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BRIEFING NOTE

**THE CASE FOR A  
EUROPEAN  
ALLIANCE  
ON CLIMATE  
EDUCATION**



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supported by



Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led NGOs at the European level, pushing for stronger action from the EU on climate and environmental issues.



The Lifelong Learning Platform is the umbrella organisation for European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth. It represents over 50 000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

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# INTRODUCTION

## CLIMATE CHANGE: A BRAND NEW EXPERIMENT FOR HUMANKIND

*Climate change, its effects, and the fight against it are throwing us in a systemic unknown.*

### **The scientific consensus is now undisputed.**

Climate and environmental change is happening at an unprecedented speed and scale and it is caused by human activities. From global warming to the rapid and massive loss of biodiversity, the scientific knowledge about the causes and effects of climate change on the Earth's environment and ecosystem are better and better understood. Beyond the consensus in earth and life sciences, there is an increasing political and public consensus on the fact that climate change is having and will increasingly have adverse effects for the continuation of a truly human life on the planet.

Unliveable temperatures, desertification, loss of food production, more frequent extreme weather events, rising sea levels, various air, soil and water pollutions, induced mass migrations, growing inequalities, loss of biodiversity, geopolitical tensions.

### **The consequences detrimental to the quality of human life, prosperity and peaceful life on earth are endless.**

**Climate change and the fight against it is the single biggest systemic challenge humanity has ever faced as a whole.** Yet, action is slow and often unadapted. Our democratic systems are poorly equipped to face urgently needed long-term planning and decisions. The complexity and systemic nature of the topic is difficult to apprehend and comprehend for citizens. In addition, there are no ready-made solutions we can look for in the recent past. The harmful action on the planet caused by our systemic action, and its effects, are a brand new and unwanted experiment humankind is engaged in.

**If we are to face this challenge collectively, we need to ensure every citizen is equipped with the right set of skills, knowledge and attitudes.**



### ARTICLE 12 - PARIS AGREEMENT

*"Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognising the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement."*



# NEEDS ANALYSIS

## CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT POLICY AND DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE HUMANKIND IS FACING.

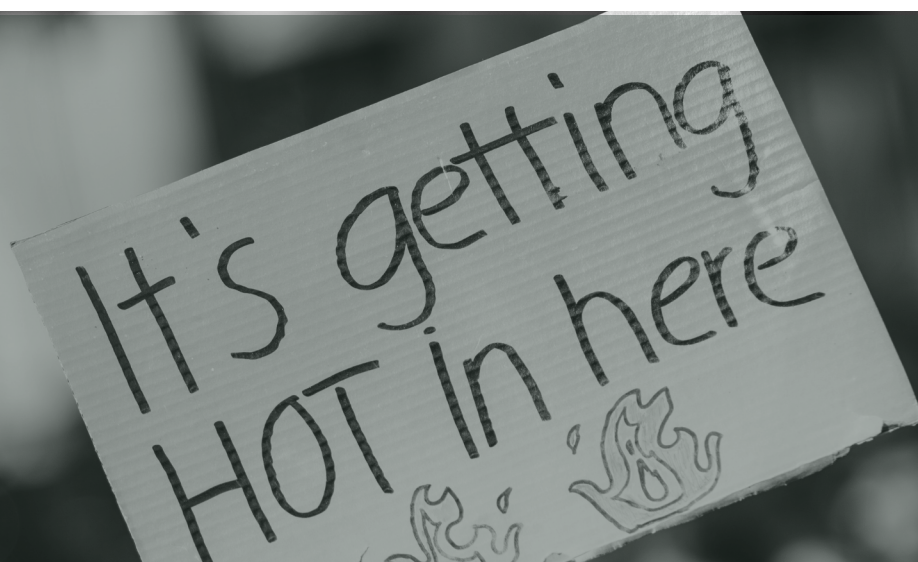
Citizens need to be equipped with the right set of skills, knowledge and attitudes to face it and act upon it. Citizens must possess the appropriate science-based knowledge to be able to encourage action at the appropriate speed and magnitude, to be able to evaluate policy proposals and their impacts. It is a democratic need to ensure all citizens have a minimum level of common knowledge and understanding about the problem in order to ensure proper democratic debate.

## THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF RELEVANT INITIATIVES ACROSS SECTORS AND ACROSS BORDERS BUT THEY ARE VERY SCATTERED.

Climate, environment or nature education initiatives already exist in a lot of different contexts: within the formal education sector at all levels from primary school to high education, within the non-formal sector through NGOs fully dedicated to it, or organising occasional projects about it. Relevant tools can be found in different languages. However, there is a lack of coordination that would facilitate the discussion across sectors, and the spreading of relevant tools and good practices across borders. (Research has shown the lack of consistent climate education and the lack of available tools for teachers, [link](#)). The alliance would be an ideal space to encourage the sharing of good-practices, develop new initiatives and projects.

## CLIMATE EDUCATION IS STILL UNDER-CONSIDERED ACROSS EUROPE AND ACROSS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS.

Climate education is still not considered in a systematic way among many educational systems. The holistic dimension of the climate change issue, its urgency, and its presence in the public sphere all call for a fast uptake by the education systems to ensure the proper training of citizens. Recent research has highlighted the need for policy makers to strategically think about climate education and awareness-raising (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))





## DISCREPANCY ACROSS EU COUNTRIES

While Italy has recently made the headlines for its decision to make climate change education compulsory (read more [here](#)), there is a huge discrepancy among European countries regarding the status of climate and environment education. The alliance would answer the need to share good practices and empower actors and stakeholders in the less advanced countries on the topic.

## A VOICE IN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION POLICY DEBATE

To advance the cause of climate and environment education, it is important to be able to engage with policy and decision makers in one united front. At the European level, there are policy initiatives relevant for climate education (such as the Competence framework for sustainable development developed by the European Commission DG Education and Culture, or the work of the European Parliament CULT Committee on Greening Erasmus and Green skills).

Being ready and able to inform policy stakeholders could be an important role of the alliance by drawing from the experience of its members.

## MOVING AWAY FROM SILOS AND TOWARDS A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH

Education about climate change and the environment is very silo-ed, at least in the formal education sector (earth science education / energy / economy / sociology in a climate perspective, etc.) The understanding of the climate problem requires system thinking and a holistic approach. The alliance would act as a space to help break these silos.

## LACK OF AVAILABLE DATA ON CLIMATE EDUCATION

There is relatively limited information regarding the state of climate and environment education in Europe. The alliance would allow a better understanding among countries and at the European level to orient policies in the most adequate direction.

# VISION, MISSION, VALUES

Any organisation needs a shared and clear set of mission, vision and values. This allows its members to work towards the same goal and understand each other. It also allows the organisation to present itself clearly to the outside world. The elements presented here are for further discussion, to be refined and agreed upon.

## VISION

### SCIENCE-BASED CLIMATE EDUCATION FOR ALL

Through quality and science-based climate and environment education, every European citizen possesses the key knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand and act upon the climate crisis as an active member of society in any capacity.

## MISSION

- Strengthen the synergies between local, national, European and international climate education initiatives.
- Provide a common and permanent space for sharing of experience and good practice; the sharing of knowledge and documentary resources; the development of projects, tools, campaigns and other forms of collective action.
- Support the integration of climate education across disciplines (holistic vision).
- Support the development of climate education tools, their translation, dissemination, and uptake across sectors and borders.
- Promote the importance of and advocate for climate education across educational sectors (non formal education, formal education, secondary and tertiary education, lifelong learning).
- Counter misinformation on climate.

## VALUES

Listening to science



Open access resources



Active citizenship







# Definition of climate education

*In order to ensure common ground, and enable the member organisations and individuals to have a clear understanding of the scope of the alliance.*

Any formal, non-formal or informal learning activity designed to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior related to the understanding of the climate, climate change, global warming, the climate and environmental crisis, its effects at the individual, social, economic and political levels, and the means of action to prevent it, mitigate it, and adapt to it.

# GOVERNANCE

## FORESEEN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Belgian-registered NGO (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif - AISBL) with moral persons as members (organisations).



### MEMBERSHIP

Organisations at the local, national and European levels interested in and active in the field of climate, environment and nature education (NGOs, schools, universities, research institutes, think tanks).

#### Two-tier membership:

Full-members with decision-making rights at the General Assembly  
Associate members with access to activities and partnerships but no decision-making power (funders)



### GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Council of Europe borders



### FUNDING

Membership fees  
EU project funding and operational funding  
Corporate sponsors (strict criteria)  
Private foundations (eg. European Climate Foundation)  
Individual donations



### REQUIRED COMPETENCES

Needed for the launch and development.

- EU NGO management (democratic governance, administration, network facilitation, communication)
- Event and project management
- Fundraising
- Knowledge of EU educational policy
- Climate and climate policy knowledge
- Non-formal education (internal - for network animation)

### GOVERNANCE

- Inspiration from standard EU NGO alliances for the statutory structure and governance model (Annual General Assembly as the highest decision-making body, elected board for X years mandate, gender-balanced board).
- Respect of the highest standards of democratic governance and transparency.
- Possibility to hire management staff if funding allows.

# SUGGESTED ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

## EU PROJECTS

Participation as partner or leader in EU projects such as Erasmus+, LIFE, Europe for Citizens, H2020, etc. In particular, in the capacity of dissemination leader, organiser of launch and final events, advocacy work packages.

## ONLINE PLATFORM

Creating an online library of existing climate education resources, in multiple languages, with a search functionality, to facilitate the dissemination and sharing. Offering a dedicated space for members to exchange.

## EVENTS

Organisation of small (up to 50 participants) to medium size (up to 200 participants) events to share knowledge and skills about climate education. Events can take the form of conferences, training events and seminars. Facilitation of cross-sectoral dialogue and projects among diverse stakeholders.

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Development of policy documents (notes, briefs) to inform policy makers at the national and European levels on latest practices in climate education. Direct interaction with policy makers at the EU level (in particular DG EAC of the European Commission, CULT Committee of the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe). Advocacy training for members. Coordination with other policy alliances on education (i.e. LLLP) and climate change (i.e. Green 10).

## RESEARCH

Support or directly engage in research in the field of climate education (facilitate the collection of data, develop surveys, push for more research on the topic).

## QUALITY STANDARDS & QUALITY LABEL

Develop guidelines, and quality standards for different types of organisations, in order to increase the quality of their climate education activities. Offer recognition to organisations in the field by creating a quality label.

## GOVERNANCE

Organise an annual general assembly and regular board and working group meetings.

## NEW EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Support the work of members in the development of new tools and initiatives (translation of existing resources, networking to test and adjust resources, etc.).

## HOUSE OF CLIMATE EDUCATION

Develop a physical permanent space for the organisation to organise trainings and events with a year long programme.



# RISKS AND OBSTACLES

## SCOPE CONFUSION

- Climate education, environment education, nature education, sustainable development education can cover different realities. If definitions and scope are not agreed upon at the onset, it can lead to some misunderstanding and mis-functioning.
- The members of the alliance will agree on a set of basic definitions and will agree which are in scope for the work and focus of the alliance.

## DIVERSITY OF STAKEHOLDERS

- The alliance intends to gather organisations from the formal education sector, non-formal education, academia, from the local to the international level. The diversity of organisations can be problematic to agree on objectives and actions.
- The alliance will seek advice and import good practices from similar organisations and alliances, in particular organisations within the Lifelong Learning Platform - the main coalition of organisations in the field of education.

## COMPETITION WITH EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE NGOS

- The field of climate and environment NGOs at the European level is very crowded. The space for advocacy, media attention, funding is very competitive. If there is a perception of competition, that might hinder the work of the alliance because climate NGO should be partners.
- The alliance will seek dialogue and cooperation with established climate and environment NGOs, will actively demonstrate its unique and useful positioning in the field.

## LOW INTEREST & ACTIVITY FROM MEMBERS

- Potential organisations for the alliance are already busy with their own agenda and activities. There is a risk that they will not see the interest of joining or of being actively engaged in the activities of the organisation.
- The alliance will offer activities partly co-designed with its members to ensure it matches their needs. The alliance needs to demonstrate that it will be beneficial for its members to engage (find new tools & practices, new leads for funding, new ways to expand & disseminate activities, new ways to achieve broader impact.)
- The alliance will make the participation threshold as low as possible (for example through very low membership fees, at least at the beginning), to ensure the benefits of participation outweigh the costs or risks.

## POLITICISATION

- The alliance intends to be involved in the European political and public sphere in the field of climate education / education policies. Political use of the alliance must be avoided to ensure its efficiency. It must remain non-partisan. Organisation with partisan political goals might try to take advantage of it.
- The alliance will design governance structure that allow the non-partisan nature of the organisation to be protected.

## EXISTING RELEVANT INITIATIVES

### THE SHIFT PROJECT



The Shift Project is a French think-tank working towards a low-carbon economy. It has started a project on mobilising Higher Education for climate. It produced a report and a call signed by 150 higher education institutions in France to ensure every student in France is trained to understand the climate crisis.

### LA FRESQUE DU CLIMAT



La Fresque du Climat/The Climate Collage is a French NGO built around the development, promotion and dissemination of one non-formal education / interactive tool called La Fresque du Climat. It is a mapping and reflection group exercise around the climate crisis, its causes and consequences. A collaborative network of volunteer facilitators and trainers supports the development of the tool. Their tool is available in 18 languages and their training programme to become a facilitator is easily available.

### AVENIR CLIMATIQUE



Avenir Climatique is a French NGO that seeks to address the climate crisis issue through education and awareness raising activities towards (young) citizens. In particular, they have developed a collaborative conference under creative commons license that everyone can implement following a MOOC on Climate/Energie topics they also developed.

### LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM



The Lifelong Learning Platform is an umbrella that gathers 42 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth. Currently these networks represent more than 50 000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The LLLP is actively engaging with European institutions to advocate for progressive education policies in Europe.

### OFFICE FOR CLIMATE EDUCATION



The Office for Climate Education (OCE) was created in 2018 in order to promote a strong international cooperation between scientific organisations, education institutions and NGOs, with the aim of educating the young generations of today and tomorrow about climate change. The OCE aims at providing them with the tools they need to understand and act, and to be aware of received ideas and avoid irrationality. The OCE and its partners produce education resources and provide professional development and support to teachers around the world.

### FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



The Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation promoting sustainable development through environmental education. FEE is active through five programmes; Blue Flag, Eco-Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE), Learning about Forests (LEAF) and Green Key International. It has members in 77 countries worldwide.

### RESEAU IDÉE



Reseau Idée is a Belgian NGO network that gathers local NGOs working in the field of environment-related education. It offers tools and training to facilitate and improve environment education.

### GENERATION CLIMATE EUROPE



Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led NGOs at the European level, pushing for stronger action from the EU on climate and environmental issues. We bring together 8 of the largest European youth organisations, representing over 460 national organisations in all Member States and over 20 million young Europeans.



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MY EXPERIENCE [...] IS THAT PEOPLE UNDERSTAND MUCH LESS ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS THAN YOU'D THINK. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I'VE LEARN FROM TRAVELLING AROUND THE WORLD IT IS THAT THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS IS CLOSE TO NON-EXISTENT. I'VE MET MANY OF THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD AND EVEN AMONG THEM, PRETTY MUCH EVERY ONE LACKS EVEN SOME OF THE MOST BASIC KNOWLEDGE. SO IF PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE, WHO IS GUILTY FOR THE MESSAGE NOT GETTING THROUGH?

“

Greta Thunberg

