projects can take various forms, such as community gardens, rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, guerrilla gardening (illegally gardening on neglected or unused public spaces), or urban farms. These initiatives often involve a combination of individuals, community groups, nonprofits, local government support, and collaborations with schools, businesses, or universities. Many urban gardening projects incorporate sustainable practices such as organic gardening techniques, composting, rainwater harvesting, and the use of recycled or upcycled materials for garden infrastructure.



Urban gardening projects offer multiple benefits, ranging from food security and environmental sustainability to community engagement and improved well-being. They contribute to greener, healthier, and more resilient cities, creating spaces that foster a connection with nature and promote sustainable living practices.

Inspirational examples and stories of successful work with youth in the field of sustainability

CROATIA



Green Action Croatia (Zelena akcija)

Green Action Croatia (Zelena akcija) is a well-known environmental non-governmental organization based in Croatia. It was founded in 1990 and has since become one of the leading environmental organizations in the country. Green Action focuses on various environmental issues, advocating for sustainable development, nature conservation, and promoting environmentally friendly practices.

The organization is active in areas such as climate change, renewable energy, waste management, biodiversity conservation, air quality, and environmental justice. They engage in research, lobbying, and public awareness campaigns to raise awareness about environmental problems and advocate for positive change.

Green Action Croatia is part of international networks and collaborates with other environmental organizations and NGOs across Europe and globally. Their campaigns often seek to influence policies and advocate for more environmentally friendly practices at the national and regional levels. Throughout its existence, Green Action has been involved in numerous campaigns and projects to protect the environment and address environmental issues in Croatia. They have worked to raise public awareness, hold corporations and government authorities accountable, and promote sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. Green Action Croatia is an active member of several national and international networks and alliances that focus on environmental and sustainability issues. These affiliations enable Green Action to collaborate with like-minded organizations and share knowledge and expertise on various environmental challenges. Some of the networks and alliances Green Action is a member of include:

- Justice&Environment
- Zero Waste Europe
- Break Free From Plastic

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- CEE Bankwatch
 - The European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
 - Climate Action Network Europe
 - GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives)
 - IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network)
 - SEENET (South East Europe Network on Natural Resources, Energy, and Transport)
 - Zeleni forum


By being part of these networks, Green Action strengthens its advocacy efforts and contributes to broader regional and international initiatives aimed at protecting the environment, promoting sustainability, and advocating for meaningful policy changes. Collaboration within these networks allows Green Action to amplify its voice, exchange best practices, and work collectively towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

ZMAG- Green Network of Activist Groups (Zelena mreža aktivističkih grupa)

ZMAG is a cooperative organization based in Zagreb, Croatia, that focuses on promoting sustainable energy practices and community engagement in the energy sector. ZMAG aims to empower citizens and local communities to actively participate in the transition towards renewable energy and energy efficiency. The Green Network of Activist Groups operates as a grassroots initiative, working to increase public awareness of sustainable energy options, advocate for renewable energy policies, and provide support for the development and implementation of community-based energy projects. They strive to democratize the energy sector by promoting citizen participation, decentralization of energy production, and the use of locally available renewable energy sources.

ZMAG engages in various activities to achieve its objectives. They offer educational programs, workshops, and public events to inform citizens about renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency measures, and sustainable living practices. They also provide consultations and support for individuals and communities interested in developing their own renewable energy projects, such as solar installations or energy cooperatives.

The cooperative actively collaborates with local authorities, businesses, and other organizations to create a supportive framework for sustainable energy initiatives. They advocate for policies that promote clean energy, energy democracy, and the transition away from fossil fuels. Additionally, ZMAG emphasizes the importance of social and environmental responsibility in the energy sector, aiming to ensure that energy practices align with sustainability goals and benefit the community as a whole.



ZMAG plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable energy practices, raising awareness, and fostering community engagement in the energy sector in Zagreb, Croatia. Their efforts contribute to the transition towards a more sustainable and decentralized energy system while empowering citizens to take an active role in shaping their energy future.

Green Sail

Green Sail is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism in Croatia and advocating for environmentally conscious practices and responsible use of the Adriatic Sea. Through its marina and charter programs, Green Sail actively works to prevent the generation of sea waste by providing educational materials and conducting informative activities. The organization also organizes beach and underwater clean-up initiatives to foster environmental awareness within local communities. In addition, Green Sail offers the Eco Walk Talk, a historical tour in the town of Split that combines cultural exploration with discussions on current ecological issues, providing visitors with a deeper understanding of the local culture and environmental challenges.

Green Sail works with marinas, charter companies, and boaters to implement sustainable practices and reduce their ecological footprint. They provide guidance and support in adopting environmentally friendly measures and offer certification programs to recognize and reward organizations that meet specific sustainability criteria. The initiative addresses various aspects of sustainable boating, including waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation, and marine biodiversity conservation. They encourage the implementation of waste recycling systems, the use of renewable energy sources, the reduction of single-use plastics, and the protection of marine ecosystems. Green Sail also promotes sustainable tourism practices by encouraging boaters to respect coastal and marine environments, engage in eco-friendly activities, and support local communities. They collaborate with local stakeholders, government bodies, and NGOs to create partnerships and raise awareness about the importance of sustainable boating practices.

Through education, training, and awareness campaigns, this initiative aims to transform the boating industry into a more sustainable and environmentally conscious sector. By encouraging boaters and tourism operators to adopt responsible practices, they contribute to the preservation of marine ecosystems and the overall sustainability of coastal areas. Green sail plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable boating and tourism practices. By raising awareness, providing guidance, and fostering collaboration, they strive to protect marine environments, reduce the ecological impact of recreational boating, and create a more sustainable future for the boating industry

Ecological Educational Centre-Eko Zadar

The Ecological Educational Centre Eko-Zadar is an organization based in Zadar, Croatia, that focuses on environmental education and promoting sustainable practices. The center aims to raise awareness about environmental issues and empower individuals, particularly young people, to take action for a more sustainable future. Eko-Zadar offers various educational programs, workshops, and projects that cover topics such as waste management, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. They work closely with schools, universities, local communities, and other organizations to deliver these educational initiatives. The center also promotes hands-on learning experiences through field trips, ecological excursions, and outdoor activities. These activities allow participants to connect with nature, learn about local ecosystems, and understand the importance of environmental conservation.

Eko-Zadar actively collaborates with governmental institutions, NGOs, and businesses to develop and implement sustainable initiatives in the region. They advocate for environmentally friendly policies and practices, aiming to create a more sustainable and ecologically conscious community. Ecological Educational Centre Eko-Zadar plays a vital role in promoting environmental education, raising awareness, and fostering sustainable practices in the Zadar region of Croatia.

SPAIN

Fridays for Future Spain

Spanish youth actively participate in the global Fridays for Future movement initiated by Greta Thunberg. Activists like Adrián Fernández, a young climate activist from Spain, have organized and led climate strikes and protests across the country. Their efforts have gained significant media attention and have influenced climate policy discussions in Spain.

Ecoembes' "Jóvenes por el Planeta" Program

Ecoembes, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting recycling and environmental sustainability in Spain, launched the "Jóvenes por el Planeta" (Youth for the Planet) program. This initiative engages young people in educational workshops, sustainability projects, and recycling initiatives, empowering them to take an active role in environmental conservation efforts.



St. MAARTEN

St. Maarten was actively engaging youth in sustainability projects and initiatives. Some examples of successful sustainability projects involving youth in St. Maarten are:

Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC)

EPIC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the Caribbean region. EPIC focuses on environmental conservation, education, and community engagement with the goal of fostering sustainable development and the responsible management of natural resources in the Caribbean, including St. Maarten.

EPIC operates in multiple countries across the Caribbean region, and its efforts span a wide range of environmental issues, from marine conservation and biodiversity protection to climate change resilience and sustainable development. Their work aligns with global efforts to address environmental challenges and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient Caribbean.

EPIC in St. Maarten:

Projects:

COASTAL CLEANUPS ON ST. MAARTEN

Annually, EPIC organizes volunteers for Coastal Cleanups on Sint Maarten/Saint Martin in multiple locations resulting in the removal of thousands of pounds of trash, including many plastics, over more than two decades. All these activities includes active engagement of schools, youth and other partner organizations.

In order to reduce litter on beaches, EPIC partnered with the St. Maarten Tourist Bureau and Princess Juliana International Airport to place 22 much needed trash bins on beaches in 2012. Some of the bins were replaced after Hurricane Irma in 2017 thanks to support from the Prins Bernhard Culture Funds.

Cleanup locations vary widely and have included Little Bay Pond and Mullet Pond, where over 40 volunteers, including three groups of Pathfinders, dived, snorkeled, kayaked and walked around this mangrove stand in Simpson Bay Lagoon. Within two hours, the 20-foot dumpster provided by the Department of Environment, called VROMI, was filled to capacity. This event was supported by the Change Foundation, Nature Foundation, Tri-Sport, the Department of VROMI, and Island Water World.

There have been approximately 20 years of cleanups, often in coordination with the International Coastal Cleanup program, which processes data on the amount and type of trash collected.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTH IN SINT MAARTEN

There is limited formal environmental education curriculum in many schools throughout Sint Maarten/Saint Martin. Through presentations and field trips, EPIC reaches diverse youth from elementary to university level. Classroom presentations include a PowerPoint, handouts, work sheets and giveaways like stickers, but the main focus is hands-on activities and interactions.

Field trips range from hikes to kayak and boat-based experiences. Youth programs also target summer camps, libraries, home schoolers, and underprivileged youth. Most programs are offered for free thanks to project funders, although ongoing funding for youth education is always being sought. Many thousands of kids on Sint Maarten/Saint Martin have gained knowledge about the natural world and first-hand experiences that encourage island stewardship. The stewardship was heavily promoted, especially after hurricane-impacts!

Over the years, educational programs have been funded by the Prince Bernhard Culture Funds, IUCN, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Optics for the Tropics, Birder's Exchange, St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, and donors. The last ten years NGO's, including Erasmus Plus Program initiators were triggered to be part of such projects. Keeping in mind that these organizations deal with a huge network of youth (workers)!

HABITAT RESTORATION AND MANGROVE PLANTING IN ST. MAARTEN

Beautiful Caribbean islands like Sint Maarten/Saint Martin face the same problems faced in larger countries where natural areas on land and along the coast are degraded from development activities, pollution, storms, and more. A valuable intervention is the act of "restoration" where biologists, volunteers, funders and landowners replant trees, nurture soils, remove pollutants and debris, restore historic flow ways and monitor the project's impact. The goal is to allow nature to thrive.

Habitat restoration such as planting mangroves and other trees means cleaner air and water, improved protection from storms, and an abundance of wildlife, including fish, corals, and birds. The community benefits from the ecological services provided by thriving natural areas such as access to healthy food sources (like fish), support of economic endeavors (like marine industries), and access to beautiful places for recreation and relaxation (like a day at the beach).

ST. MAARTEN HABITAT RESTORATION POST-HURRICANE IRMA

In 2017, three sites served as the focal point for restoration actions including:

- Little Key is an islet in Simpson Bay Lagoon, a major wetland, where 290 Red Mangrove trees were planted. These were monitored every two weeks by volunteers, mainly youth to create awareness, using a boat donated by St. Maarten Sails. The final survival rate was excellent at 84.5% at Little Key.
- Sentry Hill, a dry forest habitat, where volunteers removed non-native plants before planting approximately 309 seedlings of a variety of native species. Student scientists from the nearby St. Dominic High School were recruited to monitor the individually tagged plants at Sentry Hill once a week for eight weeks to ensure their survival. The final survival rate was excellent at 96.1%.
- Cay Bay, a coastal terrestrial scrub habitat, is an area where 125 seedlings of native species were planted. EPIC staff monitored and watered the Cay Bay plants once a week for eight weeks to ensure their survival. In this location, 13 plants were lost when goats who escaped through damaged fencing ate them. Yet there was still a successful final survival rate of 89.6%.

This project resulted in increased biodiversity at the restoration sites when compared with pre-restoration assessments and, as the new plants mature into large trees, an increased carbon sequestration. In addition, 1,253 participants, mainly youth (workers) had a personal experience with a restoration project and likely learned more about the nature on their home island. This project was completed in partnership with Rainforest Adventures and funded by BEST 2.0 Program of the IUCN, GlobalGiving, BirdsCaribbean Hurricane Relief Fund, Prince Bernhard Culture Fund, and donors to EPIC's Irma Recovery Fund.

St. Maarten Nature Foundation

The St. Maarten Nature Foundation is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in St. Maarten. The organization is dedicated to the preservation and conservation of St. Maarten's natural environment, including its marine and terrestrial ecosystems. The St. Maarten Nature Foundation works on various environmental issues, including marine conservation, biodiversity protection, sustainable tourism, and environmental education.

One of the significant aspects of the St. Maarten Nature Foundation's work is its engagement with youth in the community. They engage young people actively by:

1. Youth Environmental Council (YEC): The St. Maarten Nature Foundation has established a Youth Environmental Council (YEC), which provides young people with opportunities to actively engage in environmental awareness and conservation efforts.



The YEC involves young volunteers who participate in a range of activities, including:

- **Beach Cleanups:** Youth members often take part in beach cleanups to remove marine debris and litter from the coastline, raising awareness about the importance of keeping St. Maarten's beaches clean.
- **Educational Workshops:** The YEC conducts and participates in environmental workshops and educational programs. These workshops cover topics such as marine conservation, biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable living practices.
- **Conservation Projects:** Youth volunteers are involved in various conservation projects, including coral reef monitoring, sea turtle conservation, and the protection of critical habitats.
- **Advocacy:** The YEC also engages in advocacy efforts, promoting environmentally responsible behavior among their peers and advocating for environmental protection and sustainability.

2. **Environmental Education:** The St. Maarten Nature Foundation works with schools and educational institutions to provide environmental education programs. These programs are designed to inform and inspire young people about the importance of conservation and sustainable practices.

3. **Community Outreach:** The organization conducts community outreach events and activities aimed at raising environmental awareness among youth. These events may include community cleanups, tree planting initiatives, and participation in global environmental campaigns.

4. **Youth Involvement in Research:** The Nature Foundation involves young people in research projects and data collection efforts related to environmental issues. This hands-on experience allows youth to contribute to scientific efforts while learning about the local environment.

5. **Environmental Youth Clubs:** The organization supports and collaborates with environmental youth clubs in schools and communities. These clubs provide a platform for young people to connect, learn, and take action on environmental issues.

By engaging youth in these various activities, the St. Maarten Nature Foundation aims to instill a sense of environmental responsibility, raise awareness about the unique environmental challenges facing the island, and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards who are committed to the conservation and sustainable management of St. Maarten's natural resources


Conclusion

The Green Handbook stands as a comprehensive and empowering resource that goes beyond mere theoretical knowledge. It is a call to action, urging educators and youth leaders to take charge in promoting climate neutrality and sustainable development. With clear objectives outlined at the beginning, the handbook sets the stage for a transformative journey towards a greener future. Understanding the significance of sustainable development becomes paramount as we delve into its definition and explore its multifaceted impact on combating climate change and safeguarding our environment. By grasping the essence of sustainable practices, educators can effectively impart this knowledge to the youth, empowering them to become responsible stewards of our planet. One of the key challenges addressed in the handbook is greenwashing – a practice that deceitfully paints a facade of ecological sustainability while concealing harmful realities. By teaching youth to identify greenwashing signs and promoting sustainable alternatives, we foster critical thinking and nurture a generation that sees beyond superficial claims.

The handbook also offers a plethora of practical tools and methodologies for planning and conducting educational activities with minimal carbon footprints. By actively involving youth and encouraging their participation, educators create a dynamic learning environment where young minds can explore the complexities of climate change and sustainable development with enthusiasm. Moreover, the interactive training modules on greenwashing serve as a powerful learning experience, allowing participants to grasp the consequences of deceptive practices and develop the discernment to make informed choices. Equipped with these skills, the youth will become drivers of change, actively challenging greenwashing and demanding genuine sustainability. Celebrating organizations that have already embarked on the green transformation journey, the handbook offers inspiring examples and practical guidelines. It serves as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards a future where sustainability becomes the norm rather than the exception.

In conclusion, the Green Handbook is not merely a compilation of knowledge; it is a catalyst for change. It empowers educators and youth leaders to sow the seeds of sustainable practices in young hearts and minds, nurturing a generation that will champion environmental causes. Green Handbook serves as a valuable resource for educators, youth leaders, and organizations committed to creating a more sustainable future. By equipping the youth with knowledge, skills, and inspiration, we aspire to create a generation of environmental champions who will lead us towards a greener and more sustainable world. Together, let us take meaningful action to combat climate change and embrace sustainability for the well-being of our planet and future generations.

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IMPRESSUM

AUTHORS:

BACKSLASH

- Gilberto Martinez
- Joan Quixal

CARIBBEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE FOUNDATION

- Feroz Habiboellah
- Mesut Bayezit

WISH ASSOCIATION

- Mateja Šimunović
- Veronika Janković

ASSOCIATES:

- ZMAG-Green Network of Activist Groups
- Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar
- Croatian Association for Consumer Protection (CACP)

REDACTOR:

- Maja Katinić Vidović

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