



Just
Opt for
Knowledge about
Environment

Active citizens are amongst us and they CARE about the environment

What does being an active citizen who cares about the environment mean? What do people around us do to get involved in protecting local habitats and solving environmental issues? We took this to the streets and asked a few people about their so-called green conscience.

Denisa (27), Romania



My life philosophy is that we humans are part of nature and this is why we should respect it just as we respect ourselves. I care about the environment and I try to take small steps to protect it. For example, I turn the tap off while I brush my teeth and I turn the lights off when I leave the room. I also ride my bike everytime I have the chance, instead of taking a bus or using a car.

I often ask myself if I will actually live long enough to see a significant change around me, and even if I don't think so, I still think about the generations that will come after us. This is why I joined the environmental protests that erupted in Bucharest in the last few years – against cyanide gold mining in Rosia Montana or against fracking.

I have been a vegetarian for 7 years, mainly because I believe in the rights of animals. After seeing a film about industrial farming, I understood the link between our meat consumption and the degradation of the environment and this reinforced my belief that we could live just as well without any meat or animal produce.

Chris (20), Greece



I am very aware about the issues the environment is facing, but I don't think that I'm doing enough to make a difference. I try to fight the idea that even if I take small steps, this won't make others change. Who am I to change the world?

Anyway, my family and I are doing some small things to help the environment. We recently installed new toilets in the house and I suggested we use a basin with two flush buttons, a light one and a heavy one, to reduce water consumption.

We also collect and recycle bottle caps, thanks to a campaign developed by a company. With every three thousand bottle caps we collect, a disabled person gets a wheelchair.

Both of my parents are teachers, so they collect a lot of paper and damaged books from students and take it to the recycling bins we have around the neighborhood.

Yordan (27), Bulgaria



5 or 6 years ago I saw a 30 second Super Bowl commercial from Colgate about reducing water consumption. It was just a sink and a tap which was turned on and then turned off while someone was brushing their teeth. This really made an impression on me and I became aware of the amount of water I was wasting every day.

My flatmate and I have a really big bin in our apartment in which we deposit everything that can be recycled. Then we pick and sort everything when we empty it in the recycling containers in the city. We do the same thing with batteries.

My girlfriend and I volunteer to keep the cat population around Sofia under control by finding cat colonies and taking them to the vet to be sterilized. This has a big impact on the bird population which can be under threat if there are too many cats around town.

All in all, I want to say that I'm an active citizen, but I'm not sure if I'm doing enough.

Tips and tricks for reducing, recycling, reusing

Did you know that recycling a ton of 'waste' has twice the economic impact of burying it in the ground and recycling one additional ton of waste will pay \$101 more in salaries and wages, produce \$275 more in goods and services, and generate \$135 more in sales than disposing of it in a landfill?

Recycling is not the only way you can help nature and yourself at the same time. Up to 70% of your waste can be reused or recycled in some way. Here are some tricks on how to improve your waste disposal and how to reduce and reuse everything you can:

1. Don't create waste in the first place. Shop smart and don't use plastic bags from the supermarket. Instead, use your own or reuse the ones you already have home.
2. Try to avoid products which use excess packaging. When possible, buy fruits and vegetables in bulk instead of the individually packaged ones.
3. Instead of throwing unwanted electrical goods away, take them to the household recycling centre where they'll be split into their component parts and sent for recycling.
4. Buy a home composting kit from your local garden centre and turn your kitchen and green garden into quality compost. This way, your kitchen garbage won't smell and your garden will flourish.



5. Encourage an artist by donating your reusable materials for art. Many school children need items like toilet paper tubes or bottle caps for art projects.
6. Step on your cardboard and tin containers to flatten them out. This will make more space in your bin so you can recycle more!
7. Fix it, don't dispose of it! Either if it's an old clothing item or a household appliance, try fixing it if it's damaged instead of buying a new one. This way, you can reduce your consumption and save a lot of money.
8. Buy energy saving lightbulbs. Even if they cost more than regular ones, you will cover your investment in the long run, because they use a lot less electricity and your bill will feel lighter.
9. Get yourself a bike and use it to go to work, school or to run your errands. This way, you reduce your carbon footprint and get fit at the same time! If your city isn't exactly bike friendly, carpool or use public transport instead of your own car.
10. Instead of buying new clothes from fast fashion mega stores, try looking for clothes

in small thrift shops or fairs. They cost a lot less and you can find unique pieces to upgrade your style.



Standing up for your rights!



In order to work towards fulfilling its long-term goals, the European Union has established a series of environmental standards and policies. Companies and businesses have to comply with the EU regulations when it comes to environmental issues. But what does it all mean for the average EU citizen? Do we know how we can have access to this type of information?

According to ec.europa.eu, the Aarhus Convention (adopted in 1998) establishes the environmental rights for individuals and associations, such as:

- the right to have access to environmental information: the state of the environment, policies, the state of human health
- the right to have a role in environmental decision-making, to comment on proposals for projects related to environmental issues, and the right to receive information on the final decisions
- access to justice: the right to challenge public decisions against environmental laws. The mechanism that the EU has established in order to facilitate the direct participation of citizens in the European decision-making process is called "European Citizens' Initiative" (ECI).

The steps are as follows:

- the initiative proposed by the citizens is registered in one of the official languages of the European Union
- the Commission establishes a point of contact for information and assistance
- the statements of support from the citizens in favour of the initiative are collected and verified
- the citizens' initiative is submitted to the Commission
- within three months, the Commission should communicate its conclusions, the action it intends to take, and the reasons for their decision.

To conclude, European citizens have the chance to share their opinion and take initiatives towards better environmental policies.

It is important that they are aware of their rights and that they attempt to contribute to the betterment of the countries that they live in.

Human Impact on Climate Change



The impact that humans have on the Earth and its natural resources has not been a positive one so far. During the last decades, the impact has become more and more visible for the ordinary citizen. So what are the actual consequences of human activity for the environment?

1. Greenhouse effect

The greenhouse effect is generated by radiatively active gases, otherwise known as greenhouse gases. The main greenhouse gases that can be found in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone. If there were no greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the average temperature of the surface of the Earth would be about -18°C instead of the actual average temperature of 15°C , which amounts to a difference of 33°C . The Earth is not the only celestial body that contains greenhouse gases in its atmosphere: the atmospheres of Venus, Mars and Titan also contain gases with the potential to generate a greenhouse effect.

How does human activity contribute to the greenhouse effect? For example, carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions produced by human activities have increased by 40% since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (~ 1750). These carbon dioxide emissions are caused by the combustion of fossil fuels (mainly coal, oil, and natural gas), deforestation, soil erosions and animal agriculture).

2. Sea pollution

For instance, one of the most common, maybe most significant pollution that occurs out there, more usually than expected, is the "SEA" one. Tons of liters of fuel are spilled in the vast ocean without anyone's control, threatening ecological systems, killing living organisms and not allowing any further preservation.

Another problem related is the useless trash that is thrown inside the sea, such as plastic, metal or glass materials that cannot decompose "in a week". Citizens must invent alternative methods to store and to recycle better this waste, such as promoting bans, or, more easily, upcycling already produced materials. If there is any prohibition of using plastic bags or the taxes for them in stores get higher, there will be more people triggered to use cloth reusable market bags.

Some solutions have already been invented, but they must be improved.

Recycle, upcycle, reduce and reuse and you can contribute to the reduction of human impact on climate change.

The policy reform around education for environment



Sustainable lifestyle as well as renewable craze are under the spotlight for a reason for year. More and more people are aware of the tremendous pressing issues and try to impact as many people as possible to be a part of the change.

A crucial element in coping with the certain problems is the established policies and marks of control of everything that happens against the ecological balance. But, have everyone been included in the process? Has everyone been informed or even do they share the same opinion towards the knowledge - a consequence of a state policy.

After conducted interviews between people from different backgrounds it appears that because of the lack of education for the topic it was obligatory even irritating at school to be held such practices. On the other hand, media campaigns had been valued as well.

Global problems such as air, soil, sea, and waste pollution are the most common ones whose marks of control are weak or even there is lack of them, but all of the interviewed agreed that the insignificant punishment for these crimes is the most annoying aspect.

When asked what according to them is a proper environmental change, the people usually do not have enough common knowledge of the topic. They refer to the global warming as a term or even answer in favor of their ego, especially building a happy and calm life without realising what is actually going on in the nature. There are no any solutions proposed, which is the most important issue nowadays, or, if there are any, they are related to the control or some source of adequate authority.

Which comes forward are the meaning and the biggest objective of further environmental education. More special lessons should be taught related to the specific different types of pollution (air, soil, sea). Ecologists on the first place have to raise the awareness in one society with certain professional methods and tested but not yet developed programs in order Recycling to transform into Upcycling and the whole efficient Cycle.

Last but not least, people are ready for changing. They are triggered by all these problems mentioned above by facing them during everyday life, or by media, and they eager to know much more. Some of them are capable of writing articles and scientific literature, others to upcycle for more healthy lifestyle. But all of them are set not even to lead eco-orientated projects or discussions on a local basis, but also to lead a great education for the very next generations that will bring the light.

The Game



