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From Diversity to Unity: Strengthening International Relations Through Peer Learning

EXPLORING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Learning objectives

- Understand what global challenges are and why they matter;
- Explore key environmental and sustainability issues worldwide;
- Learn about the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Compare challenges across Lithuania, Romania, Turkey, and Poland;
- Propose youth-led solutions;
- Collaborate across cultures to design sustainable actions.



ENVIRONMENT

What words come to your mind when you hear the word environment?

▶ **ENVIRONMENT**

A vertical flowchart with a central line and eight colored circles (orange, blue, green, purple) connected to eight horizontal boxes. Each box has a colored tab on top.

- Orange tab
- Blue tab
- Green tab
- Purple tab
- Orange tab
- Blue tab
- Green tab
- Purple tab

ENVIRONMENT

The environment refers to the total set of external conditions, forces, and elements that affect an organism's life.

This includes:

- **Biotic factors** — living things such as plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms.
- **Abiotic factors** — non-living things such as air, water, soil, sunlight, temperature, and

It also includes physical, chemical, and natural forces that influence life. Living things constantly interact with their environment and adapt to its conditions.

Types of environments

- **Natural environment** — forests, rivers, oceans, mountains, wildlife, climate, and natural resources. These exist without human modification.
- **Artificial (human-made) environment** — cities, farms, buildings, roads, reservoirs, and other spaces created or altered by humans.



Why the environment matters

- It provides resources like water, air, and food.
- It regulates climate and weather patterns.
- It supports biodiversity, allowing species to survive and evolve.
- It influences human health, culture, and economic activities

HUMAN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Human activities have transformed the environment more rapidly and intensely than at any other time in history. As populations grow and technology advances, the pressure placed on natural systems increases. The environment—made up of air, water, soil, plants, animals, and climate—responds to these pressures in ways that affect both ecosystems and human well-being. Understanding the major impacts helps explain why environmental protection has become a global priority.

One of the most significant human impacts is pollution. Industrial activities, transportation, and agriculture release large amounts of harmful substances into the air, water, and soil. Air pollution from vehicles and factories contributes to respiratory diseases and global warming. Water pollution, caused by sewage, chemicals, and plastic waste, harms aquatic life and contaminates drinking supplies. Soil pollution from pesticides and industrial waste reduces soil fertility and threatens food security. These forms of pollution weaken ecosystems and reduce biodiversity.



Another major impact is deforestation, the large-scale removal of forests for agriculture, logging, and urban development. Forests play a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide, regulating climate, and providing habitats for countless species. When forests are destroyed, carbon stored in trees is released into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change. Deforestation also leads to habitat loss, pushing many species toward extinction and disrupting ecological balance.



Climate change is one of the most far-reaching consequences of human activity. The burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil, and natural gas—releases greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. As a result, global temperatures rise, causing melting ice caps, rising sea levels, and more frequent extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes. These changes threaten ecosystems, agriculture, and human settlements, especially in vulnerable regions.



Human activities also contribute to loss of biodiversity. Overfishing, hunting, habitat destruction, and pollution reduce the number of species and disrupt food chains. Biodiversity is essential for ecosystem stability, medicine, agriculture, and cultural value. When species disappear, ecosystems become less resilient and less able to provide essential services such as clean air, fertile soil, and pollination.

Another significant impact is overuse of natural resources. Humans consume water, minerals, fossil fuels, and timber at a rate faster than the Earth can replenish them. Overextraction of water leads to droughts and shrinking rivers. Excessive mining damages landscapes and pollutes ecosystems. Unsustainable farming practices degrade soil and reduce long-term productivity.



Despite these challenges, humans also have the ability to protect and restore the environment. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Reforestation projects help restore habitats and absorb carbon dioxide. Recycling and waste reduction decrease pollution. Sustainable farming and fishing practices protect ecosystems while supporting human needs. Environmental education and international cooperation play a crucial role in promoting responsible behavior and long-term solutions.



Watch the following video for more information:

https://youtu.be/G4H1N_yXBIA?si=XG2OI-OqfN3SphRE

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Sustainable development means meeting our needs today without harming the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

In 2015, the United Nations (UNO) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, establishing 17 global goals designed to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Look at the following picture and identify which Sustainable Development Goal(s) relate to the environment:



Take a look at these goals in the following video:

<https://youtu.be/ZayhZdSquJk?si=t4RJsccidPPrEP0>

GROUP ACTIVITY - SDG DETECTIVES

Each team receives one SDG-related theme:

- **SDG 6 – Clean water**

How can we reduce water pollution?

- **SDG 13 – Climate action**

How can we reduce emissions?

- **SDG 15 – Life on land**

How can we protect forests and biodiversity?

- **SDG 12 – Responsible consumption**

How can we reduce waste and plastic use?



- Give solutions to your problem

Create a POSTER on the following page!

- keywords/slogans
- drawings
- icons/stickers
- concrete solutions

SAVE OUR
PLANET

QUIZ

What is carbon dioxide composed of?

1. One carbon and two oxygen atoms
2. Two carbon and one oxygen atoms
3. Three carbon and two oxygen atoms

A _____ is the amount of carbon dioxide released by a person or group.

1. carbon trail
2. carbon footprint
3. carbon path

True or False: Greenhouse gases allow the Earth's atmosphere to trap heat and increase the temperature of the planet.

1. True
2. False

True or False: Human activity does not impact or harm the environment.

1. True
2. False

Human consumption of which of the following resources pollute the atmosphere?

1. Food
2. Water
3. Fossil fuels
4. Land



How can humans reduce fossil fuel emissions?

- 1.Reduce the use of renewable energy
- 2.Replace fossil fuels with renewable energy
- 3.Remove the ability to plant trees and crops
- 4.Replace innovations with the use of fossil fuels

True or False: As the human population increases, scientists are observing an increase in ocean pollution, overfishing, acidification, and an increase in invasive species.

- 1.True
- 2.False

The process of clearing forests is known as what?

- 1.Decluttering
- 2.Deforestation
- 3.Forest removal

Follow this link for an interactive quiz:

https://np1.nearpod.com/sharePresentation.php?code=2df80cc9bc5014df79cac47eff092c48-1&oc=lesson-library&utm_source=link



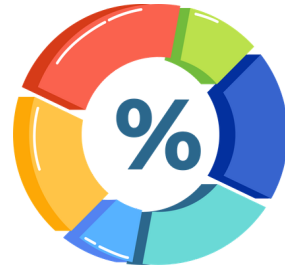
GROUP - WORK DISCUSSION

Work in groups, discuss what the main environmental problems are in each partner country (Lithuania, Poland, Turkey and Romania) and try to identify solutions for these problems.

Country	Problems	Solutions
Lithuania		
Poland		
Romania		
Turkey		



POLL



Which solutions would make the biggest difference?

- Using renewable energy (solar, wind, less coal)
- Reducing waste and recycle more
- Protecting forests and wildlife
- Improving public transport to reduce air pollution
- Saving water and preventing water pollution
- Reducing air pollution



MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS



1. Reduce fossil-fuel emissions

- Use public transport, bike, or walk whenever possible.
- Improve home energy efficiency: LED bulbs, insulation, energy-efficient appliances.
- Support renewable energy policies and companies.

2. Cut pollution



- Avoid single-use plastics and choose recyclable or reusable products.
- Reduce chemical use (pesticides, harsh cleaners).
- Support clean-air initiatives and tree-planting programs.

3. Protect biodiversity

Support conservation groups and habitat restoration.

Buy sustainably sourced products (e.g., FSC wood, certified seafood).

4. Adopt sustainable food habits



- Eat more local, seasonal, plant-based foods.
- Reduce food waste by planning meals and buying only what you need.

5. Advocate for systemic change

- Support policies that expand renewable energy, protect ecosystems, and reduce emissions.
- Participate in community cleanups, climate groups, or environmental campaigns.

SOLUTIONS SPECIFICALLY FOR TEENS

The most effective solutions to environmental problems combine big-system changes with everyday actions. Teens play a uniquely powerful role because their habits, voices, and choices influence families, schools, and communities.

1. Use energy wisely

- Turn off lights, consoles, and devices when not in use.
- Wear a sweatshirt instead of turning on heating unnecessarily.



2. Sustainable lifestyle choices

- Choose thrifted or long-lasting clothes.
- Bring reusable bottles and containers to school.
- Reduce junk food; choose healthier, eco-friendly meals.
- Keep the environment clean.



3. Eco-friendly transportation

- Walk, ride your bike, or use public transport instead of asking for car rides.

4. School-based climate action

- Advocate for recycling programs, energy-efficient lighting, or school gardens.
- Use youth climate action toolkits to push for change in your school.

5. Educate & influence others

- Share environmental facts on social media responsibly.
- Encourage family and friends to adopt greener habits.



6. Participate in youth-led climate movements

- Join local or online youth climate groups.
- Contribute to community projects like tree planting or cleanups.

CONCLUSIONS

The future of the planet depends on the choices made today. Human activity has placed enormous pressure on natural systems. Yet within this challenge lies an extraordinary opportunity - the chance to rebuild, restore, and reimagine our relationship with the Earth.

Protecting the environment begins with simple, meaningful actions—using resources wisely, reducing waste, choosing renewable energy, and caring for forests, water, and wildlife. These steps, multiplied across communities and nations, have the power to slow climate change, revive ecosystems, and secure clean air and water for generations to come.

Young people hold a unique strength in this effort. Their energy, creativity, and determination can inspire families, schools, and entire communities to act with greater responsibility. When youth lead with courage and conviction, they spark movements that reshape the world.

A sustainable future is not a distant dream—it is a path built through everyday decisions, collective action, and unwavering hope. Every tree planted, every piece of plastic refused, every step taken toward a cleaner lifestyle becomes part of a larger story - a story of people choosing to protect the only home they have.

Together, we can create a world where nature thrives, communities flourish, and future generations inherit a planet full of life and possibility.



FURTHER PRACTICE

[WWF'S WILD CLASSROOM | WORLD WILDLIFE FUND](#)

[HTTPS://CLIMATEKIDS.NASA.GOV](https://climatekids.nasa.gov)

[HTTPS://WWW.EARTHDAY.ORG/EDUCATION-RESOURCE-LIBRARY/](https://www.earthday.org/education-resource-library/)

[HTTPS://NP1.NEARPOD.COM/SHAREPRESENTATION.PHP?
CODE=740267BBF08E1A08F4CBFDA1F385C773-1&OC=USER-
CREATED&UTM_SOURCE=LINK](https://np1.nearpod.com/sharepresentation.php?code=740267bbf08e1a08f4cbfda1f385c773-1&oc=user-created&utm_source=link)

NEARPOD LESSON



REFERENCES

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/G4HIN_YXBIA?SI=XG2OL-OQFN3SPHRE](https://youtu.be/G4HIN_YXBIA?si=xG2OL-OQFN3SPHRE)

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/ZAYHZDSQUJK?SI=T4RJSCCEIDPPREPO](https://youtu.be/ZAYHZDSQUJK?si=T4RJSCCEIDPPREPO)

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?SI=3UCQITKP8BMNB01N&V=WMVLCJ=-
XKNM&FEATURE=YOUTU.BE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=3UCQITKP8BMNB01N&v=WMVLCJ-XKNM&feature=youtu.be)

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ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This booklet introduces students to today's most important global challenges and the ways people and nature are connected. Through explanations and interactive activities, it explores environmental issues, human impact, and the principles of sustainable development. Learners discuss how different countries face environmental problems and how young people can contribute to real solutions. The material encourages curiosity, teamwork, and responsible action, inspiring students to protect the planet and shape a more sustainable future.



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