



# BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

### Purpose of the Guide

This guide is designed to showcase exemplary practices in youth-led climate advocacy, providing youth workers and policymakers with a comprehensive resource to drive meaningful action against climate change. By examining successful initiatives across various countries, it aims to inspire replication and innovation while fostering stronger collaboration between youth movements and policy frameworks.

### Target Audience

The guide is tailored for:

- **Youth Workers:** To support their efforts in mobilizing young people and fostering impactful climate initiatives.
- **Policymakers:** To illustrate the transformative potential of youth-driven advocacy and encourage the incorporation of their voices into decision-making processes.

### How the Guide Can Be Used to Influence Policymaking

The examples and analysis in this guide highlight how youth-led initiatives can effectively influence policy changes. It provides actionable strategies for building bridges between advocacy efforts and policy development, emphasizing:

- Engaging youth in structured, meaningful dialogues with policymakers.
- Leveraging grassroots movements to create public pressure.
- Using data and storytelling to advocate for sustainable policies.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ECHOES PROJECT

### Overview of the Project Objectives

The ECHOES project aims to empower young people to take the lead in addressing climate change by:

- Building capacity among youth workers and organizations.
- Providing tools to influence policymaking through evidence-based advocacy.
- Promoting cross-cultural collaboration to address global climate challenges.

### Focus on Climate Action and Advocacy

ECHOES emphasizes the critical role of youth in climate action. By equipping them with skills, knowledge, and platforms, the project fosters grassroots movements that contribute to broader policy discussions, bridging the gap between activism and actionable change.



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### Highlighting the Importance of Youth Involvement in Policymaking

Youth are at the forefront of the climate crisis and possess the creativity, energy, and resilience to drive change. The ECHOES project underscores that: Youth perspectives enrich climate policies with innovative solutions. Involving young people ensures intergenerational equity in decision-making. Policymakers benefit from the authenticity and urgency conveyed by youth voices.



## PRESENTATION OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



The Coordination-Centre Régional Habitation (CRH), based in Belgium, plays a pivotal role in coordinating activities related to the ECHOES project. With a strong connection to local authorities in the Wallonia region, CRH ensures effective dialogue between youth workers and policymakers. They also facilitate workshops and training sessions that empower youth to actively participate in climate advocacy efforts.



The Climate and Environment Association Europe (CERA), headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, leads the communication and dissemination work package of the project. Leveraging its proximity to EU institutions, CERA connects local initiatives with European-level decision-makers. They focus on amplifying the voices of youth workers and providing strategic guidance for impactful communication campaigns.



Eğitim ve Gelecek Teknolojileri Derneği (EFTA), from Türkiye, specializes in designing innovative educational tools and methodologies. EFTA's expertise in creating audiovisual materials and communication strategies ensures the projects outreach is visually appealing and effective. Their contribution includes the development of campaign materials and the creation of digital resources to support youth engagement.





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The Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Group (EKO), based in Greece, focuses on fostering community-led solutions for climate action. They bring expertise in grassroots mobilization and sustainability practices, contributing to co-creation activities and local workshops. EKO emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches to addressing climate challenges.



Green Muse e.V., located in Germany, is committed to promoting green initiatives and sustainable urban practices. They lead the development of the training program and toolkit for the project, providing resources that enhance the capacity of youth workers to advocate for climate policies. Green Muse also coordinates the local workshops in Germany.



The Stichting yEUth, from the Netherlands, bridges academic research with community activism. By hosting international exchanges and coordinating cross-cultural events, yEUth fosters collaboration among youth workers. They also lead efforts in designing digital platforms and integrating innovative approaches to youth-led advocacy.



The Associação Inspira!, based in Portugal, focuses on environmental education and youth participation. Inspira! is instrumental in implementing awareness campaigns and capacity-building workshops that prioritize inclusivity. Their work highlights the role of education in empowering young leaders to influence climate policies.



Finally, Viaje a la Sostenibilidad, a cooperative in Spain, emphasizes sustainable development and climate advocacy through participatory models. They lead the organization of local events and the exchange of best practices among partners, contributing to the projects overall mission of engaging youth in climate action



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## CHAPTER 1: BELGIUM - LEADING THE CHARGE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

### Youth for Climate: A Movement Fueled by Young Voices

Belgium took center stage in the fight for climate justice when two high school students, Anuna De Wever and Kyra Gantois, decided to skip class to demand action on climate change. In January 2019, what began as a small act of defiance in front of the Belgian Parliament quickly grew into a movement that inspired tens of thousands of young people to take to the streets. Their message was simple but powerful: the future belongs to young people, and they will not sit back while it is put at risk.

Fueled by the momentum of Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future, these youth-led protests grew rapidly, with some marches drawing up to 70,000 participants. The energy on the streets was contagious, and the call for action was impossible to ignore. Young people across Belgium realized that their voices mattered, and they could influence real change.

But it didn't stop with the protests. Youth for Climate leaders took their fight to the European stage, demanding stronger climate policies aligned with the Paris Agreement. They pushed for renewable energy investments, carbon emission reductions, and sustainable development. Their persistence influenced political discourse, forcing climate action onto the national agenda and inspiring youth movements worldwide. This was proof that when young people come together with a clear vision and unwavering determination, they can challenge the status quo and hold leaders accountable.



Pic. Source: <https://climate-express.be/ride-the-tide-2024-nl/>



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## **Klimaatzaak: Justice Through Youth-Led Legal Action**

Belgium's battle for climate justice also entered the courtroom with Klimaatzaak, a groundbreaking citizen-led lawsuit launched in 2014. With over 58,000 co-plaintiffs—including a significant number of young people—the lawsuit became a symbol of collective determination to demand government accountability.

Young people played a crucial role in Klimaatzaak, using their voices to emphasize that inaction on climate change directly threatens their future. The case argued that government negligence in addressing climate issues violated fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and health. While the court's ruling stopped short of enforcing binding climate targets, it delivered a moral and political victory by declaring that current policies were inadequate.

Klimaatzaak showed that climate advocacy is not just about protests—it can take shape in legal battles, too. The participation of young people in this movement highlighted the power of intergenerational solidarity in pushing for systemic change.



Pic. Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DEZTpuixisx/>

## **The Shift Climate Coalition: Young People at the Heart of Collaboration**

Creating lasting change requires teamwork, and The Shift embodies this principle. This coalition brings together NGOs, businesses, and local governments to integrate sustainability into everyday practices. Young people play a critical role in The Shift, contributing fresh ideas and perspectives to shape climate solutions that are inclusive and future-oriented.

Through educational programs, policy discussions, and public forums, The Shift ensures that youth voices are not just heard but actively drive the conversation. By participating in these initiatives, young people have the opportunity to turn their passion into action and influence sustainability efforts at every level.



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## **Climate Express: Mobilizing Youth Energy**

Grassroots action finds its spark in Climate Express, a Belgian movement dedicated to mobilizing people on a massive scale. Known for organizing climate marches and awareness campaigns, Climate Express has rallied thousands to demand bold commitments from policymakers.

One of its most remarkable moments was the 2015 Paris March, where Belgian citizens—many of them young people—took their message to the global stage at COP21. Creative strategies, like human chains and interactive workshops, not only engaged participants but also educated them on the importance of sustained activism.

Youth have been instrumental in shaping Climate Express, injecting it with fresh energy and innovative ideas that keep the movement dynamic and impactful. Their involvement has transformed Climate Express into more than just a protest group—it is a movement that fosters a culture of responsibility and civic engagement.

Belgium's story proves that young people are not just the future—they are the present. Their courage, creativity, and determination have reshaped the national conversation on climate, showing the world what is possible when youth take the lead. Whether marching, litigating, or collaborating, they are building a more sustainable future, and they are inviting their peers to join them.



Pic. Source: <https://www.goethe.de/ins/be/en/kul/prj/nhk/bea/22156185.html>



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## CHAPTER 2: TÜRKİYE - BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH YOUTH ADVOCACY

### Youth Call to Candidates: Shaping Election Agendas with Passion and Purpose

As Türkiye approached its 2024 municipal elections, young climate activists seized the moment to make their voices heard. A coalition of six youth climate organizations launched an ambitious campaign titled "Youth Call to Candidates for Local Elections: Announce Your Climate Policies." Their goal? To ensure climate action was a top priority for mayoral candidates in key cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir—urban centers with significant carbon footprints and the potential to lead transformative change.

Driven by their commitment to a sustainable future, young activists drafted a comprehensive list of climate demands. They called on candidates to pledge net-zero emissions by 2050, invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, and transition to renewable energy sources. But they didn't stop there. Harnessing the power of social media, public forums, and direct engagement with political leaders, youth organizers mobilized widespread support, turning climate action into a hot topic in the election discourse.

Through town halls, street campaigns, and online petitions, tens of thousands of signatures were collected. The impact was undeniable: 42 candidates signed written commitments, and 15 were elected in major cities. But the movement didn't end at the ballot box. Youth groups established monitoring mechanisms to track the fulfillment of these commitments, proving their dedication to long-term accountability.

This campaign showed that when young people come together with a clear purpose and unwavering passion, they can influence political agendas and drive meaningful change. Their efforts made it clear that the future belongs to those willing to fight for it, one election at a time.



Pic. Source: <https://www.change.org/p/geç-kalmadan-geç-harekete-iklim-afetleriyle-mücadele-et?signed=true>



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## **Campaign for a Strong Climate Law: A Youth-Driven Push for Legislative Action**

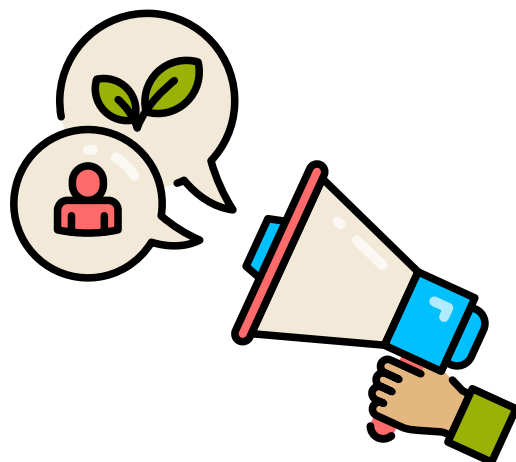
In the aftermath of Türkiye's devastating 2023 earthquakes and escalating climate crises, young advocates took a stand to demand stronger climate policies. The "Campaign for a Strong Climate Law" was born, aiming to push the Grand National Assembly to adopt a science-based legal framework for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Youth activists led the charge, combining grassroots energy with expert collaboration to craft a comprehensive legislative proposal. They demanded accountability, greater investment in renewable energy, and stringent emissions reductions. Through a mix of advocacy meetings with lawmakers, media outreach, and public demonstrations, they ensured their voices could not be ignored.

Over three months, the campaign gained immense traction, securing more than 11,000 public endorsements and catching the attention of major political parties like CHP and DEVA. Although the proposed law has yet to pass, the movement succeeded in keeping climate policy at the forefront of the national conversation and laying the groundwork for future victories.

This effort highlighted the remarkable power of youth-led legislative advocacy. By blending expertise with grassroots mobilization, young people inspired similar initiatives across the country and proved that they are a formidable force in the fight for climate justice.

Türkiye's youth are proving that climate advocacy isn't just about raising awareness—it's about creating tangible change. Whether influencing elections or shaping legislation, their resilience and creativity set a powerful example for young people everywhere. The message is clear: the fight for a sustainable future needs bold action, and youth are ready to lead the way.





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## CHAPTER 3: GREECE - PIONEERING SUSTAINABILITY WITH COMMUNITY ACTION

### Just Go Zero Tilos: A Zero-Waste Revolution Led by the Community

The small Greek island of Tilos, home to fewer than 800 residents, has become a global symbol of sustainability thanks to the inspiring "Just Go Zero Tilos" initiative. Driven by a shared vision for a cleaner future, the project, launched by the waste management company Polygreen in collaboration with the Municipality of Tilos, set out to make the island the world's first zero-waste community.

For years, Tilos struggled with waste disposal due to its remote location, but the community embraced this initiative with enthusiasm and determination. A circular economy approach replaced traditional waste collection with a comprehensive recycling and composting system. Residents were provided with workshops and resources to help them separate waste into recyclable, compostable, and non-recyclable categories.

Young people played a crucial role in driving this change. Schools became centers of environmental education, teaching students the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling. These young changemakers inspired their families and neighbors to adopt sustainable practices, creating a ripple effect of positive action across the island.

The results were extraordinary. Tilos achieved an 85% waste diversion rate, with organic waste composted and recyclables processed locally. The initiative not only preserved the island's natural beauty but also created jobs and positioned Tilos as a leading destination for eco-conscious travelers.

The success of Just Go Zero Tilos proves that small communities can inspire global change. It underscores the power of youth engagement, collective action, and the belief that sustainable living is within reach for everyone





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## **Astypalea: A Smart Island Led by Youth Innovation**

Astypalea, another Greek island, is carving its own path toward sustainability by becoming a "smart island" through a groundbreaking partnership between the Greek government and Volkswagen Group. This ambitious initiative is transforming Astypalea into a model for sustainable mobility, renewable energy, and green innovation.

The project aims to electrify transport, reduce emissions, and promote sustainable development through initiatives such as a 100% electric vehicle fleet, a network of renewable-powered charging stations, and a car-sharing platform to reduce private car use. Solar and wind energy installations are gradually replacing diesel generators, ensuring a cleaner energy future.

Young people have been at the heart of Astypalea's transformation. Educational programs and workshops have equipped them with knowledge about renewable energy technologies and sustainable transport systems. They have actively participated in pilot programs, test-driving electric vehicles and offering innovative ideas to shape the island's future.

The impact of these efforts is profound. Astypalea has significantly reduced its carbon footprint, attracted global attention as a model of sustainable tourism, and demonstrated that green energy transitions are possible, even in remote communities.

Astypalea's journey highlights the importance of public-private partnerships and the power of youth-driven innovation. The island's young residents are not just witnesses to change; they are leading it.

Greece's journey toward sustainability is a powerful reminder that even the smallest communities can have a global impact. By embracing visionary leadership, collaboration, and the energy of youth, these islands are proving that a greener future is within reach.



Pic. Source: <https://www.energiia.gr/article/172174/h-astypalaia-ths-volkswagen-kai-h-energeiakh-aytonomia-ton-nhsion>





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## CHAPTER 4: GERMANY - INNOVATING FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

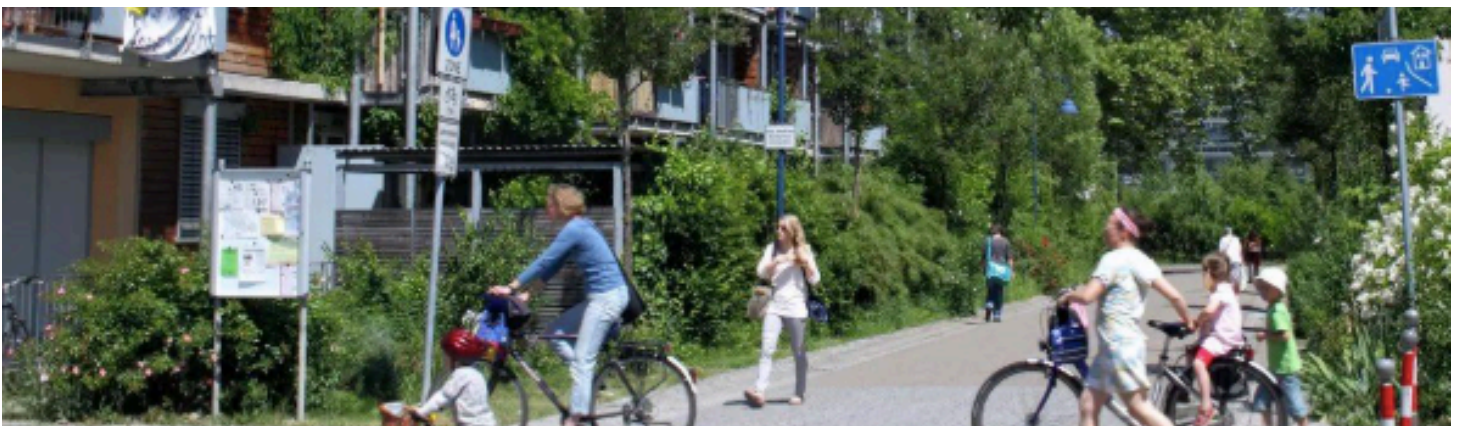
### Freiburg's Car-Free Day: Young People Leading Urban Sustainability

Freiburg, known as Germany's "Green City," has been a trailblazer in sustainability for years. One of its most inspiring initiatives is the annual Car-Free Day, a powerful community-driven effort to cut urban emissions and promote eco-friendly transportation. Launched as part of European Mobility Week, this event encourages citizens to rethink their transportation choices and embrace biking, walking, and public transit as sustainable alternatives.

On Car-Free Day, Freiburg's streets transform into vibrant spaces full of life and creativity. Instead of cars, the roads are filled with bike parades, outdoor markets, and cultural events that bring people together. Young people are at the forefront of these activities, organizing workshops, leading discussions, and spreading awareness about the benefits of sustainable mobility. Schools actively engage in the event by hosting competitions that encourage students to bike to school, fostering an early culture of environmental responsibility.

The ripple effects of Car-Free Day extend far beyond the event itself. Over the years, it has driven a surge in cycling and public transport use, with Freiburg now boasting an extensive bike lane network and one of the highest bicycle usage rates in Europe. The event has also paved the way for investments in electric buses and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, making sustainable transport an integral part of city life.

Freiburg's Car-Free Day proves that community initiatives can create lasting change. By empowering youth and engaging citizens of all ages, the city has shown that sustainability can be practical, enjoyable, and a way of life.



Pic. Source: <https://x.com/robertburns73/status/1482311716243451904/photo/4>





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## **Ende Gelände: Young Activists Pushing for Climate Justice**

Germany's commitment to climate action is exemplified by the grassroots movement Ende Gelände. Founded in 2015, Ende Gelände—which means "Here and No Further"—has become a forceful advocate for climate justice through non-violent civil disobedience. With their bold and unwavering actions, young activists have played a crucial role in challenging fossil fuel dependency and demanding systemic change.

Ende Gelände organizes mass protests at coal mines and fossil fuel sites, drawing thousands of participants from across the country and beyond. Their protests, carefully planned and executed, often involve dramatic acts such as blockades and sit-ins to disrupt operations and call for an end to coal mining. Young activists lead the charge, coordinating logistics, crafting compelling messaging, and engaging with media to amplify their cause.

Their efforts have made a tangible impact. Ende Gelände was instrumental in influencing Germany's decision to phase out coal by 2038, and their continued pressure is pushing for an even faster transition to renewable energy. Beyond influencing policy, the movement has shifted public perception, making climate justice a top priority in national discourse.

Ende Gelände is a testament to the power of youth-led activism. Their courage, creativity, and determination show that direct action can hold governments and industries accountable and inspire change on a global scale.

Germany's efforts highlight the importance of blending grassroots activism with practical solutions. Whether it's transforming cities through community-driven events or challenging industries with direct action, young people in Germany are proving that sustainability and climate justice are achievable goals for everyone.



*'Carfree' Residential Streets in Vauban*



Pic. Source: <https://carfree.com/papers/freiburg.pdf>





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## CHAPTER 5: THE NETHERLANDS - BRIDGING INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY

### Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC): Young People Protecting Coastal Ecosystems

The Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC), headquartered in Leiden, is leading the charge in sustainable coastal management and marine conservation. Since its inception in 1989, EUCC has been a driving force in advocating for policies that protect fragile ecosystems while fostering economic and community resilience.

One of EUCC's standout initiatives, the "QualityCoast" program, celebrates and supports sustainable tourism in coastal regions. Through a certification system, EUCC encourages municipalities to adopt eco-friendly practices such as biodiversity conservation, responsible waste management, and community-driven decision-making. These efforts ensure that coastal areas remain thriving and resilient for generations to come.

Young people are at the heart of EUCC's mission. Educational campaigns, internships, and citizen science projects provide opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful conservation work. From beach clean-ups to habitat restoration, young volunteers contribute their energy and passion, learning firsthand about the importance of sustainability.

EUCC's impact extends beyond conservation efforts. Its advocacy has influenced local and European policies, emphasizing the need for sustainable management of coastal zones. Communities embracing QualityCoast principles have seen boosts in eco-tourism, enriched biodiversity, and a stronger sense of environmental responsibility.

This initiative proves that when young people and local stakeholders collaborate, conservation becomes more effective and inclusive. EUCC's work showcases how scientific research and grassroots engagement can shape a more sustainable future.





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## **Leiden University Green Office (LUGO): Students Leading Campus Sustainability**

At Leiden University, sustainability isn't just a policy—it's a movement led by students through the Leiden University Green Office (LUGO). Founded by students, LUGO serves as a catalyst for green innovation, driving initiatives that integrate sustainability into everyday campus life and beyond.

LUGO's initiatives are wide-ranging, from waste reduction efforts to sustainability-themed lectures and events. One of its flagship projects, "Green Labs," promotes eco-friendly research practices by minimizing waste and energy consumption in university laboratories. Additionally, the popular "Meatless Mondays" campaign encourages students and staff to embrace plant-based meals, reducing the university's carbon footprint.

What makes LUGO special is its focus on youth leadership. As a student-run organization, it empowers young people to spearhead sustainability efforts, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Collaborations with local government and NGOs have extended LUGO's reach beyond the campus, influencing the broader community.

The results speak for themselves. LUGO's work has significantly cut down waste and energy use across the university and played a vital role in shaping Leiden University's Sustainability Vision 2030. The success of the Green Office model has inspired similar student-led sustainability movements across Europe, demonstrating the power of youth to effect institutional change.

LUGO's journey is a testament to the power of passion and innovation. By giving young people the tools to lead, universities can become hubs of sustainability and inspire lasting change in their communities.

From coastal conservation to university campuses, the Netherlands is demonstrating that sustainability is not just an idea—it's a way of life. With young people leading the charge, the path to a greener future is clearer than ever.





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## CHAPTER 6: PORTUGAL - CALL TO ACTION AND GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS

### ProTEJO (SOS Tejo): A Youth-Driven Fight to Save the Tejo River

SOS Tejo (ProTEJO) emerged from the concerns of environmental organizations, fishers, and citizens alarmed by the increasing pollution levels in the Tejo River. Industrial discharges, agricultural runoff, and untreated wastewater were threatening the river's aquatic ecosystem, water quality, and local livelihoods.

Through organized protests, awareness campaigns, and direct engagement with authorities, the movement successfully pressured the Portuguese government to strengthen oversight and implement stricter environmental regulations.

Young people have played a crucial role in this movement, driving social media campaigns, organizing educational sessions in schools, and participating in river clean-ups. Their passion and commitment have been instrumental in mobilizing public support and ensuring sustained pressure on policymakers.

#### Key Milestones:

- 2015: Residents and fishers raise initial complaints about river pollution.
- 2016-2018: Protests and marches in towns near the river draw public attention and media coverage.
- 2019: A major protest in Lisbon leads to a petition presented to the Portuguese Parliament.
- 2020-2021: Increased government inspections and tighter environmental controls.
- 2022: Declaration of protected areas and reinforcement of environmental policies.

The achievements of ProTEJO highlight the power of grassroots activism and the critical role youth can play in environmental preservation.



Pic. Source: <https://movimentoprotejo.blogspot.com/2016/>



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## **Portuguese Climate Change Lawsuit: Young People Holding Governments Accountable**

In a groundbreaking legal action, six young Portuguese activists from Leiria initiated the Portuguese Climate Change Lawsuit, demanding accountability from 33 European governments for their insufficient action on climate change. Supported by the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), their case argued that climate inaction violates their fundamental rights to life, health, and well-being.

Despite facing legal challenges, including the European Court of Human Rights' ruling of inadmissibility, the lawsuit has raised global awareness about climate justice and inspired similar legal actions worldwide.

### Key Milestones:

- 2017: Devastating wildfires motivate youth activists to seek legal action.
- 2020: The lawsuit is filed with the ECHR, targeting 33 European countries.
- 2021: The ECHR fast-tracks the case, bringing it into the global spotlight.
- 2023: Public hearings draw significant international attention.
- 2024: The case is ruled inadmissible, yet it sets a precedent for future climate litigation.

Through global campaigns, media outreach, and collaboration with other youth movements, the plaintiffs have demonstrated that young people can drive meaningful change and hold governments accountable for their environmental commitments.



Pic. Source: <https://movimentoprotejo.blogspot.com/2016/>



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## **Climáximo: Youth-Led Advocacy for Climate Justice**

Climáximo, a Portuguese youth-led climate action group, is committed to pushing for urgent and transformative climate policies. Founded in 2016, the movement advocates for carbon neutrality, social equity, and the transition to a sustainable future.

From organizing massive climate strikes to influencing national policies, Climáximo has made its mark by promoting ambitious climate targets and holding corporations and governments accountable.

### **Key Actions:**

- **Protests and Public Campaigns:** Climáximo has been a driving force behind Portugal's climate strikes, raising awareness and rallying public support.
- **Policy Advocacy:** The group played an active role in shaping Portugal's Climate Law, pushing for more ambitious goals.
- **Green Recovery Advocacy:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Climáximo pushed for sustainability to be central to Portugal's economic recovery plans.
- **Education and Public Engagement:** Webinars, workshops, and public events help inform and empower young people to take action.

### **Outcomes:**

- Influenced Portugal's Climate Law and raised awareness on the need for stronger climate policies.
- Engaged thousands of young people in environmental activism.
- Strengthened Portugal's climate movement through collaboration with global organizations.

Portugal's climate advocacy efforts demonstrate the power of collective action, showing that with determination and persistence, young people can influence policies and create a more sustainable future.



Pic. Source: <https://movimentoprotejo.blogspot.com/2016/>



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## CHAPTER 7: SPAIN - YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND CLIMATE CONFLICTS

### Youth Participation in Climate Policy: A Driving Force for Change

Spain has actively embraced youth participation in shaping climate policy at both national and local levels. Young activists played a crucial role in influencing Spain's climate action plans through their engagement at the UN Youth Climate Summit, where their voices helped shape national commitments and strategies.

Locally, cities like Barcelona have established youth councils dedicated to sustainability, providing platforms for young people to influence policy-making. These councils empower youth to contribute ideas, organize initiatives, and advocate for environmental policies that align with their vision for a sustainable future.

Barcelona also hosted the Third World Conference on Climate Change and Sustainability (October 21-23, 2024), bringing together scientists, business leaders, and policymakers. This annual event, known as Climate Week 2024, served as a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary discussions on pressing climate challenges. Youth participation in such high-profile events has been instrumental in shaping dialogues and ensuring that the perspectives of younger generations are incorporated into climate solutions.

Political parties in Spain have recognized the growing influence of youth climate activism. Many have integrated young advocates into their campaigns, highlighting policies such as the Spanish Climate Change and Energy Transition Law (2021). This multigenerational commitment to climate action underscores the evolving political landscape in Spain, where young people are emerging as key stakeholders in shaping the country's sustainability agenda.





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## **The Canal Roya Controversy: A Lesson in Green Activism and Political Influence**

The proposed Canal Roya project, which aims to construct a cable car linking ski resorts, has ignited widespread opposition from environmental groups and the public. This project is seen as a symbol of a development model that prioritizes commercial interests over environmental protection, sparking intense debates at the local and regional levels.

Environmental activists, including youth groups, have played a critical role in raising awareness and pressuring political candidates to take a stand on the issue. The controversy has influenced regional election campaigns, with Green parties and sustainability-focused political groups using the project as a rallying point to advocate for sustainable tourism and the preservation of natural landscapes.

As a result, the Canal Roya conflict has had a broader impact on shaping electoral platforms and has demonstrated how environmental activism can effectively influence political agendas. The project has become a case study of how grassroots efforts can drive policy discussions and hold elected officials accountable for their environmental commitments.

## **Far-Right Politics and Climate Change in Spain: A New Political Battleground**

In a surprising turn, climate change has become a key issue in political discourse, with the far-right party Vox leveraging water scarcity concerns to gain support in rural areas. Despite their skepticism toward climate science, Vox has capitalized on the frustrations of farmers and agricultural communities, promising increased access to water and large-scale infrastructure investments.

In regions such as Andalusia, where water shortages have become a pressing issue, Vox's campaign strategies have resonated strongly with rural voters. Their proposals, which include legalizing controversial water extraction practices in the Doñana wetlands, highlight how climate issues are being used as political tools to galvanize support.

This phenomenon demonstrates how climate change can shape electoral outcomes, with contrasting solutions offered by different political factions. While some advocate for sustainable policies, others exploit environmental challenges for political gain, making it essential for youth and environmental advocates to remain vigilant and active in pushing for science-based solutions. Spain's evolving climate landscape highlights the power of youth activism, the complexities of environmental conflicts, and the importance of staying engaged in shaping a sustainable future.



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## CHAPTER 8: LESSONS LEARNED AND PATHWAYS FORWARD FOR YOUTH-LED CLIMATE ADVOCACY

The stories and case studies presented in this guide demonstrate the extraordinary potential of youth-led climate action to drive tangible change. Across diverse regions and contexts, young people have shown resilience, creativity, and a deep commitment to addressing the climate crisis through innovative, inclusive, and impactful initiatives. By analyzing these examples, several key lessons emerge, offering a roadmap for future youth climate advocacy:

### 1. The Power of Collective Action and Grassroots Movements

Youth movements thrive when they operate collectively, connecting diverse voices behind a common cause. From Belgium's Youth for Climate to Germany's Ende Gelände, these examples highlight the transformative power of collective action, which can rapidly evolve from local protests to national and even global campaigns. Grassroots movements succeed by channeling energy into both direct action and structured advocacy.

**Key Takeaway:** Mobilizing young people around shared goals and providing them with organizational tools is essential for sustained impact. Grassroots movements should be encouraged, supported, and given space to grow.

### 2. Bridging Activism and Policymaking for Long-Term Change

Effective climate advocacy does not stop with protests—it extends into policymaking, ensuring that youth voices are embedded within decision-making processes. Initiatives like Türkiye's "Youth Call to Candidates" and Belgium's "Klimaatzaak" demonstrate that combining grassroots energy with formal policy engagement creates long-lasting change.

**Key Takeaway:** Youth organizations should be equipped with the skills to guide political landscapes and establish constructive dialogues with policymakers. Building strong advocacy campaigns backed by data, storytelling, and legal action is crucial to bridging the gap between activism and systemic change.





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### 3. Cross-Cultural Collaboration Enhances Learning and Innovation

The success of youth climate movements across Europe demonstrates the value of international collaboration. Programs such as Greece’s “Just Go Zero Tilos” and Portugal’s ProTEJO show that knowledge-sharing, cross-border exchanges, and partnerships enable youth to adapt successful models to different local contexts.

**Key Takeaway:** Fostering cross-cultural partnerships allows for the replication of best practices and continuous innovation. Youth movements should prioritize international exchanges and learning opportunities to expand their impact and diversify their approaches.



Pic. Source: <https://seeingthewoods.org/2020/01/08/the-fridays-for-future-movement-in-spain/>

### 4. The Role of Digital Communication in Scaling Movements

While traditional forms of protest remain important, digital advocacy has become a critical tool for amplifying messages, engaging larger audiences, and influencing public opinion. Youth movements like Belgium’s “Climate Express” and Türkiye’s social media-driven election campaign demonstrate how digital platforms can mobilize broad support.

**Key Takeaway:** Investing in digital communication strategies, from social media campaigns to virtual events, is essential for reaching diverse audiences and scaling advocacy efforts beyond local boundaries.





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## 5. Inclusive and Equitable Participation Ensures Sustainability

Successful movements are those that prioritize inclusivity, ensuring that marginalized and disadvantaged groups are represented. Examples from Portugal's ProTEJO and Germany's Green Muse show that engaging youth from different backgrounds leads to more comprehensive, equitable solutions.

**Key Takeaway:** Youth climate initiatives should actively involve underrepresented groups, ensuring that advocacy efforts reflect the diversity of the communities they aim to serve. This inclusivity strengthens movements and promotes intergenerational justice.



Pic. Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/climate-change-spain-andalucia-far-right-vox-election-2022/>

## 6. Monitoring and Accountability Drive Long-term Impact

Holding policymakers accountable is a key aspect of youth-led advocacy. Initiatives like Türkiye's "Climate Law Campaign" demonstrate the importance of setting clear demands and tracking commitments over time.

**Key Takeaway:** Establishing mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and feedback ensures that youth advocacy efforts lead to sustained policy implementation. Developing clear metrics for success and mechanisms for public accountability should be a standard practice.



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## CONCLUSION

As youth-led climate movements continue to grow, it is crucial to provide ongoing support through training, resources, and policy frameworks that enable young leaders to thrive. Policymakers, educators, and community organizations must collaborate to create an environment where youth activism is not only encouraged but also meaningfully integrated into long-term climate strategies.

By learning from these best practices and adapting them to local contexts, we can collectively empower the next generation to take bold action against the climate crisis and create a sustainable, equitable future for all.

Pic. Source: [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/15/inenglish/1552649054\\_637919.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/15/inenglish/1552649054_637919.html)



People of all ages have joined the protest in Madrid's Sol square.  
J.P. GANDÚL (EFE)



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