



RESILIENT
ROOTS

ECO- ANXIETY

Good Practices from
Partner Countries and
Recommendations for
Youth Workers



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INTRODUCTION

Eco-anxiety, commonly understood as a chronic fear of environmental doom, is a rapidly growing psychological phenomenon affecting individuals and communities worldwide. It is particularly common among younger generations, who often experience heightened feelings of uncertainty, fear, guilt, and helplessness about the future of the planet as climate change becomes increasingly visible and impactful. This emotional response reflects deep concerns about environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and the long-term sustainability of human life on Earth.

In response to this pressing issue, international collaboration has become an essential strategy. By working across borders, countries can share knowledge, resources, and innovative approaches to better understand and address eco-anxiety. Initiatives such as Erasmus+ projects, various EU-funded programs, and localized efforts have been instrumental in developing practical solutions that resonate with young people and the broader community. These efforts include interactive workshops, educational materials designed to raise awareness, podcasts that engage audiences through storytelling, and nature-based practices that reconnect individuals with the environment and promote mental well-being.

INTRODUCTION

This document highlights and consolidates effective practices from Resilient Roots project partner countries, including Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, and Greece. These examples provide valuable insights and tools for youth workers, educators, and mental health professionals who are on the front lines of supporting young people experiencing different forms of eco-anxiety. By learning from these diverse initiatives, stakeholders can better empower youth to transform their fears into proactive engagement, encouraging them to become agents of change in building a more sustainable and hopeful future.

Ultimately, addressing eco-anxiety is not only about mitigating psychological distress but also about fostering resilience, environmental stewardship, and collective action. Through continued cooperation and shared commitment, we can create supportive environments that nurture both mental health and sustainable development for generations to come.

This resource aims to:

Highlight unique approaches taken by each partner country.

Foster the development of eco-resilience among young individuals.

Share practical recommendations for youth workers.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES

In **Greece**, a vibrant ecosystem of initiatives is actively addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainability. These efforts, which are mostly led by the Third Sector, focus on empowering communities, especially youth, to engage in climate action, resilience building, and environmental education.

Projects range from grassroots movements encouraging local cleanup efforts and waste management to structured programs offering training on eco-anxiety and sustainable living. Cultural and educational tools are being developed to raise awareness about climate change and its impacts, while innovative approaches support mental and emotional well-being through art and community activities. Furthermore, digital platforms and solidarity projects foster collaboration and resource sharing, while hands-on programs mobilize volunteers to combat pollution and create greener, healthier spaces. Together, these initiatives reflect a dynamic and holistic approach to sustainability, emphasizing community engagement, education, and practical action.

Notable initiatives include:

- **EcoReactEU:** An Erasmus+ KA220 Cooperation project with Greece, Italy, France, and the Netherlands, providing resources like the Pedagogical Guide on Emotional Resilience and tools for youth workers tackling eco-anxiety.
- **Gen Z, Media and Climate Change:** A podcast by Panteion University students in collaboration with iMED, exploring climate change and sustainability through media.
- **RESET-ART:** A European project equipping youth workers with cultural tools to help young people manage ecological stress.
- **Earth's Echoes:** A podcast by journalism schools in Greece and Colombia, emphasizing the role of education in addressing climate change.
- **Youth EConnection:** A solidarity project offering environmental awareness activities like clean-ups and eco-friendly business mapping.
- **Ecogenia:** Greece's first youth climate corps, enabling young people to engage in impactful climate action projects.
- **Save Your Hood:** A grassroots environmental volunteering movement empowering citizen to clean and recycle for healthier neighborhoods.
- **NGO from Lefkada:** Promotes ESC opportunities in sustainability and climate action for youth.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES

- **ESAI EN ROI:** Engaging architects and urban planners in sustainable urban park designs aligned with public and environmental needs.
- **Cob.gr:** An ESC project on sustainable living at an off-grid regenerative farm, combining eco-action and teamwork.
- **Society for the Protection of Biodiversity of Thrace:** A volunteer-driven initiative protecting Thrace's biodiversity.
- **Analeia:** Educates fishers to collect plastic bycatches, removing over two truckloads of plastic daily.
- **Fabric Republic:** Modernizes circular clothing management to foster zero-waste practices.
- **Green Compass:** A digital map for eco-communities, fostering sustainable practices.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES

Croatia is actively engaged in diverse efforts to address environmental challenges, promote sustainability, and foster resilience among communities. These initiatives focus on education, cross-cultural collaboration, and practical solutions to climate-related issues. Projects emphasize equipping educators and youth with tools to manage eco-anxiety, integrate sustainability into education, and adopt eco-friendly practices in daily life.

Conservation efforts are also prominent, with initiatives dedicated to preserving natural ecosystems, such as coastal areas, aquatic habitats, and riparian forests. Sustainable tourism is a key focus, promoting eco-conscious accommodations and resource-saving measures while supporting local communities and cultural heritage.

Collaboration is a recurring theme, with programs fostering partnerships across borders, enabling knowledge exchange, and creating networks for ongoing sustainability initiatives. From creative approaches like integrating recycled materials into education to advanced research in sustainable energy and water systems, Croatia is making significant strides in building a greener future. These efforts combine grassroots actions with policy-level interventions, ensuring a holistic approach to environmental resilience and sustainability.

Notable initiatives include:

- **Under the European Stars:** An Erasmus+ project that united students from Croatia, Finland, Hungary, and Spain to engage in mindfulness exercises and workshops promoting environmental awareness and mental health resilience.
- **Environmental Awareness vs. Eco Anxiety:** Erasmus+ KAI training in Split and Dubrovnik equipping educators with tools to manage eco-anxiety through nature-based mindfulness and emotional regulation techniques.
- **BEST - Building Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Values:** A Zagreb-based Erasmus+ project promoting climate action through transformative learning and a "Head, Heart, Hands" approach.
- **Think Blue - Save Seas and Waters for the Future:** An Erasmus+ course in Dubrovnik teaching educators hands-on methods to inspire sustainable habits and aquatic ecosystem conservation.
- **Eco-Creative Classroom:** A Dubrovnik and Split initiative that empowers educators to integrate recycled materials into creative eco-art projects for environmental education.
- **Climate Change People Change:** Erasmus+ project in Šolta fostering youth engagement in climate action and raising awareness through cross-country partnerships.
- **AdriaClimPlus:** A cross-border initiative addressing climate adaptation and resilience in the Adriatic region through research and policymaking.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES

- **SusTrainable:** Erasmus+ project in Pula promoting sustainability in software development education with teacher training and curriculum integration.
- **Green Osijek:** An ecological association operating near Kopački Rit Nature Park, focusing on environmental education and eco-tourism.
- **SDEWES Centre:** Zagreb-based center advancing research and education in sustainable energy, water, and environmental systems.
- **Amazon of Europe:** A multinational effort to conserve riparian forests along the Mura-Drava-Danube UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
- **Green Stay Croatia:** Promotes eco-friendly accommodations and sustainable tourism practices to protect Croatia's cultural and natural heritage.

Italy is actively addressing eco-anxiety through innovative initiatives that combine environmental conservation, mental health support, and community engagement. Projects like forest bathing in natural reserves, free therapy sessions for young adults, and social media campaigns by UNICEF foster emotional resilience and environmental responsibility. These efforts emphasize mindfulness, education, and actionable solutions, empowering individuals to transform eco-anxiety into constructive environmental activism.

Key examples include:

- **Oasi del Respiro (Breath Oases):** In collaboration with WWF, this initiative promotes forest bathing in nature reserves across Italy, offering guided mindfulness exercises and sensory activities to reduce stress and eco-anxiety. Participants have reported feeling more connected to nature, with one stating, "It was a reminder of the beauty we are trying to protect, making my environmental efforts feel more meaningful."
- **Ecososteniamoci:** This community program provides group sessions led by psychologists to support young adults experiencing eco-anxiety. The sessions focus on emotional resilience, transforming worry into proactive engagement, and promoting sustainable lifestyles.
- **UNICEF and GuidaPsicologi Collaboration:** A partnership to raise awareness about eco-anxiety through social media campaigns, this initiative encourages open discussions, models pro-environmental behaviors, and promotes collective actions among youth to foster resilience and hope.

Slovenian efforts to address eco-anxiety encompass the Youth Courage project to empower marginalized youth, five detailed articles exploring the psychological impact of climate change, a radio program offering therapeutic advice, and a social media campaign to foster mental health awareness. These initiatives collectively emphasize education, community support, and practical tools for resilience:

- Youth Courage (Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Project): This international project reconnects marginalized youth with disrupted support systems post-COVID-19. It empowers young people through tools like interactive games, innovative surveys, and an online platform promoting active citizenship and mental resilience.
- Awareness-Raising Articles on Eco-Anxiety
 - **"Climate Change and Mental Health"** (23 May 2023): Explains how environmental crises like heatwaves and floods exacerbate mental health issues, particularly among vulnerable populations. It highlights the emergence of eco-anxiety, solastalgia, and ecological grief.
 - **"Do You Feel Eco-Anxiety?"** (3 Dec 2021): Discusses eco-anxiety as a response to environmental destruction, offering self-care practices like mindfulness and nature connection to alleviate stress and promote sustainable living.
 - **"Eco-Anxiety and Climate Anxiety Among Youth"** (11 Dec 2023): Highlights the psychological toll of recent climate disasters in Slovenia, recognizing eco-anxiety as a rational response to real threats and emphasizing its impact on young people.

- **Radio Broadcast on Eco-Anxiety** (19 April 2024): A comprehensive discussion about eco-anxiety, featuring insights from psychologists on its causes, therapeutic methods, and community-based coping mechanisms.
- **Mind the Mind Slovenia** (Social Media Campaign): A student-led initiative using platforms like Facebook to raise awareness about eco-anxiety and mental health challenges, aiming to destigmatize psychological struggles.

Good Practices

To better understand the diverse environmental and sustainability initiatives across partner countries, we have grouped the projects according to their primary focus and approach. This categorization provides a clearer view of the varied strategies addressing critical issues such as climate change, ecological degradation, and the rising psychological impact of eco-anxiety. Organizing initiatives by their main objectives and methods also helps identify common themes, strengths, and potential gaps within the collective efforts.

The below mentioned six categories, reflect the broad range of actions contributing to environmental sustainability and community resilience: Awareness-Raising Initiatives, Community-Based Initiatives, Education and Training Initiatives, Conservation and Sustainability Projects, Innovative and Digital Tools, and Mental Health and Eco-Anxiety Support. Each category captures a distinct area of focus.

01

Awareness-Raising Initiatives

Focus on enhancing public understanding and knowledge about environmental challenges and eco-anxiety.

- Gen Z, Media, and Climate Change (Podcast)
- Earth's Echoes (Podcast)
- UNICEF and GuidaPsicologi Collaboration (Social media campaigns)
- Awareness-Raising Articles on Eco-Anxiety (Slovenia)

02

Community-Based Initiatives

Focus on mobilizing local communities for hands-on environmental actions and fostering collaboration.

- Save Your Hood (Cleanup efforts)
- Youth EConnection (Solidarity project)
- Green Compass (Digital map for eco-communities)

03

Education and Training Initiatives

Focus on equipping individuals (especially youth and educators) with tools, knowledge, and emotional resilience.

- RESET-ART (Cultural tools for managing eco-stress)
- Environmental Awareness vs. Eco Anxiety (Mindfulness training)
- Think Blue - Save Seas and Waters for the Future (Hands-on educator training)
- Eco-Creative Classroom (Recycled materials for education)

04

Conservation and Sustainability Projects

Focus on direct action to preserve ecosystems, promote sustainable living, and mitigate climate impacts.

- Society for the Protection of Biodiversity of Thrace (Biodiversity protection)
- AdriaClimPlus (Climate adaptation research)
- Amazon of Europe (Forest conservation)
- Analeia (Plastic collection by fishers)

05

Innovative and Digital Tools

Focus on leveraging technology and innovation to enhance collaboration, resource sharing, and environmental action.

- EcoReactEU (Digital resources for tackling eco-anxiety)
- Green Compass (Digital map for eco-communities)
- SusTrainable (Sustainability in education via digital tools)

06

Mental Health and Eco-Anxiety Support

Focus on addressing emotional resilience and psychological impacts of environmental challenges.

- Oasi del Respiro (Forest bathing for stress reduction)
- Ecososteniamoci (Therapy for young adults)
- Youth Courage (Mental resilience tools)
- Mind the Mind Slovenia (Social media awareness)

Recommendations for Youth Workers

Based on the collected practices, the following recommendations are proposed for youth workers, accompanied by practical examples:

01

Integrate Emotional and Environmental Education:

Teach emotional literacy alongside environmental topics to help youth build internal resilience while engaging with external issues. Eco-anxiety often stems from a feeling of powerlessness in the face of large-scale ecological crises. By helping young people understand their emotions—naming feelings like grief, frustration, or fear—you enable them to process these experiences constructively. When emotional literacy is integrated with environmental education, youth learn not only about climate change, but also how to handle the emotional toll it can take.

Include mindfulness and reflective practices in your sessions. This helps young people slow down, become more self-aware, and develop healthier responses to climate-related stress. Creative tools such as storytelling, drawing, and theater can also help externalize emotions and turn feelings of helplessness into shared narratives and solutions.

02

Promote Nature-Based Practices:

Create regular opportunities for youth to connect with nature in simple, meaningful ways.

Spending time outdoors has proven psychological and emotional benefits. Activities like forest bathing, nature journaling, walking meditations, or even sitting quietly under trees help foster a sense of peace and connection. This connection is critical for both healing eco-anxiety and inspiring lasting care for the environment.

Use nature as both a physical and emotional space for exploration.

Facilitated sessions can include discussions about how natural environments make youth feel, how climate change is impacting these places, and what actions they might take to protect them. Allow for both guided and self-directed time outdoors to respect different comfort levels and personal needs.

03

Foster Community and Peer Support:

Build group-based initiatives that emphasize shared experiences, emotional support, and collective action. One of the most effective ways to reduce eco-anxiety is through a sense of belonging. Peer connections help normalize feelings, reduce isolation, and build emotional safety. Group discussions, support circles, or climate cafés (informal spaces to talk about ecological emotions) can give young people a space to be heard and validated.

Encourage solidarity and interdependence rather than perfection. Youth are often burdened by the pressure to “do everything right” in terms of sustainability. Fostering a compassionate, non-judgmental atmosphere helps shift the focus from individual responsibility to collective empowerment. Collaborating with others in small actions can create meaningful emotional shifts.

04

Leverage Digital Platforms:

Use social media and online spaces to engage young people where they already gather, providing both education and emotional tools. Digital platforms are powerful for raising awareness, sharing resources, and fostering a sense of global connection. Use short videos, infographics, podcasts, or interactive posts to normalize eco-anxiety, explain coping strategies, and provide examples of youth-led climate action.

Ensure digital content is empowering, not overwhelming. Avoid doom-laden messaging and instead focus on practical, hopeful stories of impact and resilience. Highlight tools for self-care, community engagement, and sustainable habits that young people can integrate into daily life.

Encourage critical digital literacy. Help youth reflect on the media they consume and how it affects their mood, motivation, or sense of agency. Promoting a balanced relationship with digital information is key to emotional sustainability.

05

Empower Through Action:

Channel emotional energy into purposeful environmental initiatives.

Taking action—no matter how small—can be one of the most effective antidotes to eco-anxiety. Empower youth to participate in local sustainability projects such as clean-up efforts, community gardens, repair cafés, upcycling workshops, or advocacy campaigns.

Involve young people in the design and leadership of initiatives. When youth help shape the activities they engage in, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and competence. This boosts confidence and reinforces the belief that their actions have meaning.

Celebrate small wins and local impact. Emphasize the value of consistent, everyday actions. Frame environmental responsibility not as a burden, but as an opportunity to connect with others, influence change, and build hope for the future.

Conclusion

The increasing prevalence of eco-anxiety underscores the urgent need for holistic approaches in youth work. By integrating mental health and environmental education, countries like Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, and Greece have pioneered models that address this pressing issue.

From Croatia, programs like "Under the European Stars" and "Environmental Awareness vs. Eco-Anxiety" illustrate the power of combining nature-based mindfulness with emotional resilience training. Italy's "Oasi del Respiro" initiative and the "Ecososteniamoci" sessions demonstrate how community and individual interventions can transform eco-anxiety into proactive engagement. Slovenia's "Youth Courage Project" and creative outreach like the "Escape the Gloom" game highlight the importance of innovative, youth-centered solutions. Greece contributes with diverse initiatives such as "EcoReactEU," providing structured tools for managing eco-anxiety, and "Ecogenia," fostering resilience through hands-on environmental action.

These examples emphasize the value of international collaboration and the adaptability of successful models across diverse contexts. Recommendations from this document advocate for integrating emotional literacy and sustainability topics, promoting nature-based practices, and leveraging digital platforms to empower youth.

CONCLUSION

Future efforts should expand these approaches, incorporating more localized and culturally specific methods while maintaining international cooperation. By investing in the psychological and environmental well-being of the younger generation, we can nurture a future of resilience, hope, and active stewardship of the planet. The increasing prevalence of eco-anxiety underscores the urgent need for holistic approaches in youth work. By integrating mental health and environmental education, countries like Croatia, Italy, and Slovenia have pioneered models that address this pressing issue. Future efforts should build on these practices, creating supportive environments that empower young people to face ecological challenges with resilience and hope.