

The first Young Climathons in Belgium

'The Young Climathon' is an innovative methodology which involves young people in the identification of solutions that can help local stakeholders to reduce their climate impact.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Jodoigne & Amay/Waremme, Belgium

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - Leader/CLLD

Funding: Total budget 86 697.18 (EUR)

RDP contribution 61 697.18 (EUR)

Other (King Baudouin Foundation) 25 000.00 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2020 to 2022

Project promoter: LAG Jesuishesbignon & LAG Culturalité

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Summary

The Young Climathons took place in Wallonia: in Jodoigne, in October 2021, and in Amay/Waremme in February 2022. During these 2-day hackathons, about 180 students between 15 and 18 years, from eight local secondary schools, worked on real-life challenges that were presented to them by local stakeholders. They worked together to develop innovative solutions by using participatory visual tools and input from experts and coaches. At the end of the second day, students pitched their idea to a jury and afterwards had the opportunity to transform their solution into a real-life project.

Project results

The project engaged 180 students in systemic and complex climate change challenges. Teachers had the opportunity to discover new visual methodologies to boost students' creativity and collective intelligence.

The Young Climathons resulted in five new projects being implemented by young people.

Lessons & Recommendations

The Young Climathons created opportunities for youngsters to learn how to deal with complex systemic problems (relating to climate change) thanks to a specific design thinking methodology. Moreover, it introduced them to the context of local stakeholders and partnerships.

The success of this methodology is based on the power of co-creativity. The methodology is universal and easily transferable.

Context

2019 was marked by the climate march movement that spread across Europe. Schoolchildren demanding action on climate change took to the streets across Europe. In Belgium, high school students repeatedly walked out of class and brought traffic to a standstill in protest at the inaction of adults on climate change. These marches sometimes led to dialogue between authorities and students, but unfortunately rarely any concrete action.

In this context, two Walloon Local Action Groups (LAGs) decided to take part in the 'Young Climathon', a programme of climate solutions 'hackathons' for young people. This offered young people a unique, educational and collaborative space to design innovative solutions for the climate crisis.



@Geer Spendel

Objectives

The purpose of this LEADER initiative was to enable young people aged 15 to 18 to approach complex and systemic problems through 'design thinking' inspired visual tools. It aimed to provide a space to experience the power of collective intelligence and co-creativity, giving younger generations the opportunity to act locally for the climate.

Activities

As a first step the LAGs adapted the Young Climathon's methodology to their local realities and needs in consultation with the partnering schools and municipalities. The LAGs themselves covered the human resources costs and the partnering municipalities and the Belgian 'King Baudouin Foundation' financed operational costs.

The Young Climathon organised by the Culturalité LAG in 2021 focused on the challenges of:

- Mobility – How to increase the use of bicycles amongst young people.
- Energetic Renovation – How to encourage the people of Jodoigne to insulate their homes.
- Zero Waste – How to encourage consumers to buy plastic-free products.

The Young Climathon organised by LAG Jesuihesbignon.be in 2022, focused on the challenges of:

- Upcycling – How people can give a second life to their old clothes.
- Zero Waste – How people can give a second life to their communication visuals.
- Healthy and sustainable food – How to encourage people to take an active role in their own diet.
- Mobility – How young people can be encouraged to cycle and walk daily.

All the involved teachers and LAG members followed a four-hour training session delivered by the LAGs Young Climathon project coordinators. Student teams of seven or eight then selected the challenge that they wanted to work on during the Climathon.

During each two-day Young Climathon, the student teams worked with their coaches and experts on-hand to answer their questions. The first day was devoted to the analysis of the problem, its context,

causes and consequences. The second day was dedicated to brainstorming and solution development. Finally, each team pitched their own innovative idea in front of a jury in any creative way they wished (video, craft, painting, etc.). An entertaining 'Master of ceremonies' helped to enliven the day's activities in order to boost team spirit and creativity.

Main results

The project engaged 180 students in systemic and complex climate change challenges. Teachers had the opportunity to discover new visual methodologies to boost students' creativity and collective intelligence.

The two Young Climathons resulted in the following projects being selected for implementation:

- A student-led "bike challenge" together with the 'GRACQ' cyclist association.
- The involvement of students in an insulation and renovation exhibition with the Municipality of Jodoigne.
- The creation of a children's book about 'zero waste.'
- The involvement of students in the design of a cycling toolbox.
- The involvement of students and local farmers in the creation of an interview series concerning healthy and local food.

Key lessons

The Young Climathons created opportunities for youngsters to learn how to deal with complex systemic problems (relating to climate change) thanks to a specific design thinking methodology. Moreover, it introduced them to the context of local stakeholders and partnerships.

The success of this methodology is based on the power of co-creativity. The methodology is universal and easily transferable. The LAGs are in contact with other organisations eager to organise their own Young Climathon.

"I have learned more about the climate in two days than I did in the last 15 years! I actually felt listened to, when most of the time, adults do not really listen to our expectations"

Participant

Additional information:

▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qpEgI4xQo4



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