

Report on european Youth participation mobilities

Green YOUth Changemakers Project

Co-funded by the European Union – Erasmus+ Programme

1. Introduction

The *Green YOUth Changemakers* project implemented three international mobilities designed to empower disadvantaged young people from Romania and Bulgaria to become active environmental citizens and advocates for sustainability. The mobilities took place in Romania (Drobeta Turnu Severin), Bulgaria (Karlovo), and Brussels (Belgium), providing a progressive learning pathway from local eco-actions to European-level advocacy.

The objectives were to:

- Strengthen environmental literacy and awareness among participants.
- Equip youth with skills in advocacy, structured dialogue, and campaigning.
- Foster intercultural understanding and European identity.
- Connect young people with decision-makers at local and European level.

2. Mobility 1 – *Together for Climate* (Romania)

Location and Date: Drobeta Turnu Severin, Romania, 01–05 Nov 2024

Participants: 20 young people (10 from Romania, 10 from Bulgaria), aged 15–19, accompanied by facilitators and decision makers.

Activities:

- Non-formal workshops on climate change, circular economy, and youth activism.
- Simulation games and role plays on environmental decision-making.
- Study visits.
- Intercultural evenings presenting Romanian and Bulgarian traditions.
- Daily reflection circles to monitor learning outcomes.

Methods Used: brainstorming, world café, simulation, experiential learning, peer-to-peer exchange.

Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge: improved understanding of environmental challenges at European and local levels.
- Skills: teamwork, intercultural communication, eco-campaign planning.
- Attitudes: greater motivation for active participation, stronger European identity.

3. Mobility 2 – *International Mobility in Bulgaria*

Location and Date: Karlovo, Bulgaria, 24–28 January 2025

Participants: 20 young people (10 from Romania, 10 from Bulgaria), aged 15–19, accompanied by facilitators and decision makers.

Activities:

- Advocacy training sessions on structured dialogue, lobbying, and policy design.
- Debate simulations on sustainable urban planning.
- Study visits
- Plogging activity in Karlovo park, with reflection on waste management..

Methods Used: debate, role play, problem-solving in groups, creative workshops, digital media.

Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge: gained understanding of advocacy processes and municipal decision-making.
- Skills: debating, negotiation, digital campaigning, leadership.
- Attitudes: increased confidence in addressing decision-makers, resilience, teamwork.

4. Mobility 3 – *Study Visit in Brussels (Belgium)*

Location and date: Brussels, Belgium, 13–16 June 2025

Participants: 24 people, including youth participants, facilitators, and organisational representatives.

Activities:

- Visits to the European Parliament and the European Commission.

- Roundtable with Members of the European Parliament and European NGOs.
- Presentation of Policy Recommendations developed by youth during previous mobilities.
- Guided visits to NGOs working on climate and sustainability.
- Plogging action in Brussels city centre, symbolising youth eco-activism in an urban European context.

Methods used: study visits, structured dialogue, interactive Q&A, group reflection, experiential action.

Learning outcomes:

The three youth participation mobilities implemented in the framework of the *Green YOUTh Changemakers* project – *Together for Climate* in Drobeta Turnu Severin (Romania), *Green YOUTh Activism* in Karlovo (Bulgaria), and the *Study Visit* in Brussels (Belgium) – were designed as complementary learning experiences. Together, they formed a coherent pathway that guided young people from raising awareness of environmental issues and gaining practical activism competences to engaging in structured dialogue and finally advocating for sustainability at the European level.

The learning outcomes achieved by the participants were substantial, multidimensional, and transformative. They can be analysed through the framework of **knowledge, skills, and attitudes/behaviours**, in direct connection with the project's objectives and Erasmus+ Youth Participation priorities.

a. Knowledge acquired

Environmental literacy

In the Romanian mobility (*Together for Climate*), participants were introduced to the scientific foundations of climate change, the challenges of pollution, and the concept of circular economy. Through interactive workshops and debates, they built a deeper understanding of how local environmental issues (e.g. plastic waste in the Danube) are connected to global phenomena such as biodiversity loss and climate change. They also learned about EU-level frameworks, such as the European Green Deal, linking local actions to European strategies.

In Bulgaria (*Green YOUTh Activism*), the focus shifted towards policy knowledge: how municipalities function, how environmental regulations are designed, and what role citizens can play in influencing decisions. Young people studied case studies of local initiatives, municipal planning tools, and advocacy strategies.

In Brussels, the study visit provided direct institutional knowledge. Participants learned about the functioning of the European Parliament and European Commission, the legislative process, and the role of civil society organisations in influencing policy. They gained concrete insight into how European institutions integrate sustainability into their agenda.

Youth participation and advocacy

Across all mobilities, young people enhanced their knowledge of democratic participation. In Romania, they understood the value of civic engagement at community level. In Bulgaria, they learned specific advocacy strategies, structured dialogue methods, and lobbying mechanisms. In Brussels, they saw these mechanisms applied in real life, as they engaged directly with Members of the European Parliament.

Intercultural and European awareness

Another important knowledge outcome was linked to intercultural learning. By interacting with peers from Romania and Bulgaria, participants discovered cultural similarities and differences, European values of diversity and inclusion, and the importance of cross-border cooperation. In Brussels, these insights expanded further as they interacted with European officials and international NGOs, reinforcing their understanding of European identity and citizenship.

b. Skills Developed

Communication and public speaking

Participants significantly improved their oral and written communication competences. In Romania, they practiced debating environmental issues in workshops. In Bulgaria, they engaged in simulated council debates and advocacy exercises. In Brussels, they presented policy recommendations in front of European officials, requiring high-level public speaking and persuasive communication. These experiences enhanced their ability to structure arguments, adapt to different audiences, and use persuasive techniques.

Teamwork and leadership

Working in mixed groups during workshops and eco-actions helped participants refine their teamwork skills. They learned to divide responsibilities, collaborate effectively, and respect diverse opinions. Many participants also took leadership roles in small-group tasks, developing abilities to guide discussions, motivate peers, and coordinate activities.

Digital competences

The *My City is Clean and Green* campaign, integrated into mobilities, trained participants in creating digital content (social media posts, videos, posters). They developed competences in digital storytelling, online campaigning, and the ethical use of social media for advocacy. These skills are directly transferable to their future education and employment.

Problem-solving and critical thinking

Ploggings, recycling workshops, and advocacy simulations all required practical problem-solving. Young people learned to analyse issues, propose solutions, and reflect on consequences. Critical thinking was enhanced through structured reflection sessions, where participants assessed their own performance and identified areas for improvement.

Networking and policy engagement

A unique skill outcome emerged during the Brussels study visit: the ability to interact with policymakers and international organisations. Youth participants practiced networking, learned to ask meaningful questions, and exchanged ideas with European officials. This equipped them with competences rarely accessible to disadvantaged youth from rural areas.

c. Attitudes and behavioural changes

Motivation for civic engagement

One of the strongest outcomes was a shift in attitudes. Many participants entered the project with low levels of confidence and limited belief in their ability to make change. By the end of the mobilities, they reported higher motivation to engage in civic life, willingness to volunteer, and interest in initiating their own environmental projects.

Confidence and self-efficacy

Young people became more confident in public speaking, intercultural communication, and leadership. Several disadvantaged participants overcame personal fears (e.g. speaking in English, presenting in front of officials, or travelling abroad for the first time). Their self-efficacy increased significantly, empowering them to pursue further opportunities.

Openness and tolerance

Intercultural interactions fostered openness to diversity, tolerance, and empathy. Romanian and Bulgarian participants built friendships that transcended national borders,

breaking stereotypes and reducing prejudices. Brussels expanded this further, strengthening their sense of belonging to a diverse European community.

Pro-environmental behaviours

The plogging activities, eco-workshops, and awareness campaigns encouraged concrete changes in behaviour. Participants reported adopting new habits, such as reducing plastic use, recycling at home, and using sustainable transport options. They also influenced peers and families, spreading eco-friendly behaviours within their communities.

d. Learning outcomes by mobility

Together for Climate

- Knowledge: foundations of climate change, circular economy, European Green Deal.
- Skills: teamwork, intercultural exchange, planning eco-actions, basic advocacy.
- Attitudes: motivation for activism, openness to cooperation, responsibility for local environment.

International mobility in Bulgaria

- Knowledge: municipal decision-making, advocacy processes, policy influence.
- Skills: debating, negotiation, lobbying, digital campaigning, leadership.
- Attitudes: confidence in addressing institutions, resilience, determination to act.

Study Visit in EU Capital

- Knowledge: functioning of EU institutions, European advocacy channels.
- Skills: public speaking, networking, policy drafting, structured dialogue.
- Attitudes: strong European identity, sense of belonging, readiness to act as ambassadors.

While the project expected participants to gain advocacy and eco-education competences, the mobilities exceeded expectations in several areas:

- **Confidence and leadership:** more participants than planned took leadership roles, including disadvantaged youth who initially were passive.
- **Policy engagement:** the level of maturity shown in Brussels during discussions with MEPs exceeded the partners' expectations.

- **Multiplier effect:** participants not only adopted eco-friendly habits but also became multipliers, motivating peers in schools and communities.

5. Cooperation Between Partners

All mobilities were prepared jointly by Asociația Mod of Life (Romania) and Youth and Civil Initiatives in the Rose Valley (Bulgaria). Preparatory online meetings, shared digital platforms, and joint facilitation ensured balanced responsibilities. Partners collaborated closely with schools, municipalities, and European institutions to ensure smooth organisation and relevance of content.

6. Impact

- **On participants:** transformative experiences, increased confidence, stronger eco-competences, intercultural friendships.
- **On organisations:** improved project management skills, extended networks, integration of non-formal tools into long-term programmes.
- **On stakeholders:** municipalities received youth proposals for environmental improvements; MEPs and EU NGOs gained insights from disadvantaged rural youth.
- **At community level:** visibility of Erasmus+ increased, inspiring peers and schools to join eco-actions.

7. Conclusions

The European mobilities of *Green YOUTh Changemakers* successfully combined environmental education, intercultural exchange, and civic participation. They achieved the planned objectives and, in many cases, exceeded expectations, particularly in relation to advocacy competences and European citizenship. The cumulative learning outcomes confirmed that disadvantaged youth, when empowered and supported, can act as strong changemakers at both local and European levels.

Mobility	Location & Dates	Total persons	Breakdown	Key activities	Working methods	Core learning outcomes
Together for Climate (Romania)	Drobeta Turnu Severin, 01–05 Nov 2024	22	20 youth with fewer opportunities, 1 decision-maker, 1 facilitator	Workshops, debates, eco-actions, plogging along Danube; daily reflections	Non-formal education, simulations, role play, world café, reflection circles	Environmental literacy, teamwork, intercultural skills, motivation for activism
International mobility in Bulgaria	Karlovo, 24–28 Jan 2025	22	20 youth with fewer opportunities, 1 decision-maker, 1 facilitator	Advocacy training, structured dialogue simulations, recycling workshop, plogging	Debate, role play, problem-solving groups, digital campaigning, peer exchange	Advocacy & negotiation, leadership, digital campaigning, confidence
Study Visit In EU capital	Brussels, 13–16 Jun 2025	24	22 youth, 2 decision-makers, 2 facilitators	Visits to EP & EC, meetings with MEPs/NGOs, policy recommendations, city plogging	Study visits, structured dialogue, Q&A, experiential learning, advocacy practice	EU policy understanding, public speaking, networking, policy drafting

