



**UNDERSTANDING
ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

INCUBATOR
COMPOSITE REPORT –
OVERALL

PROJECT INFORMATION

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A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EcopreNEETs Incubator pilot phase was implemented across **France, the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, and Greece**, aiming to equip young NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) with eco-entrepreneurial skills. The initiative provided structured learning, mentorship, and business development experiences.

A total of **85 young people** participated, with **72% aged 18-30**. Rural participants accounted for **44%**, with notable disparities in access to digital resources, particularly in Greece (**55% reported access issues**). While mentorship was well-received (**92% of learners found it valuable**), respondents requested continued support beyond the program.

The trainers highlighted **structured mentorship, hands-on experience, and real-world business case studies** as key strengths. However, challenges included **technical issues in online learning**, the need for **extended support**, and the importance of **localized eco-business solutions**.

This report consolidates findings from national-level evaluations and offers insights for future iterations. The policy recommendations focus on **enhancing mentorship, improving accessibility, and integrating eco-entrepreneurship into regional economic strategies**.



EcopreNEETs Incubator was established to provide young NEETs the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills for sustainable business idea implementation under mentorship and technical training. The incubation process runs through five European countries, all of which adapted the process to suit local demand. This is a report of the feedback from the participants and trainers combined, which assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the incubator from a global perspective.

1. Participant Demographics and Engagement

A total of **85 young individuals** from urban and rural areas participated in the incubator, distributed as follows:

- **France**: 27 participants across four regions (Agen, Bordeaux, Mérignac, and Saintes)
- **Netherlands**: 12 participants in an online format
- **Hungary**: 12 participants in Budapest
- **Poland**: 18 participants in a hybrid format
- **Greece**: 16 participants in a blended learning structure

Age and Employment Status

- 41% of participants were aged 18–24, while 31% were between 25–30.
- 80% identified as NEETs.
- 10% were students planning to engage in entrepreneurship after the incubator.
- 10% were already engaging in micro-work related to sustainability.

2. Incubation Program Implementation by Country



France

Implemented in **Agen, Bordeaux, Mérignac, and Saintes**, with activities including business simulations, eco-awareness sessions, and structured multi-session incubation programs. The **Saintes cohort produced five finalized business plans, with one already seeking funding.**



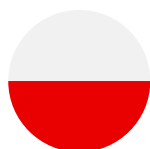
Netherlands

A **three-day online program** with 12 participants and four enterprise stakeholders. While mentorship was highly rated (**92% satisfaction**), digital accessibility issues were noted.



Hungary

A **four-week hybrid incubation model** in Budapest, featuring **case studies on sustainable businesses. 92% of participants valued mentorship**, but **33% found scheduling difficult.**



Poland

A hybrid incubation model focusing on **business model development and financial planning**. Participants requested more **real-world case studies** and peer collaboration opportunities.



Greece

A **hybrid model blending online learning and in-person workshops**, with participants developing **eco-friendly product prototypes. 55% of rural participants faced digital access barriers**, highlighting the need for better infrastructure.



3. Impact and Key Findings

1. Mentorship as a Game Changer

- 92% of learners found mentorship transformative.
- 67% of mentors were open to continued engagement, suggesting potential for structured post-incubation mentoring.

2. Hands-On Learning Was More Effective Than Theoretical Lessons

- Poland and Hungary's real-world business problem-solving approaches led to stronger engagement.
- France's Saintes program produced five concrete business plans.

3. Online Learning Accessibility Needs Improvement

- Only 67% of Hungarian participants were satisfied with online materials.
- 55% of Greek rural participants had connectivity barriers, emphasizing the need for hybrid learning models.

4. Regional Disparities in Eco-Business Awareness

- The Netherlands had 75% of participants already familiar with sustainability, while Poland required more foundational training.
- France and Greece had the highest levels of business prototyping engagement.

4. Policy Recommendations

The EcopreNEETs Incubator has demonstrated a significant impact on young NEETs, equipping them with practical skills and exposure to sustainable entrepreneurship.

However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring long-term mentorship, expanding access to digital learning, and strengthening policy integration across Europe. To build on the successes of the incubator and address these gaps, the following detailed recommendations should be implemented.



Young people must be placed at the centre of eco-entrepreneurship initiatives, as they are the key drivers of future sustainable businesses. The EcopreNEETs project has shown that NEETs require greater exposure to training opportunities in eco-entrepreneurship. Training should go beyond theoretical knowledge and focus on hands-on, practical experiences that allow young entrepreneurs to develop business models, test sustainable products, and interact with established eco-businesses. Digital literacy is also a crucial component, and young people must have greater access to digital tools that facilitate learning and business development. Many participants, especially from rural areas, faced challenges in accessing digital infrastructure, making it essential to provide subsidies or financial assistance for digital tools and broadband access. Strengthening digital education will ensure that young entrepreneurs are equipped to navigate the modern business landscape and leverage technological advancements for sustainability-focused enterprises. Furthermore, integrating eco-entrepreneurship programs into secondary and higher education curricula will help young people develop essential business skills from an early stage, allowing them to transition smoothly into the workforce.

Youth workers and trainers play an essential role in ensuring the success of eco-entrepreneurship programs. The establishment of a dedicated pool of eco-entrepreneurship trainers will contribute to greater consistency in training methodologies and improve knowledge-sharing among educators. Trainers must undergo continuous professional development, keeping up with the latest trends in sustainability and digital entrepreneurship. Creating a transnational network of trainers will allow for the exchange of best practices across different EU countries, helping to refine teaching strategies and mentorship approaches. A structured certification system should also be introduced to ensure that trainers possess the necessary competencies to guide NEETs effectively. Through targeted capacity-building initiatives, trainers will be better equipped to provide high-quality guidance and support, helping young people transform their eco-business ideas into viable enterprises.

Youth organizations serve as crucial intermediaries between young entrepreneurs and available resources, but many of these organizations lack sufficient infrastructure to maximize their impact. The provision of well-equipped eco-entrepreneurship hubs will allow young people to develop their business ideas in supportive environments.



These hubs should be integrated into regional business ecosystems, facilitating access to mentorship, coworking spaces, and collaboration opportunities with established companies. Additionally, youth organizations should be provided with funding to develop structured long-term programs that offer ongoing business development support. Many young entrepreneurs require continuous training beyond the initial incubator phase, making it necessary to implement follow-up programs that provide mentorship, networking events, and access to seed funding opportunities. Strengthening the role of youth organizations will ensure that aspiring eco-entrepreneurs receive sustained support as they develop and launch their businesses.

Stakeholders, including policymakers, private sector leaders, and NGOs, must take an active role in fostering an enabling environment for youth-led eco-businesses. The social economy industry has significant potential to provide opportunities for NEETs, integrating them into value chains focused on sustainability. Policymakers should introduce targeted financial incentives, such as tax reductions and preferential public procurement policies, to encourage businesses to support young eco-entrepreneurs. The European Commission should also expand access to direct micro-funding for NEETs, reducing bureaucratic barriers that currently hinder their ability to secure financial support. A simplified EU-wide micro-funding scheme dedicated to young sustainable entrepreneurs will ensure that financial constraints do not prevent promising ideas from materializing into real businesses. Moreover, the EU Cohesion Policy 2028 should emphasize youth eco-entrepreneurship as a key priority, establishing a cohesive framework for funding allocation and policy alignment across member states.

A centralized EU Eco-Entrepreneurship Database should also be developed, serving as a comprehensive platform that provides young entrepreneurs with access to relevant resources, business templates, and funding opportunities. NGOs and community organisations should act as bridges between young entrepreneurs and financial institutions, ensuring that NEETs are well-informed about available support mechanisms. A structured collaboration between youth organizations, policymakers, and private sector actors will create a more inclusive and sustainable ecosystem for eco-entrepreneurship. By fostering strong partnerships, stakeholders can collectively contribute to the long-term success of youth-led sustainable businesses, aligning with broader EU objectives related to green economic growth and social inclusion.



By implementing these recommendations, the EcopreNEETs initiative can transition from a temporary pilot project to a sustainable, scalable program that supports the next generation of eco-entrepreneurs. The enthusiasm and innovation displayed by young participants in the pilot phase highlight the immense potential of NEETs in driving sustainable business models. However, realizing this potential requires systemic policy changes that enhance accessibility to training, funding, and mentorship opportunities. Policymakers must recognize that youth-led eco-entrepreneurship is not just an employment pathway but a crucial driver of Europe's transition toward a greener economy. Creating the necessary infrastructure, financial mechanisms, and institutional support will ensure that NEETs can play a central role in shaping the future of sustainable business in Europe. With coordinated action across various sectors, the EcopreNEETs Incubator can serve as a long-term solution to youth unemployment while simultaneously fostering environmental and economic sustainability.

5. Conclusion

The EcopreNEETs Incubator has succeeded in equipping young NEETs with skills, confidence, and networks required to join the sustainable entrepreneurship realm. The incubator provided many of its members with precisely what they sought for their eco-startups through custom mentorship, workshops, and a geographically centred approach. The program has empowered participants to develop viable eco-business models, translating innovative ideas into tangible business opportunities. Through tailored mentorship, hands-on workshops, and targeted networking, the incubator has delivered precisely what aspiring entrepreneurs needed to take their first steps into the green economy. The strong engagement and enthusiasm of participants have demonstrated that young people are eager to be part of Europe's sustainable transformation, provided they have access to the right support systems.



Maybe one of the program's greatest accomplishments is that it can bolster subsequent involvement via mentorship. According to the results, mentorship was critical for 92% of the responders. Thus, this structure for such a guided incubation period is necessary. Without this period, many of the ideas that could help so many others will never be realized. Therefore, the anticipated mentorship network post-incubation is not an option but a necessity.

Geographic gaps in digital access are a major issue as well. While many of the city residents had sustainability and digital resources, the rural NEETs weren't able to even start because they couldn't get the basics. Digital access is more than a technological concern; it's an equity concern. A countrywide campaign needs to be established so that connectivity issues and infrastructural shortcomings do not hold anyone back from moving forward.

In addition the incubator facilitated the emphasis on real world applications. The countries of the winners were France and the business model exercises were from Poland, which indicates how active engagement can genuinely get far. The incubator has also succeeded in bridging gaps in eco-entrepreneurial access across different regions of Europe. While disparities in digital access persist, the program has underscored the urgency of addressing these challenges at a structural level. It has provided a roadmap for future investment in digital infrastructure to ensure that every young person, regardless of location, can benefit from online learning and business development opportunities. With greater digital inclusivity, the next generation of green entrepreneurs will emerge from both urban and rural backgrounds, fostering a truly diverse and dynamic eco-entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The findings of this report confirm that the EcopreNEETs Incubator has delivered remarkable impact in fostering youth-led sustainability entrepreneurship. With continued policy support, increased funding, and institutional backing, this initiative has the potential to become a permanent driver of green economic development in Europe. By embracing the proposed policy recommendations, the European Commission can ensure that the EcopreNEETs Incubator remains at the forefront of empowering young entrepreneurs, creating a lasting legacy of innovation, inclusion, and sustainable economic growth across the continent.

