

EU / UK Youth

Stronger Together for social action

**Resource pack
Climate & Sustainability**

<https://www.britishcouncil.be/programmes/education/stronger-together/social-action>



Introduction

The [EU / UK Youth Stronger Together](#) is a two-year project (2023-2025) implemented in co-operation with the [European Movement International](#) and co-funded by the [European Union](#). It offers young people aged 15–30 from the EU and the UK opportunities to connect, co-operate, influence and implement change together on issues of common interest.

The project aims to facilitate close and sustainable relationship between young people in the UK and the EU for Europe’s collective benefit. We work with various groups of young people through different strands of the programme.

As part of the Social Action strand of the programme focusing on schools, we organise thematic events, workshops, and a competition to facilitate partnership building between schools in the UK and EU.

We aspire to highlight the role of young people aged 15–18 as changemakers, active global citizens and leaders at local, national and European level. You can find out more on:

<https://www.britishcouncil.be/programmes/education/stronger-together/social-action>

Let’s get started!

Welcome! This project is based on collaboration between students in different countries working together. It is designed to be **student-led**, with support and facilitation from your teacher(s). For the very best results international collaboration is vital, however, the ideas can work well within an individual school too.

There are two main support documents relevant for the Climate and Sustainability topic. **Stronger Together Teacher Facilitator Notes and Starting Points** is for the teacher facilitators supporting your project. The other is this one, for you, the students, the most important people in the project. The intention is that your teacher facilitators pass over responsibility for this project to you, the students, as soon as possible. Encourage your teacher facilitators to read this document - their role is to support you to lead the project.

Both documents contain more information than you need. Some of it is in *Additional Information* at the end. The internet has hundreds of thousands more pages. Be realistic. You can’t do it all. You do not have to read everything or do every activity! You have other subjects to study! You will have to be selective in consultation with your partners in the other schools and colleges.

The project writers have suggested that you make a journey, in stages, with three focal points. These are **Learn, Explore and Act**. As the project evolves and you, the students, get to know each other, you will almost certainly find new aspects of “Climate and Sustainability”. You will probably put more emphasis on some sections rather than others – making your project together unique.



We would suggest that you take an early look at the final section 3.4 - Actions

Remember that working together is the aim. As they say “*Carpe diem*” or “*seize the day*” or more simply “make it happen”.

Enjoy!

1. Learn: background information

The central point is that the climate of Planet Earth is changing due to the actions of humankind. Consequently, humans will have to alter their lifestyles to become more sustainable and reduce the impact of their actions.

This topic is underpinned by references to well understood scientific principles. However, not everyone accepts the science. Multiple perspectives exist. For example, at the present time only about 1 in 7 Americans understands that there is a consensus among climate scientists (consensus is actually defined as 90%) that human caused climate change is happening.

The challenge of using accurate, credible information is a constant in this topic. It requires robust critical literacy, examination of our own and others’ assumptions, and engagement with complex global processes and diverse perspectives.

- ***You should certainly discuss these contradictory opinions. Do you think climate change is real?***
- ***As part of ‘Explore’, you might like to collaborate in researching these contradictory opinions.***

1.a. The science

The Earth’s atmosphere acts like a blanket preventing heat provided by the sun radiating back out to space. ‘The greenhouse gases’, mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and not forgetting water vapour, sustain this blanket and keep Earth at a global average of around 17°C. The effect of extra CO₂ in our atmosphere is now warming the air and also extends to the oceans.

- ***You could share information about the changing temperatures in your locality with partners.***

1.b. Responses to climate change: political, practical and international

Climate change underpins the Sustainable Development Goals for 2015-2030, especially Goal 13. This calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. All parts of the world are affected.

In November 2022 the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change took place in the Egyptian coastal city of Sharm el-Sheikh.



(COP27 <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop27>). The focus of this gathering was to reinforce the aim of restricting global warming to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels by a rapid programme of decarbonisation. This goal now seems very difficult to achieve by 2030.

- ***As part of ‘Explore’ you could research and discuss whether the Sustainable Developments Goals are being worked on in each partner country, and how.***

1.c. Climate justice

Climate change is a subtle form of human rights violation. There is no direct persecution or threat but combustion of fossil fuels in industrialised nations has jeopardised the ability of certain societies to maintain their traditional practices, diminishing their cultural identity and their connection with their natural environment’. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- ***Is it correct to say this? You could share opinions with the partners.***

1.d. Sustainability

Earth, our only home, has limited resources and capacity. Sustainable development attempts to balance the needs and rights of present and future generations, the planet and all its inhabitants. It also considers the best ways to tackle interrelated challenges such as the climate emergency, inequality and poverty and wealth.

The world agenda for sustainability is framed through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals -SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, which combine human development goals with planetary concerns: <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/>

- ***Partners could share local examples of where inter-related challenges are being addressed.***

1.e. Social justice, beyond charity

“Humanity’s 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet”. But how do we do this? See the work of Kate Raworth and others here:

<https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/#>

We already have the knowledge and tools to make this happen whilst ensuring collectively we do not overshoot our pressure on Earth’s life-supporting systems, on which we fundamentally depend.

- ***You could share how these issues are looked at in your own communities with your partners.***



1.f. Broaden perceptions, counter stereotypes

Although media coverage of people and places may reinforce common stereotypes about which countries are responsible for climate change, extreme weather events are not defined by national frontiers. The impact of climate change requires us all to develop new ways of thinking, acting and living for a sustainable and equitable future. We must learn from each other. Many in the global south, particularly indigenous peoples, have strong connections with nature and implicit understanding of sustainable living, essential knowledge if humankind is to find a sustainable future within the planet's resources and in tune with earth's well-being.

- ***As part of 'Explore', partners might like to compare media coverage in different countries.***

Note: You will find more information for this section under 'Additional Information and Notes' at the end of this document – and your own research will provide far more information.

- How will you evaluate / peer review your collaboration? Revisit your aims often as your project unfolds!

Appoint key people: e.g., communicators; writers; convenors; researchers; evaluators.

Agree on outcomes: e.g., a report, a campaign, an arts performance delivered live and online.

Action phase: creating content. This might involve a practical outcome such as videos, surveys, action plans, dramatic interpretation. Setting up an online conference, debate, inviting relevant speakers online and then further discussion. You're only limited by your imagination!

Review, monitor and evaluate:

- how will you keep your project on track? A GANT chart or Action Plan will allow you to project-manage your collaboration.
- How will you evaluate your outcomes against your aims?
- How well are you achieving your aims?
- How well are you collaborating with your partners?

Publish and present your work: home and abroad. How will you share your outputs? Spread the word? Influence others?

2. Explore: Climate and sustainability

In this section you will find many suggestions for student-led activities, supported by your teacher facilitators. Please adapt the materials according to your school context, and, importantly, the needs and dynamics of the groups in the partner institutions. Flexibility and adaptability are highly recommended. One size does not fit all! As they say in some countries, "there is more than one way to cook an egg"!



2.a. Real, relevant and current issues

Some of you will be extremely globally aware. Others will have gaps in knowledge and understanding.

- A good starting point would be **'What's in the News about climate change?'** Your group members will rapidly identify the key issues for yourselves.
 - This would be a good moment to exchange information with students from partner schools ie via padlet or similar
 - The students or teacher facilitator can then prompt student-led research online and elsewhere, which can be shared.
 - The students or teacher facilitator can introduce key concepts such as the Global Goals, share a video or sound clip, and steer the group to the relevant topics by providing a resource or news story they might not have found.
- **Extension:** Choose one or more of the identified issues from **'What's in the News about the climate change?'** and use an **Issues tree** to unpack thinking.
 - Draw a large outline of a tree, with the Issue of your choice on the trunk.
 - The causes or roots of the problem are written in amongst the roots of your tree and the possible solutions become leaves.
 - This can be left on display and added to as learning deepens.

2.b. Terminology – what's in a word?

There is a lot of debate about the correct terminology when considering climate issues and sustainability. There are several ways of looking at this.

- Research the terminology used to refer to climate change – different people use different terms. What difference do the terms used make? How does the language we use influence our attitudes towards something?
- Using a **Continuum Line** can help explore the terminology your group wishes to use.

In a large space hang labels saying 'agree' and 'disagree' some distance apart ().*

Read the following statements, one by one, and ask members of your group to stand on the imaginary line between your labels, according to their views.

Ask for information about why each person has stood where they have.

It is perfectly acceptable for participants to move in the light of others' views!

Statements:



- *Our group would like to use the term ‘Global warming’.*
- *‘Climate change’ best describes how our group thinks.*
- *We think ‘Global heating’ describes well what is already happening.*
- *‘Climate emergency’ conveys our concerns as a group.*

Using the learning from this exercise and the research so far, settle on a term your group wishes to use. Share this with your international partners. Have you chosen the same terminology? Or something different? Find out the thinking behind these decisions. We have chosen to use the term Climate Change in this pack. Do you agree?

Further information about terminology can be found in Jeff Goodell’s book ‘The Heat Will Kill You First’. Does your library stock this book, or can you ask them to order it?

() An interesting practical challenge is whether you can actually carry out this exercise live online with partners in another country. Good luck!*

2.c. Sustainable Production and Consumption: Global Goal 12

Like most young people you will not have total autonomy at home on important consumption decisions e.g. over the buying of food, clothing, transport and other lifestyle ‘choices’. But you can influence them within the budgetary restrictions of the family.

This raises important questions about production and consumption – Global Goal 12.

There are no right answers to these dilemmas. Listening to others can be enlightening and explaining your own views can help you to understand why you think and act the way you do. Changing your mind in the face of new evidence or perspectives is also a very good practice!

We have chosen three topics – **food, clothing, transport** - you might like to discuss these questions.

Prompt Questions for discussions:

Food: Fast food and its increase - how is this related to the climate emergency and sustainability? Do franchises such as McDonalds perpetuate or help the issue? Where does our food come from? Air miles? Is that the same for each country? Do some countries rely more on home grown food? Does eating seasonal food help? Has climate change - hotter summers, wildfires, different rain patterns - had an effect on food production? Do increased energy costs help determine the food that is available and what we should eat? Can growing your own food help combat the sustainability issue? Should everybody learn to cook from basic foods in order to lessen the need for ready meals/ takeaways? Have you ever foraged? Damsons, sloes, blackberries - what is near you? Is this different in each country? What can we learn from each other? Find out about fairtrade productions - can this help? Does giving up eating meat solve the problem? Vegetarian or vegan?

Clothing: Consider where you buy your clothes from, how frequently? Do you buy them to last? To wear to a particular event? Are they a staple part of your wardrobe or a throw away item? Who made them? Are the materials they are made from produced in a



sustainable way, are they natural or man-made? Do the dyes that are used have a harmful effect on the environment? Has climate change had an effect on the production of some of these materials e.g. cotton? How long do you keep them for? What do you do with them next? Send them to a second-hand shop, recycling, swap with friends? Sell on online market places like Vinted? Do you buy from second hand shops?

Transport: Keep a log for a week. Record walking, cycling, scooter, bus, tram, underground, train, car? How much time do you spend doing each? How many solo journeys do you make? How often is it just you that needs a lift somewhere? Compare between countries. How often do you fly? Are there alternatives - are they more expensive? Can you change your pattern of transport? Are you learning to drive? What do you think about electric cars? What public transport do you have access to? Is the public transport infrastructure good in your area?

Now choose a topic your group would like to debate.

These topics can be debated in a range of ways, choose the most appealing for your group.

Thinking through the prompt questions will enable you to identify key issues for that topic and what you think about it. For example, the following issues might arise:

- 'I think it's important to only buy second-hand clothes because.....'
- 'It's important to me that I am vegan because.....'
- 'I think public transport should be free because.....'

These are just examples; your group will have its own views and ideas!

A. Debated in individual groups (Online might be possible, though challenging!)

- *Participants sit in two circles of equal numbers, facing each other.*
- *The inner circle will be facing out and the outer circle facing in.*
- *The activity leader will explain to participants that in order to explore why you think an issue is important, you have to explaining your reasons to the person opposite.*
- *Explain what you think and why, whilst they listen without interrupting.*
- *You then swap roles and it's your turn to listen.*
- *After a while, the inner circle people rotate once to the left, and then the exercise can be repeated with a new person.*
- *Continue for as long as you feel comfortable.*

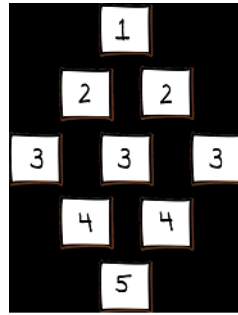
At the end there should a plenary session. Points emerging from the debate and exploration can be shared with international partners. You may have different priorities, or there may be a consensus.

B. Participants can make their own 'Diamond 9' exercise.

Using your group's knowledge, research and thinking on the topics of climate change and sustainability, work in pairs to construct a **Diamond 9** (for instructions – see below). Each pair can trial their Diamond 9 with another pair, or your international partners, to generate lots of debate and sharing of perspectives.



Diamond 9



Design your own Diamond 9 by choosing nine words or short statements relating to climate change priorities. What things need to change in the world in order to safeguard humanity's future on Planet Earth? Humans will need to alter our lifestyles and become more sustainable – what do you think are the most important actions to take?

Your chosen words or statements should capture the range of issues you have identified about climate change from your research.

This is an example from a different international project. You could use this as a model and build in your own priorities.

Sustainable Energy Sources	Limiting Human Population Size	Controlling Air Pollution
Secure and Safe Food Production	Universal Clean Water Supplies	Peace and Justice
Making Polluters Pay and Clean Up	Democratic Systems (where everyone gets a say in decisions)	Gender Equality

Diamond 9 Instructions

- Write each word or statement on a separate card or piece of paper.
- Try out your Diamond 9 with another pair: ask participants to read the words or statements.
- Participants can then rank the statements in a diamond shape, with their highest priority at the top and lowest at the bottom. There will be one on the top row, two on the second and so on. This is shown in the illustration.
- Encourage participants to discuss their reasons, justify their choices or alternatively record where they do not agree.

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- There are no right answers, so each person can have a different perspective without this being a problem. This is a tool to get people talking! You simply acknowledge when there is not agreement. Remember: we need a wide range of thinking to address the challenges of sustainability!

When you've tried out your Diamond 9 you might want to make some changes to the words you've used, so your meaning is clearer.

As an extension you could also include a blank card for your participants to add their own word or statement if they wish. This way you may find things you've forgotten to include.

Collaboration: share your findings with the partners.

3. Act: Climate and sustainability

When considering how we can act together to make a difference it is important to consider actions that will have a sustainable effect and that hopefully will outlast or develop after the project has ended.

Responsible action starts with thinking critically and building the foundations of knowledge and understanding by unpacking issues together.

3.a. Thinking critically about Climate and Sustainability

A nation's carbon dioxide emissions are the sum of its citizens' individual '**environment footprints**', or **carbon footprint**. Each person's environment footprint is made up of

- their primary footprint i.e., direct use of fossil fuels for transport, heat, and light
- secondary footprint i.e., indirect use for goods and services which require fossil fuels.

You can find your own environment footprint, how it compares with the average for your country and globally here: <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/>

One idea to reduce environment footprints is carbon trading. Each person would hold a 'carbon card' storing their carbon credit status. The idea is that in the future, carbon credits may be forfeited along with cash, when using the Earth's resources.

With this in mind, you could work through the following questions in stages – firstly individually in private to yourself, then within your group and directly with your partners, publicly.

Individual private questions: *what do I think about this personally? Why do I think like I do? To what extent am I open to changing my point of view?*

- What do you think your carbon footprint is? Do you think it is above or below your country's average? How do you feel about it?
- How does your up-bringing or value system affect how you feel about your carbon footprint?
- How would you react to having a carbon card?

Group Dialogue questions: *what do other people think about this? How can I find different perspectives to my own? Analyse assumptions, implications and contradictions. And how can I engage with complexity, conflict, uncertainty, and difference with integrity?*

You can discuss these questions, and questions of your own, with others, in small groups:

- Why do people in different parts of the world have different carbon footprints?
- What links are there between poverty and low carbon footprints? Wealth?
- Is a 'western' lifestyle possible for everyone? Does the 'western' lifestyle have to change?
- Is it possible to have a low carbon footprint and not live in poverty? What about local variations?
- What is the relationship, if any, between those who add a bigger burden on the Earth and those who do not?
- Is it fair that climate change restrictions make it harder for countries in the Global South (Africa, Asia and Latin America) to industrialise?

3b. Global Goal 12: Community Local Action by individuals, partners and the partnership

Using the learning from '1. Learn' and '2. Explore', and especially "Sustainable Production and Consumption", you and the partners may already have identified an issue (or issues) in your own lives or communities on which you would like to take responsible and achievable action. If not, this is the time to decide!

Set up a working party, consider timelines, planning one step at a time, assigning roles, involving others, getting the community on board, establishing media outlets for the partnership, taking action and sustaining the change.

Actions could include information events, creative actions, assemblies, flash mobs, online campaigns, workshops, performances and fundraisers.

Share the impact with your international partners and find out what they have done to improve their own locality.

Share the main impacts and outcomes of your "Stronger Together" activity through social media, possibly in both languages of your partnership.



Further links

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/resources-school-teachers>

<https://globaldimension.org.uk/resources/itv-climate-explorers/>

<https://globaldimension.org.uk/resources/climate-justice-hope-and-action/>

Handout: Additional Information and Notes – a fuller version

1.a. The Science

The Earth's atmosphere acts like a blanket preventing heat provided by the sun radiating back out to space. (Blanket Effect Image from NASA: <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>). The greenhouse gases', mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and not forgetting water vapour, sustain this blanket and keep Earth at a global average of around 17°C. The pre-industrial level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was 280 ppm, a so-called 'safe level' is thought to be around 350 ppm, today the concentration is up to 422 ppm and rising. We have added to CO₂ levels not only by burning fossil fuels but also through some industrial processes, steel and concrete production are examples. Forest fires are also contributing CO₂ and these are currently more fierce due to long lasting droughts. Carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere for a long time. Methane is a more potent greenhouse gas produced naturally by volcanic activity. Domestic animals, the production of some crops and draining of bogs and wetlands all add to methane in the atmosphere. Unlike CO₂ it degrades after a couple of decades. The effect of extra CO₂ in our atmosphere also extends to the oceans which are becoming more acidic and warmer as they trap the greenhouse gas and heat energy, and of course a warmer ocean takes up more room adding to sea level rises that are already happening due to ice melt.

1.b. Responses to climate change: political, practical and international

Climate change undermines the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 13 which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. All parts of the world are affected, the polar regions are some of the fastest warming parts of the earth but 2023 has also seen more densely populated regions in the northern hemisphere recording record temperatures under so called 'heat domes'. Many parts of the world which have scarcely contributed to the rise in greenhouse gases in our atmosphere are also the least well equipped to cope with change. Drought and crop failure linked to climate change are contributing to inward migration in both Europe and North America. To learn more about Goal 13, and for the latest United Nations climate news, visit <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange>

In November 2022 the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change took place in the Egyptian coastal city of Sharm el-Sheikh. (COP27 <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop27>). The focus of this gathering was to reinforce the aim of restricting global warming to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels by a rapid programme of decarbonisation. This goal now seems very difficult to achieve by 2030, if at all.



We will also need to seek ways of adapting to the likely effects of climate change, this might mean strengthening sea defences or planting drought-resistant crops. An associated term - mitigation - means making the impact less severe for example by changing farming practices or capturing and storing CO₂ in depleted gas fields.

1.c. Climate justice

‘Climate change is a subtle form of human rights violation. There is no direct persecution or threat but combustion of fossil fuels in industrialised nations has jeopardised the ability of certain societies to maintain their traditional practices, diminishing their cultural identity and their connection with their natural environment’ Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Global warming is a global crisis but with uneven effects, with the global south bearing many of the consequences and least able to deal with them. The injustice is that these areas had little or no responsibility for the industrial growth that relied so heavily on fossil fuels. To find out more see: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/climate-justice/>

1.d. Sustainability

Earth, our only home, has limited resources and capacity. Sustainable development attempts to balance the needs and rights of present and future generations, the planet and all its inhabitants. It also considers the best ways to tackle interrelated challenges such as the climate emergency, inequality and poverty and wealth. Whilst the climate emergency features highly in the news for justifiable reasons, sustainability provides sources of hope and good news stories of solutions and plans for a better world. Positive news stories can be harder to come by in all media forms. ‘Positive News’ offers a lens on the world that helps give people a fuller picture of reality, supports their wellbeing and empowers them to make a positive difference. See: <https://www.positive.news/>

The world agenda for sustainability is framed through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, which combine human development goals with planetary concerns: <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/>

1.e. Social justice, beyond charity

Fundraising campaigns that aim to evoke sympathy and raise money for those who suffer the effects of the climate emergency may instil feelings of guilt, with limited educational value. Encouraging learners to research and question the relevant global issues helps them understand that there are more effective ways for governments and people to achieve a more sustainable and equitable world in the longer term than charity. Reaching social and global justice commitments in the way humanity conducts itself on this planet are the key to sustainable futures, for people alive today and for those to come.

‘Humanity’s 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet’. See the work of Kate Raworth et al here: <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/#> This work offers inspiring and fresh thinking on how this is achievable and possible – showing how we



already have all the knowledge and tools to make this happen. Raworth offers a ‘playfully serious approach’ to framing the interconnected challenges of no-one falling short on life’s essentials whilst ensuring collectively we do not overshoot our pressure on Earth’s life-supporting systems, on which we fundamentally depend.

1.f. Broaden perceptions, counter stereotypes

No country is uniformly rich or poor: inequality exists within, as well as between countries. There is much to be learnt from others around the world, considering their contexts and cultures. Media coverage of people and places may reinforce common stereotypes with regard to the climate emergency, particularly the negative impressions that one country is causing all the problems, such as China or the USA. Adverts and images can imply dependency and uniform poverty in southern hemisphere countries and continents.

The impact of Climate Change requires us all to develop new ways of thinking, acting and living for a sustainable and equitable future. Many in the global south, particularly indigenous peoples, have strong connections with nature and implicit understanding of sustainable living. This knowledge is essential if humankind is to find a sustainable future within the planet’s resources and in tune with earth’s well-being. Survival International is a movement of people from over 100 countries with the vision of a world where tribal peoples are respected as contemporary societies and their human rights protected. Tribal and indigenous peoples have much of the knowledge and understanding of the Earth’s life-supporting systems that will be necessary to bring about sustainable futures. <https://www.survivalinternational.org/>

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