

## EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY – THE KEY FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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**Abstract:** Sustainable development has become a top priority on the global agenda in recent years. Scientific research, trends in country development, and practical experience related to environmental degradation and the effects of climate change clearly demonstrate the need to alter economic development models. The focus of this paper is to evaluate global issues, such as climate change, that require a change in our lifestyles and a revolution in the way we think and act. To achieve this change, we require new skills, values, and attitudes that lead to more sustainable societies. This pressing need must be addressed by education systems by defining relevant learning objectives and learning contents, introducing pedagogical methods that properly prepare learners, and motivating their institutions to incorporate sustainability principles in their management structures. The Climate Bank Roadmap data was used to conduct an empirical analysis, which clearly reflected the importance of an appropriate educational response in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The result of the paper underline that in this way, the accumulation of knowledge is supported for understanding the complexity of the world, the development of green entrepreneurship, critical thinking, but also the capacities for action to respond to these challenges through sustainable solutions.

**Keywords:** green entrepreneurship, sustainable development, education, sustainability.

**JEL Classification:** Q01, Q57.

### 1. Introduction

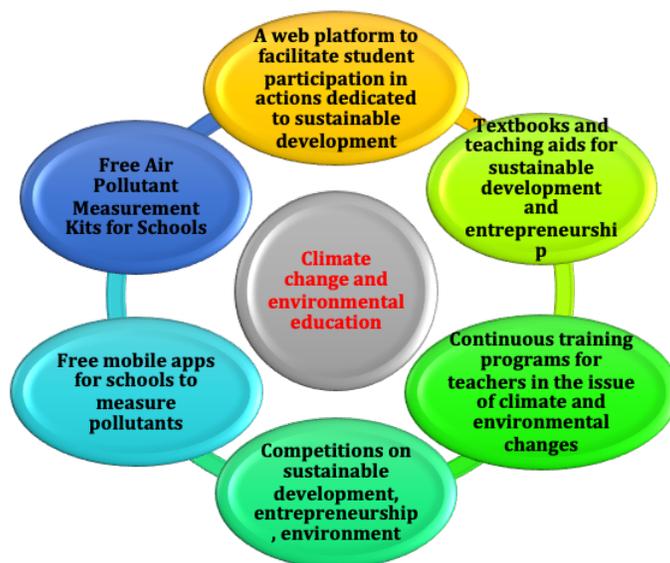
Creating learning opportunities that are environmentally sustainable is critical to the present and future of our planet. The ecological crisis affects everyone and every aspect of society. Timely strategic action is needed to help Europeans fully participate in the green transition of their economies and societies, rather than simply react. Ecological sustainability learning is part of this strategic approach.

Goal 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda states that by 2030, signatories must ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to promote sustainable development; this includes education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of peace and A culture of non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

Education for sustainability is a key objective as it helps people understand and respond to the impacts of the climate crisis by giving them the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to act as agents of change. The importance of education and training in tackling climate change is recognised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the related Agenda for Action on Climate Empowerment, which require governments to educate all major stakeholders and policy groups. engage. and action on climate change.

Developing a more sustainable lifestyle requires awareness of current changes in the world that require more sustainability.

Education is critical to sustainable development. Today, education is critical to helping leaders and citizens develop solutions for a better, more sustainable future. Unfortunately, our current pool of knowledge, skills and experience in various fields does not provide solutions to all current global, social and economic problems. While humanity has experienced many crises in the past and overcome them brilliantly, we are currently facing bigger problems and a growing population. While we can learn from history to solve today's problems, current realities do not warrant that new generations must learn what sustainability means on their own. Education is key to learning and a sustainable future (see Figure 1).



**Figure no. 1. Key tools for climate change and environmental education**

Source:

[https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/EDUCA%C8%9AIA%20PRIVIND%20SCHIMB%C4%82RILE%20CLIMATICE%20%C8%98I%20MEDIUL%20%C3%8EN%20%C8%98COLI%20SUSTAINABLE\(1\).pdf](https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/EDUCA%C8%9AIA%20PRIVIND%20SCHIMB%C4%82RILE%20CLIMATICE%20%C8%98I%20MEDIUL%20%C3%8EN%20%C8%98COLI%20SUSTAINABLE(1).pdf)

The concept of sustainable development must be implemented at the whole society level, in which general education, especially higher education, plays a crucial role. Educational institutions must use resources wisely to achieve sustainable development and provide young people with life experiences in a sustainable environment. They must become catalysts for necessary changes at the level of society as a whole, and their graduates must become instruments for the transformation of society as a whole towards sustainable development. Because most forms of economic activity become inefficient when controlled centrally, the notion that economic activity must be led by entrepreneurs who respond to policy incentives through managerial and technological innovation has become dominant over the past two decades.

These private sector investments in eco-innovations not only generate profits for entrepreneurs and investors, but can also create significant positive externalities for society and the environment as a whole, especially if they not only help create a small niche market, but It can also create huge positive externalities for society and the environment as

a whole. For them, driving the future has the potential to scale and enable sustainable transformation of the entire industry. The United Nations stated that the sustainable development of the earth will be the main concern of the United Nations in the next 12 years, and called on countries to take practical measures to solve social, economic and environmental problems.

Each generation has the same goal, which means economic, social and technological growth and development, which means a prosperous life. Persistence in the pursuit of these goals has brought mankind to the stage of development it has now reached. More and more resources are becoming scarce, the climate is changing for the worse and the environment is deteriorating by the day. Societies are becoming increasingly unbalanced and many countries are facing significant difficulties in accessing the resources they need for development. Amid growing pressure from environmental, social and economic constraints, humanity has begun to recognise that it will self-destruct if it continues to consume irrationally, waste and ignore the signals of this lifestyle. The long boom of recent years has fuelled these habits, which means that the promises of the modern economy may have created the conditions for its own failure.

In this context, Von Hauff and Kleine, Pierre Chapuy, Raderbauer argue that sustainability has three permanently interacting dimensions, namely environmental sustainability, social sustainability and economic sustainability. In addition, corporate social responsibility is about contributing to sustainable development. With this ultimate goal in mind, companies need to consider the environmental and social impact of best practices to contribute to their progress and protect the environment.

Sustainability has many advantages in the short and long term. We cannot sustain the Earth's ecosystems or continue to operate without making more sustainable choices. Without changes to damaging processes, we are likely to run out of fossil fuels, large numbers of animal species will become extinct, and the atmosphere will be irreparably damaged.

## **2. State of the art**

Education plays a key role in solving global problems, and young people can be the driving force. The young people of the future will be able to adapt to new changes and create positive changes for society. The purpose of Education for Sustainable Development is to empower/encourage creative and motivated young people to focus on transforming society into a sustainable way of life - meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Education and training policies and investments that focus on inclusive green and digital transformation are key to Europe's future resilience and prosperity. Young people entering the labor market during this period will have a more difficult time finding their first job.

While partial unemployment schemes, wage subsidies and business support should help limit job losses, the COVID-19 pandemic will have serious consequences for the labor market. Digital skills are a must, even more so in the post-COVID-19 world. Almost all further education and jobs in all sectors require some form of digital skills, but on average two in five Europeans aged 16 to 74 do not have these skills (DESI).

The transition to an environmentally sustainable, circular and climate-neutral economy has significant implications for jobs and society (Commission reflection paper). Citizens expect governments to prioritize environmental protection when planning economic

recovery measures to address the economic and social consequences of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and promote the transition to a greener, more sustainable world.

Only if people have the necessary skills and education can Europe achieve a sustainable economic recovery and achieve green and digital transitions, while demonstrating its role as a world leader, strengthening its position in global competition and remaining committed to a just transition. To achieve this transformative goal (see Table no.1).

**Table no. 1 – Steps to follow for the transition to a sustainable economy**

<b>Profound change in citizens' behavior and skills</b>	There is a need to make such change possible starting with education systems and educational institutions as catalysts. Actions should be geared towards changing behavior by encouraging skills for the green economy, by supporting new and sustainable education and training infrastructure and by renovating existing buildings ("renovation wave"), thus creating enabling environments for this change (COM 2019) .
<b>The green transition</b>	It requires investment in education and training to increase the number of specialists who act towards a climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy.
<b>Effectively supporting transitions to sustainability</b>	By integrating sustainable environmental perspectives in the natural and human sciences and supporting changes in skills, methods, processes and cultures.
<b>Education and training at all levels on sustainable development and green entrepreneurship</b>	It should equip citizens with digital skills, but also with other skills, such as entrepreneurship and the ability to learn, that are needed to navigate a labor market transformed by technological change.

**Source:** own processing

Education plays a vital role in human progress, especially during periods of major change such as the one we are experiencing today. In this context, the transition to a green economy will bring about fundamental changes in society, and education will play a vital role.

The concept of green entrepreneurship connects the business sector and the sector. In other words, educating people about sustainability and entrepreneurship will create businesses that save the planet. Entrepreneurship refers to the stage of establishing a business and exposes the author and the business he innovated to protect the environment.

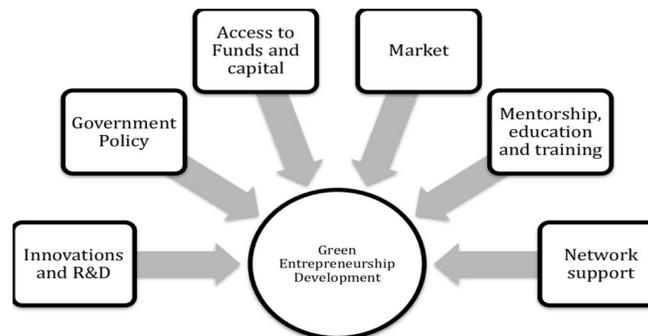
Green entrepreneurs view environmental values as an essential part of their identity and seek to capitalize on the competitive advantage their businesses bring to the marketplace. Environmental challenges are closely linked and linked to economic activities and social lifestyles. The functioning of our economy, embedded in our society, depends on our planet, which has limited and limited resources.

All great things are the result of small steps taken consistently towards a goal. The objective of green entrepreneurs is to protect the environment by exploiting the cultural heritage of different regions and developing businesses that aim to:

- Use of recycled materials.
- Responsible use of natural or cultural resources.

Start-up entrepreneurs benefit from new opportunities such as: B. The potential to create a transformative and impactful shift towards a more sustainable business paradigm. Environmentally friendly practices create a positive corporate image, serve as a model for regulations that ensure environmental protection, reduce tax costs through legislation that provides tax incentives for those working to improve the environment, and encourage cooperation among business partners. is also increasing.

Companies with green values are an attractive option because they increase competitiveness and offer many other benefits for the sustainability of companies, people and the planet.



**Figure no. 2. Components of a green Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**

Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Components-of-a-green-Entrepreneurial-Ecosystem\\_fig1\\_318208391](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Components-of-a-green-Entrepreneurial-Ecosystem_fig1_318208391)

The mission of a green entrepreneur is not easy, but it can be very effective, backed by the strength and resources of an ecosystem that understands that protecting the planet must be seen as a core business value.

In Romania, entrepreneurs in the green sector face several obstacles. One is education about the real impact people have on the environment, on the one hand, and information about existing sustainable practices, on the other. There are many ways to support green entrepreneurship and the development of environmentally innovative solutions, but in recent years these have become an increasingly common topic in public debate and are being debated more intensively globally.

### 3. Literature review

Increasing the level of education and awareness regarding climate change is one of the objectives targeted by the National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 and was also foreseen in the National Strategy on Climate Change and Economic Growth based on Low Carbon Emissions for the period 2016-2020 (CRESC) and in its Action Plan 2016 – 2020 (to be updated). Last but not least, "facilitating ecological education to promote environmental protection measures and address climate change issues in and outside schools" 19 is assumed by the current Government in the Government Program. In

addition, the National Education Act was amended to include environmental competences among the key competences in the Act.

“A fundamental shift is needed in the way we conceive of the role of education in global development, as it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planet.... Now, more than ever, education has a responsibility to adjust its speed to the challenges and aspirations of the 21st century, and to promote the right kinds of values and skills that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth and peaceful coexistence.” (Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO)

A good starting point for expressing EDD values related to teaching and learning is represented by Earth Charter. This is an ethical principle that includes respect and care for the community that protects life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy and a culture of peace.

The Earth Charter, launched in June 2000 in The Hague, is the product of a universal intercultural dialogue about shared goals and values, in which more than 2,000 organizations representing millions of people participated. It has been used with success around the world in educational programs around the world.

Amran et al. (2010) highlight sustainability as a key issue for the 21st century business community, especially in the context of significant adverse social and environmental impacts caused by the recent crisis and rapid industrialisation.

Bennett defined in 1991 the notions of environmental entrepreneur, "green entrepreneur", "eco -entrepreneur" and "ecopreneur", the characteristics on the basis of which we can identify green entrepreneurs being that green entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated. Their business activities have a general character positive on the natural environment and on environment sustainability, and acts consciously to secure a future may sustainable.

Over the past decade, the green economy has become an important policy framework for sustainable development in both developed and developing countries. It offers an attractive framework for achieving a more resource-efficient, low-carbon, less environmentally damaging and socially inclusive society. The green economy concept has become increasingly popular in international, regional and national policy circles: initially as a response to the financial crisis (Bina and La Camera 2011), but also as an engine for growth and development. It is an operational policy agenda to achieve measurable progress in linking environment and economy (Schmalensee 2012) as a 'pillar' for implementing sustainable development to drive the transition to a low-carbon green economy.

A 2014 United Nations report points out that entrepreneurship has provided the opportunity for many of the poor to earn a sustainable livelihood.

It is a considerable driver of decent jobs and can significantly contribute to sustainable development by creating jobs and stimulating economic growth and innovation, improving social conditions and helping to address environmental challenges. Thus, sustainable entrepreneurship is widely recognized as the answer to the question of the development and decrease of social inequalities (authors such as Dean and McMullen, 2007; Cohen and Winn, 2007) and the social challenges (Zahra et al., 2009) will face in this century.

In an analysis of the main findings of the two decades of cross-national analysis of environmental attitudes, de Franzen and Vogl showed that the average concern with environmental issues increases as a country's wealth increases, in general, environmental concerns have slightly decreased in the last two decades, especially in those countries that recorded a lower level of economic growth. In countries such as the US, Japan and Germany,

the percentage of people who say they are willing to pay much higher prices or much higher taxes to protect the environment fell by about 8% on average between 1993 and 2010. The study found that at the individual level, environmental concerns are determined by people's age, gender, education, income and ideological preferences and post-material values.

In particular, in the last decade, changes at the national level have influenced the choices made by firms, increasingly focusing on corporate environmental responsibility or environmental corporate social responsibility (ECSR).

The concept is defined by Mazurkiewics as "the duty to bear the environmental implications of the company's operations, products and facilities, eliminate waste and emissions, maximize the efficiency and productivity of its resources and minimize practices that could negatively affect the enjoyment of the country's resources by future generations."

The growing demand for green skills in most sectors of the economy is an important part of the debate on how to achieve them.

Every job must contribute to a more sustainable economy. A key challenge is to introduce sustainability issues into existing areas of training and learning. Green capabilities can include the knowledge, values and attitudes and technical skills that are essential to promote sustainable economic, environmental and social outcomes for industry and communities. The development of green skills includes the upskilling of workers as well as the development of new skills.

#### **4. Key skills for the transition to a green economy**

Young people in Romania are increasingly interested in climate change and environmental education, and are increasingly involved in actions related to climate change prevention. There is also a commitment to expand access to environmental and climate education through participation in international agreements (such as the Paris Agreement) and recent government programmes. At the same time, the National Education Act has been revised 1/2011, incorporating environmental capabilities into the Act's key competences.

Climate change and environmental education refers to education that promotes sustainable lifestyles through the development of eco-social skills. Such education aims to familiarise young people with the physical and socio-economic problems caused by climate change and to improve ways of coping with them.

In both green and sustainable economies, individuals must possess basic (general) sustainable development capabilities. In addition, in the green economy, technical skills are needed to create green jobs. Having a skilled workforce with the necessary professional education is a prerequisite for a green economy. It is therefore necessary to focus training efforts on training in specialised technical skills, which are explicitly sought after by the labour market, this issue is particularly relevant for STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

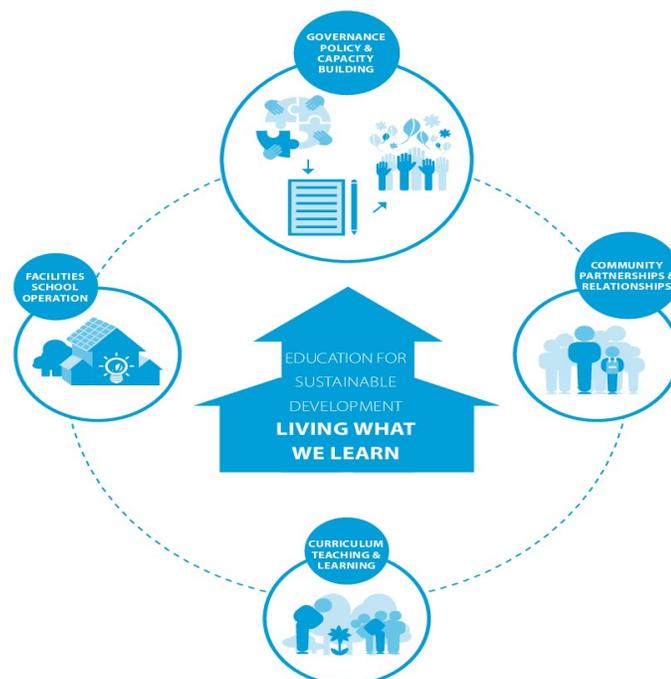
There are four key competences for a sustainable society. The first category corresponds to traditional general skills - instrumental, interpersonal or systemic skills - which can be applied to everyday situations. The second type comprises the skills needed to support the behavioural and social styles of a green economy. The third category of skills are those that make green jobs technically possible and are specific to each productive sector of the green economy, while the fourth category comprises skills that come from continuous education processes to update professionals. All four are part of the necessary knowledge that citizens should possess to achieve the future sustainability of our society.

People need to acquire knowledge to understand the complex world they live in. They must have the capacity to cooperate, support and act to bring about positive change

(UNESCO, 2016). These individuals can be referred to as 'citizens of sustainability' (Wals, 2015; Wals and Lenglet, 2016).

In general, everyone agrees that "members of sustainability" must possess certain core competencies that enable them to engage with the modern world in a constructive and responsible manner.

Education for sustainability is not just about teaching sustainable development and adding new training materials and courses. Universities need to see themselves as places of learning and experiencing sustainable development, so all their operations should focus on sustainability principles. The educational institution as a whole needs to change in order to make the transition to a green economy more effective.



**Figure no. 3.** Whole institution approach (UNESCO 2014a: 89)  
Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-whole-institution-approach\\_fig2\\_323442329](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-whole-institution-approach_fig2_323442329)

All educational institutions need to consider their responsibility to comprehensively address sustainable development issues, to promote the development of sustainable competences and to develop specific learning outcomes for each of the sustainable development goals. It is therefore essential to use action-oriented transformative pedagogy and to include content related to the SDGs in school curricula.

### 5. Methodology

The methodological approach to achieve the goals of this work is the content analysis of the document (The EIB Group Climate Bank Roadmap 2021-2025).

The approach followed three stages of analysis. The first is preparation. This involved searching and identifying the possible source of the required data, mainly from journal publications in databases such as SCOPUS, Web of Science and journals, newspapers, websites, reports, policies, action plans of public bodies.

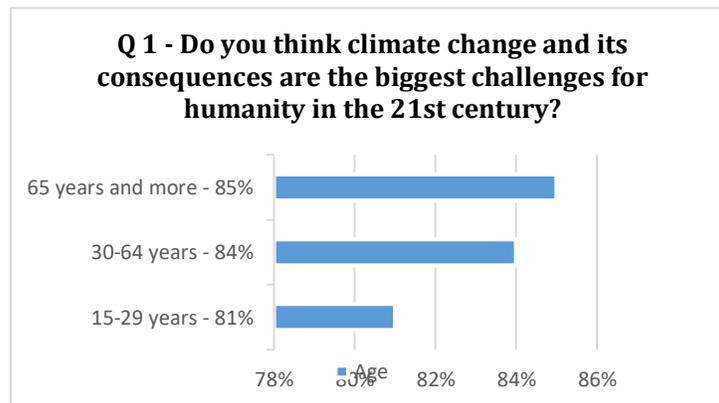
The second stage involved reviewing and sorting the materials, where the collected documents were studied in detail and classified according to the objectives of the study.

The last stage consists in interpreting the statistical data from The EIB Group Climate Bank Roadmap 2021-2025 for Romania.

A questionnaire was used to obtain the data and it was applied to 1000 people in each country of different ages to ensure a representative sample.

Following the application of the EIB climate questionnaire in Romania, the following results were obtained:

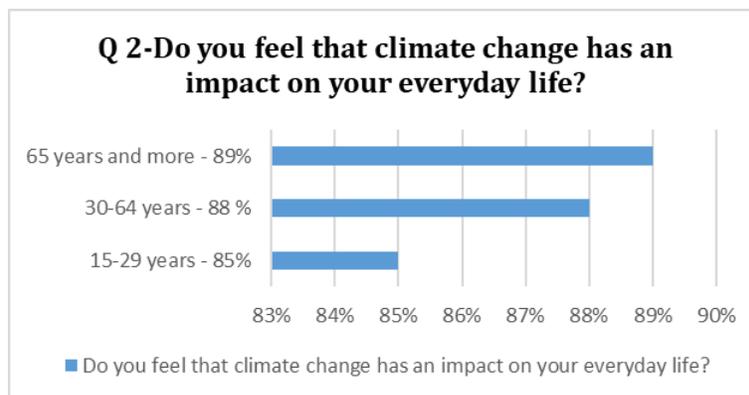
- 84% of Romanians believe that climate change and its consequences are the biggest challenges for humanity in the 21st century.



**Figure no. 4: Interpretation answers Q 1**

**Source:** <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

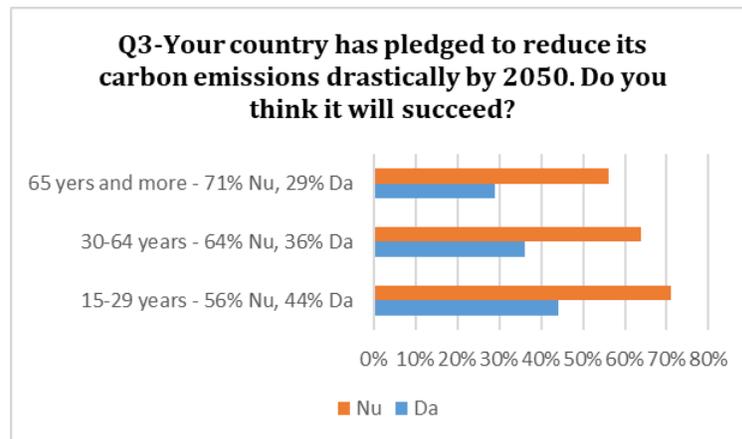
- 88% of Romanians believe that climate change has an impact on their daily lives (11 percentage points higher than the European average of 77%).



**Figure no. 5: Interpretation answers Q 2**

**Source:** <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

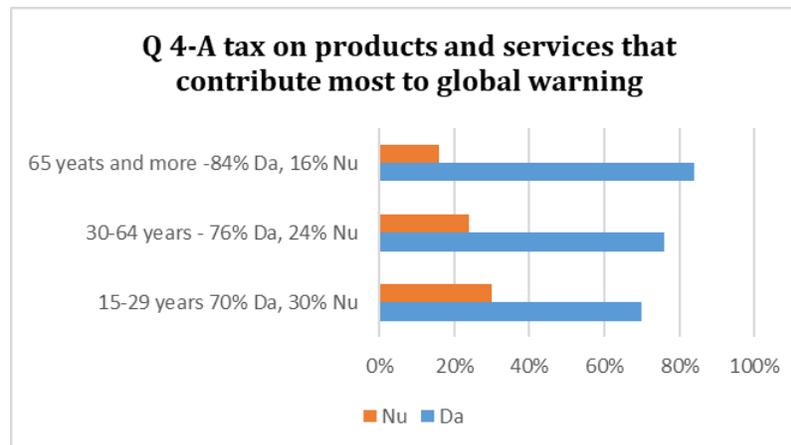
- 64% believe their country will not be able to significantly reduce carbon emissions by 2050 in line with the Paris Agreement.



**Figure no. 6: Interpretation answers Q 3**

Source: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

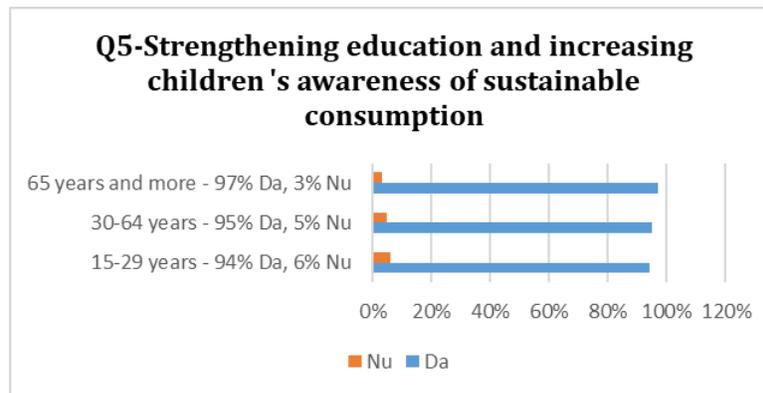
- 76% agree with taxing products and services that contribute the most to global warming.



**Figure no. 7: Interpretation answers Q 4**

Source: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

- 95% of the respondents expressed support for strengthening education and raising children's awareness of sustainable consumption.



**Figure no. 8: Interpretation answers Q 5**

Source: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

## 6. Results and discussion

Following the interpretation of the data, it emerged that 85% of Romanians are more worried about the climate crisis than their own government. They are therefore quite pessimistic when it comes to their country's ability to make an ambitious green transition, 64% believe their country will not be able to drastically reduce carbon emissions by 2050 as committed in the Paris Agreement.

The difference between the generations is obvious in this case, namely 15 points between people aged 30 or older (44% of whom believe that Romania will succeed) and people aged over 64 (29%). 71% of people aged over 64 believe that Romania will not be able to meet the goal set for 2050. 56% of respondents aged between 15 and 29 share this pessimism.

As a result, almost two-thirds (63%) of Romanians are in favor of stricter government measures – similar to those implemented to combat the COVID-19 crisis – that would require changes in people's education and behavior.

The most popular solutions for combating climate change among Romanians are :

- (76 %) would support – to a greater extent than Europeans in general (69 %) – a tax on the products and services that contribute most to global warming. Even 75% of respondents with lower incomes would favor such a tax.
- Romanians also support a minimum 5-year warranty for any electrical or electronic product (94%)
- strengthening education and raising young people's awareness of sustainable consumption (95 %).

The EIB Group's support for climate action and environmental sustainability can be divided into 12 focus areas, 10 of which correspond directly to the European Green Deal, as shown in Figure no. 9.



**Figure no. 9: Main themes of the European Green Deal programme**

Source: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-group-climate-bank-roadmap>

Structuring around these focus areas helps to ensure that the EIB Group is fully aligned with the EU, both in terms of objectives and in terms of use of the EU budget. This provides a consistent basis for strengthening dialogue with Member States on investment plans - from medium-term recovery and resilience plans to 2030 national energy and climate plans, national adaptation strategies and plans, just transition territories or long-term national transition plans.

People of all ages need to be able to develop knowledge, skills and lifestyles to live as sustainably as possible, adopt new consumption patterns and contribute to a greener future. Education and training play an important role in helping the public move from environmental awareness to individual and collective action to protect the environment.

In the field of education and training, climate change, biodiversity and sustainability initiatives are increasingly being implemented in Europe. However, despite progress and growing public interest, environmental sustainability education has not yet become a systematic part of EU policy and practice.

## 7. Conclusions

We hope that after reading this material, young entrepreneurs, as well as entrepreneurs with longer experience, will gain a much broader understanding of the issue of sustainable development, as well as the multiple methods by which these principles can be operationalized in the development of a business. In the coming years, as the implications of a sustainable approach to development will become more and more widely applied in all spheres of human activity, the adoption and application of these principles will become increasingly important for the competitiveness of a business, in all areas of activity.

Thus, the early adoption of the principles of sustainable development and their introduction into the routine of activities, right from the moment of developing a business, can offer a series of sustainable benefits to all entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurs of the future will be those who will design sustainable and flexible businesses, who will have knowledge about sustainability and who will be able to easily adapt to new market, environmental and social demands.

European policies in the field show us the way forward. These are also in a continuous transformation, following the market, social and environmental requirements registered at the level of the European Union.

Concern for sustainable business development is currently quite low, and the brave entrepreneurs who have already ventured into this field are relatively few. The good news is that the interest in green and sustainability education is increasing, the business environment being more and more concerned with issues for which they are already looking for or implementing innovative, alternative solutions that can bring long-term impact.

In Romania, entrepreneurs in the green sector face multiple obstacles, one of which is, on the one hand, education regarding the real human impact on the environment, and on the other, information on existing sustainable practices. There are quite a few opportunities that come to support the development of green entrepreneurship or eco -innovative solutions, but in recent years they have started to be a topic that has appeared more and more often in public debates and is talked about even more intensively at a global level.

The responsibility of the future belongs to us, those who decide and act now to change the present and build a desired future, a projection with a multitude of possibilities. In the knowledge-based society, where information technology and communications play an essential role, and the fourth industrial revolution is already foreshadowing in the most developed economies, a redefinition of the level of education and professional training of citizens called to implement the principles is required which are the basis of sustainable socio-economic development.

In this context, in addition to knowledge, it is necessary to develop the capacity to innovate, to create new, competitive products and processes, to capitalize on the abilities, skills and knowledge possessed by different individuals, who collaborate to achieve a common goal in a context globally efficient and sustainable.

In the wake of the climate crisis, the current sustainability movement has become an even more attractive priority for businesses as people begin to live more sustainable lives. In the future, a positive impact on the climate, an improved impact on the environment, people and the atmosphere, and a productive contribution to society along the entire value chain are likely to be corporate expectations. Companies will be held accountable for all aspects of the industry and any environmental damage or harmful emissions should be limited or eliminated during the production process.

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