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Erasmus+ Programme  
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Agenzia Italiana  
per la Gioventù

# YOUTH WATER GUARDIANS

13-21.05.2024 - MESSINA, ITALY





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POLAND - Stowarzyszenie IMPAKT  
NORTH MACEDONIA - EduArt  
LITHUANIA - Tarptautinis bendradarbiavimo centras  
ROMANIA - Asociația BMN  
GREECE - Youthpath

# ABOUT OUR PROJECT

"Youth Water Guardians" took place in the beautiful coastal town of Sant'Alessio Siculo, Italy, at Hotel Solemar from May 13th to 21st, 2024. This vibrant Youth Exchange successfully brought together passionate young individuals aged 18-25 from six program countries: Italy, Poland, North Macedonia, Lithuania, Greece, and Romania.



Each national team consisted of six participants plus one Group Leader and one facilitator. Among them, several participants came from backgrounds with fewer opportunities, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

Throughout the exchange, participants actively delved into the pressing issue of water pollution, exploring its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. This diverse gathering provided a unique platform for sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices related to water conservation and sustainability.



Project Postcard

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2023-3-IT03-KA152-YOU-000174490>



# OUR PROJECT'S MOTIVATIONS

The main goals of YWG included exploring the causes of water pollution, identifying effective strategies to mitigate it, exchanging knowledge across Europe, promoting the Erasmus+ Programme, and fostering personal growth and partnerships among participants.



Another critical goal was to inspire and mobilize communities to take meaningful action against water pollution.

Participants worked towards this by creating impactful awareness campaigns and engagement activities, culminating in the powerful "No Clean Water No Life" showcase.

Through this final event, they aimed to raise awareness about water conservation and encourage communities to adopt sustainable water practices. By inspiring collective action, the project sought to drive positive environmental change on a broader scale.



# THE STORY

From the moment we gathered in Sant'Alessio Siculo, the excitement was palpable. We kicked off our first day with energizing icebreakers and team-building activities, setting the tone for a week of deep learning, cultural exchange, and impactful action.



Our team-building exercises were hands-on and thought-provoking. Crafting water filters from plastic bottles made us think critically about water purification challenges.



A community beach cleanup further cemented our commitment to environmental action, as we joined forces to clean the beautiful shoreline of Sant'Alessio Siculo.





The core of our project revolved around hands-on activities that brought us face-to-face with the realities of water pollution. One of our most impactful days started with a sensory walk along the beach, where participants guided each other blindfolded, connecting deeply with nature through touch and sound.



Back at our venue, we rolled up our sleeves for some creative workshops. Divided into teams, we explored the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to water. Each group prepared presentations, merging research with creativity to bring their points to life.













Next, we focused on creating podcasts that addressed the critical issue of water pollution. Using professional recording gear, participants learned how to use podcasting as a powerful communication tool. Each team shared highlights from their countries, bringing practical examples of water-related challenges and solutions to the table. The result was an engaging mix of informative and inspiring content, showcasing diverse perspectives and offering real-world insights. Despite being new to podcasting, everyone embraced the process, turning their learnings into impactful stories that resonated with our shared mission.






No youth exchange in Sicily would be complete without immersing in its rich history and culture. Our trips to Savoca and Taormina were breathtaking. Walking through these historic towns, we not only enjoyed the stunning views but also connected our project's environmental theme with the cultural heritage of the region.





# NO CLEAN WATER NO LIFE



## FINAL EVENT

The culmination of our journey was the grand event, "No Clean Water No Life." This showcase brought together all the incredible work we had accomplished throughout the week. Participants presented short films on critical topics such as Farm Runoff, Industrial Waste, Overfishing, Plastic and Trash, Oil Spills, and Wastewater, shedding light on these pressing water pollution issues. Each film provided practical examples from their countries, illustrating the real-world impact of these challenges.





In addition to the films, we created a stunning photo gallery, capturing moments that reflected both the beauty of water and the threats it faces. These photographs were printed and displayed, adding a powerful visual element to the event.



But that wasn't all! We also crafted speeches, poems, and banners that conveyed powerful messages about water conservation and environmental responsibility. The poems and speeches added a heartfelt, personal touch, while the banners served as vibrant, artistic expressions of our collective mission.







# OVERFISHING



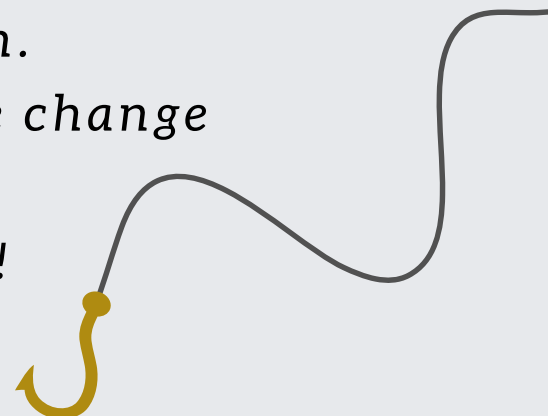
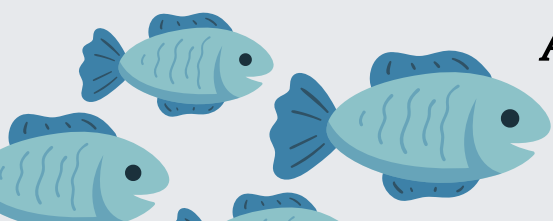
*Little fish under the sea  
the water is your house  
as everyone can see.*

*We are destroying your life  
by fishing you and leaving plastic  
of every size.*

*We are causing big wars  
CO2 emissions, sensitive species  
and habitat loss.*

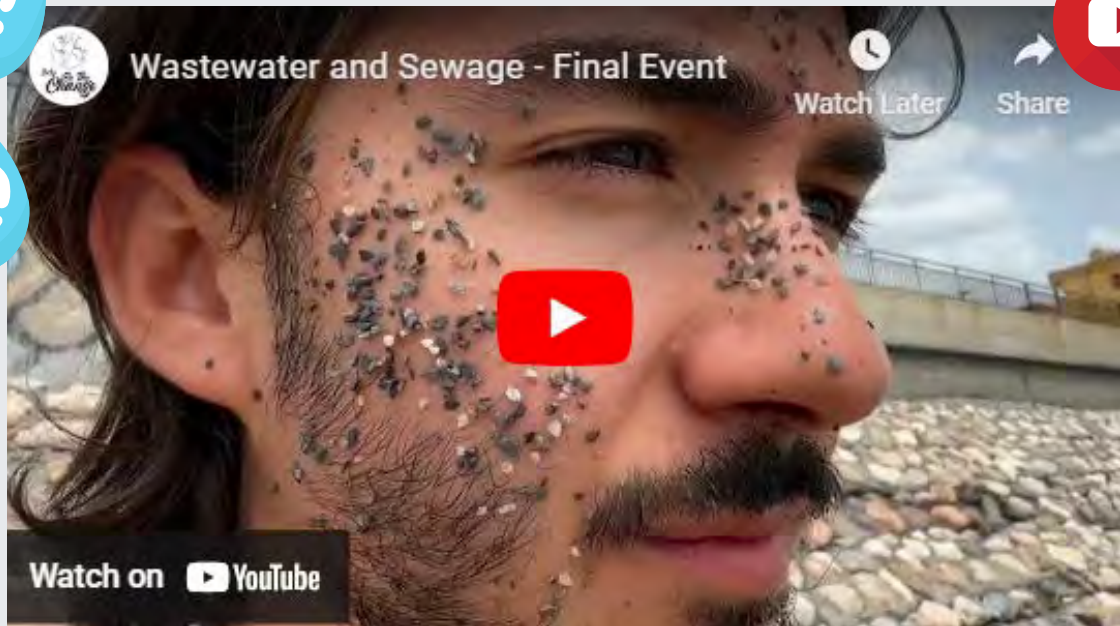
*Overfishing is not an option,  
protecting the environment  
must be our mission.*

*We don't want the climate change  
so make an action  
And be the change!*





# WASTEWATER AND SEWAGE



## ***Water Journey***

*In clean springs  
From mountain heights  
They gently flow  
A journey starts*

*Through smooth rocks  
They weave and wind  
Their liquid path  
Both soft and wide*

*They serve the thirst of earth and tree  
A lifeblood pulse, forever free  
But as they wander far and wide  
They meet the towns where people lie*

*From faucets turned  
They fill our glass  
A gift of life  
From nature's past*

*We use it more and like the feel  
The true price we will reveal  
Down the drain, they swirl away  
To darker depths where shadows play*

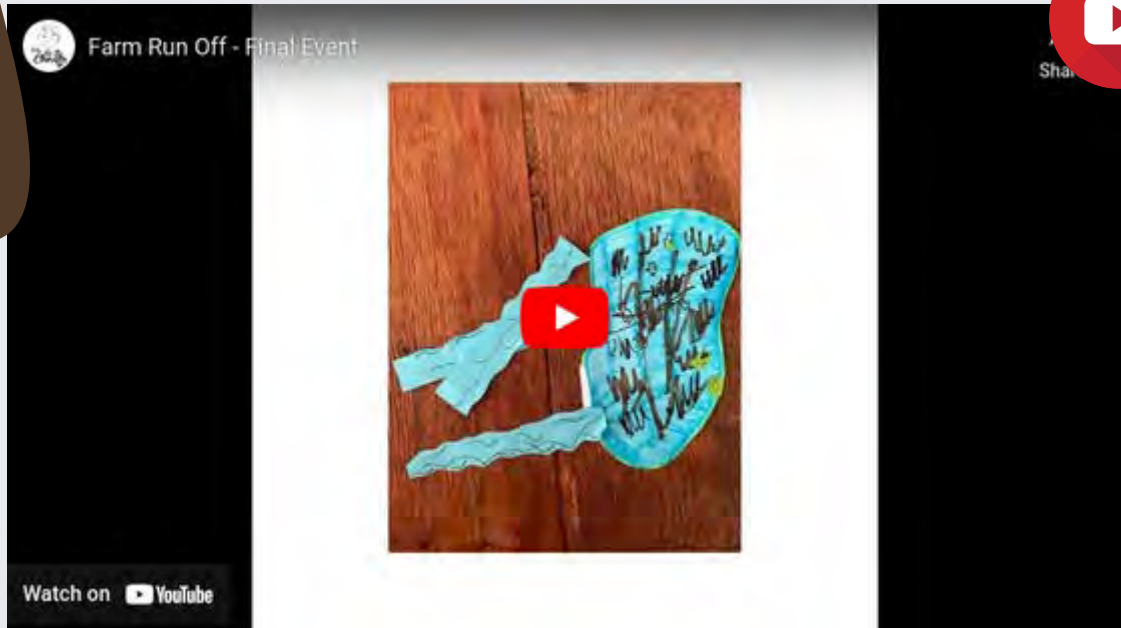
*Thorough pipes and drains  
They lose their grace  
From clean to grey  
A longer trace*

*In treatment plants they strive to mend  
Remove the stains the waste they bend  
Yet still they bear the marks we leave  
A silent plea for us to see*

*So let us cherish every drop  
From lake to stream  
From hill to top*



# FARM RUNOFF





## WE LOVE FARMS

COWS, CHICKENS, AND VEGETABLES TASTE FINE,  
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER SIDE?  
WATER GETS CONTAMINATED FROM THE FOOD THAT YOU EAT.

BAMMMMM!!!

YOU LOOK GOOD IN YOUR FARM BOOTS,  
YOUR COWBOY HAT AND THE JEANS WITH THE STRAPS,  
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WATER YOU DISCARD?  
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF THAT?

WE LOVE THE BIG TOMATOES, THE LUSH, JUICY FRUITS.  
IS THIS A JACKED COW?  
OMG, THAT'S SO COOL!

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DRUGS, PESTICIDES, AND FERTILIZERS  
THAT YOU USE? OMG, THE RIVER IS PURPLE!  
THAT'S AMAZING! AND WAIT, IS THAT A FROG WITH FIVE LEGS?  
THAT'S NEW.



NO ONE LIKES THE SMELL.  
SHIT CAN BE TURNED INTO COMPOST,  
AND BRANCHES THAT YOU PRUNE INTO BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS.  
BUT COME ON, HAVE YOU ACTUALLY EVER MADE COMPOST OUT OF SHIT?  
I'VE SEEN YOU IN YOUR FUNNY HAT, THROWING THAT SHIT INTO A POND.



WE LOVE FARMERS AND THE THINGS THEY PRODUCE.  
WE WOULDN'T SURVIVE WITHOUT THEM. BUT SOME THINGS  
NEED TO BE IMPROVED.





Runoff happens when the water from rain, melted snow or irrigation doesn't sink into the soil for proper absorption. Instead, it moves over the ground, picking up natural and artificial pollutants along the way. Eventually, those contaminants get deposited into coastal waterways, lakes, rivers and even underground sources of drinking water. And this causes water pollution.

About half the land area in the United States is farmland. These nearly 1.2 billion acres (akër) produce an abundant supply of food and other products. Activities on working farms and ranches can affect water quality, both locally and across multi-state watersheds.

Farm runoff is something people not usually see as a problem and they tend to neglect it. Even though manure fertilizers and other "natural" junk is biodegradable, the amount that we allow to flow into rivers and lakes every year greatly overcomes the ability of their decomposition. In big industrial farms, waste is usually taken care of by special cleaning facilities.

But pesticides, fertilizers and a bunch of different chemicals cannot be controlled as easily.

There are some ways to reduce runoff:

- Stricter measurements should be implemented in terms of controlling the farmers' actions
- Farmers should leave the soil surface undisturbed from harvest to planting using conservation practices such as no-till or conservation tillage to reduce runoff,
- Plant cover crops to uptake residual nutrients, and/or maintain vegetated buffer strips around fields and streams to intercept runoff.
- These tillage and conservation cover practices can also improve soil health by building up organic material over time.
- In order to use the manure from the farm animals like cows and pigs, farmers should not give any antibiotics to their animals. The manure will need to be processed before used by bacteria and there should be a strict test that is safe for the ecosystem especially free from mutants.

I come from a place with hundreds of lakes. My parents told me stories that the color of their water was crystal clear and blue, almost like Sicilian coast. But since the times of Soviet Union we started farming more efficiently and digging small canals next to farmlands in order to control the irrigation of crops.

However, these canals are directly connected to rivers and lakes, so over time farm runoff reached all of the beautiful sources of water, turning them dark brown colour. A lot of algae appeared and the bottom surface became all soft and mushy. All my life lakes look like this but I really hope the situation will change and I would see what previous generations saw.

Additionally I would like to speak about farming with polluted water, which is a bit of a paradox - every crop needs water at some point, but farming can also pollute it. So if we farm without sustainable solutions, we might get stuck in a cycle that brings diseases, famines and other disasters.



# INDUSTRIAL WASTE



INDUSTRIAL  
WASTE   
RECLAIM REUSE  
REIMAGINE

@bethechange





By the river, clear and bright,  
Fish would swim with all their might.  
Big factories came, puffing smoke,  
Now the river makes us choke.  
Fish are gone, the water's slow,  
Pollution makes it hard to flow.  
Once it sparkled, now it's gray,  
All the life has gone away.  
Machines are loud, skies aren't blue,  
Nature's sad and needs us too.  
Let's clean rivers, make them new,  
Bring back waters bright and blue.





Good evening, in this speech we will discuss one of today's major environmental problems, namely water pollution caused by industrial activities.

Industries are one of the main causes of water contamination, responsible for more than 70% of freshwater pollution according to the World Health Organisation.

Every year, around 300 million tonnes of pollutants are poured into our waterways from industries around the world, endangering the health of more than 1.8 billion people who use contaminated drinking water, with devastating health consequences.

To tackle this problem, it is essential to take decisive measures, such as:

1. Check that industrial discharges are in compliance with the law;
2. Invest in cleaner technologies, such as renewable energy;
3. Educating people on the importance of water and its responsible use.

Collaboration and communication between governments, industries and local realities should also be promoted in order to create new strategies for sustainable and locally appropriate industrial development.

In conclusion, it is clear that industrial pollution, and consequently water pollution, poses a significant threat to our health and environment. Action is needed now to protect our planet and ensure a healthier future for all.

Thank you.



# PLASTIC & TRASH





Throwing plastic is not bombastic  
And we have to keep our world fantastic  
If u want to make some cash don't throw  
away that trash  
Because Spyros will get hurt and covered in  
dirt  
But let's be serious and get to the point  
Long after we have come and gone  
Our plastic footprints will live on  
Let's turn the page and be the change





Today, we want to draw your attention to a pressing environmental issue that demands our immediate action: plastic pollution in our oceans.

### 1. The Scale of the Problem

Every year, over 380 million tonnes of plastic waste is generated globally. Shockingly, more than 8 million tonnes of this plastic ends up in our oceans. To put this in perspective, that's equivalent to the combined weight of 2 million elephants. This staggering amount of plastic waste has profound implications for marine life, ecosystems, and ultimately, human health.

### 2. The Human Connection

Approximately 3 billion people around the world regularly consume fish. This means nearly half of the global population relies on fish as a staple in their diets. However, when fish ingest plastic waste, the plastic contaminants enter our food chain. While the full extent of how consuming plastic affects human health is still unknown, initial studies indicate potential risks, which underscores the urgency of addressing this issue.

### 3. Impact on Marine Life

Marine animals often mistake plastic debris for food. Research indicates that 33% of fish have ingested plastic, which contains harmful chemicals and toxins. These substances can severely impact their health, leading to fatal outcomes. Furthermore, plastic waste can entangle marine animals. Without hands to free themselves, they are often trapped by fishing nets or plastic packaging, impairing their ability to eat, swim, and sometimes, even leading to their death by drowning.

### 4. The Microplastics Menace

As plastic decomposes, it breaks down into smaller fragments known as microplastics. Unlike larger pieces of plastic that can be removed from coastlines, microplastics are nearly invisible to the naked eye, making them incredibly difficult to eliminate. Despite their tiny size, microplastics pose significant threats to marine life and ecosystems, and they continue to accumulate in our oceans.

### 5. Future Projections and Solutions

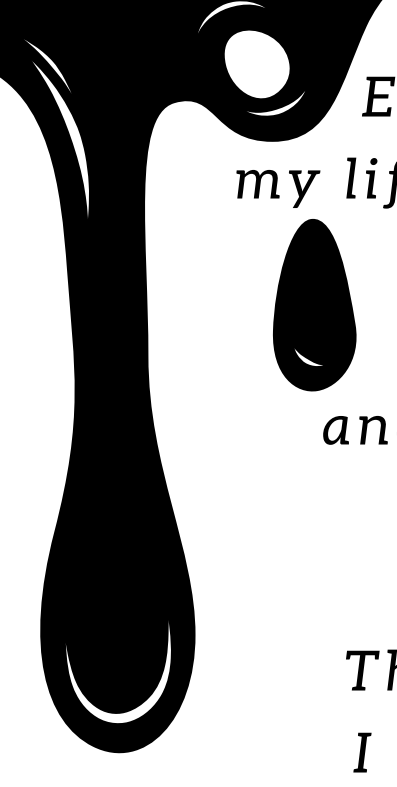
If we do not change our current practices, ocean plastic pollution is projected to triple by 2040. However, there is hope. By taking decisive action to reduce plastic production and investing in sustainable alternatives, we could cut the amount of ocean plastic pollution by 80%. This requires global cooperation, innovative thinking, and a commitment to sustainability.



# OIL SPILLS








Ever since the poison spread,  
my life has been hanging by a thread.

I was once free  
to spread my wings  
and fly above the ocean's rings.

Oil spills have created  
waves of mass destruction  
Threatening to swallow us all.  
I heard the dolphins' delirium  
as they exhaled petroleum  
The whales as well were screaming.

They were trying to warn me  
That this is a chain reaction  
A vicious circle  
Of death and mayhem.


If I get caught in  
the oil trap,



I could die within two weeks.  
I don't know where to go now.  
I guess I could fly somewhere else  
Although this has been my home  
since the beginning of time.

All of my friends are now dying  
And I cannot bear to watch them  
suffer any longer.

But my wings have never been heavier.





Ladies and Gentlemen,

Imagine a perfect day at the beach. The sun is shining, the waves are gentle, and everything seems perfect. But then, a thick, black substance starts to spread over the water. This is the nightmare of an oil spill—harmful, ugly, and preventable.

Oil spills do more than just make our beaches dirty. They destroy marine life. Birds can't fly, fish can't breathe, and entire ecosystems are damaged. Disasters like the Exxon Valdez in 1989 and the Deepwater Horizon in 2010 left lasting scars that we still see today.

Why should we care? Oceans are vital to our survival. They control the climate, produce over half the oxygen we breathe, and provide food for millions. When oil spills happen, it throws everything off balance, affecting not just sea creatures but our lives too.

Here's the important part—each of us can help. Yes, even you! By supporting clean energy, demanding better laws to prevent oil spills, and joining beach clean-ups, we can make a big difference.

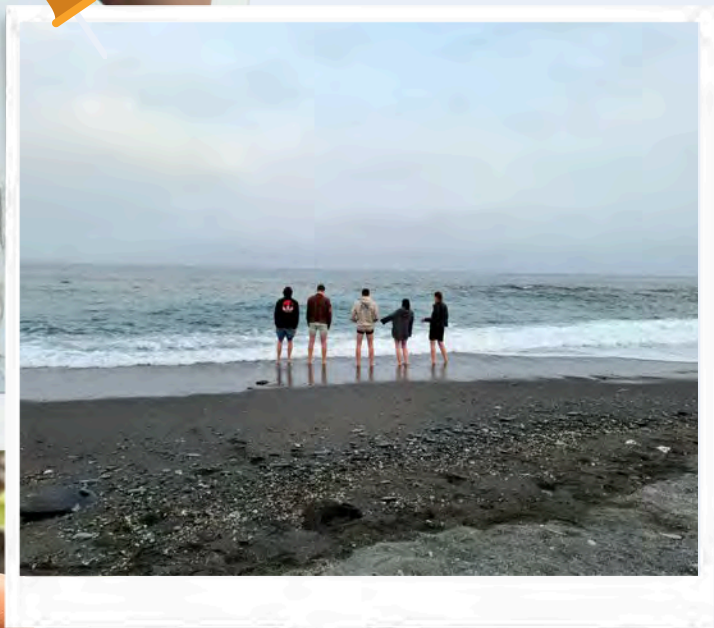
Did you know that just one liter of motor oil can pollute one million liters of water? Think about the damage a large oil spill can do! We need to act fast to stop these disasters before they start.

Imagine the ocean as a beautiful symphony, where every creature plays a part. When oil spills happen, it's like hitting a wrong note in this music, creating chaos and harm.

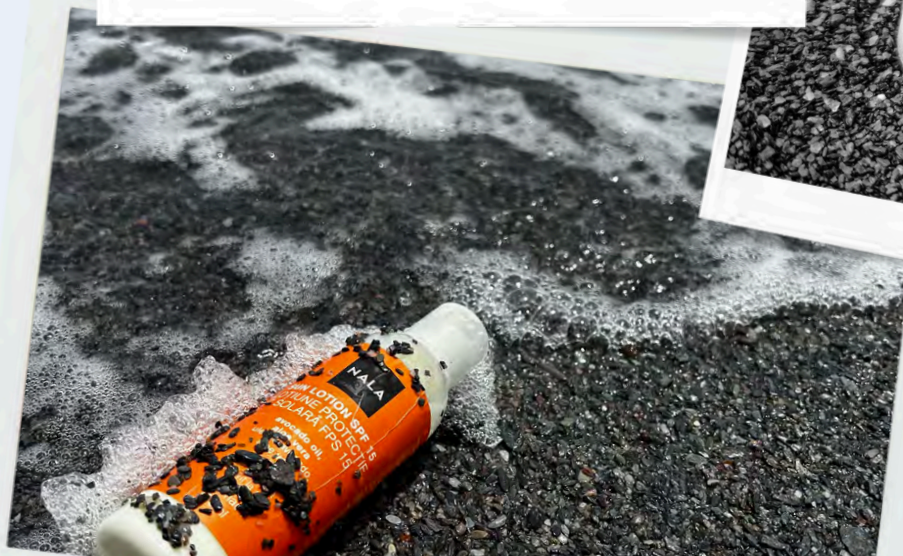
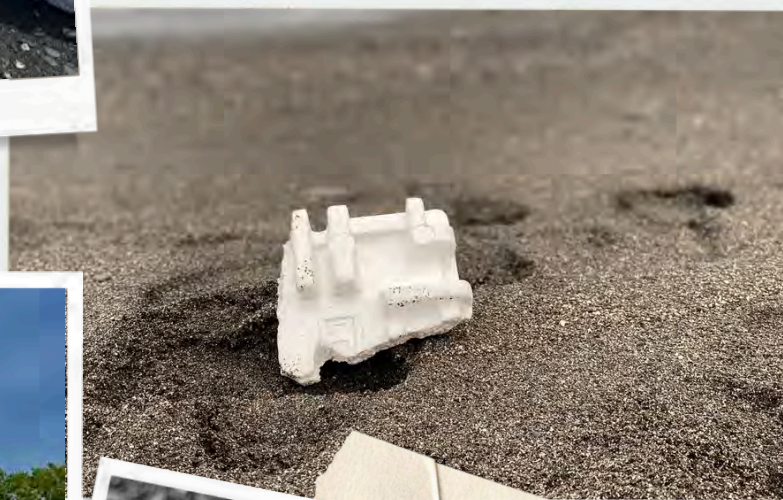
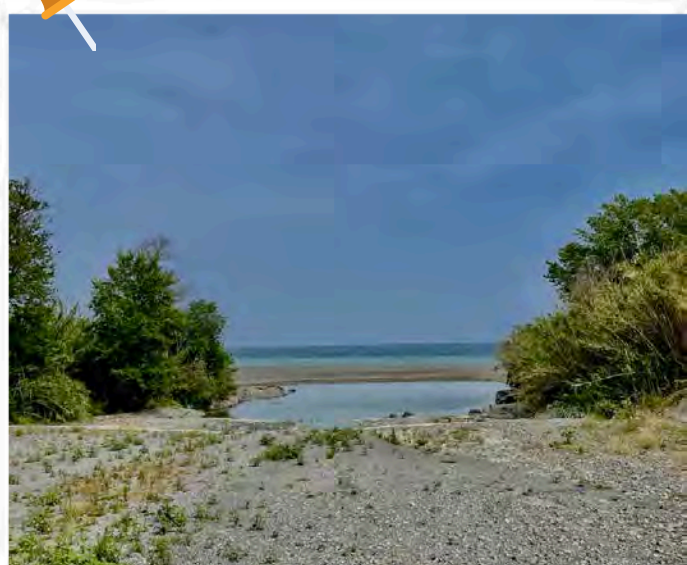
Let's make a promise today to protect our oceans. Let's ensure that future generations can enjoy clean beaches, thriving marine life, and all the benefits our oceans provide. Together, we can keep our waters clean and our planet healthy.

Thank you!





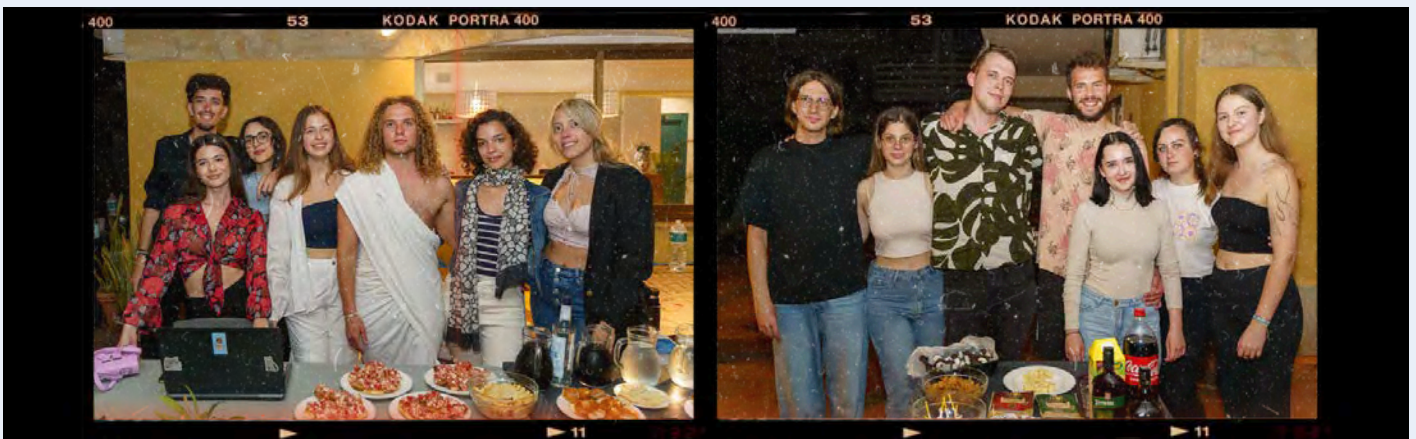
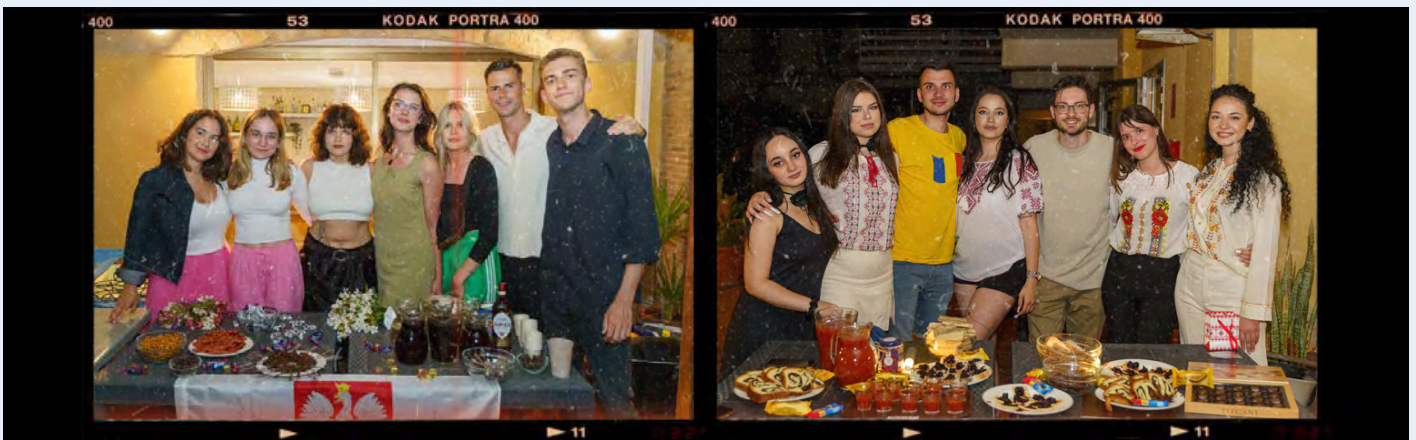
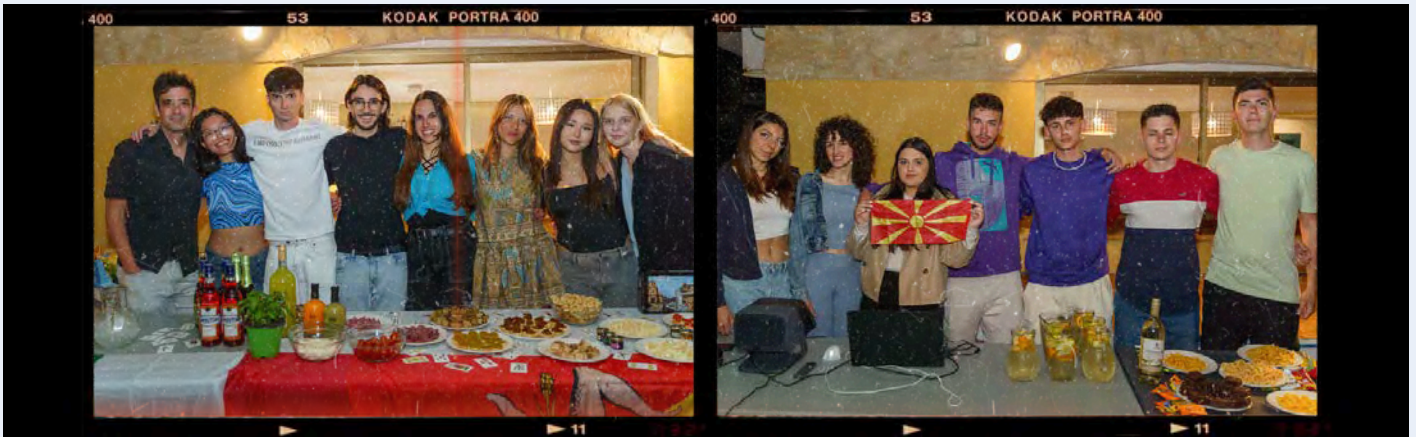






# INTERCULTURAL NIGHTS

Intercultural Nights were a highlight of our exchange. Each country: Greece, Poland, Italy, Romania, North Macedonia, and Lithuania shared their unique traditions, music, dances, and cuisine. These evenings were a vibrant celebration of diversity, filled with laughter, music, and delicious food, creating unforgettable memories and deepening our connections.





The impact of "Youth Water Guardians" was profound. Throughout the week, we gained valuable insights into water pollution and practical approaches to address it. The hands-on activities, from creating podcasts to crafting short films, allowed us to develop key skills such as digital media production, creative thinking, and effective communication. Working together on presentations, photo galleries, and banners strengthened our abilities in team collaboration and project management.





As all good things must come to an end, our final day at "Youth Water Guardians" was filled with heartfelt moments. We gathered close to the sea, the soothing sound of waves creating a perfect backdrop for our last reflections. Stories were shared, laughter echoed, and yes, a few tears were shed as we said our goodbyes. We promised to keep in touch and carry forward the mission we embraced together.

"Youth Water Guardians" was an unforgettable journey, immersing us in the critical issue of water pollution while forging friendships that will last a lifetime. From cleaning beaches to creating inspiring podcasts and films, every moment was packed with learning, teamwork, and just a touch of sand stuck between our toes!

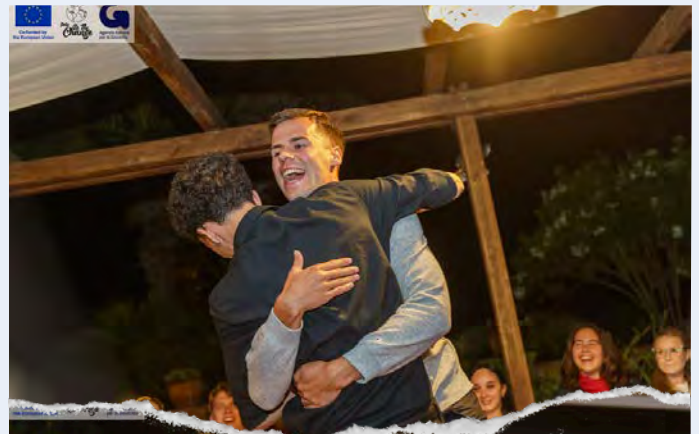
A huge thank you to Be The Change for bringing us together on this incredible journey. As we head back to our corners of Europe, let's carry the lessons we've learned and the friendships we've made, ready to ripple out into our communities. Here's to the waves we've made and the ones still to come—together, we'll continue making a difference, one drop at a time. Cheers to all the guardians out there—let's keep the tide of change going strong! 🌊💙







"Plenty of activities to let us understand the problem of water pollution and how each country face this problem. We lived next to the sea and everything was reminding me how we should change our habits before we'll lose the pleasure to live other kind of similar experiences"



"Youth exchange programme was an amazing experience for me. As a biochemist student I loved the topic of the project and all the activities that it had to offer. Some memorable moments were the making of the water filter, cleaning the beach and having great parties. If I could I would do it all over again."





"In this project I learned more about water pollution and how important it is to keep our environment clean. I learned to socialize more in English, I made a lot of friends and I would like to keep in touch. I had the opportunity to travel a day in Taormina and I fell in love with this city, it was very beautiful"

"Participating in the youth exchange was truly a wonderful experience. The facilitator did an amazing job unifying everyone and making sure that no one stays alone. The activities were fun, the people were amazing, and it will really hurt going back home"





# GREAT MEDIA TO TACKLE THE TOPIC

# SOURCES



## 5 TED-Ed Lessons about water

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human right. But just why is it so important? To learn all about water and how it affects the human body, watch this playlist of original animated vi...

TED-Ed Blog / Aug 8, 2017





# USEFUL LINKS



Achieving SDG 6 ensures access to clean water and sanitation, safeguarding public health and reducing environmental pollution. UNEP promotes innovative water management strategies to meet these targets.



SDG 6 addresses the need for clean water and sanitation to achieve sustainable development. UN DESA tracks progress and offers data-driven strategies to tackle global water challenges.



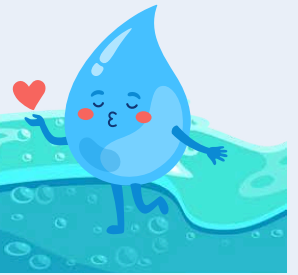
Water reuse is a critical solution for addressing water scarcity in Europe. The European Commission champions sustainable water recycling to preserve resources for future generations.



World Water Week is the leading global event to tackle water challenges, fostering collaboration and innovation for a sustainable future. It unites experts, organizations, and decision-makers to address water crises and drive actionable solutions.



# 7 TIPS TO SAVE AND PROTECT WATER



1. Install water-saving fixtures like low-flow showerheads and dual-flush toilets. Fixing leaks and using efficient appliances can greatly reduce water usage.
2. Dispose of harmful substances like chemicals, oils, and pharmaceuticals properly to prevent water contamination.
3. Avoid single-use plastics and recycle responsibly. Reducing plastic waste helps protect water bodies from pollution.
4. Choose products from farms practicing sustainable methods to minimize chemical runoff into waterways.
5. Participate in or organize clean-up drives in your area to help reduce litter and pollution in local water sources.
6. Collect rainwater for non-drinking purposes like watering plants or cleaning to conserve freshwater supplies.
7. Get involved in efforts to restore and protect wetlands, rivers, and forests, which naturally filter and maintain water quality.

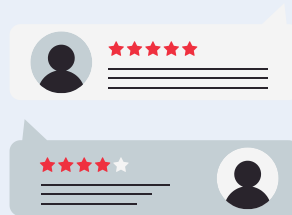






# DISSEMINATION MATERIAL

CREATED DURING  
THE PROJECT



## WEB PAGE

<https://www.bethechangeitaly.com/post/youth-water-guardians>

## FINAL EVENT & PODCAST (VIDEO PLAYLIST)

[https://youtube.com/playlist?  
list=PLc\\_PVdNfRgbmvgsXmo0BkVFbCreYSmjut&si=imf  
q-nYZ7flhEaBY](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLc_PVdNfRgbmvgsXmo0BkVFbCreYSmjut&si=imfq-nYZ7flhEaBY)

## PHOTO ALBUM

<https://youtu.be/ADW3IRzOwOE>

## INSTAGRAM/TIKTOK/ SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK

[bit.ly/3ZoAx8w](https://bit.ly/3ZoAx8w)

[bit.ly/4eNe2OP](https://bit.ly/4eNe2OP)

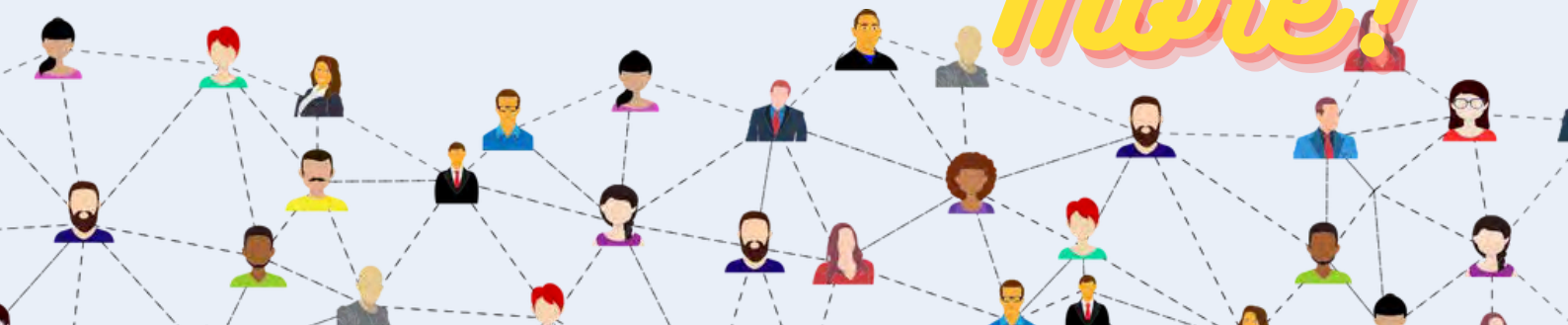
[bit.ly/4g4HmRZ](https://bit.ly/4g4HmRZ)

[bit.ly/496Di1s](https://bit.ly/496Di1s)

[bit.ly/4eQv7Yh](https://bit.ly/4eQv7Yh)

[bit.ly/4fG2GNS](https://bit.ly/4fG2GNS)

*and much  
more!*







# WHAT IS THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

Erasmus+ is a European Union (EU) program that aims to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. It provides funding for individuals and organizations to participate in exchange and mobility activities within the EU and beyond.

Erasmus+ offers a range of opportunities, including study and work placements, traineeships, and volunteering projects. It also supports cooperation and innovation in the education and training sectors, as well as in youth and sport.

## MOBILITY PROJECTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Erasmus supports non-formal learning mobility of young people in the form of **Youth Exchanges**, with the objective to engage and empower young people to become active citizens, connect them to the European project as well as help them acquire and develop competencies for life and their professional future.

More specifically, Youth Exchanges aim to:

- foster intercultural dialogue and learning and feeling of being European;
- develop skills and attitudes of young people;
- strengthen European values and break down prejudices and stereotypes;
- raise awareness about socially relevant topics and thus stimulate engagement in society and active participation.

The Action is open to all young people, with a special focus on those with fewer opportunities.



# YOUTH EXCHANGES

## OVERVIEW

A youth exchange allows a group of young people from different countries to meet, live together and work on shared projects for a short period.

Youth exchanges take place outside the school environment.

On a youth exchange, you can expect to participate in activities such as workshops, exercises, debates, role-plays, outdoor activities and more. Participants' learning experiences are recognised through a Youthpass.

## DURATION

Youth exchanges last between 5 and 21 days. This excludes travelling time.

## CONDITIONS

Youth exchanges are open to people between the ages of 13 and 30 yo. To be a group leader in a youth exchange, you must be at least 18 yo.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The EU grant supports travel as well as practical and activity-related costs necessary for the exchange.



**Erasmus+**

EU programme for education, training, youth and sport

More info at <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>



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	<b>ASOCIATIA BMN</b> 	
	<b>EDUART</b> 	
	<b>STOWARZYSZENIE IMPAKT</b> 	
	<b>YOUTHPATH</b> 	
	<b>TARPTAUTINIS BENDRADARBIAVIMO CENTRAS</b> 	



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