



GUARDIANS OF TRUTH

Empowering Youth Against

Greenwashing

Toolkit - Part 3

Fragmented education

About greenwashing in Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands and Turkey – practices and possibilities in education, empowerment and engagement of young people against greenwashing.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Guardians of Truth Erasmus+ KA210 Youth Project © 2025 by The Tree Party is licensed under CC BY 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



About the Project

This report comes from the "Guardians of Truth" Erasmus+ KA210 Youth Project, which kicked off in September 2024. It's funded by the European Union, and the goal is to make young people and youth workers stronger against greenwashing.

Our project is a joint effort by four awesome organizations:

- Alternativi International from Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria
- Impactgrid e.V. from Berlin, Germany
- Stichting The Tree Party from Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Nicea Culture and Education Association from Iznik, Turkey

WHAT'S IN THIS MATERIAL?

MATERIAL 1:

- Understanding the concept and types of greenwashing
- Curriculum and awareness deficiency
- Advertising and social media tactics that mislead consumers

MATERIAL 2

- Difficulty identifying greenwashing
- Greenwashing in key sectors (fashion, food, energy, cosmetics)
- Impact of greenwashing on climate change and sustainability

MATERIAL 3

- Fragmented education and lack of national strategy
- Developing critical thinking and fact-checking skills

MATERIAL 4:

- Urban-rural divide and low trust
- Equipping youth with tools to become sustainable and responsible consumers



MATERIAL 3

- Raise awareness among youth and youth workers about the growing problem of greenwashing and its effects on trust, behaviour, and environmental engagement.
- Equip participants with critical thinking tools and practical competences (such as Life-Cycle Thinking and Total Cost of Ownership) to make informed, responsible, and realistic sustainability choices.
- Bridge the gap between urban and rural perspectives by fostering empathy, dialogue, and collaboration that highlight diverse realities in access to sustainable lifestyles and information.
- Empower young people to become active communicators and changemakers, capable of designing inclusive, ethical, and context-sensitive campaigns that inspire genuine community-level action.



After reading the material, the participants will be able to:

- Recognise and critically analyse greenwashing in media, products, and marketing campaigns, distinguishing between factual sustainability information and manipulative communication.
- Understand the urban-rural divide in sustainability awareness and behaviour, identifying how context, access, and opportunity shape different environmental realities.
- Apply key analytical tools such as Life-Cycle Thinking (LCT) and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) to evaluate the environmental and financial impact of everyday consumer choices.
- Design and communicate inclusive, evidence-based sustainability campaigns, adapting messages ethically to both urban and rural audiences and rebuilding trust through honest, participatory communication.

Youth all over Europe care deeply about the environment – but the way they act on that concern differs depending on their background and environment.

Where we live shapes not only our habits, but also what options we have. In cities, youth may see eco-friendly shops and campaigns everywhere. In rural areas, sustainability might look like saving water, repairing equipment, or relying on community exchange instead of consumerism.



However, both groups face the same challenge: greenwashing – the manipulation of environmental messages for profit. When young people can't tell truth from marketing, they lose trust and motivation to act. This module equips youth and youth workers to recognise misleading claims, rebuild trust, and design honest, inclusive sustainability messages that speak to both rural and urban realities.

Key Concept 1 – Greenwashing and Its Impact on Youth Trust

Definition: Greenwashing is when organisations use language, symbols, or design to appear more sustainable than they actually are.

Why it matters to young people?

Why it matters for youth:

- It creates false confidence – young consumers may believe they are making sustainable choices when they are not.
- It causes eco-fatigue – when every brand claims to be green, youth may stop believing any of them.

It increases urban-rural distrust – many rural youth perceive sustainability as an “urban fashion,” while urban youth may not see the structural barriers rural.



Learning link: In Truth Detectives: Spot the Greenwash, participants learn to identify manipulative marketing and rebuild confidence in verified information.

Key Concept 2 – The Urban–Rural Divide in Access and Opportunity

Urban youth: usually have more exposure to sustainability campaigns, recycling systems, and digital eco-content – but also more exposure to false advertising and consumer pressure.

Rural youth: often live closer to natural resources but have limited access to recycling, public transport, or affordable eco-products.

Educational insight: Environmental action must be taught as contextual – what works in a city may not in a village.

For example:

- Buying local food is easier in rural areas, while reducing packaging is easier in cities.
- Electric vehicles may be accessible in cities but unrealistic in remote regions without charging infrastructure.

Learning link: Mind the Gap allows participants to feel these differences physically and emotionally, promoting empathy and understanding between youth from diverse regions.

Key Concept 3 – From Awareness to Sustainable Behaviour



Awareness alone does not lead to change. Young people need skills and competences to act responsibly and critically.

Sustainability education today integrates three learning dimensions:

First comes the cognitive dimension, which involves understanding how sustainability systems function, how individual consumer choices affect the environment, and how the entire life-cycle of a product – from production to disposal – determines its real ecological footprint. This knowledge is introduced through guided input and reinforced in the Basket on a Budget activity, where participants explore how information and pricing influence their decisions.

The practical dimension focuses on the ability to apply this knowledge in real-life situations – to make informed daily choices and to evaluate what is realistic within one's own context. Participants practice this during interactive comparisons of different products, learning how total cost of ownership (TCO) can reveal hidden environmental and financial impacts.

Finally, the socio-emotional dimension helps young people build empathy, responsibility, and a sense of personal agency. Through collaborative exercises such as Step Forward and Local Heroes, they develop mutual understanding of diverse realities and see how collective reflection and creative communication can drive positive change.

Together, these dimensions align with the EU's GreenComp Framework (2022), which views sustainability as a lifelong learning process that empowers citizens to act with knowledge, confidence, and shared purpose.



KEY CONCEPT 4 – LIFE-CYCLE THINKING AND TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP (TCO)

Modern consumer culture often hides the real cost of products behind appealing prices and “green” labels. A T-shirt might be advertised as “eco-friendly” because it uses organic cotton, but if it is manufactured in poor working conditions, shipped across continents, and discarded after a few uses, its overall environmental and social footprint remains high.



To become responsible and critical consumers, young people must learn to look beyond the surface and understand two essential analytical tools: Life-Cycle Thinking (LCT) and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

a) Life-Cycle Thinking - Seeing the Whole Story of a Product

Life-Cycle Thinking (LCT) is a method that helps us analyse the entire journey of a product – from raw material extraction to production, transportation, use, and finally disposal or recycling.

Instead of focusing only on the moment of purchase, it encourages a “cradle-to-grave” or even “cradle-to-cradle” mindset.

For example, a reusable metal water bottle may seem expensive at first, but when its long life and reduction of single-use plastics are considered, its impact is significantly lower than repeatedly buying plastic bottles.

Conversely, some “green” products are not truly sustainable once their full life-cycle is examined - for instance, electric scooters that rely on rare minerals and non-recyclable batteries can have a high hidden footprint.

In youth education, LCT develops critical thinking and systems awareness. It helps young people connect environmental, social, and economic dimensions – understanding that every product embodies energy, labour, and resources that extend far beyond the shop shelf.

b) Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) - The Hidden Economic Dimension

While LCT explores environmental impact, Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) focuses on financial and practical sustainability.

TCO examines how much something really costs over time, not just its initial purchase price.

It includes:

- Upfront cost - what you pay at first.
- Maintenance cost - repairs, replacements, cleaning, energy use.

Disposal or recycling cost – how the product is managed after use.

For example, buying cheap electronics may seem economical, but if they break quickly or require constant replacement, the long-term cost – financially and environmentally – becomes far higher.

This approach helps youth shift from short-term “cheap is better” thinking to long-term value and responsibility. It also raises awareness of economic inequality: rural or low-income communities often cannot afford high-efficiency products, even though these would be cheaper in the long run. Recognising this creates empathy rather than judgment and invites discussion on structural fairness.

A product’s environmental impact begins long before and after we buy it.

Life-Cycle Thinking (LCT) helps learners evaluate the whole journey – extraction of raw materials, production, packaging, transport, use, and disposal.

Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) shows that a cheap product may cost more in the long run (repairs, waste, replacements).
Learning link: In Basket on a Budget, participants simulate real shopping decisions and discover that sustainability depends not only on price, but also durability, repairability, and accessibility.



KEY CONCEPT 5 – CRITICAL AND ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Information today travels faster than ever – and so do half-truths.

For young people growing up surrounded by social media, influencers, and viral campaigns, understanding how messages shape beliefs and behaviour is crucial.

Sustainability communication has the power to educate and inspire, but it can also manipulate and mislead.

This is where the concept of critical and ethical communication becomes central – both as a skill and as a value.



True sustainability communication builds trust, understanding, and inclusion – it informs rather than manipulates.

Youth must learn to:

- Check evidence before sharing environmental claims.
- Communicate in ways that are positive, realistic, and inclusive.

Adapt their messages to fit the context – what motivates rural audiences may differ from urban ones.

Campaigning as a Tool for Youth Empowerment

Campaigning is one of the most powerful forms of non-formal learning.

When young people design and lead campaigns, they develop:

- Critical thinking (evaluating what's true and relevant),
- Creative expression (finding ways to make sustainability visible), and
- Civic competence (learning to influence positive change through collective voice).

However, many youth campaigns unintentionally reproduce urban biases or rely on social media trends that do not translate well in smaller or rural communities.

To avoid this, facilitators should guide participants to design campaigns based on authentic needs and reachable audiences rather than abstract global slogans.

A good sustainability campaign begins with three questions:

- What change do we want to see?
- Who can make it happen?
- What message would move them to act?

By answering these questions together, young people learn that effective campaigning is not about loudness but relevance - communicating meaningfully to real people in their real contexts.



Rural and Urban Communication – Two Different Worlds

Sustainability messages that resonate in a large city may fall flat in a small town, and vice versa.

This is not a matter of intelligence, but of experience, access, and values.

In urban contexts, young people are typically more exposed to digital media, influencer culture, and global sustainability trends. They encounter environmental messaging daily through social media, advertising, and public campaigns, many of which rely on fast visuals, slogans, and emotional appeal. Urban campaigns often frame sustainability in terms of consumer behaviour - recycling, reducing plastic, choosing ethical brands, or switching to sustainable transport. These approaches resonate with audiences accustomed to quick, attention-grabbing content and digital interaction.



In contrast, rural contexts rely more on personal connection and community-based communication. Messages about sustainability are shared through local networks, schools, youth centres, and informal gatherings rather than large media platforms. Rural youth tend to value authentic stories and visible benefits - for example, how environmental actions improve daily life, strengthen the community, or preserve local traditions. Sustainability here is not a lifestyle trend but a matter of livelihood and identity: linked to farming, water use, resource sharing, and collective wellbeing.

Understanding these differences helps youth workers and campaign designers create messages that fit their audiences – messages that are not only heard but felt as relevant and achievable.

Learning link: In Local Heroes – One Message, Two Worlds, participants design two campaigns (for rural and urban youth) using the Checklist for Honest Green Communication.

5 ACTIVITIES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THESE INFORMATION



AI: MIND THE GAP: STEPPING INTO URBAN AND RURAL REALITIES

- Role-Play Simulation, Learning by Doing
- To help young people experience and reflect on the differences in opportunities, access, and trust between urban and rural youth in relation to sustainability, green consumption, and environmental awareness – and to promote empathy and shared understanding through experiential learning.
- Role cards (10-15 characters), masking tape or rope to mark a starting line, printed statement list, music player (optional for mood).
- Prepare 15-20 role cards that mix:
 - Urban youth roles (e.g., university student with access to eco-shops, marketing intern following influencers, NGO volunteer in the city)
 - Rural youth roles (e.g., high-school student in small town with no recycling, farmer's daughter, apprentice with slow internet).
- Prepare 20-25 statements linked directly to your theoretical section (access, awareness, trust, greenwashing exposure).
- Clear floor space where everyone can stand in one line shoulder to shoulder.



- Icebreaker: "The Wind Blows for Those Who..."
- Materials: One chair per participant (minus one)
- Arrange chairs in a circle in the middle of the room – one fewer than the number of participants.
- One person stands in the centre and says:
 - "The wind blows for those who..." followed by a statement related to green habits and sustainable behaviour that might be true for some people in the group. Everyone for whom the statement applies must stand up and quickly find a new chair (not directly next to them).

Team Building: "Our Green Map"

- Materials: A4 paper, markers, stickers
- After forming groups (try to mix rural and urban youth), give each team an A4 sheet titled "Our Green Map."
- Ask them to draw or list:
 - 3 things all of us already do that are eco-friendly.
 - 2 things that are harder to do in our community.
 - 1 thing we'd love to try or learn from others.
- Encourage drawing, doodles, or icons instead of just writing.
- After 10 minutes, each team briefly presents their map in 1 minute.

AI: MIND THE GAP: STEPPING INTO URBAN AND RURAL REALITIES

Main activity (35-50 min)

- All line up at the same start line.
- Facilitator reads each statement; participants step forward if it applies.
- Examples (drawn from theoretical content):
 - "I can buy local organic produce within 2 km of my home."
 - "I have reliable internet to check product information."
 - "I trust that eco-labels on products in my store are real."
 - "There is a repair shop near my town.".....
- Participants: 10-30 participants
- Duration: 75-90 min



Step Reflection Card (Individual Tool)

- Purpose: To help participants internalise the key learning outcomes of the activity by connecting what they experienced emotionally and intellectually ("stepping into different realities") to their personal context and potential actions.
- Distribute small A5 reflection cards to each participant. Each card should have three clearly printed prompts (see below). You can add icons or small visuals for a youth-friendly look
- Invite participants to take 5-7 quiet minutes to reflect individually and answer the prompts in their own words.
- After writing, invite participants to pair up (preferably with someone from a different background – urban/rural mix) and share one insight each.
- This step reinforces peer reflection and empathy.
- Collect cards for qualitative evaluation
- Prompts on the card:
 - One thing I realised about sustainability and access → What new understanding did you gain about how location or resources affect people's ability to live sustainably?
 - One thing I can teach or share with others → What practical idea, example, or perspective from today could inspire someone else in your community?
 - One thing I want to change or try after this activity → What action – even small – could you take in your daily life or youth work to make sustainability more inclusive or realistic for everyone?

Reflection materials: "Step Reflection Cards" (A5) – printed for each participant.

A2: IT'S ME, IT COULD BE ME, IT'S NOT ME

- Card game, role play
- To explore how daily sustainable choices differ between rural and urban youth and to identify the barriers, motivations, and opportunities behind these behaviours.
- Participants will reflect on their personal habits, see how context influences them, and exchange practical ideas to bridge those gaps.



- One set of Reaction Cards per group (It's Me, It Could Be Me, It's Not Me).
- Flipchart paper and markers for the group summary
- Post-its or sticky notes if using the "Learning Ladder" evaluation method.

- Deck of 20-25 Choice Cards (with statements about daily consumption and behaviour)
- Three Reaction Cards per participant or team:
 - It's Me - I'm doing this regularly
 - It Could Be Me - I know about it / would like to, but can't right now
 - It's Not Me - Doesn't apply / not possible in my situation
- Prepare two or more mixed teams (urban + rural participants).
- Print and cut the Choice Cards
- Give each team their own deck and 3 coloured Reaction Cards.
- Prepare a flipchart titled "What Helps / What Stops Us" for the reflection round.



- Luxury brand with "vegan leather" but no disclosure on plastics used.
- Shoe company claiming "zero waste" but ignoring packaging.
- Online retailer using "conscious choice" tags without definitions.
- Influencer-led "eco capsule" collections with no transparency reports.

Required Materials : https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1ihrv50ke8l49e_9a2scjMnKPB5RYcgeN

A2: IT'S ME, IT COULD BE ME, IT'S NOT ME

Icebreaker (15 min) - "Daily Habits Bingo"

- Participants move around the room finding others who do certain actions (e.g. "buys second-hand," "composts," "rides a bike").
- The goal: realise everyone does something, but not the same things.



- Mini Team-Building: "What We Have in Common" (10-15 min)
- After finishing the Daily Habits Bingo, the facilitator divides participants into small mixed groups of 4-6. Each team discusses what they noticed during the Bingo game – for example, which sustainable actions appeared most, which were rare, and which surprised them.
- Challenge each team to find as many things as possible they all have in common connected to sustainability, daily habits, or how they understand "green" products and information.
- After 5-7 minutes, each team shares one sentence starting with:
 - "We discovered that all of us..."
- Celebrate similarities and connect them to the session's goal: understanding how our realities differ, but our values and hopes are similar.

Main Activity (45 min)

- Form small mixed groups of 4-6 participants (each group should include both rural and urban youth).
- Each group receives a deck of 20-25 Choice Cards and the three Reaction Cards:

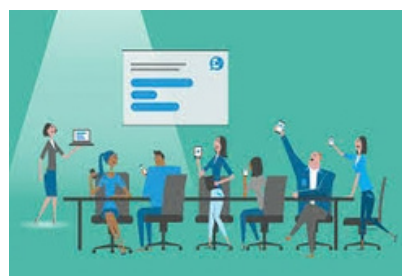
• It's Me It Could Be Me It's Not Me

- Within each group, select one person to act as the Host/Reporter.

- Their role is to guide the rhythm of the discussion, make sure everyone speaks, and take short notes about key barriers, differences, or creative solutions mentioned.

- The Host draws one Choice Card at a time and reads it aloud.

- Everyone in the group places or points to their Reaction Card to show how the statement applies to them.



A2: IT'S ME, IT COULD BE ME, IT'S NOT ME

The Host invites a 2-3 minute discussion:

- Why do you do or not do this?
- What makes it easy or difficult in your community?
- Have you seen someone else manage it differently?

Encourage participants to teach each other practical hacks or solutions (e.g, urban youth sharing repair cafés or apps; rural youth sharing reuse or DIY habits).



- Participants: 15-35 participants
- Duration: 60 min



- Learning Ladder Reflection
- How to Do It:
 - On a flipchart, draw a ladder with five rungs, labeled:
 - I never thought about this before
 - I understand the differences between rural and urban realities
 - I can explain how context shapes sustainable choices
 - I learned at least one new solution or idea from peers
 - I'm ready to try or share a new sustainable habit
 - Give participants sticky notes and ask them to write one thing they learned and stick it on the rung that best reflects their current stage.
 - Discuss the distribution together – noticing growth and collective insight.

Required Materials: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MbMTIFAYR8sXDDwevVSvPFxcm5FuYQLM?usp=share_link

A3: BASKET ON A BUDGET (LIFE-CYCLE & TCO)

- Experiential learning, Guided reflection and group discussion
- To help participants understand that the “greenest” choice isn’t always the cheapest-looking product – and that sustainable consumption involves analysing the entire life cycle and hidden costs (financial, social, and environmental) behind products.
- Introduce the concepts of Life-Cycle Thinking and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).
- Enable participants to spot greenwashing in consumer products and marketing claims.



- -Printed “Product Cards” (15-20)
- -“Budget Sheet” per team
- -“Choice Matrix” per team
- -Summary chart of Life-Cycle and TCO concepts
- -Include both obvious and subtle greenwashing examples (e.g, “eco” packaging made of plastic).
- -Keep prices realistic but diverse.
- -Mix global brands and local small producers.
- -Encourage debate – the goal is not to find the “perfect” basket but to think critically.
- -During debrief, highlight that limited budgets and access shape sustainability choices – especially for rural youth.

- “Product Cards” – 15-20 cards, each representing an item from everyday life (e.g, sneakers, t-shirt, phone, shampoo, reusable bottle, bag of chips).
- Each card includes:
 - -Price (€)
 - -Brand description / eco-claims (some real, some fake-greenwashed)
 - -Durability rating (1-5)
 - -Environmental footprint (1-5)
 - -Origin (local, EU, imported, etc.)
 - -Repairability / recyclability
- Mix obvious “cheap” and “eco” options – some misleading, some genuine.
- “Budget Envelopes” – each team gets a fictional budget (e.g. €100).
- “Shopping Baskets” – printed template or small basket where teams place chosen cards.
- Flipcharts, pens, calculators (optional), sticky notes.



A3: BASKET ON A BUDGET (LIFE-CYCLE & TCO)

Introduction

Start by asking:

- “How do you decide what to buy – price, brand, or sustainability?”
- “What do you think a product’s life-cycle means?”

Briefly explain:

- Life-cycle thinking: Every product has an environmental cost at each stage – production, transport, use, and disposal.
- Total Cost of Ownership (TCO): What you pay over the entire life of the product (including repairs, replacements, waste).
- Show a quick example: a €20 “eco” T-shirt vs. a €10 fast-fashion one.



Simulation (25–30 min)

- Divide participants into small mixed groups (urban + rural youth).
- Give each team a budget envelope and the product cards spread on a table or floor.

Tell them:

- “You’re a youth club with a €100 budget. You need to buy 5 items for your daily life.
- Choose wisely – you’ll have to justify your choices later.”
- They can discuss freely, but must keep within budget. Encourage reading details carefully – some “eco” claims will be greenwashing!



Presentation & Debrief

Each group presents:

- The products they chose
- Their reasoning: price vs. sustainability vs. practicality
- What they discovered – were any “eco” claims misleading?

Debriefing and plenary discussion

Facilitator leads discussion:

- Which products had the lowest long-term cost?
- Did greenwashing influence your decisions?
- How does income or location affect your ability to choose sustainably?
- For rural youth – are certain eco-options even available in your area?
- Participants: 10 - 30 participants
- Duration: 60 - 75 min

Sustainability Choice Matrix

- Include both obvious and subtle greenwashing examples (e.g., “eco” packaging made of plastic).
- Keep prices realistic but diverse.
- Mix global brands and local small producers.
- -Encourage debate – the goal is not to find the “perfect” basket but to think critically.
- During debrief, highlight that limited budgets and access shape sustainability choices – especially for rural youth.

A4: RURAL AND URBAN TRUTH DETECTIVES: SPOT THE GREENWASHING

- Group analysis, cooperative learning, debate
- To strengthen young people's ability to recognise misleading environmental claims in advertising and social media – and to understand how marketing targets rural vs. urban audiences differently.



- Prepare 10-12 printed or digital ads in advance (from Instagram, YouTube, etc.).
- Mix urban-focused and rural-targeted products (e.g. "eco-fertiliser" vs. "green city car").
- Keep the checklist simple and visual – use icons like
- Printed or digital ads and social media posts (mix of real greenwashing and genuine eco-initiatives).
- "Greenwashing Checklist" handout (criteria such as vague terms, hidden trade-offs, fake labels).
- Flipcharts, markers, stickers.
- Optional: end with a mini award for "The Most Misleading Ad of the Day."

Icebreaker - "Two Truths and a Green Lie"

- The facilitator reads or displays three statements about products or sustainability – two are true, one is a "green lie."
- Participants must guess which is false by moving to different corners of the room (A, B, or C).
- After each round, the facilitator reveals the correct answer and explains briefly why the false statement is misleading.

Example rounds:

- "H&M's 'Conscious' line uses 100% recycled materials." (false – only a small percentage is recycled).
- "Reusable cups save water compared to single-use cups."
- "All eco-labels are verified by the EU." (many are self-declared).

Team-Building - "Greenwashing Detectives"

- Give each participant a sticky note with one of four "detective roles" written on it (Reporter, Scientist, Activist, or Consumer).
- Ask them to find 2-4 others who complete a balanced team (each role appears once per team).
- Once grouped, ask:

"What would each of your roles focus on when checking if a product is truly green?"

- Teams brainstorm 3-4 focus questions (e.g. "Where's the evidence?", "Who benefits?").

A4: RURAL AND URBAN TRUTH DETECTIVES: SPOT THE GREENWASHING

Main Activity

- Explain what greenwashing is and show 1-2 real examples. Present the Checklist for Detecting Greenwashing – short, visual, easy to use.
- Group Investigation
 - Each team receives 2-3 printed ads or screenshots.
 - They apply the checklist to analyse how convincing each message is.
 - Teams mark each ad as credible, unclear, or misleading.
- Poster Creation
 - Each team makes a mini “case file” on flipchart:
 - Name of the brand/product
 - What the claim says
 - What they found misleading
 - What real transparency would look like
- Gallery Walk
 - Teams display their findings.
 - Everyone walks around, reads, and votes for the Most Misleading Ad and Most Honest Example using stickers.
- Group Reflection
 - “Which ad was most persuasive even though it wasn’t true?”
 - “How might rural vs. urban consumers interpret these messages differently?”
 - “How can we check claims next time we see something ‘eco’ online?”
- Participants: 15 - 30 participants
- Duration: 75 - 90 min



“Critical Thinking Compass”

- Method: Team-based self-evaluation + individual reflection/find down the document)

Required information: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1raRR9fTkVST04oMmACFnxS0Fc0cDZleM4c_qwDwyzz0/edit?usp=share_link

A5: LOCAL HEROES: ONE MESSAGE, TWO WORLDS

- Project-based learning, creative communication, cooperative design
- To empower youth to create authentic, transparent campaigns promoting sustainability in their communities –rural or urban, turning learning into action, demonstrating that effective environmental communication must reflect people's real access, needs, and trust levels.
- Strengthen understanding of how geography and context shape youth engagement in sustainability.
- Flipcharts or digital canvases (Canva, Miro, etc.)
- Markers, paper, recycled materials for posters
- "Checklist for Honest Green Communication"



Icebreaker: "Eco Headlines Gone Wrong"

Divide the group in small teams as they will compete between each other. Each team gets 2 big voting cards-REAL and FAKE. The facilitator reads or shows a series of short, real or fake "green" headlines.

Example options:

- "Company Plants One Tree for Every Million Sold"
- "The New 100% Recycled Bottle Made of 70% Plastic"
- "Organic Cigarettes – Because Health Matters"
- "Zero-Emission Private Jet Service"

Participants shout REAL or FAKE, or raise a green/red card.

The facilitator reveals the truth (and briefly explains why it's misleading).

End with a laugh and a short question:

"Why do these headlines sound believable – or not?"

Team-Building: "Decode the Message"

Each team receives a mysterious "eco claim" card – for example:

- "Locally sourced energy drink"
- "Green fashion for everyone"
- "Zero-impact online shopping"
- "Smart farming saves the planet"

Their task:

- In 5 minutes, brainstorm two interpretations of that message:
 - How an urban youth might see it
 - How a rural youth might see it
- Draw or write their two "decodings" on flipchart (funny, serious, or creative).



Each team briefly presents their interpretations

A5: LOCAL HEROES: ONE MESSAGE, TWO WORLDS

Debrief

Facilitator leads a short reflection:

- “Were there big differences between rural and urban interpretations?”
- “What does this tell us about tailoring our communication?”
- → Transition: “Now let’s use what we discovered to create messages that work for both worlds – honestly and inclusively.”

Introduction

- Recap what greenwashing is and why trust is essential.
- Discuss how the same message may be received differently in a small village vs. a big city.
- Example: “Go Vegan” might feel elitist in a rural area where people rely on farming, while “Eat Local” resonates more.

Campaign Creation

- Each team creates two parallel mini-campaigns:
- one for urban youth,
- one for rural youth.
- Each campaign should include:
- a main slogan (1 sentence)
- 1-2 key visuals or messages
- a short action call (“What can young people actually do?”)
- a proof or fact supporting the claim
- a trust marker (real certification, source, or community example)
- Encourage creativity: campaigns can be posters, sketches, short scripts, or social media concepts.

Gallery Walk & Debate

- Display all campaigns around the room.
- Each team presents both versions (urban & rural) in 1-2 minutes.
- Then hold a cross-review: participants vote for
- Most Credible Message
- Best Adaptation to Local Context
- Most Empowering for Youth
- Finally, discuss:
- “What was harder – the rural or urban version?”
- “What did you learn about trust, inclusion, and access?”
- “How can youth workers make their communication more authentic?”
- Participants: 15 - 30 participants
- Duration: 75 - 90 min



Part 1 – Self-Reflection Grid (Individual or per Team)

Part 2 – Peer Review: “Campaign Feedback Card”

Required information: https://docs.google.com/document/d/10EB3-EczRt5PXXhaciSsZHkdUt2k1cCV3s5938tGFe8/edit?usp=share_link

MATERIAL 3 EVALUATION

1. How does greenwashing affect young people's trust in sustainability?

- It builds stronger confidence in eco-friendly companies.
- **It makes young people doubt which environmental messages are real or fake.**
- It helps youth make better purchasing decisions.
- It encourages companies to act more responsibly.

2. A company that advertises itself as sustainable without proof or independent verification is practicing greenwashing.”

a. Answer: True

5. Which statement describes the main difference between rural and urban youth regarding sustainability?

- a. Urban youth care more about sustainability.
- b. Rural youth have better access to eco-products.
- c. Urban youth have more exposure to campaigns, while rural youth have fewer resources but stronger community ties.**
- d. There is no difference at all.

6. Ethical communication is mainly about using strong emotional messages to make people feel guilty.”

- Answer: False

7. What is one key principle of ethical communication?

- Using complex scientific language.
- **Being transparent, inclusive, and based on real evidence.**
- Making exaggerated promises to gain attention.
- Targeting only online audiences.

8. In rural contexts, effective sustainability campaigns should focus on:

- Fast digital trends and influencer culture.
- **Personal stories, authenticity, and visible community benefits.**
- International cooperation and academic research.
- Advertising expensive eco-products.

3. Which of the following best explains Life-Cycle Thinking (LCT)?

- Focusing only on how a product is used.
- **Evaluating the environmental impact of a product from raw materials to disposal.**
- Comparing product prices in different stores.
- Calculating the number of times a product is recycled.

4. Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) means:

- The purchase price of a product only.
- **The overall cost of a product over its entire use, including maintenance and disposal.**
- The average cost of producing the product.
- The price plus sales tax.

9. Why is understanding the Total Cost of Ownership important for youth?

- **It helps them make decisions that consider both financial and environmental impacts over time.**
- It encourages them to buy more expensive products.
- It simplifies marketing campaigns.
- It reduces the need for recycling.

10. Which statement reflects the goal of the “Local Heroes – One Message, Two Worlds” activity?

- To create competition between urban and rural youth.
- **To design two honest, context-sensitive sustainability campaigns for different audiences.**
- To test who can make the most creative slogan.
- To teach graphic design skills.



Acknowledgements

Jannes Herman Mostert The Tree Party - Netherlands

Georgi Kuzmanov Alternativi - Bulgaria

İlknur GÜLER AYDEMİR NICEA - Turkey

Vanna Vadivan Gopal Impact Grid e.V - Germany

We thank you for your continued support in our programs.

Contact

Jannes Herman Mostert

info@thetreeparty.nl

Follow us

