Developed by:
Judit Lantai and Álvaro González Pérez

Edited by:
Dragana Jovanovska

Special thanks to the #EcoFighters preparatory team:
Alexandra Seybal
Lucija Karmelutti
Marian Ignat
Rob O’Donnell
Terhi Nurminen

Graphic Design:
Mishko Petkovski
# EcoFighters
A guide for school students into environmental activism

## Table of Content

**Introduction** ................................................................. 4
   #EcoFighters ............................................................... 4
   OBESSU ................................................................. 6
   Generation Climate Europe ........................................... 7

**Climate emergency - what on Earth is going on...**
   or what is going on on Earth? ......................................... 8
      Evidence-based overview ........................................ 8
      Differentiated impact in Europe .................................. 10
      School student activism on climate and environmental topics ................................................. 12
      Impact of the climate emergency on young people and other social groups .......................... 14

**Activist Spotlight 1** ................................................... 17

**Climate emergency - what can I do?** ........................................ 19
   Needs ............................................................................. 20
   Aim ............................................................................. 23
   Objectives ....................................................................... 24
      SMART goals .............................................................. 24
   Implementation ................................................................... 27
      SWOT analysis .......................................................... 28
      Power mapping .......................................................... 31
      Funding sources ......................................................... 33
   Evaluation ......................................................................... 35

**Activist Spotlight 2** ..................................................... 36

**Conclusion** ...................................................................... 39

**Resources** ....................................................................... 40
#ECOFIGHTERS - A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS INTO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

This publication was developed as part of #EcoFighters - School students for the environment, a project led by the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU).

It aims to raise awareness among school students and young people in general about the environment and the climate emergency, and to empower and inspire them to take a stand for the environment and address the environmental issues and concerns in their communities.

#EcoFighters - A Guide for School Students into Environmental Activism was created based on the input gathered from OBESSU member organisations via a survey, focus groups with OBESSU member organisations, young activists and youth organisations on European and global level, inputs and guidance from the preparatory team, as well as interviews with young people active in the field of environmental activism.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to play a part in it!

OBESSU
ABOUT THE #ECOFIGHTERS - SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT WORK PLAN

With the #EcoFighters – School students for the environment project, OBESSU set to promote a culture of environmental awareness and activism in the context of school student and apprentices organisations, through democratic participation of young people in various ways, platforms and levels.

The project was supported by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, in the form of an Annual Work Plan with the following objectives:

- To promote the exchange of best practices and examples among OBESSU member organisations in relation to environmental issues and sustainability;
- To build capacities of school student activists in advocacy and democratic participation, with a special focus on addressing environmental challenges, from local and national to European and global levels;
- To develop an ‘Action Kit’ related to the topic for school student activists;
- To implement local and national awareness raising actions regarding environmental issues.

The project is implemented by the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), with the support of Generation Climate Europe (GCE).
ABOUT THE ORGANISING BUREAU OF EUROPEAN SCHOOL STUDENT UNIONS (OBESSU)

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

OBESSU works:

- to represent the school students as stakeholders of their educational systems, and in issues concerning their lives;
- to provide the national school student unions with assistance and support and to cooperate for the development of school student representative structures;
- to encourage and enable exchange of experience and good practice among the national school students unions;
- to promote equal access to education and to strive for the end of all discrimination and injustice within the educational systems;
- to contribute to the development of democratic educational systems in Europe, that promote active citizenship in all forms;
- to promote solidarity and understanding between young people;
- to promote new teaching methods in learning and promote a healthy teaching environment.

For more information please go to: www.obessu.org
ABOUT GENERATION CLIMATE EUROPE (GCE)

Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led networks at the European level pushing for stronger action from the EU on climate and environmental issues. GCE brings together 460 national organisations across 47 countries in Europe.

Uniting European youth networks, GCE creates a platform for the youth to advocate for a just and green transition in Europe.

GCE works:

- to facilitate internal coordination and collaboration between its Member Organisations;
- to empower young people to meaningfully engage in EU decision-making processes on climate, environmental and sustainability issues;
- to advocate for stronger action on environment and climate by and in the European Union that proactively and regularly includes the voices of young people.

For more information, please go to: www.gceurope.org
CLIMATE EMERGENCY - WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON... OR WHAT IS GOING ON ON EARTH?

Evidence-based overview

- 2020 was the warmest year ever recorded in Europe and the second one globally. Moreover, by 2020 the six warmest year on record all happened between 2015-2020 (NASA)

- Between September 2019 and August 2020 approximately 152 gigatons of ice were lost from the ice sheet (World Meteorological Organization)

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentrations in the atmosphere have continued to rise in 2020, reaching new record levels despite the global COVID-19 lockdown (Copernicus Climate Change Service / European Union)

---

What do these statements have in common?

They portray science-backed evidence showcasing the current reality of the climate emergency. The climate emergency, often referred to as (human-made) climate change, is the most pressing issue of our era, which is already having catastrophic consequences all around the globe, and in Europe.

Whereas climate and environmental topics are gaining increasing political relevance in Europe, numerous issues remain on the table. Current public policies around the topic are simply not enough to address the impact of the climate emergency with the urgency it requires. In some cases, this is translated into initiatives of governments and corporations as greenwashing actions rather than meaningful steps to tackle the crisis. Furthermore, climate and environmental topics are becoming more and more politicised.

"Greenwashing could be described as when a government, company or entity spends more time and resources on labeling themselves as environmentally friendly than on minimising their environmental impact."

That is precisely why one of the pillars of this Toolkit is reflected in the following sentence: Check your facts!

No matter what anyone says, there is hard, compelling evidence on the immense (current and future) impact of the climate emergency. The following are just a few examples out of multiple others that you are probably already familiar with:

- Rise of sea levels, causing erosion or wetland flooding, as well as soil contamination through saltwater and lost habitat for many animal and plant species.

Rise in temperatures of the sea, affecting marine species and ecosystems, and in some cases the loss of breeding grounds for marine fishes and mammals\textsuperscript{4}.

Changes in rain and snow patterns, altering the availability of water throughout the year\textsuperscript{5}.

Extreme weather changes, forcing not only multiple animal species to adapt or migrate, but also human communities to flee due to alterations in their environment caused by climate change\textsuperscript{6}.

**Differentiated impact in Europe**

Many regions across the world are already suffering and experiencing the devastating effects of droughts, coastal flooding and other extreme weather events, caused by the climate emergency. While in Europe these effects are not as noticeable as in for instance the coastlines of South Asia or the Greater Horn of Africa, they are undeniably already taking place. These are a few of the consequences of the climate emergency that the different regions of Europe are currently experiencing:

- **Southern and Central Europe** → more frequent heat waves, forest fires and droughts.

- **The Mediterranean area** → becoming drier, turning increasingly vulnerable to drought and wildfires.

- **Northern Europe** → rainfalls will increase, and winter floods could become common.

\textsuperscript{4} International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/ocean-warming

\textsuperscript{5} European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en

The Western Balkans → changing rainfall cycles are increasing the amount of floods, which is already translated into numerous environmental migration cases.\(^7\)

### Urban areas

Urban areas, where the majority of Europeans live → exposed to heat waves, flooding or rising sea levels. Often they are not sufficiently prepared to adapt to climate change.\(^8\)

---

\(^7\) Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - [https://www.internal-displacement.org/](https://www.internal-displacement.org/)

\(^8\) European Commission - [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en)
School student activism on climate and environmental topics

If you are reading this Guide, it is likely that you have heard of youth climate activism or of a few youth climate movements. If it’s not the case, worry not, and let’s recap the events: in August 2018 Swedish school student Greta Thunberg started to protest every day (and eventually every Friday) outside the Swedish parliament, holding a sign that read *Skolstrejk för klimatet* ("School strike for climate").

Eventually, multiple young people and students joined the cause in several other countries. On 15 March 2019, after numerous school strikes took place all around the world, the first *Global Climate Strike* gathered more than one million people in 2,200 strikes organised in 125 countries. Almost simultaneously, it seemed like environmental topics started to become newspapers’ front page material and key drivers for political discussions.

The youth climate movement achieved what major stakeholders working on climate and environmental issues did not in dozens of years of advocacy: bringing environmental matters to the forefront of political agendas. In just a few years, the number of youth climate movements and the engagement of young people on the topic both in Europe and globally skyrocketed, to the point that in 2019 Greta Thunberg herself addressed world leaders directly during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Greta Thunberg addressing world leaders during the 2019 World Economic Forum, where she famously said that “our house is on fire”.
It seems undeniable that environmental topics are crucial for young people. The question is, why?

*Because young people have the biggest stake in their future!*

In most countries young people cannot take part in elections until they turn 18, which effectively means that they have no say on policies directly influencing environmental issues. At the same time, children and young people are the least responsible for the climate emergency, yet they will bear the greatest burden of its impact. In the words of David Attenborough, “Young people are the people who are going to inherit the mess that we've made”.

In the documentary “A Life on Our Planet”, narrated by Attenborough himself, the potential mess to be inherited becomes painfully clear. This is the world they describe that someone born in 2020 will witness if no action is taken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the 2030s:</th>
<th>In the 2040s:</th>
<th>In the 2050s:</th>
<th>In the 2080s:</th>
<th>In the 2100s:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Amazon Rain-forest is degraded into a dry savannah, bringing multiple species into extinction and altering the global water cycle.</td>
<td>Frozen soils melt in the northern hemisphere, releasing large quantities of methane into the atmosphere and increasing the rate of human-made climate change.</td>
<td>Oceans’ temperatures continue increasing. As a result, coral reefs around the globe die, and the amount of fish population in the seas plummet.</td>
<td>Food production enters into a global crisis stage. Pollinating insects disappear. Weather becomes even more unpredictable.</td>
<td>The global temperature increases by four Celsius degrees. A significant share of the Earth is uninhabitable by people, causing millions of people to be homeless.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differentiated individual experience on the side of youth regarding the impact of the climate emergency demonstrates an often-too-neglected fact: **climate change deepens social inequalities**.
Impact of the climate emergency on young people and other social groups

Young people will have to deal with significant sociopolitical, economic and environmental challenges inherited from previous generations, which is only enhanced by the fact that youth is strikingly affected by periods of crises, e.g. in terms of quality education, employment or housing. If we add to the mixture the negative consequences of COVID-19 on the rights of young people, the imminent threat of the climate emergency on the livelihoods of youth becomes even more pressing.

Furthermore, it is not only young people that suffer more intensely from the effects of the climate emergency, but also several other social groups. Women for instance represent globally a notably high percentage of poorer communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihood, especially in rural areas where they are responsible for the water and energy supply for cooking, heating or food security. On top of this, the access of women to control of environmental goods and services is highly limited and the same applies to their involvement in decision-making bodies. Indigenous people are also particularly vulnerable to the consequences of the climate emergency, as they are greatly dependent and in close contact with environmental resources. The impact of the climate emergency on the environment amplifies already existing cases of political or economic marginalisation, losses of lands and resources, or human rights violations among indigenous people.

Its impact specifically on young people showcases the strong need for intergenerational equity at the time of developing environmental policies. An intergenerational equity component openly addresses the massive ecological debt that younger and future generations will carry on their shoulders if the matter is not confronted with the imperativeness it requires. The inclusion of justice and fairness within climate discussions is essential to amplify the voices not only of young people and future generations, but also of women and other social groups.

The principle of intergenerational equity states that every generation holds the Earth in common with members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future. The principle articulates a concept of fairness among generations in the use and conservation of the environment and its natural resources.

---

9 European Youth Forum - https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-sustainable-development
generations, but also of the multiple other groups discriminated against on the basis of gender, socioeconomic level, geography, or the intersection of these. The climate emergency will only be solved with a systemic change that not only tackles its environmental component, but also addresses social inequalities as well as puts forward a new economic model that works for the people and for the planet.
So, it’s clear that “our house is on fire”
What are decision-makers doing about this?

Globally, the current most relevant policy document outlining the global action plan to tackle the climate emergency is the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris, France. In Europe, the policy initiative that will mobilise the highest amount of resources to tackle the climate emergency is the European Green Deal of the European Union, which aims at making the EU climate-neutral by 2050. However, the way that it’s going to do so and most importantly, whether that goal will be achieved, is very much open to discussion since those are goal-setting frameworks rather than set-in-stone legislation around every single policy impacting climate change.

As part of the roadmap established to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the EU currently envisions a reduction of CO₂ emissions by 55% below the emission levels in 1990 by 2030. Currently, evidence shows that in order to keep temperature rise to 1.5 Celsius degrees (as outlined in the Paris Agreement), global CO₂ emissions would need to be reduced by 7.6% annually until 2030. Applying this to the EU would lead to a greenhouse gas emission reduction of at least 65% by 2030. In other words, the EU is not taking the actions needed to tackle this crisis sufficiently. The same goes for the vast majority of countries in Europe.

Now, this is what policy-makers are currently doing to tackle the climate emergency - and it’s clear that there is a need to do more and better. If you want to know what other young activists and YOU can do about it, keep reading!
ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT 1

Tetiana Stadnyk,
Secretary General of Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)

- **Why did you get involved in the climate movement?**
  I used to be this “annoying person” not allowing people to waste food or any kind of item. My grandpa and I even used to do dumpster diving for things that could still be used to further construct something. I always imagined myself as an activist that would bring forward important policy suggestions and point out cases in which the environment was not respected, and eventually ended up in YEE.

- **If you had to name the biggest barrier and opportunity that environmental youth organisations are facing in terms of advocacy, what would that be?**
  There are two barriers I can surely identify: firstly, the capacity to continuously follow all the changes and updates when trying to work on a specific piece of policy for instance. You need to be on it all the time and that takes a lot of resources. Secondly, funding, which applies to most youth NGOs.
  In terms of opportunities, I would underline the increasing avenues for collaboration and networking among youth organisations working on climate and environmental topics.

- **What do you wish you had known when you started to get involved in the youth climate movement?**
  It can be draining and you need to build your work-life balance. Additionally, some people are not showcased, we don’t fully know how much expertise is out there. It’s not just one person speaking, but the community that stands behind that person. Last but not least, some young people cannot afford to volunteer, and in Europe it’s certainly a middle-class white Europeans’ movement. I wish I had known this so I could grab the hand of another person at the very beginning and say “come along, we will do this together!”

- **What’s the one advice you would give to other activists not to give up?**
  Build systems that will support you in the long run. Working on sustainability requires mainstreaming it everywhere. Also, don’t be afraid to ask for help, you will never know if you’ll get it unless you pose the question!
Chloé Mikolajcza,
Host of “The Burning Case” podcast and climate activist

- Why did you get involved in the climate movement?
  - I traveled for a bit, which was very unsustainable but an eye-opener, as I visited many countries that were facing environmental injustice. When I came back to Europe I changed my studies to do a masters in environmental sciences and management, which was when I started to take my first steps in the field as a consultant and volunteer.

- Can you give an example of a successful advocacy action you have co-ordinated or taken part in?
  - As part of the “Right to Repair” campaign, we asked the European Commission to commit to regulating smartphones. We did actions in several cities in Europe, we did an online social media campaign, a petition, op-eds... We made a lot of noise during three weeks and when the European Commission released their “Circular Economy Action Plan”, it included a commitment to “Right to Repair” and to regulate smartphones.

- What do you wish you had known when you started to get involved in the youth climate movement?
  - We change with time and that’s okay. I came to the climate movement with very strong ideas that almost excluded everyone. I thought everyone should be vegans, should stop flying, and so on. By exchanging with people, my viewpoints changed a lot. Keep your mind open and don’t hesitate to talk with people that come from different backgrounds! Additionally, I would like to underline that to do activism, you can come from any background. You don’t need any masters or studies specifically about it, you can give a beautiful addition from so many different perspectives.

- What’s the one advice you would give to other activists not to give up?
  - A quote that I really like: “for every complicated issue there’s a simple solution, and it’s the wrong one”. We are not going to solve the climate emergency with silver bullets. It’s not the environment on one side, poverty on this other side, patriarchy on another. Everything is connected, and we really need to see this as a systemic change and address every aspect of that system. Keep on learning and be open to different perspectives.
CLIMATE EMERGENCY - WHAT CAN I DO?

By reading this guide until now you probably quite understand that there is a lot to be done and there are many inspiring ways to do so. Have you also decided that you would like to act?

Great!

Let’s see how you can do the best possible action in the most effective way with the right people. Sometimes, when we realise that there is a social issue that needs attention, it can feel overwhelming at first.

*Where do I even start solving such a big problem?*

It’s important to realise you cannot solve everything at once. While it would be great to find a magic solution that makes our planet healthy and thriving again, you serve the cause best if you set realistic goals. And then all the small and big achievements together can go a long way!

OBESSU already has a lot of manuals that give you some support, for example the [Manual for School Students](#) - which relates to school student participation in general - and the [#PeerPower: Guidelines on Peer Education](#). But with this Guide, we are trying to give you some specific insights on how to get engaged with climate related advocacy.

**Advocacy - Public awareness or policy-making?**

Activism and advocacy can take many forms. From your individual decision to choose to live a more sustainable lifestyle to raising public awareness and influencing policy-making, it can add to the achievement of the final goal of reaching a clean planet for all as soon as possible.

In the [#EcoFighters - Guide for school students into environmental activism](#), we really are focusing on public awareness raising and policy-making, things that you
do in collaboration with others. You can see these two directions as the core elements of advocacy. Both have their place in the environmental and climate movement, so do not feel pressured by this choice. You can combine them or engage in multiple actions, too, depending on your capacities and keeping in mind your well-being of course.

*Whichever route you decide to take, you will have to make sure you have a solid plan.*

**Your best friend for planning: NAOMIE**

To help you come up with a plan to make your action successful, there is a friend who is a help in need at all times: **NAOMIE**. We assure you that NAOMIE is a great companion who gathers the key steps for making any project a success. See below!

| Needs | Aim | Objectives | Methods | Implementation | Evaluation |

If you follow the identification of these steps, your actions should be definitely impactful. For the sake of ease, let’s try it out with a concrete example as a guide through your exploration of each step. You will see as a side note an imaginary action that hopefully helps you make the descriptions more concrete - it’s a story of a group of students who want to act big!
**Needs**

It comes as no surprise that the first decision you should take is identifying what the problem you are trying to work on really is. Instead of jumping directly to deciding on what actions you would like to take, you want to assess the needs of the stakeholders concerned first.

*Stakeholder* refers to anyone, individual, or group that has an interest, in this case in your project or advocacy action. It includes people directly involved, such as the volunteers of your organisation, policy-makers working on the topics you are focusing on, or foundations that give you grants.

But whose needs should be considered? And how? Let’s help you figure out how you can assess these things!

For example, Coraline, Novak, Alberto and Sigrid are a group of friends studying in the same school in Nova Victoria who realised that the climate emergency is not taken into consideration enough around them. It’s time to act! They sat down in the cafeteria of their school one afternoon to discuss what exactly needs to be acted upon. That’s where the story of the **Fantastic Green Four** starts out.
WHO

Some examples could be:

- People in your community (your fellow students, your neighbours, your city, your region, your national level)
- Teachers
- Headmasters
- Parents
- Your union
- Grants providers or sponsors (in case you receive funding)
- Policy-makers

HOW

For example:

- Discussions during class
- Group gathering/debate after study hours
- Survey before your action/event
- Public reports and data
- Focus groups
- Consulting with other NGOs engaged on the topic

However, do not forget: whichever need you identify and choose to work on needs to be something you are also passionate about. It’s very difficult to keep being active in an area that you don’t feel deeply committed to. As we said in the beginning, there is a lot to be done, so you can surely find the right fit for you.

The Fantastic Green Four put the climate emergency on the agenda for the next student union meeting and asked their families at home what they see as the biggest issue in the city in this regard. Based on all of those discussions, they agreed to work on mobilising their fellow students for a protest because the region of the city of Nova Victoria is very polluted and the local municipality is doing nothing to incentivise a more sustainable functioning of the industry.
**Aim**

Once you identify what the need you want to work on is, you have to set a concrete aim - a final outcome that you would like to see.

Try to think of it as your overarching vision for your activism! Not to be mixed with the objectives below, which are smaller steps that take you to the top of the mountain - your aim.

*For example, the Fantastic Green Four want to ensure that the industry in Nova Victoria is green and sustainable. Fair and square!*
Objectives

However, your big vision needs strategic steps to get you there - some subgoals that have concrete actions mentioned in them.

For identifying these objectives, you could use the model of SMART goals:

- **Specific**: Your objective needs to be as clear as possible, otherwise it will be difficult to know what you want to achieve exactly. It helps to check if you are answering these simple questions: Who? What? How? Where? When? Why?

- **Measurable**: You also want to make sure that you can somehow measure your progress - either by setting the time, the level of change you want to reach, the amount of stakeholders involved or the amount of money raised, for example.

- **Achievable**: Your objective has to be something that is setting your expectations in the right place. For example, it cannot be too short of a time frame, too costly or too big of a change.

- **Realistic**: Sometimes we realise there is a need for something - but we might not be the right people to address it, the timing isn’t right, we don’t have some necessary resources, or another factor is not right. Your objective needs to be realistic - for you!

- **Time bound**: Last but not least, your plans have to have a specific timeframe. It matters a lot if something should be done in 1 week, 1 month or 1 year!
For the Fantastic Green Four, the objectives of their protest look more or less like this:

- To draw attention of the public to the consequences of the pollution from the local industries and the lack of action from local decision-makers on this.
- To push the local decision-makers to change regulations in the city in a way that will ensure that industrial actors will have to adhere to minimal environmental standards.
- To mobilise fellow students from our school and other schools in the city to join the protest to help with this issue.

**Methods**

You already have your key aim and objectives? Great, let’s choose some methods to put them into practice!

Activism has many faces and can be done in many different ways.
To get inspired, we suggest you check out these good practice examples from the Impact Month of the #EcoFighters project and beyond:

- “We cooperated with other youth organisations to make a statement about Finland’s non-sufficient work in the fight against climate change, demanding action” - Finlands Svenska Skolungdomsförbund (Finland)

- “Together with Fridays for Future, we made some cities and regions approve Climate Emergency Declarations, by organizing both strikes and institutional meetings. We also aim to put together a toolkit that the school students involved can use in different regions of Italy” - Unione degli Studenti (Italy)

- “We are trying to turn a piece of land that used to belong to the mafia into a sustainable garden, to also clean out the pollution caused there over the years” - Unione degli Studenti Scafati (Italy)

- “We created a podcast tackling environmental issues that we are additionally using to promote our school student union” - Česká Středoškolská Unie (Czech Republic)

- “We launched webinars every week, tackling different aspects of the environmental crisis and our impact on it and strengthened our collaboration in this field by organising these events with our regional organisations” - Dijajška Organizacija Slovenije (Slovenia)

- “We created an informative brochure for students about the origins of the climate crisis and how to tackle its issues, and we want to disseminate it in almost every secondary school in Austria” - Aktion Kritischer Schüler_Innen (Austria)

- “We created a social media competition among schools in Spain to produce content where they share what they’re doing to make their school greener” - Confederación Estatal de Asociaciones de Estudiantes (Spain)

- “We organised peer-to-peer learning activities on climate activism” - SV-Bildungswerk e.V. (Germany)
As you could see from the objectives, the Fantastic Green Four are choosing to organise a protest. Let’s see how they are planning to make that a success!

**Implementation**

*Up until now, you were only planning. And this is how it should be!*  

Before putting your idea into action, it’s important to think through and plan all the little details. It’s good to have a cool method in mind but you have to make sure that it’s the right one and that once you put it into practice it impacts the right people!

A thorough analysis of your situation and considering your funding sources can be of help with that, so let’s check out some methods and opportunities that can help you in this regard. **You should start using these techniques and think about your funding sources already in the earlier stages** when creating your objectives and choosing your method - we are detailing them here so you can ensure that once you get to the implementation, it really is only about pushing that green button to launch your action.

Even then, be ready for things to go a bit differently than you imagined - and be ready to accept that that’s okay. Good planning will not make your action bullet-proof but it will help you **reduce the possibilities of things going wrong during implementation**. It will also **maximise the positive impact you can have**.
SWOT ANALYSIS

An easy, go-to method you can always apply to assess the situation is doing a so-called SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Pretty straightforward, right?

**Strengths** are those internal factors that bring you advantages in a situation, for example characteristics of your team members, a close relationship with a policy-maker, an eco-friendly headmaster or available funding for environmental actions.

**Weaknesses** are the internal factors that are not so favourable towards meeting your goal - which can be a lack of volunteers interested in the topic, being perceived as less relevant because of being young, etc.

**Opportunities** are the external opportunities and chances that you see growing out of those two factors. This can be for example a workshop you can hold in your school on the climate emergency, a project to be involved in or run, and so on.

**Threats** are the opposite side of this spectrum - the negative scenarios you can imagine out of the identified factors. Examples could be a local decision-maker being strongly opposed to accepting facts about the climate emergency, a powerful lobby group of stakeholders from the fossil fuel industries blocking your actions or a lack of funding available to meet your objectives.
Asking the following questions might help you in your analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are you/your team good at?</td>
<td>What are you/your team not so good at?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What unique resources do you have?</td>
<td>What resources are you lacking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do others see as your strength?</td>
<td>What do others see as your weakness?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What doors are open to you based on your strengths?</td>
<td>What limits do you face based on your weaknesses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can help you in achieving your goal (partners, processes, etc.)?</td>
<td>What can hinder you in achieving your goal (competition, timing, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Fantastic Green Four, the SWOT analysis looked a bit as it follows:

**Strengths:**
- All members of the Fantastic Green Four have good relationships with students in other schools as well.
- Coraline is the Vice-President of the student union of the school and is active in the regional union as well which gives her the opportunity to spread the word about the action.
Having Alberto as an exchange student in the team who has experience from his own city in organising awareness raising activities - even if not a protest.

Novak just recently joined as a volunteer an environmental NGO that is trying to establish a local group in Nova Victoria.

Weaknesses:

- None of the Fantastic Green Four has organised a protest before. Therefore, they need to do research on some tips and tricks.
- They have no sponsor for this action and their families are a bit unsure about being able to afford the materials so they need to find financial support for this.
- None of them have worked extensively on the topic of climate emergency so far.

Opportunities:

- Students all across the world have been protesting for the environment - probably many will join this local action!
- There are supportive representatives in the local municipality who are only waiting for an external push to be able to argue better for their points.
- A few environmental NGOs work in the city so there is an opportunity to reach out for expertise and combine efforts.
- There are increasing funding opportunities for youth projects that address the climate emergency.

Threats:

- The industries do not financially benefit from the change in the current regulation and are heavily lobbying to keep the status quo.
- The mayor of the city is not openly supportive of sustainable policies, in order to keep the industry around.
- If headmasters don’t support the cause or even penalise participation, students might be hesitant to join.
POWER MAPPING

When it comes to deciding where to focus your energies for your action, it's really important that you gain an understanding of the players in the field.

With the technique of power mapping, that should not be so difficult to achieve. Imagine putting the different stakeholders who your action is concerned with (e.g. check the groups identified in the ‘needs’ part) in an axis. You are aiming to understand how much influence they have and whether they are supportive of your cause or not.

Something like this:

- **A LOT OF POWER**
- **SUPPORTIVE**
- **NON-SUPPORTIVE**
- **NO POWER**

**Useful tips:**
- Ignore those in the corner of non-supportive with little to no power. You have better use of your energy than to spend it on them!
- Make sure to keep those who are not supportive but have power over your cause on your radar. You might not be able to turn them on your side (in some cases, you can!) but you can work on avoiding big negative surprises.
- Supportive - highly influential stakeholders are the sweet spot for your advocacy. Engage with them very actively!
- Supportive stakeholders with low influence are good to be kept informed and consulted regularly. They can help you achieve your goals in unexpected ways!
From the worksheet of the Fantastic Green Four, here are some examples:

- Their mayor is currently a non-supporter with a lot of power. But this is something that can be changed with the right amount of pressure!
- From having talked to other environmental activists, they know that many representatives in the local municipality are supportive of taking stronger measures towards clean industry in the region. These are high influence and supportive stakeholders, a group that the Fantastic Green Four engages with a lot.
- Comparably, other activists and NGOs have less direct influence but can offer great support and combine efforts for the cause.
FUNDING SOURCES

The SWOT Analysis and the Power Mapping will ensure that once you implement your advocacy action you do it in the right way, at the right time and involving the right stakeholders. However, while hard work and commitment is important, so is the **financial feasibility of your actions**. Let's talk about this for a second.

There are a great amount of sources for funding where you can apply to have your idea become a reality. We are listing here a few:

**European Youth Foundation**

The European Youth Foundation has a focus on understanding climate issues better in the policy field for the period of 2022-23. Pilot activities will help you carry out local actions; international activities will allow you to connect with other enthusiastic organisations from across Europe; and Work Plans will help realising more complex and strategic processes (such as the #EcoFighters project of OBESSU).

More information can be found here:  
https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation

**Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps**

Both Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps have a strong focus on green measures and sustainability - the right time to get involved! There are projects such as youth exchanges and youth participation activities (for Erasmus+) and volunteering projects and solidarity activities (European Solidarity Corps) that you can apply for if it's in line with your planned action.

More information can be found here:  
https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/  
https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en
Open Collective Youth Climate Fund

The Open Collective Youth Climate Fund supports individuals and groups of youth climate activists between the age of 16 and 29 from the Global South, or generally from communities that face more challenges than others in our global society. They also invite groups that are not registered organizations to apply.

They provide small grants for activities that foster impactful climate action, activities and events implemented within 3 months.

For details, please check:

https://opencollective.com/ycf

National Geographic

National Geographic often has opportunities for funding that relate to sustainability, however, their calls change on the regular to always tackle the most pressing issues. It’s worth checking periodically for their funding opportunities.

More information to be found here:

https://www.nationalgeographic.org/funding-opportunities/grants/

Other funding sources

There are often opportunities on the local, regional and national levels to get funding for some activities. These can be e.g. from companies, micro-granting from other NGOs, public funds in the country/region/city, especially on education and on climate, etc. It can also mean approaching local businesses, shops or artists for example to support your cause by material means.
In the case of the Fantastic Green Four, they were seeking out support from the local paint shop who gave them paint sprays for free and some card boxes from their storage that could be used for creating the signs for the protest. The local textil shop was willing to give some leftover material that was also used for the occasion. Moreover, they received free pins from the shop that deals with it in the city. This was a great help for bringing their protest to life!

**Evaluation**

Once all is said and done, it’s really important to take time for reflection on what has happened. Evaluating your whole process will give invaluable learnings that can support:

- Practicing what you preach: making sure that your projects and advocacy actions are as environmentally friendly as possible
- Identifying your mistakes and how you could have avoided them
- Identifying your good practices and where you could use them again
- Closing the internal processes of your team - thank yous and goodbyes <3

For Coraline, Novak, Alberto and Sigrid, the time has come to close the chapter on their Fantastic Green Four adventure. They decided to gather in the cafeteria again, where their journey began, and discuss what worked well, what could have been done better and to celebrate the successes they have made. Who knows, maybe this is just the beginning - there is a lot to address about the climate crisis, so the chances to act are multiple, both for them and for you!
ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT 2

Ergi Bregasi,
Project Coordinator at EDEN (Tirana, Albania)

- **Why did you get involved in the climate movement?**
  - A package of reasons. The first one, a personal event - my father passing away - heavily influenced me towards joining the environmental movement. The feeling that I was doing something impactful that is tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis helped me get through that difficult period. I truly found a community around a topic that I fully believe in.

- **What are the three main issues in Albania in relation to the climate emergency?**
  - Firstly, environmental migration mainly due to floods is a problem, in the entire Council of Europe community and particularly in the Western Balkans. Secondly, energy poverty and non-clean energy resources are causing issues and in most regions in the Western Balkans energy production is based on non-clean energy. In Albania there are a lot of air pollution problems due to this. And last but not least, biodiversity and habitat loss is getting worse and worse.

- **What do you wish you had known when you started to get involved in the youth climate movement?**
  - Climate and environmental advocacy is a dynamic journey with ups and downs. Sometimes you need to protect yourself from burn-out and eco-anxiety. Sometimes as climate activists we commit ourselves with a heavy workload, due to high motivation and belief in the cause, which impacts the work-life balance. Also, due to bureaucratic and non-accountable systems we may feel that we are unheard, which at the beginning can make the world outside the climate community seem like an enemy.

- **What’s the one advice you would give to other activists not to give up?**
  - It’s tough work. Make sure that at every stage you follow your vision and the aim you have!
Sophia Kianni,
Member of UN Secretary General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

- **Why did you get involved in the climate movement?**
  - I became a climate activist after visiting Iran when I was in middle-school and I saw how horrible the climate situation is there. My family struggled to access information in Farsi, which is their native language. That’s why I decided I want to work on making climate education more accessible to people who do not speak English.

- **What was a big challenge you overcame?**
  - When launching Climate Cardinals, my organisation, we had a viral TikTok on the first day that called young people to action to translate climate information. We had an unexpectedly high level of interest which meant thousands of people in our internal channels that we had to moderate constantly. So we had to manage and create structures to be able to channel the great amount of interest practically.

- **What do you wish you had known when you started to get involved in the youth climate movement?**
  - My biggest advice is to reach out to as many people as possible and try out working and volunteering with multiple organisations until you really find a place where you enjoy engaging. Work with people with whose values you really feel aligned with - there is no reason for you to be stuck somewhere where you feel like you don’t belong.

- **What’s the one advice you would give to other activists not to give up?**
  - You shouldn’t put your own mental well-being at risk. If you cannot take care of yourself, you cannot take care of the world. Also, try to assess what led you to arrive there - if you feel burned out and tired, you may not be in the right place and feel free to look in other places to stay engaged. Also, if you feel overall defeated, remind yourself what would happen if we all felt this way - if we do not work on pushing for change, who will?
Want to hear from more activists? Want to learn more in depth?

Make sure to check out the #EcoFighters MOOC which you can access on the following link: https://ecofighters.eu/

It has even more content on the data for the climate emergency, on other activists’ journeys and on how to create your own actions. We fully recommend it as a learning experience beyond this guide.
CONCLUSION

In the “An Inconvenient Truth” documentary from 2006, former US Vice-President Al Gore uses the metaphor of a frog in hot water to explain the global inaction with regard to climate change. If you put a frog into a pot full of boiling water, it will immediately jump out and possibly survive; however, if you put one in a pot with cold water that warms up slowly, the frog will stay and eventually die. The COVID-19 pandemic has had and will have an immense impact on everyone’s livelihoods and health, and served as a pot of boiling water out of which governments all around the world are trying to leap immediately. For COVID-19, there aren’t insufficient funds or will to act. And that’s exactly how the climate emergency should be regarded as well.

When creating this toolkit, numerous youth climate activists were consulted through interviews, focus groups or informal exchanges. There was one question we were always posing: **what is your vision for the world in 2050?** The answers we witnessed varied greatly, from a pretty bleak Earth at a point of no-return to a society fully-based on circular economy principles. What remained constant, however, is that young people are key voices so as to bring forward the necessary change to reach a world in 2050 where we can say that we have overcome the climate emergency. For this, policy-makers need to realise that we have been sitting at the bottom of a pot full of water steadily boiling up for a while now. So make sure you map out all your stakeholders, prepare your most convincing grant application and take your protest sign out to the streets: the road seems long and arduous, but it’s definitely a road that no one else will take for you!
#EcoFighters

A guide for school students into environmental activism

## RESOURCES

Amnesty International UK  

Climate Action Network Europe  

Copernicus Climate Change Service of the European Union  

Council of the EU  

European Commission  
[https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en)

European Youth Forum  
[https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-sustainable-development](https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-sustainable-development)

Generation Climate Europe, European Youth Forum & Institute for European Environmental Policy  

International Union for Conservation of Nature  
[https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/ocean-warming](https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/ocean-warming)

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
[https://www.internal-displacement.org/](https://www.internal-displacement.org/)

Mind Tools  
[https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm)

MyClimate  
[https://www.myclimate.org](https://www.myclimate.org)

National Geographic  

United Nations  

World Meteorological Organization  