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Policy recommendation 3

Improving Internationalization of Climate Change Education for Youth



FAST
FORWARD



Introduction

Climate change is a global crisis that requires international cooperation and the sharing of experiences. The younger generation plays an important role in pushing climate action, however, the education system plays an additional role in the understanding of climate science, sustainability and strategies. Enhancing international cooperation in climate change education equips youth with the required skills for responding to the effective global response.

However, several challenges are identified in Internationalizing Climate Change Education in the WB area, including:

1. **Disparities in Curriculum Content:** EU educational systems provide comprehensive climate education, while WBC educational systems offer minimal exposure.
2. **Limited Access to Resources:** WBC countries lack access to quality educational materials and technology.
3. **Cultural and Political Barriers:** Political ideologies and cultural perspectives In the region influence how climate education is approached.
4. **Lack of International Coordination:** There is no standardized framework for integrating climate change education across the region.

Nevertheless, several success stories across the region have been observed. The following sections analyze several initiatives (projects) which have contributed to this aim.

Examples of Good Practices of Internationalization of Climate Change Education for Youth

This part analyses how climate change education is being implemented in the WB region. We have observed that the EU support in this path has been crucial. Five European Union (EU) projects have been carried out to assess their contributions to Education for climate change. These projects are evaluated on their objectives, outcomes, and methodologies in promoting sustainability education. The analysis focused on how each project addresses the principles of climate change, by encouraging the services, active participation and integrating sustainability in the education system. The project's impacts are seen in the non-formal and formal educational sectors. These projects share a timeline from 2016 to 2027 targeting different aspects of climate change and sustainability:

1. **Knowledge for a Resilient Society (2016-2020)** focused on promoting environmental protection, disaster risk management, and integration of sustainability education in higher education institutions in the Western Balkans.
2. **Promoting Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in the Framework of EU Integration (2020-2023)** has the purpose of strengthening the institution's capacities in the region by incorporating climate change, disaster risk management and EU integration efforts in the education system.
3. **Joined For Sustainability - Building Climate Resilient Communities in WB and EU - 1FUTURE (2023-2026)** has the focus on building the climate resilience communities in the EU and WB through cross-border cooperation, community learning and promotion of the best practices for resilience and sustainability.

4. Up-skilling researchers for Sustainable Entrepreneurship based on Innovation Process Management (USE IPM) (2023-2027) has the focus on advancing the skills of the researchers in sustainable entrepreneurship for integrating the innovation process management. The project has the purpose of enhancing tools and skills for the students, researchers, and entrepreneurs that are crucial to driving business practices and environmental responsibility.

5. Sustainable Living Labs for Regional Entrepreneurial Cooperation (GreenWB) (2024-2027) is framed to create sustainable living labs in the WB region by advancing cooperation regionally and innovation through practical application and hands-on learning on sustainable principles.

This next section presents a further analysis of the five EU-funded projects that focus on main goals, results, programs, target groups, future path, impacts and their titles. The aim is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of these projects' contributions to climate and sustainability objectives.

Table 1 summarizes the project under the following headings:

- **The Program:** The EU framework or funding scheme under which the project was executed, highlighting its alignment with broader EU strategies.
- **Main Goals:** The primary objectives that are crucial for projects to achieve through alignment with the sustainability targets and climate
- **Activities and Results:** The key actions undertaken within each project by providing insights into the implemented strategies and their effectiveness.
- **Target Groups:** The specific stakeholders that the project aims to benefit or engage from.
- **Impacts:** The benefits and effects as a result of projects assessing their contribution to the social and environmental goals.
- **Future Pathways:** Recommendations and directions for future projects based on their effectiveness and sustainability deriving from the findings.

Through this structured in-depth analysis, we aim to assess the success of each of the initiatives and derive insights to guide future EU-funded projects on the aims of climate and sustainability objectives. A full description of each project focused on ESD is given next.

Title of the project	Program	Main goals	Activities and Results	Target groups	Impacts	Future pathways
Knowledge for a resilient society (2016-2020) - http://www.wkforce.gr/adjevinans.net/	Erasmus+	The K-FORCE project aimed to establish a sustainable educational foundation in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Fire Safety Engineering across Western Balkan countries. It focused on enhancing interdisciplinary curricula by integrating engineering with fields like environmental protection, civil defense, and climatology. The project prepared societies to respond to catastrophic events by modernizing academic programs, improving teaching methods, and fostering international collaboration among universities and stakeholders. These efforts contributed to building resilience and strengthening the capacity of Western Balkan societies to manage disaster risks effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Development: New and updated curricula for undergraduate, graduate, and professional development programs in DRM and Fire Safety were created and implemented in partner universities across the Western Balkans. Training and Capacity Building: Numerous workshops, seminars, and training sessions were organized for university staff, students, and external stakeholders. These activities were designed to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary for effective disaster risk management. Student Mobility and Exchange: The project facilitated the mobility of students and staff between partner institutions, allowing them to gain international experience and engage in cross-border collaboration on DRR and Fire Safety topics. Development of Educational Materials: A range of educational resources, including textbooks, and online courses, were developed. These materials were made accessible to a broad audience, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the project's outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic community: researchers, professors, decision makers in HEIs or other people involved in activities related to the project 'goal and interested in following its development and outcomes; Students of WBC HEIs Professionals working in the field of Risk Management and Fire safety Decision-makers at local, national and regional level; Other stakeholders, such as NGOs, and other public or private institutions 	The K-FORCE project had a significant impact on improving the quality of education and training in disaster risk management in the Western Balkans. The new curricula and training programs continue to be offered by partner universities, ensuring that future generations of students and professionals are well-equipped to deal with disaster risks. The project also contributed to building a culture of resilience in the region by raising awareness and promoting best practices in disaster risk reduction. The network of institutions and professionals established through the project continues to collaborate on DRR initiatives, ensuring the sustainability of K-FORCE's achievements.	The project also contributed to building a culture of resilience in the region by raising awareness and promoting best practices in disaster risk reduction. The network of institutions and professionals established through the project continues to collaborate on DRR initiatives, ensuring the sustainability of K-FORCE's achievements. The consortium that successfully led the K-FORCE project has continued its collaborative efforts in advancing disaster risk management and resilience-building through the 1Future project, ensuring sustained impact and progress in the field.

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Promoting Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in the framework of EU Integration (2020-2023)	Erasmus+	This project developed 2 Jean Monnet modules, at the Faculty of Economics (FE), University of Tirana (UT), respectively Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA). Both subjects were developed under the context of EU integration. The specific objectives of this project include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support on the introduction of an EU angle into mainly non EU related studies Encouragement of interest in the EU and constitution of the basis for future poles of European knowledge in Albania Delivery of tailor-made courses on specific EU issues relevant for graduates in their professional life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching activities (development of teaching and learning materials) Research Activities Supporting activities of this project targeting dissemination and exploitation of project results with different stakeholders such as public institutions, Civil Society and <u>NGO-s</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students, higher education institutions representatives, central and local government unit representatives and other nongovernmental 	The first module enhanced students' understanding of EU disaster management, environmental hazard risks, and policy challenges in EU integration. The second module built knowledge in climate change adaptation, research methods, and critical analysis, while fostering skills in ethical reflection and recognizing the need for ongoing learning.	Producing and promoting new knowledge on the EU and related fields, ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes by integrating modules into university curricula, improving services, and raising awareness.

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Sustainable Living Labs for Regional Entrepreneurial Cooperation (GreenWB) (2024-2027) https://greenwb.eu/	Erasmus+	The objective of the "GreenWB" project is to promote sustainable development and green transition in the Western Balkans by enhancing the region's capacity to implement green policies. The project focuses on improving environmental governance, fostering green entrepreneurship, and supporting the adoption of green technologies and practices across various sectors. By doing so, GreenWB aims to contribute to the economic and environmental resilience of the Western Balkans.	The GreenWB project is centered around enhancing the green innovation and entrepreneurial skills of students in higher education within the Western Balkans. Key activities include the establishment of Sustainable Living Labs at partner universities, which act as hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship. These labs serve as one-stop-shops for collaboration between academia and industry, helping to commercialize research and entrepreneurial ideas.	The target group of the GreenWB project primarily includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students from higher education institutions in the Western Balkans. Academic staff from these institutions. Also targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurs, particularly those involved in green innovation and sustainability. Public and private sector stakeholders interested in fostering sustainable development and entrepreneurial ecosystems. Aims to engage a broader audience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policymakers. Community members. 	The GreenWB project is poised to have a multifaceted impact on the Western Balkans region, particularly in the field of education and green economy. <p>Educational Impact: The project enhances the educational landscape by establishing Sustainable Living Labs in universities, which provide students and faculty with hands-on experience in green innovation and entrepreneurship. This not only boosts the skill sets of the participants but also strengthens the capacity of higher education institutions to deliver relevant, up-to-date training that aligns with global sustainability goals.</p> <p>Economic Impact: By fostering collaboration between academia and industry, the GreenWB project stimulates the green economy in the Western Balkans. This contributes to the economic resilience and growth of the region.</p>	As the GreenWB project progresses, it will also focus on enhancing its engagement with policymakers and the wider community, advocating for policies that support sustainable development and green entrepreneurship. This ongoing engagement will help embed the principles of sustainability more deeply into the economic and educational frameworks of the region, driving long-term change.

Title of the project	Program	Main goals	Activities and Results	Target groups	Impacts	Future pathways
JOINED For Sustainability - Building climate Resilient communities in WB and EU - 1FUTURE (2023-2026) - https://1future.feut.edu.al/#	Erasmus+	The broader aim of the project is to mainstream a holistic approach towards climate and sustainability action. This will be achieved by improving regional capacities in implementing Green Deal goals in higher education system, particularly those related to the need for action to contribute to the green transition and to strengthen the sustainability competences of stakeholders. <p>Specific objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Knowledge Hubs for Climate and Sustainability (KHCS) within each WBC HEIs Mainstream climate and sustainability culture within WBC HEIs Raise awareness of staff and student community on the needs for climate action within HEIs Increase synergies between academia, business sector and government for implementing joint initiatives for climate and sustainability Reinforcement of networking and collaboration between staff and student communities of EU and WBC HEIs about climate and sustainability 	The 1Future project's activities focus on achieving climate action and sustainability in Balkan HEIs through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Modernization: Updating and creating courses on climate and sustainability, including short intensive courses with micro-credentials. Establishing Knowledge Hubs (KHCS): Setting up KHCS centers in partner HEIs as central hubs for research, collaboration, and sustainability initiatives. Research and Collaboration: Initiating research projects, publishing case studies, and launching the Climate and Sustainability Journal to promote ongoing collaboration. Engagement and Outreach: Developing the 1Future online platform, organizing conferences, webinars, and workshops to connect HEIs, businesses, and policymakers. Capacity Building and Sustainability: Training HEI staff, facilitating exchanges, and securing funding to sustain project outcomes and integrate them into HEI governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic community: researchers, professors, decision makers in HEIs or other people involved in activities related to the project 'goal and interested in following its development and outcomes; Students of WBC HEIs Enterprises and Business Associations Decision-makers at local, national and regional level; Other stakeholders, such as NGOs, and other public or private institutions 	The 1Future project aims to lead climate action in Balkan HEIs, connecting stakeholders to build climate-resilient communities in non-EU Balkan countries. The short-term impact includes implementing modernized courses and establishing Hubs within HEIs to engage students and staff in sustainability efforts. Medium-term impacts involve launching the 1Future Platform to foster collaboration between HEIs and businesses, as well as publishing a book of case studies to guide policymakers. Long-term impacts include integrating revised courses into HEI curricula, sustaining the Hubs, and continuing the Climate and Sustainability Journal to connect research communities across the Balkans and EU.	The 1Future project ensures sustainability through established KHCS, the 1Future online platform, modernized courses, and the book of case studies, all of which will continue to function beyond the project's lifetime. KHCS centers will become legal entities, playing a central role in sustaining project outcomes, fostering research, and engaging with businesses and policymakers. The 1Future platform will connect academia with the business sector, offering tools and resources to support climate-friendly processes. Revised curricula and short intensive courses will be integrated into HEIs, ensuring continued education in climate action. The Climate and Sustainability Journal will persist, promoting ongoing research and collaboration in the field.

Title of the project	Program	Main goals	Activities and Results	Target groups	Impacts	Future pathways
Up-skilling researchers for Sustainable Entrepreneurship based on Innovation Process Management (USE-IPM) https://useipm.com/	Horizon 2020 Widespread	The USE IPM project, titled "Up-skilling researchers for Sustainable Entrepreneurship based on Innovation Process Management," focuses on enhancing the capabilities of researchers, particularly in widening countries, by improving their skills in innovation management and sustainable entrepreneurship. The project aims to strengthen the relationship between academic institutions and the business community, promoting the development of innovation ecosystems that can drive sustainable economic growth. Through secondments and collaborations with EU partners, the project seeks to introduce new practices and approaches that benefit both the academic and non-academic sectors, ultimately contributing to the overall welfare of the regions involved	<p>The USE IPM project focuses on enhancing sustainable entrepreneurship through innovation process management.</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training researchers in innovation management. • Organizing secondments to EU partner organizations. • Facilitating workshops on technology transfer. <p>The project aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new skills among participants. • Improve collaboration between academic and non-academic sectors. • Create innovative solutions that contribute to sustainable economic growth. • Emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral teamwork in achieving these goals 	<p>The target group of the USE IPM project primarily includes researchers, particularly from widening countries. Focuses on enhancing skills in innovation process management and sustainable entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic institutions • Businesses • Other stakeholders involved in fostering innovation and sustainable development. <p>Aims to equip these groups with the necessary knowledge and tools through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Secondments • Collaborative activities. 	<p>The impact of the USE IPM project can be observed through three key perspectives:</p> <p>Scientific Impact: The project enhances research and innovation (R&I) excellence by improving the competencies of researchers through secondments. It also boosts the reputation and attractiveness of academic institutions by establishing Entrepreneurial Innovation (EI) centers, leading to institutional reforms in widening countries.</p> <p>Economic Impact: The project strengthens the ability of academic institutions to collaborate with the business sector, promoting better communication and mobility between academia and industry.</p> <p>Societal Impact: The project increases youth employment opportunities in widening countries by converting brain drain into brain gain.</p>	<p>The future pathway of the USE IPM project will focus on further solidifying the integration of sustainable entrepreneurship within academic and non-academic sectors. This will be achieved by expanding the activities of the Entrepreneurial Innovation (EI) centers established during the project, fostering stronger collaborations between academia and industry.</p>

Policy Recommendation

The five EU projects collectively advance the Education for Sustainable Development by targeting different aspects of sustainability, from disaster risk management and adoption of the climate to entrepreneurial innovation. Each project has made major contributions to implement sustainability principles in educational curricula and practices by fostering a more sustainable and resilient society in the Western Balkans and Europe.

The good experience from these projects, as well as the continuous path towards enhancing internationalization of education for climate change in the WB region, can be used as guidelines for developing several policy recommendations.

1. Develop a Regional Climate Education Framework:

- Collaborate through UNESCO and other international organizations to create standardized climate education guidelines in the WB region.
- Ensure the framework is adaptable to local contexts while maintaining core scientific principles.

2. Promote International Educational Exchange Programs:

- Establish student and teacher exchange initiatives focusing on climate education.
- Encourage collaboration between universities and schools in different countries in the region through joint research projects and virtual classrooms.

3. Leverage Digital Platforms for Knowledge Sharing:

- Expand access to online courses and digital learning tools to bridge resource gaps.
- Create multilingual, open-access climate education resources.

4. Strengthen Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making:

- Include young people in international climate policy discussions through summits, exchanges and youth councils.
- Support grassroots youth-led climate initiatives with the support of mentorship and funding.

5. Encourage Cross-Sector Partnerships:

- Encourage cooperation between NGOs, private sector, educational institutions and government.
- Invest in research to improve climate education methodologies and their effectiveness.

About the Fast Forward Project

The project “Engage, connect and empower youth for a sustainable green future” is focused on two European Youth Goals: quality learning and sustainable green Europe. It aims at implementing a creative strategy in terms of capacity building for the new generation actually facing the problems of tomorrow related to environment degradation, climate change, and sustainability issues. The target group of the project is youth trainers/workers, organizations, young activists in Albania, local/national authorities, and citizens of Albania and Europe. The project will focus in bringing the EU practices and translate them into tangible tools for youth in Western Balkan in order to fast forward the green transition.

The core of the project, capacity building, will be achieved through a critical number of activities, such as ToT, Youth exchanges, toolkits and manuals. These activities will spill over throughout non-formal learning providers benefitting staff, youth, and key stakeholders in the process.

This project is implemented in partnership with six organizations: Build Green Group and AlbanianSkills from Albania, BRAVO – Bosnian Representative Association for Valuable Opportunities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eco – Logic from North Macedonia, The Balkan Forum from Kosovo and Brigaid EU Project from Spain.

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