



# CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT!

## A Snapshot of Youth and School Initiatives on Climate Change and Migration



Co-funded by  
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# Change Environment project

The Change Environment project, funded by the Erasmus programme, aims to engage and educate students aged 14 to 18 on the pressing issue of climate change, particularly focusing on how it disproportionately affects vulnerable populations.

By employing innovative educational tools and strategies, through a four-stage pedagogical curriculum, the project seeks to:

- Introduce students to how climate change disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations, those with limited adaptive capacities due to factors such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to resources, economic instability, and heightened risk of displacement and migration.
- Provide students with clear, comprehensive, and evidence-based information about climate emergencies and environmental change, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges at hand.
- Complement scientific data with real-life stories and testimonies from young activists, refugees and communities affected by climate change, ensuring a balanced perception that combines both factual knowledge and human experience.
- Facilitate interactions between students from other countries, with the aim of fostering mutual understanding and reflection on the shared global responsibility to address and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Encourage students to become advocates for sustainability by promoting behavioural and lifestyle changes that contribute to the construction of more inclusive and environmentally conscious societies in daily practice.



# Climate Change, Migration, and Education

Frequent and severe natural disasters, prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, and other climate-related phenomena are forcing millions of people to leave their homes, both within their own countries and across international borders, highlighting the increasing interconnectedness of climate change and migration. The Office of the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) has emphasized that projections indicate a dramatic increase in climate change-induced migration in the coming decades, with estimates suggesting that by 2050, 1.2 billion people, roughly 13% of the world's population, could be displaced[1], underscoring the urgent need to act and ensure that collective efforts are mobilized to address and support the often forgotten victims of climate change

Climate change is threatening vulnerable communities, pushing them to migrate to seek safety and better opportunities. Internal migrations are increasing, especially from rural areas to cities due to resource scarcity and the impossibility of adapting agriculture. Similarly, international migrations are increasing, especially from areas where vulnerable populations live, suffering from severe famines and droughts, forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries[1]. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) emphasizes that migrations induced by climate change are not only a humanitarian issue but will also affect development, security, and global stability[2].

Understanding how climate change is reshaping migration patterns globally and in Europe is important for developing informed and proactive responses that address these multifaceted challenges.

Recent studies indicate that Europe will need to increasingly prepare to face growing migratory flows from neighboring continents, while at the same time managing the impacts of climate change on its own population. Southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Greece, are already affected by extreme weather events such as droughts and heat waves, which are causing desertification in rural areas, and the exodus to cities. In Northern Europe, rising sea levels threaten coastlines and infrastructure, endangering the lives of millions of people. This combination of migratory factors poses an unprecedented challenge to social cohesion and integration policies[3].

UNESCO's findings underscore the importance of incorporating climate change education into school curricula, and highlight how education[4] plays a crucial role in preparing societies to address the systemic challenges posed by climate change.

Empowering the general civil society and young people with knowledge and actionable skills can bridge the gap between awareness and practical solutions. Combining local knowledge and global perspectives and education becomes a key driver in fostering resilience and informed decision making. Climate change education must aim to not only increase knowledge but also foster skills for action, values, attitudes, and community-driving decisions that promote sustainability.

Teachers, educators, schools, civil society organizations and policymakers have a pivotal role to play in helping students understand the causes and consequences of climate-induced migration by transforming school environments into powerful spaces for fostering awareness and action.

Education programmes like the Change Environment Project are essential in equipping young people with the right tools and knowledge to address and act on climate change and migration.

By encouraging best practices and providing a platform for students to share their ideas and actions, this project fosters collaboration, innovation and action; the project believes in the importance of youth participation, as emphasized by the IOM, which highlights that young people are not only affected by climate-induced migration but are also in a unique position to drive solutions[5].

This report is designed to showcase best practices led by students, schools and teachers, where students were the protagonists, so that other teachers, educators, and schools can be inspired to replicate these initiatives with their own students. Additionally, this report offers a window into the vibrant movement driven by young people as reflected in their initiatives, and encourages stakeholders and policymakers to reflect on how to best empower youth by providing them with the necessary support and resources to become voices for change. Together, we can create pathways for young people to lead the way in building a sustainable and equitable future for all.

## Best practices: learn and replicate

Addressing the twin challenges of climate change and migration requires innovative and practical solutions, and students across Europe are stepping up to the task with remarkable creativity and determination. From grassroots environmental initiatives to collaborative projects that address the human dimensions of migration, young learners and their schools are proving to be powerful agents of change.

This section highlights exemplary student-led and school-based initiatives from five European countries that tackle these pressing issues in impactful and replicable ways. These projects not only demonstrate the power of education in fostering awareness and action but also provide valuable inspiration for teachers and students worldwide. By showcasing these initiatives, we aim to offer practical, ready-to-implement ideas that can be adapted to diverse educational contexts, empowering more schools to join the collective effort; whether it's through hands-on environmental projects, cross-border exchanges, or advocacy campaigns, these initiatives illustrate that change starts in the classroom but extends far beyond, into communities and across nations.

We invite teachers and students to explore, learn, and adapt these practices.

Learn, get inspired and act!



# Recommendations

## Youth-Led Initiatives for Change

The initiatives presented in the report show that there is a buzz and a desire among young people to take part in creating change. Through various initiatives, students have learned, engaged in dialogue with teachers and peers, and rolled up their sleeves to create a more sustainable and fairer world, starting from their schools and communities. Teachers have played a pivotal role in motivating students to take action, guiding them first to understand the phenomena of climate change and migration, and then to comprehend the importance of collective and individual responsibility as citizens in mitigating the effects of climate change through small actions.

## Teachers' Role as Change Agents

We encourage teachers to be agents of change, embracing their role as comprehensive educators in the classroom. Regardless of the subject taught, it can be linked to the themes of climate change, sustainability, social justice, and social activism. Teachers should fully leverage their transformative power and integrate these global issues into their lessons.

## Student Development and Engagement

Guiding students throughout their school years is an important and decisive role, and it is in the classroom that the young leaders of the future are formed. Integrating creative workshops, presentations, documentaries, bringing in guest speakers, and creating virtual and in-person exchange opportunities among students has a positive impact, as it empowers students to use their creativity and initiative and improves their critical thinking. Incorporating a balanced learning experience between data and human stories is important as it allows students to see beyond the data, to understand the stories of people affected by climate change, and to cultivate empathy.

## Teachers as Facilitators of Concrete Projects

Teachers must also assume the role of facilitators, guiding students to apply what they have learned and transform it into concrete projects, whether they be artistic, awareness campaigns, or collective moments dedicated to sustainability. It is important that these projects are expressions of the students' desire to take initiative and be part of the change, while developing leadership, communication, and activism skills.

# Recommendations

## Role of Schools in Facilitating Initiatives

Not only teachers, but other actors must facilitate this learning process towards awareness and social action for climate change.

In the initiatives presented in the report, the importance of involving not only teachers but also schools emerge. School administrators must collaborate with teachers, and facilitate and welcome these initiatives in classrooms. Alongside teachers, the school must be an institution, an incubator of transformation for young people, leading them to achieve full social awareness and to commit to more active social and community environments that promote sustainable actions.

## Civil Society Organizations as Allies

Schools and teachers can find strong support from civil society organizations and the private sector. In the initiatives presented, civil society organizations have shared practices and supported schools in opening up to these issues, sharing resources and materials. NGOs must put their experience, expertise, networks, and platforms at the service of communities and schools to multiply exchange opportunities for schools, teachers, students, and affected communities, so that actions aimed at mitigating, counteracting, and raising awareness about issues such as climate change and migration are not isolated but can be shared and replicated. The role of civil society organizations is also important to connect students to local, national, and global movements, encouraging young people to learn from their peers, be inspired, grow, and design a more sustainable future together.

## Policymakers' Support

If actions are to be driven from the bottom up, mobilizing students, schools, and communities, it is equally important that they be supported with the right means. Policymakers must echo the inspirations of young people, providing them with support in two directions: legislative support, pushing for school reforms where issues such as climate change and migration are present in national curricula, to allow students to study and understand the complex intersection between climate change and migration and prepare them to contribute to solutions. Policymakers must also facilitate both education programmes on these issues and the actions undertaken by young people with adequate funding to provide financial support so that young people can concretely develop actions in their schools, communities, and with their peers. It is important to also create national platforms, supported by governments, where young people can meet and exchange their ideas and actions, and reflect together on the next steps and policies to be taken to address these and other global challenges.



# Conclusion

In the various countries involved in the project, climate change is impacting populations, and trends predict that the consequences will increasingly be a cause of human displacement. The initiatives presented in the report each have a unique way of responding to the call to action; however, some common themes have emerged, highlighting the strong sense of urgency felt by participants to bring these issues to school and society.

The different initiatives have allowed students to make their voices heard, engage together and be agents of change. Actions like El Dia Del Migrante and Drawing routes: a journey through the causes of migration, have found in artistic expression a tool to raise awareness about climate change and have encouraged students to see migration from a human perspective. The importance of community involvement has been fundamental in initiatives such as Swap-party and Colillatón, where locals and migrants together have implemented collective actions on recycling and waste management, examples of shared and inclusive responsibility. Other similar initiatives have seen students come together in street campaigns to not only raise awareness about issues of migration and displacement but also to raise funds for organizations committed to a more just and equitable society, such as Sleep-Out and Save the Kiserdó!, highlighting how collective actions, in addition to reinforcing the message, have a very strong impact on society.

The involvement of young activists has also been fundamental. Their direct experience with the consequences of climate change in their communities has brought students closer and allowed them to develop greater empathy. Students had the opportunity to interact and learn directly from a young climate activist, and together they reflected on potential projects to develop together making this not only an opportunity for peer-to-peer cultural exchange but also a means to multiply efforts.

However, despite the existence of various initiatives and institutions that involve young people in decision-making processes there is still a pressing need to go further, by creating opportunities that ensure all young people are included, especially those who may not have had access to education on climate issues or opportunities to participate in the debate, such as youth from rural areas, those with fewer opportunities, or those from migratory backgrounds.

Projects like Change Environment play a vital role in schools, fostering education and awareness among young people of different ages and backgrounds. These initiatives not only educate but also empower youth to become leaders of their generation, by making climate advocacy and action accessible to all, and ensuring that the responsibility to address climate change and its impacts is shared equitably, rather than being limited to a privileged few. Inclusivity and active participation are critical to building a future where all voices contribute to solutions for our planet.





# Notes

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