

YOUNG PEOPLE WANT A REAL ROLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN THEIR SCHOOL CURRICULUM

IN SHORT :

- 1,019 young people gave their opinion on their environmental education in this new official Opinion from the Forum des Jeunes
- 91% of the young people surveyed believe that environmental education should be addressed more in the secondary school programme
- Their ideas: reform the secondary school programme, welcome speakers in schools and implement concrete projects to reconnect with the environment

INFOS : Link to the [Opinion \(in French\)](#) on our website

After having surveyed more than 1000 young people aged 16 to 30 in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Forum des Jeunes publishes its official Opinion on environmental education in secondary schools.

In a few figures :

- **91%** of respondents believe that environmental education **should be more addressed** in secondary school!
- For **74%** of respondents, environmental issues have **not** been **sufficiently** (60%) or **not at all** (14%) addressed in their secondary school education.
- **83%** of young people do not know of any **youth-friendly information sources** on climate change.

Young people want to learn more about current environmental issues in secondary school, through all their classes. They want to be informed about individual and collective **solutions**, about the **impacts** of climate change both locally and globally, about the **links between the climate crisis and other environmental crises**, and about the links between these crises and **social inequalities**.

Environmental Education (EE) needs to be further integrated **into the entire school education in a cross-curricular way**, and therefore **school programmes need to be updated and teachers trained**.

Young people also want **actors from outside the school to teach these subjects**. Youngsters want to be educated through **concrete actions** (vegetable garden, waste management, healthy snacks, sustainable canteen, etc.), and through the organisation of debates and events in schools. In order to do this, **collaboration between schools and external EE actors** must be encouraged and funded in a structural way.

We are right now experiencing the effects of climate change. Most young people feel **eco-anxiety** and a form of despair in the face of the urgency of the situation. Addressing these issues at school would allow each young person to be able **to grasp them, to create a sense of solidarity and belonging to a group, and even to generate new mobilisation initiatives**.

Forum des Jeunes is the official advisory body and spokesperson for young people aged 16 to 30 in the French-speaking community of Belgium

In order to ensure theoretical and practical contents and interdisciplinary approaches that respond to current environmental challenges in a coherent way, the Forum des Jeunes calls for **strengthening environmental education** through the following recommendations :

A. Education

- Refinancing of the **collaboration between schools and external actors providing EE** (associations, youth sector, etc.) in a structural way.
- Structurally **support schools that run EE projects** over the long term (material and financial support, learning activities and coaching, pedagogical resources, training, etc.), particularly during the implementation of the Steering Plans.
- From kindergarten to grade 3 of secondary school, **strengthen the collaboration with field actors in the drafting of school programmes** by clearly identifying the concrete activities and projects to be carried out in the field of environmental education.
- Integrate EE into the reference frameworks of **the last grades of secondary education**, in a transversal manner, to be tackled by all students, in transitional and qualifying education, in a transversal way, regardless of their study orientation.
- Make environmental education a priority subject **in the basic training** of all teachers, in a transversal manner and in connection with their respective disciplines, and provide them with the necessary tools to address EE in their respective subjects.
- Strengthen **lifelong training on environmental issues** for teachers so that they can integrate these issues into their courses.
- Provide teachers with time to coordinate EE projects.
- Promote and support the centralisation of the offer in the field of EE on the website of Réseau Idée for French-speaking Belgium, and support its specific information and pedagogical support service for teachers.
- Increase the awareness of parents who are active in the school and in their associations in order to organise their activities and events in an EE perspective.

WHAT ISSUES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED?

- The solutions, both individual (digital saving, reduction of meat consumption, promotion of second-hand goods, etc.) and collective (politics, business, civil society), to the various environmental crises;
- The impacts of climate change at both local and global levels;
- The links between climate change and other environmental crises (collapse of biodiversity, overexploitation, pollution);
- The links between these same crises and social inequalities (i.e. the concepts of climate justice and just transition);
- The emotions felt by young people in order to be able to act on these feelings and turn these obstacles into sources of motivation for action.

This information on EE must also **address the local and current context, and take into account the realities experienced by young people** in their diversity, in order to build a critical view of these issues and enable them to act and make choices consciously.

HOW SHOULD EE BE ADDRESSED?

- Ensure that EE is integrated into the entire school programme (from kindergarten to higher education), in particular within the reference frameworks of all disciplines in secondary school education.
- Encourage the implementation of concrete projects and actions (vegetable garden, waste sorting, healthy snacks, sustainable canteens, etc.) in schools, and the organisation of debates and events in schools (e.g. through the organisation of a Week for the Environment).
- Mobilise artistic and creative forms of expression in the learning of EE, as part of the Cultural and Artistic Education Pathway for each student.

The Forum des Jeunes also calls for the strengthening of environmental education outside school, through the following recommendations:

B. Outside of school

- Strengthen the **structural means of associations** whose target audience is young people and which are active in different sectors (youth, sport, culture), so that they can **train and provide an EE adapted to their public, in a transversal way**.
- Make visible and strengthen existing sources of information for parents on environmental education.

C. Access to information

- Strengthen **access to quality information** that is appropriate to the issues at stake in today's environmental challenges, so that young people can progressively take action and be actors of change.
- Support and make visible quality information sources that are aimed at young people and linked to environmental issues.
- Integrate **media education in mandatory education**, in all fields and in a transdisciplinary way, as soon as possible, in order to be able to analyse and verify online content and its authors.

D. On a political level

- Make **EE a political priority** by integrating it in a transversal way in the regional and Wallonia-Brussels Federation policy statements.
- Give more means to the Cooperation Agreement between the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region, relating to the Environment and Sustainable Development in Education, to carry out its missions and ensure the integration of EE in education.
- Assign a person in charge of EE in each cabinet and each administration.
- Ensure transversal coordination of EE across the administrations in charge of environmental issues.

