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Climate Change Education in Europe: Perceptions and Pathways for Transformation

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The presentation delivers insights addressing the concepts fundamental to the linkages between climate change education and our societal dynamics, including examples of impacts at the European scale. European Green Deal and Education for Sustainable Development are core frameworks ensuring that education plays a pivotal role in achieving European climate adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development goals.

Climate change stands as one of the most critical challenges of our time, given the intensified impacts of extreme events on socio-ecological systems. Addressing the unprecedented challenges posed by climate risks demands both immediate action and a sustained long-term commitment from our societies and their citizens. Climate change education can respond to this dual perspective, helping people understand and face the consequences of the climate crisis, and empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to support and jointly apply mitigation and adaptation strategies. Education system is an important channel for building/enhancing climate culture not only for its direct “users”, but also for their entourage. Moreover, social and emotional learning in education is crucial for fostering resilience, coping with eco-anxiety, and promoting effective climate action.

Although the impacts of climate change and the measures required to address them vary across sectors and groups, education can serve as a powerful leverage point for driving cross-sectoral transformative change by breaking down silos and fostering collaboration across disciplines and sectors. The ongoing climate change has detrimental impacts on the education system, extended on short- and long-term, from local to national and even larger spatial scales. Extreme events, increasingly frequent and often associated with climate change, affect structures and infrastructures supporting the education services, as well as the education process itself in various

ways, from disturbing the continuity of the activities to damaging the facilities. In affected areas, emerging climate events may further exacerbate barriers to education for vulnerable groups. The interconnectivity between education and other sectors and services makes education one of the keys to adapting to the changing environment in Europe, including the climate-driven, and socio-economic dynamics (i.e. migration, spillover effects, social equity and labour market).

The presentation highlights the findings of a survey exploring perceptions of climate change's impacts on education in Europe, offering insights into how education changes perception and action towards climate change, and supporting transformative changes to enhance the climate resilience of the education system. The bi-directional linkages between climate change and education as reflected in the national climate adaptation and education strategies are also discussed, specifically emphasising the role of strong leadership, innovative and cross disciplinary pedagogies, and collaborative partnerships to reimagine education systems for a climate-changed world.

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