

Bridging Voices:

Empowering Youth Diversity in the Pursuit of Climate Justice

Author: Claudia Aglietti

Data collection: Claudia Aglietti and Rose Marie Montoya

Reviewers: Henrique Gonçalves and Kalle Ristikartano

Climate Justice Long-Term Project
SALTO Inclusion & Diversity

December 2024

Index

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY	5
INTRODUCTION	8
STUDY BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	9
<i>The climate justice long-term project</i>	9
<i>Aims and scope of the study</i>	9
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework</i>	10
Definitions and concepts	10
Young People with Fewer Opportunities (YPWFOs): definition and challenges	10
Climate Action	11
Environmental justice and climate justice	11
Climate justice in the context of youth engagement in climate action	12
Understanding intersectionality: origins, evolution, and applications	12
The Wheel of Privilege: a visual tool for intersectionality	13
Methodology	14
Phase 1 - Mapping climate action organisations and initiatives, trends, and needs in the EU	14
Phase 2 – Interviews with representatives of youth sector organisations that address climate justice	14
Research limitations	15
RESULTS OF THE STUDY	16
<i>Insights from the mapping exercise</i>	16
Main environmental issues addressed	16
Climate Justice	17
Youth leadership	17
Youth as target groups	17
Vulnerability profiles and targeted support	18
Collaborative approaches	18
Funding sources	18
Preliminary conclusions from the mapping exercise	20
<i>Insights from the qualitative interviews</i>	21
Overview of organisations involved	21
Organisational context	23
Environmental issue addressed	23
Activities: Focus on inclusion and diversity	24
Analysis of funding	25
Working with public authorities	26
Working with other organisations	26
Climate justice: a nuance definition through diverse perspectives	26
<i>Mainstreaming climate justice and intersectionality: innovations from three youth organisations</i>	28
CONCLUSIVE INSIGHTS	33
REFERENCES	34
SALTO-YOUTH STANDS FOR...	37

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAN	Climate Action Network	A global network of over 1,300 NGOs working to combat climate change and promote sustainable solutions.
CM	Committee of Ministers	The decision-making body of the Council of Europe that oversees policies and recommendations.
COP	Conference of the Parties	The governing body of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which meets annually to assess progress in combating climate change.
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations	Non-governmental, non-profit organisations involved in various advocacy, humanitarian, and development roles.
E+	Erasmus+	The EU's programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe, promoting learning and mobility opportunities.
ESC	European Solidarity Corps	An EU initiative that provides opportunities for young people to volunteer or work on solidarity projects that benefit communities.
FDVA	Fonds pour le Développement de la Vie Associative	A French fund that supports the development of non-profit associations.
GEN	Global Ecovillage Network	An international organisation promoting sustainable living through ecovillage practice and education.
IMDI	Norwegian Directorate for Integration and Diversity	A Norwegian agency responsible for integration and diversity policy.
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	A Canadian government department that administers immigration, refugee programs and citizenship processes.
IYNF	International Young Naturefriends	A European network promoting environmental education and nature-friendly activities among young people.
NAs	National Agencies	Bodies responsible for managing, supporting, and implementing EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and ESC at national level.
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland	An umbrella organisation representing voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, focusing on advocacy and youth development.
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.	A UN office that promotes and protects human rights worldwide.
SALTO	Support, Learning and Training Opportunities.	Network of resource centres providing training and tools for youth workers under Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund.
SMN	Spare Bank 1	Norwegian regional savings bank that supports community projects, including environmental initiatives.
UN	United Nations	International organisation established in 1945 to maintain international peace and promote social progress.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	A UN agency that focuses on sustainable development, poverty reduction and building community resilience.
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	A UN agency providing humanitarian and development assistance to children worldwide.

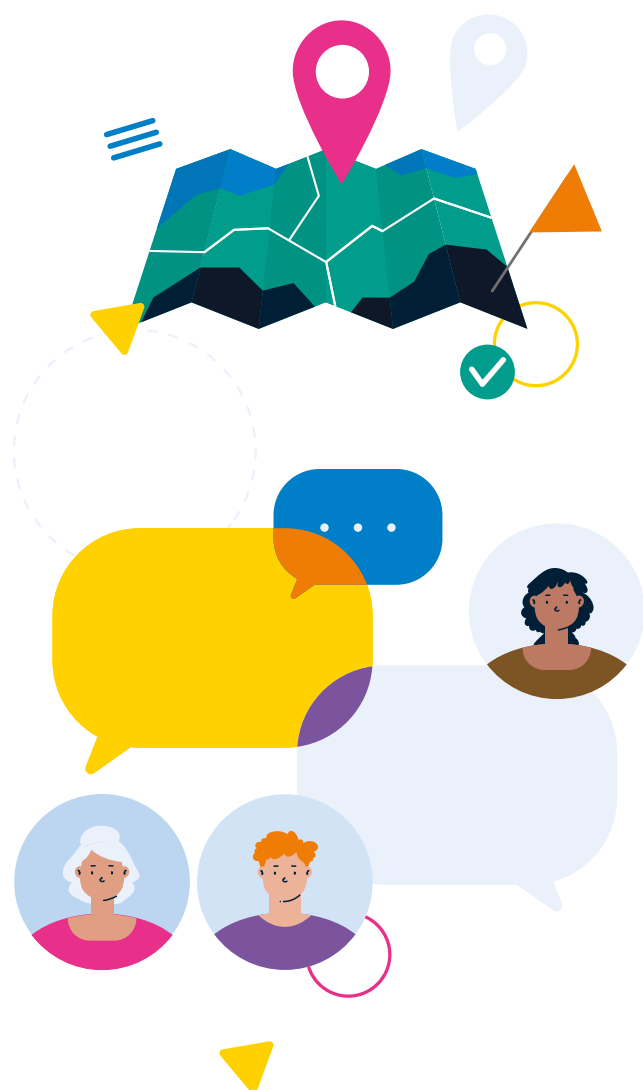
WHO	World Health Organization	A United Nations agency responsible for international public health.
YEE	Youth and Environment Europe	A network of youth organisations across Europe dedicated to environmental education and advocacy.
YFOE	Young Friends of the Earth	A youth network focused on environmental activism, part of the global Friends of the Earth network.
YPWFOs	Young People with Fewer Opportunities	Refers to people who face barriers such as economic hardship, geographical isolation or discrimination that limit their access to opportunities.
ZFW	Zero Food Waste	A volunteer initiative that aims to reduce food waste by redistributing surplus food to those in need.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study explores the role of **youth work and youth-led climate action** in the European Union, focusing on how these initiatives engage young people from diverse backgrounds. Rooted in the concept of **climate justice**, the study highlights the importance of inclusion in addressing the impacts of climate change and ensuring that solutions benefit all. Beyond environmental goals, climate justice integrates social issues and calls for inclusive practices that amplify the voices of underrepresented communities in projects, initiatives, and decision-making processes.

Central to the research is the lens of **intersectionality**, a framework that examines how intersecting identities such as socio-economic status, nationality, gender and age, shape individual experiences of disadvantage or privilege. This approach helps to identify the complexity of systemic barriers that prevent vulnerable groups from fully participating in climate action and provides actionable insights into how these challenges might be overcome.

Research methodology: To assess current trends in youth-led climate action and the challenges to inclusivity, the study used a two-phase methodology combining desk research and qualitative interviews.



Phase 1: Mapping initiatives

The first phase involved mapping 60 youth-led or youth-focused climate initiatives across 28 EU countries. Using a detailed mapping grid, the study looked at various parameters such as geographical coverage, organisational structure, inclusivity measures and funding sources. This exercise aimed to identify trends, focus areas and gaps in the inclusion of underrepresented groups.

Phase 2: Qualitative interviews

Building on the mapping results, the second phase involved 10 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with representatives of different youth organisations, including umbrella organisations, grassroots initiatives, and specialised bodies. The interviews explored themes such as inclusivity practices, collaboration strategies, definitions of climate justice and funding mechanisms.

The thematic analysis of the mapped organisations and interviews provided several insights into achievements and barriers to inclusivity in youth-led climate action.

Key findings

› Youth leadership in climate action

Youth emerges as a significant player in transformative climate initiatives across Europe, with around a third of the mapped projects designed to primarily benefit young people, and more than half directly led by young people. These initiatives focus on education, advocacy, and empowerment, creating platforms for young activists to influence policy and mobilise local action. International collaborations, supported by EU programmes such as Erasmus+, amplify the impact of these efforts.

However, systemic inequalities often prevent underrepresented groups, including socio-economically disadvantaged youth, rural communities, and minorities, from accessing these opportunities. Targeted interventions are needed to overcome these barriers and ensure equitable participation.

› Mainstreaming inclusiveness

While many youth-led organisations recognise the importance of inclusivity, its application remains inconsistent. More than half of the initiatives mapped lack explicit strategies to address the needs of diverse groups. **This shortcoming weakens the principle of climate justice, which advocates for equitable representation and participation**, including of the groups most affected by climate change.

Organisations that adopt an **intersectional approach** show better results in terms of inclusivity. For example, some initiatives support refugees with language training and job opportunities, while others empower women by addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities to climate change. These examples show how intersectionality can strengthen climate action by addressing different forms of disadvantage.

› Integrating Climate Justice

Climate justice is widely recognised among youth organisations but is inconsistently operationalised. Many CSOs define it as a fusion of environmental and social concerns, emphasising accountability, fairness, and inclusivity. However, few explicitly integrate these principles into their operational frameworks. The study highlights organisations that are successfully integrating inclusivity and intersectionality into climate action, prioritising participatory approaches, and ensuring that vulnerable voices can participate in and influence climate action.



› Success through collaboration

Collaboration is a defining characteristic of successful youth climate initiatives. Most organisations work with other civil society groups, pooling resources, and expertise to tackle complex challenges. Partnerships with local governments and international agencies **extend the reach and impact** of these initiatives. However, collaboration is not without its challenges. Bureaucratic constraints and misalignment of priorities between organisations and local authorities can slow down the landing and progress of projects. In some regions, inadequate government support for youth and environmental action limits the potential for effective partnerships.

› Funding

Funding has a significant impact on the sustainability and scale of youth climate initiatives. EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps provide crucial support, with over 60% of initiatives relying on such funding. However, reliance on short-term grants creates financial instability and **hinders long-term planning and (inclusivity) programme continuity**. Smaller organisations face additional challenges in accessing private philanthropy, particularly in regions where youth or environmental projects are not politically prioritised. Volunteerism helps sustain many initiatives, but risks burnout and limits scalability.

Conclusion

This study reveals a vibrant landscape of youth work and youth-led climate action in Europe, driven by passionate leaders and innovative approaches. However, significant gaps in inclusivity and equity remain. Addressing these will require targeted support for diverse groups, sustainable funding models and increased collaboration between stakeholders.

Intersectionality is emerging as a key tool for advancing climate justice. By addressing intersecting vulnerabilities, organisations can develop more inclusive and impactful climate initiatives. Strengthening youth leadership is also critical to ensure that **diverse voices are part of the bottom-up shaping of policies** and actions to address climate challenges.

As Europe moves forward in this area, the results of the study contribute to forming a baseline for empowering youth work and young leaders in the EU in the pursuit of climate justice. Collective youth action based on the values of equity, diversity and sustainability is essential to creating a fair and just climate future.



INTRODUCTION

Young people are one of the social groups most affected by the climate crisis. As they look to the future, they face what is often called intergenerational injustice - inheriting the consequences of emissions produced by previous generations, while having little say in the decisions that led to today's climate problems. The growing sense of injustice has heightened young people's awareness that they may bear the brunt of the environmental crisis for the rest of their lives. This concern often manifests itself as ecological anxiety, depression, and grief.

In response to these challenges, young people are increasingly emerging as leaders in climate action and advocacy initiatives. From organising school walkouts and running online campaigns to spearheading community-based projects and participating in international climate conferences, youth-led climate activism is rapidly gaining momentum. Many young activists are involved in grassroots organisations working at local or national level, while others are part of broader European or international networks. This collective mobilisation is bringing new perspectives and powerful voices to the climate debate.

Youth mobilisation has also caught the attention of policy makers within the EU institutions, creating new spaces for youth participation in climate policy discussions. One notable example is the "Symposium: Young People, Democracy and Climate Action" held in Strasbourg in September 2024. Recommendations from the Symposium emphasise the importance of promoting young people's active participation in climate-related decision-making and investing in education and green jobs. The need to address climate-related mental health challenges is also highlighted, as is the need to **promote inclusivity and diversity in youth climate action**.

The participation of young people from socio-economically vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds is crucial but remains limited. These individuals often face **systemic barriers** that limit their involvement in mobilisation efforts and in initiatives at national and local levels. Such exclusion hinders the representation of diverse experiences and perspectives, which are essential for shaping equitable and effective climate solutions.

Against this backdrop, this study examines current trends and challenges in youth work across the European Union, with a particular focus on EU-funded initiatives such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. Using an **intersectional lens**, it explores how youth-centred organisations understand and engage with the concept of climate justice. The study highlights the efforts and challenges these organisations face in promoting inclusivity and diversity and offers insights for a more **equitable and inclusive climate action landscape**.



STUDY BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The climate justice long-term project

This study is part of the inception phase of the Climate Justice Long-Term project, implemented by SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, in collaboration with several National Agencies (NAs). The project highlights the need to ensure that Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes are accessible to young people with fewer opportunities (YPWFOs), who are often excluded from climate movements and the green transition¹.

This project aims to explore how inclusion and diversity can be strengthened within EU youth programmes tackling environmental and climate action, and aims to make this a reality by developing a strategic, long-term strategy organised around three main objectives:

› **Transnational Partnership and Collaboration:**

The project aims to foster increased cooperation across borders by connecting National Agencies (NAs), youth networks and other stakeholders. By centralising resources and providing a platform for joint efforts, the study aims to create a stronger, synergised network that supports inclusive climate action.

› **Capacity building for inclusive climate action:**

Recognising the systemic links between climate action and social justice, this project highlights the need for capacity-building initiatives that empower YPWFOs. It proposes the integration of co-design principles to actively involve these groups in decision-making processes, and the establishment of a think tank to support long-term engagement.

› **Knowledge building, preservation, and intersectional understanding:**

To ensure that climate justice efforts are inclusive and sustainable, the project prioritises individual capacity building and the sharing of best practices among youth workers and young people. It advocates co-creating solutions with those directly affected by climate change and emphasises the role of learning mobility and mentoring activities in supporting continuous learning.

By positioning Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps as mechanisms for amplifying the voices of YPWFOs, this project provides a framework for the meaningful engagement of underrepresented groups, fostering inclusive practices within climate-related actions.

Aims and scope of the study

The present research work aims to provide an overview of how existing youth climate action in the EU engages young people from diverse backgrounds. It seeks to explore how youth-led and youth-focused organisations, particularly those funded by civil society organisations (CSOs), are incorporating the needs and voices of YPWFOs.

The study will therefore examine the extent to which these initiatives can benefit young people from under-represented groups and provide insights and guidance on how to make climate action accessible to all.

¹ Nicodemi, S., & Denais, A. SALTO I&D. (2022). Green Inclusion Seminar, A collection of inputs gathered during the Green Inclusion Seminar, held in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 15-18 November 2022.

Theoretical and methodological framework

To advance knowledge and deepen the understanding of emerging trends and challenges related to climate justice in the EU, this section presents a conceptual framework that integrates the notion of climate justice with the theoretical lens of intersectionality.

This study is guided by three key research questions that will help explore the intersection of climate justice and inclusion in the EU youth sector:

- 1 Climate Justice in the EU:** What are the main current trends and areas where youth movements and organisations are most engaged in climate action within the EU?
- 2 Inclusion and Diversity:** How inclusive are youth organisations in their climate action initiatives in the EU today?
- 3 Good Practices:** What actions, tools, and approaches have proven successful in enhancing the inclusiveness and diversity of youth climate action in the EU? What can be learned from these good practices?

To better define the scope of the study, definition of main concepts used will be provided below.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Young People with Fewer Opportunities (YPWFOs): definition and challenges

The term Young People with Fewer Opportunities (YPWFOs) is used throughout this study to describe young people who face various barriers limiting their access to opportunities offered by the . YPWFOs is a broad definition that reflects the diverse experiences of young people in different regions and nations across the EU. YPWFOs may include people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and people from rural or remote areas.

Building on years of experience from the Youth in Action Programme, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (2021) identifies a comprehensive framework of barriers commonly encountered by YPWFOs:

Disability	Physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments.
Health challenges	Including mental health issues.
Educational barriers	For example, young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs).
Cultural differences	Encompassing migrant, refugee, or ethnic minority backgrounds.
Social exclusion	Such as former drug users or individuals facing social marginalisation.
Economic hardship	Living in poverty or within low-income households.
Discrimination	Based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or intersectional issues.
Geographical isolation	Residing in remote or underserved areas.

In this regard, an additional source of insight into the barriers faced by YPWFOs and strategies to reconcile climate action with inclusion, is represented by the Green Inclusion Seminar² held in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, in November 2022. The seminar and the resulting report highlight the need for EU youth programmes to address the specific challenges faced by young people from diverse backgrounds when engaging them in climate action. It also identifies the obstacles faced by organisations working with vulnerable young people in these contexts. A key finding was the need for a more holistic approach, addressing both environmental concerns and social inequalities. It emerged from the seminar that the integration of inclusion and green projects is not just a speculative ideal, but a practical necessity to create more inclusive solutions. Such solutions would aim to ensure that YPWFOs are not excluded from opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the sustainability goals of youth engagement in climate action.

Climate Action

In the European Union, climate action refers to efforts to combat climate change and mitigate its effects, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions (climate change mitigation) and adapting to the existing and future impacts of climate change (climate change adaptation). These actions are at the heart of the European Green Deal, a key aspect of which is to empower young people to lead and shape Europe's climate-resilient future. The European Commission's Youth for Climate Action Initiative aims to engage young people in climate action by providing resources and cross-border cooperation to scale up youth-led climate projects and foster a collective, forward-looking response to climate challenges. The European Solidarity Corps and the Erasmus+ programme are the two main programmes that have been designed to support this objective.

Environmental justice and climate justice

Environmental justice and climate justice both address the unfair distribution of environmental risks and impacts, but they focus on different issues and approaches.

Environmental justice centres on fair treatment for all people regarding exposure to environmental risks, recognizing that vulnerable communities often face higher levels of pollution, toxic waste, and limited access to clean resources. It advocates for the inclusion of these communities in environmental decision-making processes, emphasising the equitable distribution of environmental benefits (e.g., clean air, safe drinking water) and fair enforcement of policies.

Climate Justice specifically addresses the global impacts of climate change and recognizes that the poorest and least responsible communities are often the most affected by climate-related issues like extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and displacement. Climate justice advocates for systemic changes to address these disparities, accentuating the ethical responsibility of wealthier nations and sectors that have contributed most to global emissions.

While Environmental Justice seeks equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regarding environmental policy and hazards, climate justice specifically targets the ethical and social dimensions of climate change. Climate Justice addresses the recognition that climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable communities, who are often the least responsible for causing it. This concept emphasises that climate change is not solely an environmental issue, but a complex sociological challenge tied to social, racial, and economic inequalities.

Climate justice can be seen as encompassing environmental justice, but it expands the concept to include a global and intersectional perspective that addresses broader social, economic, and ethical dimensions related to climate change.

² Nicodemi, S., & Denais, A. SALTO I&D. (2022). Green Inclusion Seminar, A collection of inputs gathered during the Green Inclusion Seminar, held in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 15-18 November 2022.



Climate justice in the context of youth engagement in climate action

The "" (CM/Rec (2024)6) is a key document adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 23 October 2024. It reflects the current understanding of climate justice in the context of youth engagement in EU climate action and echoes the concept of climate justice as outlined at the recent Council of Europe Youth Partnership "Symposium: Young People, Democracy and Climate Action" held in Strasbourg in September 2024.

This document highlights the crucial role of young activists, in advocating for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. It also sets out a framework for how Member States can support and empower youth participation in climate-related decision-making processes.

At the heart of this recommendation is the idea that climate justice should ensure fairness in both the process and the outcomes of climate action. It recognises that young people, especially those from vulnerable communities, are disproportionately affected by climate change due to their higher risk exposure and socio-economic vulnerability. The document therefore emphasises the need to address inclusiveness. Climate justice in this context goes beyond environmental issues to include elements of social justice, such as equality, diversity, and the protection of fundamental human rights. It insists on giving young people, especially those facing social and economic inequalities, equal opportunities to influence climate policies and decisions.

By framing it in a European context, it highlights the need for fairness and equity in addressing the global and local impacts of climate change, ensuring that responses to climate change are not only effective, but also equitable and inclusive for all.

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION, AND APPLICATIONS

How can intersectionality be used as a framework to promote more inclusive climate action?

Intersectionality is a way of understanding how different aspects of a person's identity - such as gender, class, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, and other social factors - interact and overlap. The intersection of these identities can mean that some people face more challenges, barriers, or opportunities than others, even if they live in the same society and context.

The term intersectionality was first used by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to challenge traditional ways of looking at inequality, which often treated aspects of identity as separate, when in fact they are interconnected. In her influential paper *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* (1989), Crenshaw focused on the intersection of race and gender and how the law didn't fully address the compounded discrimination that occurs when these two dimensions intersect.

Over time, the use of an intersectional lens in academia has expanded to include other identities such as sexuality, age, class, ability, and religion. Today, intersectionality is applied in many fields beyond law and social sciences, such as urban planning, health care, psychology, and education. It is also increasingly being used in policymaking. For example, the United Nations uses an intersectional approach in its efforts to reduce inequalities in areas such as health, gender-based violence and climate change. Similarly, the European Union's Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025 emphasises intersectionality and supports policies that address interconnected inequalities.

Intersectionality is therefore valuable because it provides a comprehensive tool for social analysis. It shows how different identities are linked and how their intersection can affect life chances, choices and opportunities, reasons for inclusion and exclusion dynamics, participation or not. In short, different intersections of different identities can produce different experiences of inequality.

On the other hand, intersectionality is also a multifaceted and complex theory that is not easy to operationalise. This complexity can make it difficult to grasp, especially for non-academic audiences.

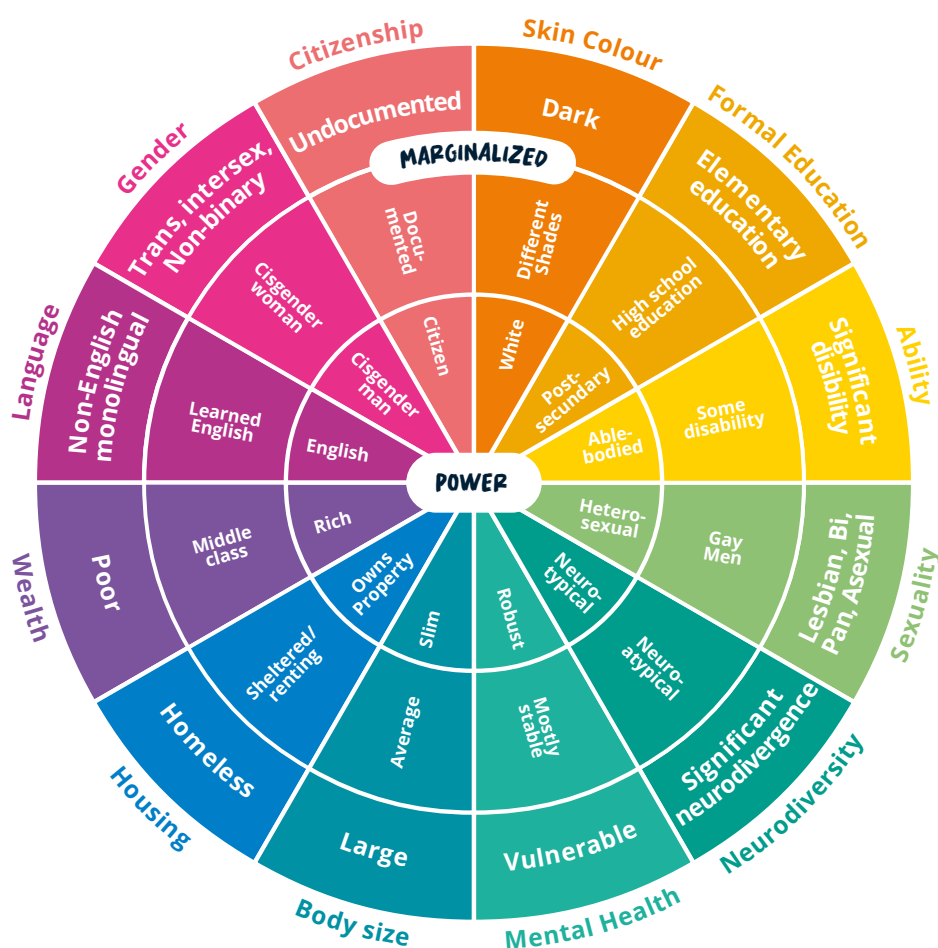
The Wheel of Privilege: a visual tool for intersectionality

Designed as a tool aimed to bridge the gap between academic theory and public understanding of intersectionality is Sylvia Duckworth's Wheel of Privilege. Featured in the Government of Canada's IRCC Anti-Racism Strategy 2.0 (2021-2024), the Wheel of Privilege serves as a visual representation of how various social identities influence power dynamics. Access the tool [here](#).

In the wheel, social identity categories are represented as segments radiating from a central hub. The closer an identity category is to the centre; the more privilege and power that group typically holds within a given society. Conversely, those on the outer edges of the wheel represent groups that face greater systemic discrimination. The Wheel of Privilege is therefore a tool to facilitate reflection on how people can experience different levels of advantage or disadvantage depending on the intersection of different factors and the context in which they live.

By using a circular design, the Wheel of Privilege can effectively illustrate the interaction of different identities without requiring the reader to master theoretical jargon. Although based on the Canadian context, the strength of the Wheel of Privilege lies in its ability to make the abstract concept of intersectionality more tangible. It provides a visual metaphor that can be immediately grasped to understand that power is not evenly distributed, and that individuals' experiences of privilege or marginalisation are influenced by multiple, overlapping factors.

As well as serving as a practical tool for explaining intersectionality, the Wheel of Privilege is likely to be an appropriate tool to develop in an adapted version under this theme. Indeed, it could serve to further illustrate how different social identities are more or less represented in EU youth work and climate action today. Indeed, while integrating the fundamental concepts of climate justice and intersectionality, this visual tool will help to outline the state of play of youth sector organisations working on climate justice in the pursuit of climate justice, as well as areas where there is scope to improve inclusion and diversity.



METHODOLOGY

Having established the conceptual framework, including the concept of climate justice and the theoretical lens of intersectionality, the next section outlines the methodology. This approach combines extensive desk research, qualitative data collection, and intersectional analysis to examine the trends and challenges shaping youth climate action in the European Union today.

Phase 1 - Mapping climate action organisations and initiatives, trends, and needs in the EU

The analysis began with a comprehensive review of current trends in the European Union, focusing on initiatives led by youth sector organisations that address climate justice. The methodology was primarily desk research -based, with data collected using a mapping grid organised into 24 columns that capture different aspects of these organisations and initiatives. Several key questions guided the exploration of youth engagement in climate action:

- › **What are the main trends (including areas and activities) in which youth movements and organisations are most engaged in climate action?**
- › **Do youth movements and organisations involved in climate action explicitly refer to climate justice in their initiatives?**

Once established the current landscape of climate justice initiatives, the next step was to explore inclusivity within these movements, focusing on the representation of vulnerable groups.

The following questions guided this phase:

- › **How inclusive are youth movements and organisations in their climate justice initiatives?**
- › **Which YPWFOs are involved in youth movements and organisations working on climate change in the EU, and to what extent?**

This phase also assessed the tendency of civil society organisations to collaborate with other civil society organisations and local authorities, as well as the funding source and sustainability of their initiatives.

In order to start collecting the most relevant and up-to-date data, fieldwork moved from the following sources:

- Organisations participating in the “Symposium: Young People, Democracy and Climate Action” to be held at the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 24-26 September 2024.
- Database of recent initiatives selected from Erasmus projects, which address climate action³ and focus on inclusion and diversity.
- Additional initiatives that have emerged as significant citizen-led change actions in communities directly and most affected by climate change.

Geographical coverage: Data collection was extensive, covering 20 countries, including EU member states and countries associated with the Erasmus+ program.

³ Projects dealing with the environment and climate change represent about 5.22% of the total number of projects in the Erasmus+ database (in figures: 14138 out of a total of 270614 projects). Source: Erasmus+ project results website

Phase 2 – Interviews with representatives of youth organisations addressing climate justice

Having mapped the current landscape of climate justice initiatives, the next logical step was to explore specific issues in more depth and gain insights that could not be obtained through desk research alone.

To this end, 10 interviews were conducted with representatives of youth sector organisations actively engaged in climate justice. Organisations were selected from the same source as in Phase 1, chosen for their active role in climate advocacy, community action and policy initiatives. This selection ensured diverse perspectives reflecting environmental, social, economic, and human rights dimensions.

The methodology employed semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants the flexibility to share nuanced views while maintaining a focus on the core themes of the study. Transcriptions of the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key insights. This iterative process captured the breadth of interpretations of climate justice, while recognising the unique contributions of each organisation. Questions developed from the mapping phase research were pilot tested with a youth worker to ensure relevance and clarity. Key themes explored during this phase included organisational structures, activities, efforts towards inclusivity and diversity, definitions of climate justice, collaboration, funding strategies and policy recommendations. This phase yielded a wealth of qualitative data, revealing both subjective insights and organisational perspectives. It provided a deeper understanding of sector-wide trends, challenges, and successes.

A central focus of this phase was inclusivity within these movements, particularly the representation of vulnerable groups. To guide this exploration, the following key questions were posed:

- › **What barriers to inclusion did these movements face?**
- › **What factors facilitated inclusion?**
- › **What inspiring elements emerged from their experiences?**

By aligning the interviews with the findings from the mapping process, the study provided a comprehensive and detailed picture of the state of climate justice initiatives across the EU.

The results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 analysis are presented below.

Research limitations

While this research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of youth participation and leadership in climate initiatives, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. As the analysis was primarily conducted in English, organisations whose websites or materials are predominantly in other European languages may have been under-represented. This language bias may have hindered the identification of initiatives in countries or regions where English is not commonly used for organisational communication, potentially favouring more internationally oriented entities or those operating in predominantly English-speaking contexts and programmes, such as E+/ESC. This approach may have inadvertently prioritised the perspectives of those involved in structured, formal initiatives, while overlooking the voices of informal or grassroots youth-led movements operating in many EU countries.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

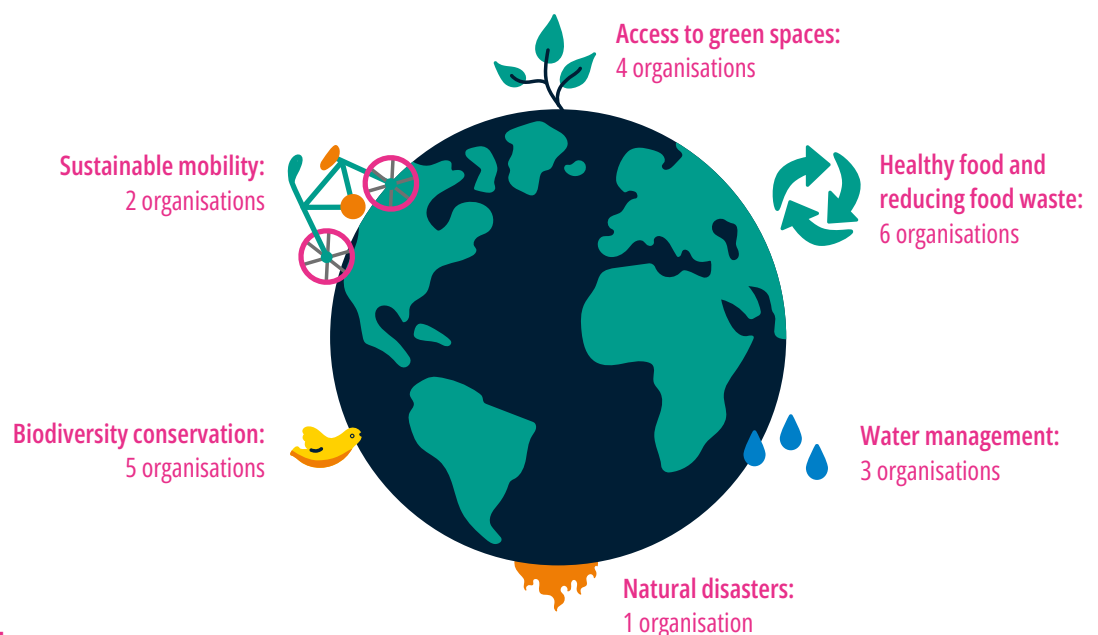
Insights from the mapping exercise

The analysis of data from various climate action initiatives across Europe provides valuable insights into the environmental and social dynamics driving youth involvement in sustainability. The research covered 60 initiatives spanning 28 countries, with a particular concentration of activities in Spain, Germany, and France. These organisations, ranging from formal associations to informal groups, are united by their focus on promoting inclusivity and addressing pressing environmental concerns.

MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

The findings highlight climate change and sustainability as the most prominent areas of focus for these organisations. A significant portion of initiatives is dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation, with many actively promoting policies that support sustainable practices.

In addition to the general area of climate change and sustainability - mentioned by 40 out of 60 organisations - several specific environmental issues are being addressed by some CSOs, such as:



CLIMATE JUSTICE

The concept of climate justice appears infrequently in the descriptions of the mapped organisations. It is explicitly mentioned less than five times, alongside related terms such as social justice (three mentions) and global justice (two mentions). This limited use suggests that while the principle of just responses to climate change underpins many initiatives, it is not always explicitly articulated within their stated scope or focus. Youth-led or youth work projects often embody these values in practice, even if they do not explicitly frame their work in justice-related terminology.

The findings also suggest that climate justice is becoming more prominent globally, particularly as a framework for addressing the ethical obligations of wealthier nations and high-emitting sectors to take responsibility for their outsized role in the climate crisis. However, in the European context, organisations involved in local or regional interventions tend to prioritise practical implementation over explicit reference to climate justice, perhaps reflecting the more globally oriented term. Nevertheless, their activities are broadly in line with the core principles of responsibility that are central to the concept of climate justice.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Youth participation emerges as a central theme in the initiatives examined. Around a third of these initiatives identify young people as their primary target group, while the majority (32 out of 60) are directly initiated and led by young people themselves.

Youth leadership highlights the recognition of young people as both critical agents of change and key stakeholders in addressing the global climate crisis. Youth-led initiatives often prioritise advocacy, focusing on influencing policy, raising public awareness, and mobilising collective action to drive systemic change. These organisations exemplify the potential of young people to challenge traditional power structures and bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to climate challenges.

In addition, youth-led initiatives play a critical role in fostering collaboration among young activists and building networks that amplify their collective impact. By providing opportunities for leadership and direct involvement in decision-making processes, these initiatives not only empower young people, but also ensure that their voices are heard in shaping the future of climate action.

YOUTH AS TARGET GROUPS

Besides youth-led initiatives, a significant number of projects (28) focus on young people as beneficiaries, emphasising education and community-based solutions. These projects often prioritise raising awareness of climate change through workshops, training programmes and creative media such as art, theatre, and film. Using engaging and accessible methods, these initiatives aim to inform and inspire young people, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate and address the complexities of the climate crisis.

Alongside educational efforts, community-based activities such as urban gardening, waste reduction programmes and environmental clean-ups are widely implemented, fostering local engagement, and cultivating a sense of responsibility among young participants. These activities often serve as entry points for young people to become more actively involved in sustainability efforts, bridging the gap between education and action.

In addition, some initiatives focus on international cooperation, facilitating cross-cultural exchanges and global collaboration on environmental issues. These programmes enable young people to participate in broader dialogues on sustainability, encouraging them to consider different perspectives and to recognise the interconnected nature of climate challenges across regions and communities.

As a preliminary conclusion, when young people are positioned as the target group rather than the main actors, youth work activities tend towards education and empowerment, reflecting the structured and often hierarchical nature of these organisations, which are typically led by more experienced or established actors. While these efforts aim to build basic skills and foster a deeper understanding of climate issues, they may inadvertently reinforce the traditional dynamic of imparting knowledge and guidance to young people rather than developing it with them.



VULNERABILITY PROFILES AND TARGETED SUPPORT

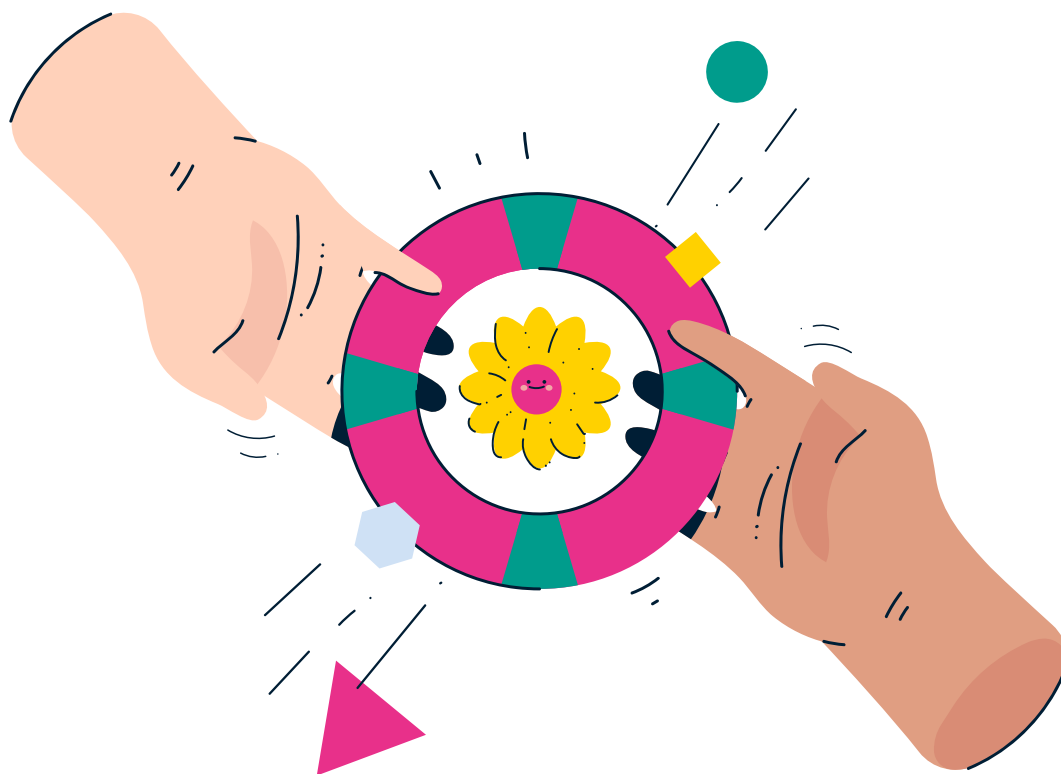
A critical observation from the data is that over half of the surveyed organisations do not explicitly address vulnerability profiles or provide targeted support for diverse groups. This suggests a gap in the inclusivity of certain initiatives, particularly for youth from socio-economic backgrounds, rural areas, or minority groups. However, several organisations are tackling these challenges by offering intersectional support, such as addressing the combined impacts of disability, gender inequality, and socio-economic exclusion.

For example, some projects work with refugees to provide language training, employment opportunities, and community integration, thereby addressing both environmental and social vulnerabilities. Similarly, other initiatives promote gender equality within climate action, particularly focusing on empowering women and addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on gendered roles.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

A significant trend observed is the collaboration between organisations. Almost all projects surveyed (56) work together with other civil society groups, pooling resources, and expertise to tackle complex environmental and social issues. This collaborative model is especially prominent in consortia, where funding depends on joint project proposals. These collaborations enhance the reach and impact of initiatives, creating a more comprehensive approach to climate justice.

Partnerships with local public authorities happen for 38 CSOs, with some organisations indicating a lack of engagement with schools, municipalities, and law enforcement agencies. This points to an area for growth, particularly in fostering greater synergy between civil society and governmental institutions.



FUNDING SOURCES

Youth-led or youth-focused environmental and climate change projects depend on a diverse funding landscape, including a mix of public grants, private donations, and fundraising activities.

EU programmes, in particular Erasmus+, play a key role in supporting these initiatives. Of the 60 organisations mapped, 38 rely on Erasmus+ funding, meaning that just over 60% of organisations receive financial support from this programme. In addition, the European Solidarity Corps is identified as a funding source in three cases, and the European Climate Foundation also appears as a contributor.

Although the data collected may be incomplete, outdated or not publicly available, the mapping exercise identified several other sources of funding.

Public funding programmes at national and international level, often in cooperation with regional or local governments, are another important support mechanism. International NGOs, private donors and foundations also play a crucial role in funding these initiatives.

Many organisations also rely on membership fees, individual donations, and income from business activities to sustain their operations. In addition, fundraising campaigns are often promoted through websites to generate further financial support.

Below is a list of funding organisations identified during the mapping exercise, along with their websites, beyond E+ and ESC, for specific mapped projects and initiatives.

World Health Organisation (WHO)	https://www.who.int/
European Social Fund	https://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en
European Climate Initiative	https://europeanclimateinitiative.eu/
Euro Care	https://www.eurocare.org/
European Climate Foundation	https://europeanclimate.org/
FDVA Ile de France	https://www.fdva.iledefrance.fr/
Spark	https://www.spark.ngo/
Animafac	https://www.animafac.net/
OXFAM	https://www.oxfam.org/
CAN	https://climatenetwork.org/
E&D	https://www.eandd.org/
UNICEF	https://www.unicef.org/
UNDP	https://www.undp.org/
OHCHR	https://www.ohchr.org/
EU Culture for All Programme	https://ec.europa.eu/culture/culture-for-all_en
Municipality of Faro	https://www.cm-faro.pt/
LUSH	https://www.lush.com/
Patagonia Foundation	https://www.patagonia.com/foundation/
Cultura Gift Fund	https://www.cultura.no/
IMDI	https://www.imdi.no/
SMN Sparebank 1	https://www.sparebank1.no/
Bergesens Foundation	https://www.bergenesstiftelse.no/
NABU	https://en.nabu.de/

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS FROM THE MAPPING EXERCISE

The mapping exercise has provided valuable insights into the landscape of youth-led and youth work climate action across Europe, highlighting initiatives that address climate justice and inclusivity. The dataset reveals a wide range of approaches, with organisations focusing on different environmental issues, from climate change and biodiversity to food security and water management. The clear prioritisation of climate change and sustainability in many initiatives underlines the urgency that these organisations feel in tackling the global environmental crisis.

However, the data also reveals critical gaps. More than half of the organisations surveyed do not address vulnerability profiles, suggesting a significant opportunity to increase focus on groups who face barriers to participation. Despite this, several organisations are adopting inclusive approaches, with targeted actions aimed at empowering vulnerable groups such as refugees, women, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These organisations emphasise youth leadership, social inclusion, and resilience, linking climate justice with broader social justice concerns.

The findings also highlight the importance of collaboration with other civil society groups to increase the impact of their initiatives. Partnerships with public institutions and international organisations also highlight the interconnected nature of the challenges and the need for a coordinated approach to effective climate action.

Finally, the study reveals a diverse range of funding sources, with Erasmus+ and other EU programmes playing an important role in supporting these initiatives. However, the reliance on different funding mechanisms suggests different levels of sustainability and resource security among organisations, which could affect the long-term effectiveness of their projects.

In conclusion, the study illustrates a promising trend of inclusive, youth-led climate action, although it also identifies key areas for improvement, particularly in promoting youth leadership and the inclusion of diverse groups and more inclusive practices. These findings can help guide future initiatives and bottom-up policy development to promote a more equitable and just transition to a sustainable future.



Insights from the qualitative interviews

To complement the mapping analysis, ten in-depth online interviews were conducted with representatives of civil society organisations working on climate change (see Table 1). The interviews cover a wide range of organisations working to tackle the climate crisis from different perspectives. The initiatives and projects showcased address climate change and social justice issues and use unique strategies to achieve their goals, including education, empowerment, co-creation, and inclusive approaches. They are proving that integrating environmental action with community empowerment and diversity is not only possible, but effective. However, challenges remain in ensuring truly inclusive climate action that meaningfully engage vulnerable groups.

The following section is a summary of the findings, with examples from each organisation's experience to illustrate the key findings.

OVERVIEW OF ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the organisations that participated in the study. It includes their focus, activities, and websites:

Table 1 - Organizations Overview

ORGANISATION	ACTIVITIES	WEBSITE	INTERVIEWEE
YEE - Youth and Environment Europe (Eu)	YEE is a European network of environmental youth organisations working to strengthen international cooperation, increase knowledge about the climate crisis, raise awareness and increase youth participation in environmental decision-making.	https://yeenet.eu/	Member of the Secretariat
IYNF- International Young Naturefriends (Eu)	IYNF is a European network of environmental youth organisations focusing on environmental education, outdoor activities, and experiential learning, promoting values such as respect, solidarity, equality, sustainability, and a deep appreciation of nature.	https://www.iynf.org	Two Members of the Board
GEN - Global Ecovillage Network (Eu)	European branch of the Global Ecovillage Network, an international organisation dedicated to promoting sustainable living practices and inspiring communities and individuals to live harmoniously within the ecological limits of the planet.	https://gen-europe.org/	Project manager
SALTO Green (EU)	SALTO Green provides guidance and training to National Agencies to reduce their carbon footprint. It aims to continuously improve the quality of education for sustainable development and increase environmentally responsible behaviour.	Soon available	Pedagogical engineer

NYCI - National Youth Council (Ireland)	The NYCI is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. The NYCI represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective expertise to address issues relevant to young people and to support youth-led projects.	https://www.youth.ie/	Youth & Climate Justice Development Officer
FOE - Friends of the Earth Cyprus (Cyprus)	FOE Cyprus is a branch of FOE international, a non-profit environmental organisation that promotes sustainable policies, climate justice, biodiversity conservation and zero waste practices while advocating for a just and clean planet.	https://www.foecyprus.org/	Project manager
ZFW - Zero Food Waste (Cyprus)	ZFW Cyprus is a volunteer-driven initiative that collects surplus produce from local fruit and vegetable markets across Cyprus and distributes it to those in need, with the aim of reducing food waste and promoting sustainability.	https://zfwcy.org/	Outreach coordinator
MAKE Aps (Italy)	MAEK Aps is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion and social benefit as well as youth exchange and international cooperation activities in Europe, mainly using non-formal education as a learning methodology.	https://www.maekaps.com/about-us/	Member of the Board
Red international B-LIVE (Spain)	B-LIVE is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting youth participation at local, national, and international levels through inclusive volunteer programmes, environmental initiatives and projects related to the social and solidarity economy	https://blive-spain.org/	Project manager
Ecomuseum Zagori (Greece)	Ecomuseum Zagori offers educational programmes, guided tours, workshops, and activities involving the local community, promoting sustainable tourism and interaction with local cultural heritage.	https://ecomuseumzagori.gr/en/	Member of the Board

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The ten organisations included in this second phase of the study vary widely in size, focus and scope. They can be grouped into three broad categories: umbrella organisations, grassroots initiatives, and specialised bodies.

Umbrella organisations

These organisations act as coordinating bodies or networks for member groups, providing resources, training, and advocacy on a wider scale:

- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)
- International Young Naturefriends (IYNF)
- GEN Europe (Ecovillage Network)

Total: 4 umbrella organisations.

Grassroots initiatives

Locally based and often volunteer-led, these organisations work directly with communities to implement projects and address specific regional needs:

- Zero Food Waste Cyprus
- Ecomuseum Zagori
- Mike Association
- B-live Association
- Young Friends of the Earth Cyprus

Total: 5 grassroots initiatives.

Specialised organisations

These organisations do not fit strictly into the 'umbrella' or 'grassroots' categories, but focus on niche areas or act as resource centres:

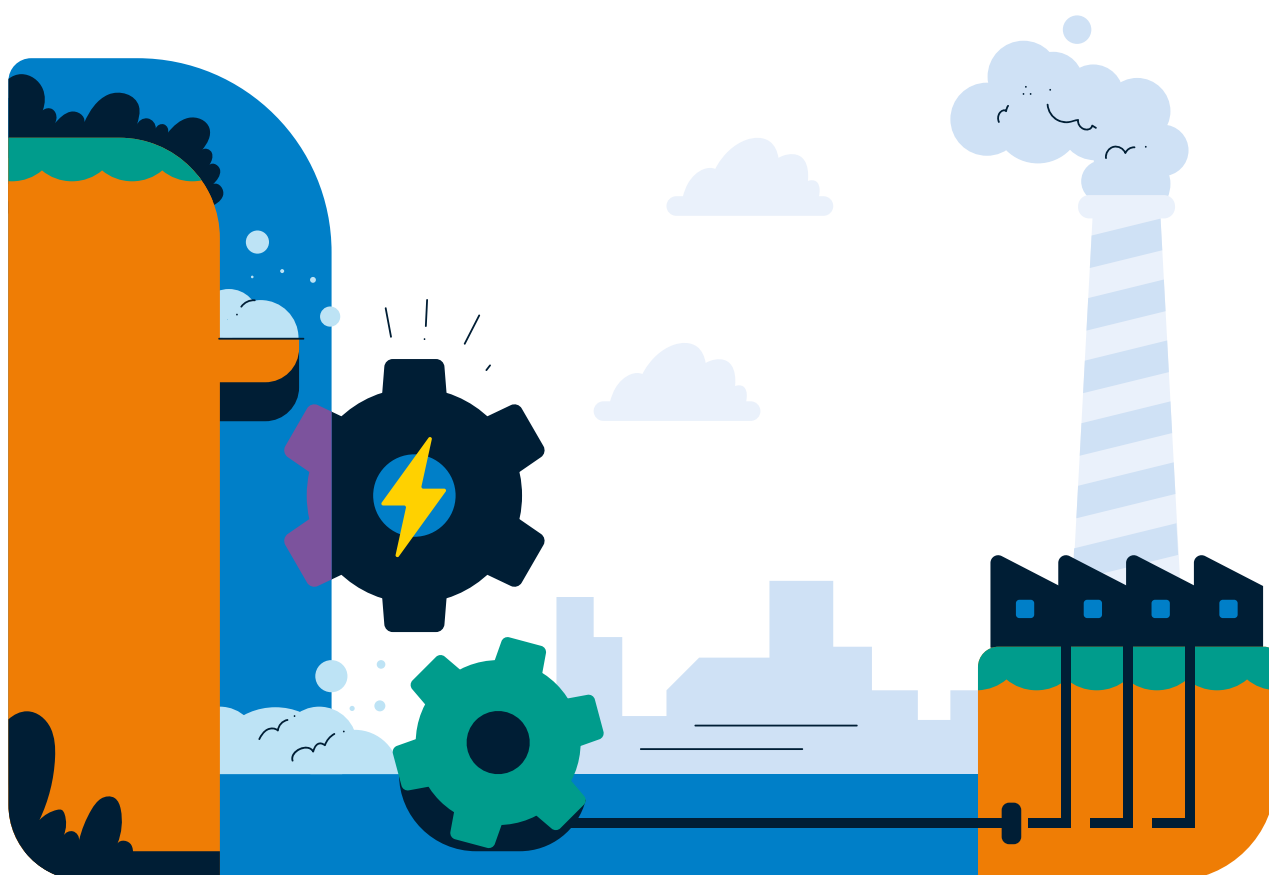
- SALTO Green: A resource centre specialising in environmental transitions within EU programmes.

Total: 1 organisation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE ADDRESSED

The work of the ten organisations covers the different environmental issues and related actions, as shown in the breakdown below.

- Sustainable agriculture and food security (7 mentions): Tackling food waste and promoting sustainable farming practices.
- Biodiversity conservation (6 mentions): Protecting ecosystems while engaging local and vulnerable communities.
- Circular economy and waste reduction (5 mentions): Implementing initiatives to reuse and redistribute resources.
- Renewable energy and energy poverty (4 mentions): Promoting equitable access to sustainable energy solutions.
- Pollution and habitat restoration (5 mentions): Restoring natural environments for the benefit of vulnerable populations.
- Urban green spaces (4 mentions): Transforming neglected areas into inclusive, accessible green areas.
- Green mobility (3 mentions): Developing sustainable transport solutions to reduce barriers for diverse groups.



ACTIVITIES: FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

The organisations are actively combining environmental goals with social inclusion, addressing local challenges while building community resilience through inclusive and diverse approaches. Inclusivity is at the heart of their work, ensuring that diverse groups are not only involved but empowered in climate action. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of their climate change activities.

› Combining social inclusion with circular economy

Zero Food Waste Cyprus redistributes surplus food to migrants, refugees, and economically disadvantaged locals, demonstrating how circular economy principles can support both environmental sustainability and social justice.

› Inclusive education initiatives

Ecomuseum Zagori integrates traditional practices such as transhumance with biodiversity conservation, promoting cultural preservation and environmental education for remote communities. The National Youth Council of Ireland supports youth-led initiatives such as fast fashion recycling projects and marine conservation documentaries, empowering diverse participants.

› Accessible environmental activities

Friends of the Earth Cyprus ensures that its campaigns are accessible to all, including LGBTQ+ people, migrants, and people with disabilities. By providing safe spaces and translation services, they create inclusive platforms for participation. Red International B-Live engages people with disabilities in urban farming projects, combining sustainability goals with inclusion efforts. GEN Europe runs activities for neurodivergent people in the ecovillage of Torri Superiore.

› Involvement of rural and remote communities

Ecomuseum Zagori and Mike Association overcome geographical and economic barriers by involving rural communities in habitat restoration and sustainable practices, encouraging participation in under-served areas.

› Empowering youth through involvement:

Youth and Environment Europe empowers economically disadvantaged young people to lead transformative urban projects, such as creating inclusive green spaces. Red International B-Live combines social inclusion with sustainability education by engaging local and homeless communities in urban gardening projects.

ANALYSIS OF FUNDING

Public funding, particularly through EU programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and funds such as the European Climate Fund, is crucial to the activities of the organisations surveyed. These programmes enable large-scale projects focusing on education, climate change and intercultural exchange. For smaller organisations, these funding streams are the main financial lifeline, enabling initiatives that would otherwise not be possible with national or local resources.

Other sources of funding include private philanthropy, which was frequently mentioned in the survey responses, and self-sufficiency and volunteerism, which were also mentioned as additional support strategies.

However, reliance on specific, time-limited grants creates instability. When funding cycles come to an end, many organisations face interruptions in their activities, limiting their ability to implement larger, more comprehensive climate change projects. Although some organisations are exploring private funding to complement public grants, access to these resources is uneven, particularly in regions where environmental or youth-focused projects are lower political priorities.

Challenges:

- **Short-term funding:** The temporary nature of public grants limits long-term planning, forcing organisations to adapt their strategies to meet changing funding needs.
- **Dependence on volunteers:** While unpaid labour is valuable, it risks burnout and undermines project sustainability.
- **Limited private funding:** Private philanthropy, while flexible, remains less accessible in regions with fewer philanthropic initiatives.

WORKING WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Partnerships with public authorities contribute significantly to the success of many CSOs, providing essential resources, space, and visibility. However, the level of support varies widely. In some regions, local governments actively support youth and environmental projects, while in others these initiatives are side-lined due to different political or economic priorities.

Administrative barriers, such as bureaucracy and slow communication, often delay or hinder project progress.

Challenges:

- **Bureaucratic inefficiencies:** Administrative barriers impede timely project implementation.
- **Political dependency:** The success of partnerships depends heavily on the priorities of public authorities.

WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Collaboration with other organisations is a key strategy for CSOs to increase their impact and share resources. Cross-sectoral efforts, involving partnerships between environmental groups, youth organisations and groups supporting vulnerable populations, help to achieve common goals. Such collaborations leverage the strengths of each partner to increase the effectiveness and reach of climate action initiatives. Umbrella organisations are particularly effective in creating and managing these partnerships because of their ability to unite and coordinate their members.

Challenges:

- **Misaligned priorities -** Conflicts can arise when organisations prioritise immediate social needs over environmental concerns.

Public funding underpins the activities of many CSOs but is constrained by short-term cycles and a reliance on voluntary contributions. Partnerships with public authorities provide crucial support, but their success depends on political will and administrative efficiency. Collaboration between organisations increases impact and resource sharing but can be hampered by misaligned agendas.

Despite these obstacles, the organisations surveyed continue to address these challenges and strive to improve the sustainability and reach of their initiatives.

CLIMATE JUSTICE: A NUANCE DEFINITION THROUGH DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

This section summarises the findings on the concept of climate justice from a specific interview question on what is understood by this concept. The aim was to explore whether different CSOs share a common definition of climate justice or approach it with different interpretations.

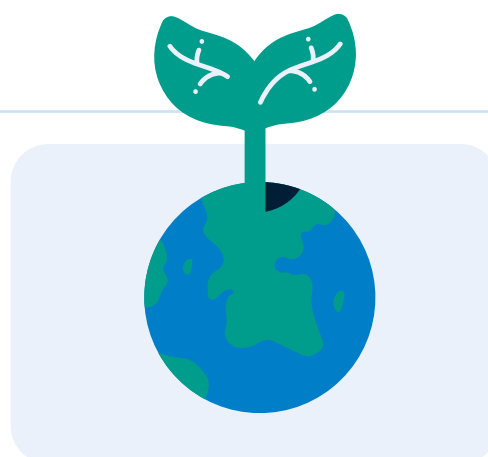
A recurring theme is the recognition that those who have contributed least to the climate crisis, often low-income and marginalised communities, are disproportionately bearing its impacts. As one contributor reflected, “communities with limited historical contributions to global emissions often face significant challenges, particularly in low-income countries affected by systemic inequalities” (NYCI). Addressing these inequalities requires recognising historical emissions and systems of inequality, while ensuring that vulnerable groups are involved in designing solutions. For example, “climate justice requires an integrated perspective that considers the economic, political and social factors” that shape how people and communities respond to climate change (YEE).

Many perspectives highlight the importance of bridging environmental and human rights concerns. As one participant noted, “climate justice addresses the interconnectedness of people and the planet and seeks balanced solutions that include both” (NYCI). This approach underlines the need for inclusive strategies that link environmental and social issues while ensuring equitable measures to mitigate climate impacts. Another participant suggested that “those with greater responsibility should take a leading role in addressing the crisis”, emphasising the importance of accountability for historical contributions (IYNF). This includes advocating for fair reparations, solidarity measures and addressing systemic challenges such as energy access and inequality (FOE CY).

The concept also extends to practical, community-centred approaches. For example, “climate justice goes beyond ecology and recognises social dimensions such as food security and access to healthy living conditions” (ZFW CY). This balance between ecological action and social justice is reflected in another perspective: “It is about creating policies that respect human dignity while addressing intergenerational needs” (MAEK). Contributors emphasised the importance of participatory approaches to ensure that all stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups, have a voice in decision-making processes (SALTO Green). The idea that “cooperation rather than competition is essential to address societal challenges” reinforces the value of collective action (GEN Europe).

Despite its complexity and different interpretations, the central aim of climate justice remains consistent: “to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all, especially the most vulnerable, leaving no one behind” (FOE CY).

In conclusion, the concept of climate justice appears to be consistently defined across organisations, reflecting a shared understanding of its principles. Furthermore, organisations have developed around the concept in both theory and practice. Of the organisations interviewed, three have more directly integrated the principles of climate justice and intersectionality into their mission and vision, demonstrating a developed and integrated approach in this regard. These organisations are presented in the following section.



Mainstreaming climate justice and intersectionality: innovations from three youth organisations

Climate justice and intersectionality are at the heart of initiatives led by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) and Friends of the Earth Cyprus (FOE CY).

These organisations recognise that tackling the climate crisis requires more than environmental solutions - it requires addressing systemic inequalities and amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities. Through their work, they are embedding the principles of climate justice, highlighting the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, and integrating intersectionality to ensure inclusivity in their actions. As they emerged from the data collection as the most advanced in this regard, this assessment examines their approaches, success stories and the useful resources they have created, which can be used as a reference point on which to build further progress.

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND (NYCI)

1. Organisational context

The (NYCI) is an umbrella organisation representing over 50 voluntary youth groups across Ireland. It serves as a collaborative platform to address social, political, and environmental issues affecting young people. Through tailored training, advocacy, and project-based initiatives, NYCI empowers youth workers and young people to respond to challenges such as climate change and environmental anxiety.

2. Climate Justice projects

NYCI's flagship initiative, the Fund, is an ongoing project, supporting diverse youth-led projects each year. Themes of the initiatives are chosen by young participants. Recent topics focus on marine conservation, water accessibility and fast fashion. Notable outcomes include upcycled sea glass jewellery and a youth-led documentary capturing the intergenerational impacts of climate change on marine communities.

3. Diversity in projects

NYCI prioritises inclusion by working with diverse groups, including LGBTQ+ youth, rural communities, migrants, and young people from low socio-economic backgrounds. Projects emphasise accessibility and promote cross-cultural exchange with Global South organisations in countries such as Malawi and Kenya, providing a platform for youth to learn and share solutions globally.

4. Youth-initiated or targeted actions

NYCI's approach is youth-led, with projects designed in consultation with young participants. This ensures that their priorities drive the work. The organisation also enables youth delegates to represent Ireland at climate forums such as COP, advocating for systemic change and raising their voices on national and international platforms.

5. Collaboration and funding challenges

NYCI relies on short-term government funding, particularly from the Youth Climate Justice Fund. However, the uncertainty of funding due to policy changes poses a challenge to project continuity. NYCI also works with civil society organisations and Irish government agencies to amplify youth voices in policy making.

6. Relevant resource under climate justice and or intersectionality

The Climate Justice Charter serves as a framework to guide youth organisations in promoting climate action rooted in justice and equity. Recognising the critical role of youth in tackling climate change, the Charter outlines principles to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon society is inclusive, equitable and leaves no one behind. By signing the Charter, organisations commit to uphold these principles of climate justice and to work together in a community committed to systemic change. Benefits of joining include access to training and events designed to increase the understanding of climate justice among staff, volunteers, and young people. This initiative also fosters a network of peers working towards a just and sustainable future.

Link - <https://www.youth.ie/climatejusticecharter/>

The document “How to Create Change at the Local Level” is a resource developed as part of the Climate Justice Project to empower young people in influencing local and global climate action. It emphasises meaningful participation and climate justice, providing practical tools such as vision boards, planning sheets, and email templates to help young people strategize and advocate for change. The resource highlights the importance of intergenerational collaboration and inclusivity, particularly focusing on engaging vulnerable, rural, and disadvantaged youth often excluded from climate conversations. It encourages both traditional political engagement and grassroots activism, ensuring diverse pathways for impactful climate action.

Link - <https://www.youth.ie/documents/how-to-create-change-at-the-local-level/>

YOUTH AND ENVIRONMENT EUROPE (YEE)

1. Organisational context

(YEE) is a European network of young environmental experts dedicated to the promotion of non-formal environmental education. The organisation equips young people with knowledge and advocacy skills, while promoting opportunities for them to engage directly with decision-makers on climate issues.

2. Climate justice projects

“Empowering the Unheard” aims to promote an inclusive climate movement across Europe. Building on the success of their previous initiative “Showcasing the Unheard”, this project focuses on

- Supporting all youth: Engaging Europeans aged 12-30 from vulnerable groups in community projects and local decision-making processes.
- Capacity Building: Building the capacity of YEE member organisations to work effectively with diverse young people.
- Grant opportunities: Providing small grants to member organisations to support their efforts to involve diverse young people.
- Youth Delegate Support: Supporting young delegates from underrepresented backgrounds to participate in European and global decision-making events.
- Workshops: Organising Europe-wide workshops for young people involved in grant-funded projects, providing networking, and learning opportunities on climate activism.

More results at this link. The project is supported by the UMI Fund and runs from 2023 to 2025.

3. Diversity in projects

YEE's projects target economically disadvantaged groups and emphasise intersectionality, creating spaces for diverse communities to define their own climate justice priorities.

4. Youth-initiated or targeted actions

Youth empowerment is central to YEE's approach. Projects such as 'Empowering the Unheard' are co-designed with participants, who are also supported with grants to implement local actions. Leadership programmes provide further opportunities for young people to lead training and advocacy campaigns.

5. Collaboration and funding challenges

YEE faces challenges in securing EU funding for intersectional projects and relies on private philanthropic donors to support initiatives that target vulnerable communities. It partners with global organisations to connect youth voices across continents and ensure diverse representation at international events.

6. Relevant resources for climate justice and or intersectionality

The Climate Justice Needs an Intersectional Approach toolkit is a comprehensive guide to integrating intersectionality into climate action. It provides a framework for navigating the interconnected web of social identities, power dynamics and environmental impacts, empowering users to approach climate activism, policymaking, and community engagement through an inclusive and justice-centred lens.

Key topics covered:

- Intersectionality and environmental justice: Explores how power dynamics shape vulnerability and resilience and highlights the importance of inclusivity in environmental decision-making.
- Climate impacts on diverse communities: Examines how climate change disproportionately affects groups such as indigenous peoples, people of colour, low-income populations, and those in vulnerable regions, highlighting intersections with other forms of discrimination.
- Partnership, representation, and engagement: Provides guidance on fostering inclusive dialogues, amplifying all voices, and building partnerships to collectively address climate challenges.
- Tools for Intersectional Analysis: Provides practical tools and frameworks for analysing the intersections of power, privilege, and vulnerability in climate issues, helping to identify inequalities and develop tailored solutions.

This toolkit is designed to equip individuals and organisations with the knowledge and resources they need to effectively advocate for climate justice and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in the fight against climate change.

Link - <https://yeenet.eu/publication/climate-justice-needs-an-intersectional-approach-toolkit/>

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH CYPRUS (YFOE CY)

1. Organisational context

(FOE CY) integrates environmental advocacy with a strong social justice focus. As part of the [SALTO](#) network, FOE CY campaigns for systemic change, involving diverse communities such as low-income households, migrants and LGBTQ+ groups.

2. Climate justice projects

In line with the vision, values, and strategy of YFOE Europe and International, Friends of the Earth Cyprus works for climate justice locally and regionally. Its efforts focus on ensuring that Cyprus fulfils its responsibility to limit global warming by following scientific recommendations. The organisation emphasises addressing the climate crisis while promoting equity, ensuring that the transition to sustainability (in Cyprus) is inclusive and leaves no one behind.

3. Diversity in projects

FOE CY's commitment to intersectionality is reflected in its campaigns, which include accessibility measures such as translations and safe spaces. Training and events emphasise inclusivity and often include underrepresented groups such as single mothers and rural communities.

5. Youth initiated or targeted actions

FOE CY runs several youth-focused programmes, including nature camps and activist trainings that equip young people with environmental advocacy and communication skills.

6. Collaboration and funding challenges

With a small staff of four, FOE CY often faces resource constraints. It relies on short-term European grants and foundations, which limits its ability to sustain long-term projects. The organisation works with communities and schools, but engagement with the authorities remains inconsistent.

8. Resources

The Toolkit for Intersectional Movement Building is a comprehensive resource developed by Young Friends of the Earth Europe to guide activists and organisations in building inclusive, effective environmental justice movements. Published in December 2020, the toolkit brings together insights from YFOE Europe's three-year journey, with articles, tools and case studies reflecting voluntary initiatives, personal experiences and collective learning.

Key features of the toolkit:

- **Articles and case studies:** Provides in-depth discussions on how different identities intersect with environmental issues and offers real-life examples of intersectional activism.
- **Practical tools:** Includes resources for running workshops, facilitating discussions, and implementing intersectional approaches within organisations and campaigns.
- **Volunteer contributions:** Highlights initiatives and thoughts from volunteers, emphasising grassroots perspectives and community-driven solutions.

While YFOE Europe acknowledges that it may lack certain concrete tools and articles on specific identity intersections, this toolkit represents a resourceful step towards building an inclusive and impactful environmental justice movement. By ensuring that diverse voices and experiences are integral to the movement, it serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to understand and implement intersectional strategies in environmental activism.

Link - https://www.youngfoe.ie/assets/files/pdf/toolkit_for_intersectional_movement_building.pdf

In conclusion, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) and Friends of the Earth (the International, European, and the Cyprus branch) exemplify how intersectionality and climate justice can be effectively translated from theory to practice. By addressing systemic inequalities and amplifying all voices, these organisations have moved beyond rhetoric to implement impactful, inclusive initiatives that address real-world climate challenges.

Their projects demonstrate concrete applications of intersectionality: NYCI engages LGBTQ+ youth, migrants, and low-income groups through its Climate Justice Project, while YEE's Empowering the Unheard promotes leadership within diverse communities and supports their participation in global climate decision-making forums. FOE CY demonstrates inclusion through tailored programmes that prioritise underrepresented groups, including single mothers and LGBTQI individuals, ensuring that no one is left out.

These organisations go further than simply targeting vulnerable groups. Resources such as NYCI's "How to Create Change at the Local Level" and YEE's "Climate Justice Needs an Intersectional Approach Toolkit" empower communities and activists with practical tools and strategies to address systemic inequalities in climate action. These initiatives not only promote inclusivity, but also build the capacity of underrepresented groups to advocate for their needs, cementing intersectionality as a central pillar of climate activism.

Despite challenges such as funding instability, resource constraints and systemic barriers, these organisations have demonstrated resilience and tested innovative approaches. Their commitment to youth-led, inclusive projects ensures a sustainable transition that leaves no one behind and provides a replicable model for embedding the principles of climate justice and intersectionality at both local and global levels.



CONCLUSIVE INSIGHTS

The report explores the European youth work field in relation to climate justice and the concept of integrating inclusion and diversity into youth work and youth-led climate action, by ensuring the active participation of vulnerable groups.

Several conclusions emerge in relation to the concept of empowering youth diversity in the pursuit of climate justice.

› **Climate justice is incomplete without inclusion**

The study highlights that while youth-led initiatives are at the forefront of addressing the climate crisis, many efforts struggle to adequately include diverse groups, particularly Young People with Fewer Opportunities (YPWFOs). This exclusion undermines the principle of climate justice, which advocates for equity and inclusion for all, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

› **Intersectionality strengthens climate justice**

The concept of intersectionality is critical to achieving climate justice. By recognising that different forms of disadvantages (based on race, gender, socio-economic status, etc.) intersect and affect individuals differently, organisations can create more inclusive and effective climate action programmes.

› **Youth leadership is central to climate justice**

Youth engagement is fundamental to advancing climate justice. Young people, especially those from vulnerable communities, have unique perspectives and are often the most affected by environmental degradation. Empowering them to contribute to decision making processes on climate policies and actions is a key aspect of ensuring that climate action is both equitable and effective.

› **Collaboration and sustainable financing for justice**

Achieving climate justice requires strong partnerships between youth organisations, civil society, governments, and the private sector, to strengthen access to resources, adequate representation, and equal opportunities. However, these partnerships must be designed for long-term sustainability, with adequate and reliable funding that prioritises inclusivity and equity.

› **Moving Forward: A roadmap for youth empowerment in climate justice**

As Europe moves forward on climate justice, these findings provide a roadmap for empowering youth work and young leaders in the EU. Collective youth action, based on the values of equity, diversity, and sustainability, is essential for shaping a fair and just climate future.



REFERENCES

Academic articles and research

- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalising the intersection of race and gender. UCLA School of Law.
- European Environment Agency. (2018). Unequal exposure and unequal impacts: Social vulnerability to air pollution, noise, and extreme temperatures in Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/unequal-exposure-and-unequal-impacts/environmental-justice-environmental-hazards-and/view>
- European Environment Agency. (2023). Just resilience: Leaving no one behind in the transition to a climate resilient society. Retrieved from <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/just-resilience-leaving-no-one-behind>
- European Environment Agency. (2023). Achieving equity in sustainability transitions. Retrieved from
- Marchetti, C. (2013). Intersectionality as a methodological approach in social sciences.
- Mohai, P., Pellow, D., & Roberts, J. T. (2009). Environmental justice. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 34(1), 405-430.
- Pellow, D. N. (2018). What is critical environmental justice? Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Pihkala, P. (2022). Towards a taxonomy of climate emotions. *Frontiers in Climate*, 3. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fclim.2021.738154>
- Schlosberg, D., & Collins, L. B. (2014). From environmental to climate justice: Climate change and the environmental justice discourse. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 5(3), 359-374.

Selected books

- Hooks, B. (1984). *Feminist theory: From the Margins to the Centre*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Notarstefano, M. (2021). *Intersectionality in Theory and Practice*. Harvard Kennedy School Programme on Women and Public Policy.
- Thomas, L. (2022). *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to dismantle systems of oppression to protect people + planet*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

Policies and reports

- Council of Europe (2024).

Recommendation CM/Rec (2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Young People and Climate Action (Adopted at the 1510th Meeting of Ministers' Deputies). Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/climate-action>

- Council of Europe (2024).

The role of the youth sector in addressing young people's climate emotions (A. Stapleton & I. Jece, authors; L. Pasic & A. Bergholtz, coordination, and editing).

- European Commission (2020).

A Union for Equality: A strategy for equality between women and men 2020-2025 (COM (2020) 152 final). Brussels, Belgium: European Commission.

- Generation Climate Europe (2022).

Intergenerational justice or how to be a good ancestor. Retrieved from: <https://gceurope.org/intergenerational-justice-or-how-to-be-a-good-ancestor/>

- Government of Canada (2021).

IRCC Anti-Racism Strategy 2.0 (2021-2024): Change Management. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/anti-racism-strategy.html>

Seminars and discussions

- Nicodemi, S., & Denais, A. SALTO I&D. (2022). Green Inclusion Seminar, A collection of inputs gathered during the Green Inclusion Seminar, held in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 15-18 November 2022.
- Symposium on Youth and Climate Action (2024). Symposium: Youth, Democracy and Climate Action. Retrieved from: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/symposium-2024>

Websites and tools

- ACCTING project repository. <https://zenodo.org/communities/accting/records>
- European Environmental Agency
- Erasmus+ project database. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>
- GEN Europe Resources. <https://gen-europe.org/resources/>
- Intersectional Environmentalists. <https://intersectionalenvironmentalist.com>
- SALTO-YOUTH. Inclusion and Diversity Strategy: <https://salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionstrategy/>
- UN Framework for Climate Justice. <https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-action/justice-and-action/climate-justice>
- Youthrex TED Talk on Intersectionality.

Organisations and links for the mapping exercise and the interviews

1. 7 Arte Green Fest (Kosovo) - 7-arte.org/
2. Aqui Coop (France) - aquicoop.fr
3. Barlavento Article (Portugal) - barlavento.pt
4. Berliner Tafel History (Germany) - berliner-tafel.de/history
5. Biodiversa Eco-TOT (EU) - biodiversaprojects.eu
6. Blive Spain (Spain) - blivespain.com
7. Climate of Change (Europe-wide) - climateofchange.info
8. Collectif Demarque (Belgium) - demarque.be
9. Conscious Consumption (International) - conscious-consumption.org
10. Cracking Light Productions - Rising Tide (International) - risingtideproductions.org
11. CROSOL Solidarity Report (Croatia) - crosol.hr
12. Declic Collectif (France) - decliccollectif.fr
13. Eco-club of BITISI (International) - bitisi.eco
14. Ecoality Project (EU) - ecoality.org
15. Ecoembes (Spain) - ecoembes.com
16. Ecomuseum Zagori (Greece) - ecomuseumzagori.gr
17. Erasmus+ Project 101051370 (EU) - ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus
18. Erasmus+ Project 2021-1-RO01-KA152-YOU-000020485 (Romania) - erasmusplus.ro
19. Erasmus+ Project 2022-1-DE04-KA152-YOU-000065652 (Germany) - erasmusplus.de
20. Erasmus+ Project 2023-1-MT01-KA153-YOU-000130875 (Malta) - erasmusplus.mt
21. Erasmus+ Project 2023-2-IE01-KA220-YOU-000180230 (Ireland) - erasmusplus.ie
22. Erasmus+ Project 2023-3-ES02-KA152-YOU-000183000 (Spain) - erasmusplus.es
23. European Young Rewilders (EU) - youngrewilders.eu
24. Fenomena Project (International) - fenomena.org
25. Fietsschool Diksmuide Facebook (Belgium) - facebook.com/fietsschooldiksmuide
26. Flaschengaerten Project (Germany) - flaschengaerten.de
27. FOE Cyprus (Cyprus) - foecyprus.org
28. Food Pickup Point (International) - foodpickuppont.com
29. Friends of the Earth Malta (Malta) - foemalta.org
30. Fundación Canarias Recicla (Spain) - canariasrecicla.org
31. Fundación Global Nature (Spain) - fundacionglobalnature.org

32. Fundación Montemadrid (Spain) - fundacionmontemadrid.es
33. Future Heroes (International) - futureheroes.org
34. GEN Europe (EU) - gen-europe.org
35. Guardianes de la Costa (Spain) - guardianesdelacosta.org
36. Gutta.md (Moldova) - gutta.md
37. Haricots La Ferme Urbaine (France) - haricotsferme.fr
38. IYNF - International Young Nature Friends (International) - iynf.org
39. KIMBA Initiative - Berliner Tafel (Germany) - berliner- Tafel.de/kimba
40. LazyLab EU Projects (EU) - lazylabprojects.eu
41. LCOY 2024 - JAC Association (France) - lcoyjac.org
42. Le RESES (France) - le-reses.org
43. LVAf Latvian Environmental Fund (Latvia) - lvaf.lv
44. Maekaps - About Us (EU) - maekaps.eu
45. NAJU National Association (Germany) - naju.de/nationalassociation
46. NAJU Youth Division (Germany) - naju.de
47. Naturschutzjugend Austria (Austria) - naturschutzjugend.at
48. Nieuwsblad Article (Belgium) - nieuwsblad.be
49. No Excuse Slovenia (Slovenia) - noexcuse.si
50. NYCI - National Youth Council of Ireland (Ireland) - nyci.ie
51. Plantekasser from Frak.dk (Denmark) - frak.dk/plantekasser
52. PUSH Sverige (Sweden) - pushsverige.se
53. Soon Available (N/A) - comingsoon.org
54. Studenten voor Morgen (Netherlands) - studentenvoormorgen.nl
55. SYFC Switzerland (Switzerland) - syfc.ch
56. UKYCC - UK Youth Climate Coalition (United Kingdom) - ukycc.org
57. UNG Energi (Norway) - ungenergi.no
58. We Are Climates (International) - weareclimates.org
59. YEE Network (International) - yee-network.org
60. Young Improvers for Climate (EU) - youngimprovers.org
61. ZFWCY - Youth and Climate (Cyprus) - zfwcy.org
62. Zrodla (English) (Poland) - zrodla.org

SALTO-YOUTH STANDS FOR...

'Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes'. The European Commission established a network of eleven SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the EU Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, offering young people valuable non-formal learning opportunities.

SALTO's goal is to support the implementation of the European Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps Programmes focused on priorities such as social inclusion, diversity, participation, digital transformation, green transition, and solidarity initiatives. To achieve that, SALTO-YOUTH provides resources, information and training for National Agencies and youth workers focused on these European priority areas. Most of these resources are available at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net including the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, the Trainers Online for Youth (TOY) database, links to online resources, and more.

The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre, based in Belgium-Flanders, works with the European Commission to help young people with fewer opportunities take part in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

SALTO Inclusion and Diversity provides training, develops youth work methods, and shares resources with National Agencies and youth workers. By offering training, promoting exchanges, and improving inclusion and diversity practices, SALTO aims to make these efforts more visible, accessible, and widely supported.

For more information and resources, visit the Inclusion & Diversity pages at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion.

EDITORIAL INFO

Cite as: Aglietti, C., Gonçalves, H., & Ristikartano, K. (2024, December). Bridging voices: Empowering Youth Diversity in the Pursuit of Climate Justice [Report]. Climate Justice Long-Term Project, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity.

Additional materials, mapping grids and datasets are available on request from the authors at aglietti.claudia@gmail.com.

Disclaimer - The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. Published in February 2025 by SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/inclusion/ (Support & Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within The Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes).

SALTO-Jint, Grétrystraat 26, 1000 Brussel, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 209 07 20
inclusion@salto-youth.net

Legal info: JINT vzw, 0441.254.285, RPR Nederlandstalige Ondernemingsrechtbank Brussel
Coordination: Henrique Gonçalves (henrique@salto-youth.net)
Author: Claudia Aglietti (aglietti.claudia@gmail.com)
Layout and Illustrations: Stardust (hallo@wearestardust.be)

Reproduction and use for non-commercial purposes are permitted, provided the source www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/ is acknowledged and the centre is notified at inclusion@salto-youth.net.

SALTO

