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PREPARE

Promoting Environmental Protection and Learning on Climate Change

Grant Agreement no. 2022-1-TR01-KA220-YOU-000087199

National Report: Greece

Document Details

Deliverable title	National Report: Greece
Activity	Activities 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
Lead Partner	Symplexis
Author	Grigoris Chryssikos, Symplexis
Dissemination level	Confidential, only within the consortium
Status	Pending
Version	8.0
Date	November, 2023

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1. Executive Summary

Protecting the environment is now an undeniable necessity. But the challenge is how this can be done in combination with economic growth. One of the industries on which many countries, and in particular those in the south of Europe, rely is the tourism industry. Yet its development often has a negative impact on the environment. This report focuses on the situation in Greece, the impact of tourism on its economy and the natural environment, as well as on the policies and initiatives it is implementing and supporting to make a shift towards green growth and sustainable tourism. The report also refers to the level of expansion of green professions as well as examples of such professions that could be practised in Greece, thus actively contributing both to the protection of the environment and the development of sustainable tourism. In addition to the desk research, the project partners in Greece carried out research through questionnaires and co-creation workshops from which important findings were extracted regarding the level of public awareness and familiarity regarding environmental protection, sustainable tourism and green skills/professions. Based on all the above, 2 case studies of sustainable tourism in Greece were identified which accurately reflect the objectives of the project and policy recommendations were drawn up which could contribute to the development of other similar initiatives and green growth in Greece in general. Finally, based on all the findings presented in the National Report, a SWOT Analysis for Greece was developed.

2. Introduction

Tourism is a sector with a major impact on both the European economy and society, and despite its rapid decline during the pandemic years, the tourism industry has almost recovered to pre-COVID levels. The size of the European tourism industry is also confirmed by statistics, as Europe is the region with the



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largest number of international tourist arrivals in the world, namely almost 600 million arrivals in 2022 (Statista, 2023). As a result of this, the tourism industry has a large share in Europe's economy, approximately 10% of its Gross Domestic Product, but this percentage is higher when referring to the southern European countries (WTTC, 2019). Similarly, the number of people employed in tourism in the EU is also significant, exceeding 12 million, while the percentage of persons employed tourism industries

as share of those employed in non-financial business economy reaches 10% in the European Union and exceeds it in the Southern countries (EUROSTAT, 2019).

Yet an industry of this size could not avoid having a significant environmental impact. In particular, around 5% of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by tourism-related activities, a figure that is expected to double in the next 25 years (European Union, 2017). Out of the emissions caused by the tourism industry, 20% are caused by the activity of tourist accommodation, the construction of which also causes a high degradation of the natural environment, while 75% are due to transport (3.7% of total GHG emissions) as airplanes and road vehicles are commonly used, which are the most polluting means of transport (European Union, 2017). In addition to these, tourism can be responsible for overexploitation of natural resources, first and foremost water, air and water pollution, and erosion of the natural environment and ecosystems. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that although the tourism industry has a share in the environmental damage, it is also directly affected by it, as tourism is largely based on natural beauty (mountains, sea, beaches, air quality, etc.). It is therefore essential for tourism to change direction and focus on the protection of the natural environment, as the current profit-driven direction seems to be self-destructive.

Thus, the latest policies of the European Union aim at protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity, with the main policy being the "European Green Deal", which has set a target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2023 compared to 1990 levels and to eventually reach zero net



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greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (European Commission, n.d). Linked to the European Green Deal are 'The Urban Agenda for the EU', which focuses on improving the quality of life in urban areas, and the 'New European Bauhaus', which aims to create a sustainable and inclusive future by connecting citizens, experts, businesses and institutions, while initiatives have also been developed that focus on sustainable tourism, including more sustainable transport, better measuring of the environmental footprint, encouraging the adoption of green practices by businesses, and the development of green skills (European Commission, n.d). In 2015, the E.U countries also signed the Paris Climate Agreement which aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (UN, n.d)

Developing green skills and creating green jobs – i.e., skills and professions that contribute to preserving and protecting the environment – in the tourism sector could reduce its environmental footprint and reduce the risk of its decline due to environmental degradation, as it would equip its workforce with people with a "green" mindset and the appropriate skills to enhance the sustainability of the sector. It would also create new job opportunities, thus providing the potential to reduce the unemployment rate, and especially the youth unemployment rate.

3. Sustainable tourism: The national context

3.1. Tourism in Greece: Statistics

As mentioned in the introduction, the influence of the tourism industry is stronger in southern European countries. Greece could naturally not be an exception, as it is known worldwide for its attractions, islands, landscapes and food and is a popular destination for tourists from all over the world. Tourism is also described by the country's politicians and media as Greece's 'heavy industry', which is of course just an impressionistic opinion and is not based on facts.

Nevertheless, tourism does have a significant impact on the Greek economy. In 2019 (pre-pandemic levels) Greece recorded over 30 million arrivals which generated over €15 billion in travel earnings (Deloitte Central Mediterranean, 2023). Also, the direct contribution of tourism to GDP was approximately €21 billion (over 12% of GDP), while the total contribution of tourism exceeded €61 billion,



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or approximately 33% of GDP (Deloitte Central Mediterranean, 2023). The contribution of tourism to employment is also very significant, as more than 1 million people are employed in the tourism industry (Deloitte Central Mediterranean, 2023). This means that approximately 20% of the workforce is employed in tourism (ELSTAT, 2023). Although these figures changed during the years of the pandemic, as tourist arrivals fell rapidly, tourism already recovered significantly in 2022 and is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023.

3.2. Impact on the environment

However, such extensive tourism activity, which peaks during summer season, has also a heavy impact on environment. First of all, to cater for such a large number of tourists, building in tourist areas is often uncontrolled. For example, in 2022 alone, 1280 new building permits were granted in Cyclades (Kathimerini, 2023). Another typical example is the island of Santorini which, according to the former mayor Nikos Zorzos, is 18% covered by buildings, a proportion which is higher than that of Attica, where the capital of Greece, Athens, is located (Kathimerini, 2018).

As a consequence of the above, there is also a major increase in garbage and waste. Research has shown that on the Mediterranean islands during high season, coastal pollution increases by 117% with 84% of it consisting of plastic waste (Green Agenda, 2019). This problem is intensified by the fact that Greece is failing to meet the objectives set by the European Union, as the actual recycling rate is only 16% while the European goal for 2025 is 55% (Kathimerini, 2023). At the same time, the landfill rate of waste reaches 77% while the target for 2035 is below 10% (Kathimerini, 2023)!

A further problem created by the excessive tourist flows is the overconsumption of natural resources, in particular water. It is typical that although Greece is one of the top countries in the world in terms of access to water, the overconsumption that takes place especially during the summer period combined with drought, often leads to water supply failures in popular tourist destinations such as Santorini (Kathimerini, 2018) and Chalkidiki (ERT News, 2022). In addition to natural resources, biodiversity is also threatened, as the OECD report on Greece states that overbuilding near the coast, the creation of roads and overcrowded beaches pose a significant threat to coastal and marine biodiversity (OECD, 2020).



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Finally, excessive and unregulated building, combined with the impacts of climate change and Greece's deficient emergency management mechanisms, has led to disasters (wildfires and floods) with significant losses of both human lives and the environment (SGI, 2022).

3.3. Policies

3.3.1. Environment

In order to mitigate and tackle the aforementioned issues, Greece is adjusting its environmental strategy by participating in global climate agreements such as the European Green Deal. In 2014, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Greece developed the National Biodiversity Strategy for 2014-2029, which sets the objectives for improving knowledge on biodiversity and on how this knowledge can be integrated into sectoral policies (OECD, 2020). In 2015 Greece signed the Paris Climate Agreement and in 2021 it also committed to comply with the COP26 guidelines (SGI, 2022). In 2022 the first climate law was passed in the Greek parliament, which sets specific targets such as disengaging from fossil fuels for power generation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Reuters, 2022). However, the SGI Network rates Greece poorly on its environmental policies (SGI, 2022), and Greenpeace commented on the new environmental law that it is only a small step towards the right direction without setting a concrete strategy for immediate decarbonisation (Reuters, 2022).

3.3.2. Sustainable tourism

In line with the demands of our era, where the consequences of climate change are becoming increasingly evident, Greece is now implementing several initiatives to support and promote sustainable tourism, both with the support of the public sector as well as with the support of the private sector and international organizations.

For instance, the Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory has been established under the auspices of the World Tourism Organisation and in cooperation with the University of the Aegean, aiming to provide data and analysis to the public and private sector on tourism in the Aegean islands but also in Greece in general, in order to equip them with all the appropriate information needed for the shift towards sustainable tourism (Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory, 2023).



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A second key initiative is PlasTICK, which is supported by the Ministry of Tourism and the National Tourism Organisation in collaboration with Common Seas. PlasTICK is a digital platform that helps hotels and accommodation businesses to measure their plastic footprint, but also provides them with information on solutions and practices that will contribute to the reduction of plastic use (PlasTICK, n.d). Alongside the initiatives at national level, local initiatives have also been developed, especially on the Greek islands. Some of them are "Just go Zero" in Tilos, "Astybus" in Astypalaea, "Clean Blue Paros" etc. (Emily, 2022).

In order to promote the initiatives mentioned above, the Greek National Tourism Organisation in the UK has developed an online platform, sustainablegreece.co.uk , which highlights all sustainability actions in Greek tourist destinations and aims to encourage tourists to visit and support local communities that adopt green and sustainable practices (Sustainable Greece, n.d).



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4. Green Skills and professions in Greece

4.1. National Context

The effects of climate change and the shift towards green development and sustainability are creating new jobs in the so-called green professions which also require green skills. In particular, if the obligations under the Paris Agreement are respected, the number of jobs will increase by 0.7 %, which is the 4th highest in the EU and indicates that the jobs created will outweigh those that will disappear as a result of this green transition (SEV, 2021). However, according to Katerina Argyropoulou who is the director of the Laboratory of Science and Career Counselling at the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens which has developed a career guidance handbook aimed at providing information on the prospects of green professions, green professions are not particularly well-known in Greece. Specifically, according to Ms. Argyropoulou, only 1% of professionals are engaged in green jobs and this percentage is the lowest in Europe (Liberal, 2023).

In order to change this, initiatives aiming at training people in green skills and green professions exist, albeit few in number. For example, the Public Employment Service offered in 2023 a training programme in digital and green skills to 120 000 unemployed people (Naftemporiki, 2023). Furthermore, the #GreenMakers programme, supported by the company Mytilineos, provides free training to 100 people to apply for jobs in green professions (Naftemoriki, 2023). In Greece, however, there are also university departments with an exclusive focus on environmental issues, such as the Department of Environmental Engineering in the University of Western Macedonia, although none of them are located in Attica. There are also many faculties that have courses or orientations related to environmental protection such as the departments of Geology, Agriculture, Oceanography, Materials Science, Architecture, Civil Engineering etc. (Liberal, 2023). And beyond the professions that require university education, there are also those that require a lower level of expertise, such as guides to natural landscapes and parks or rangers. Moreover, someone could also set up a green business such as a bicycle rental business, while, last but not least, opportunities for green jobs are also offered by the agricultural sector through bio farming or urban farming.



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4.2. Green Professions

The following are indicative sectors in Greece where green employment opportunities are offered and examples of green jobs with varying levels of expertise:

Field	Green Professions	Description
Waste Management	Waste management engineer, sorting ambassador, recycling agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This profession requires a high level of expertise and advanced knowledge of waste management as the waste management engineer is responsible for the coordination and management of the disposal collection and recycling of waste. For example, it may involve overseeing waste management schemes such as landfills. - The sorting ambassador is responsible for informing businesses, organisations and citizens about the correct sorting of waste for more efficient waste management and recycling, thus helping to increase the recycling rate in the area. Requires good communication skills as well as a good knowledge of the materials offered for recycling and the criteria to be eligible for recycling. - The recycling agent is responsible for the proper sorting and preparation of a business/organisation's waste to ensure that most of it is recycled. This profession requires good organisational skills and a good knowledge of the factors that make materials/waste recyclable.
Forest Protection	Forestry scientist, forest ranger, seasonal firefighter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apart from beautiful beaches, Greece has also a large number of forests. The Forestry Scientist is responsible for the management, protection and utilization of the forest. The position requires a high level of expertise and advanced knowledge of forest ecosystems. - Forests, especially during summertime, require protection as there are incidents of arson or carelessness that put the forest at risk. A ranger has to love nature as he/she will spend a lot of time in it, be observant and constantly alert and be capable of managing emergency situations. - In Greece, wildfires are common throughout the summer months and therefore there is an increased need for additional fire-fighting personnel at that time of year. The seasonal firefighter must be courageous, determined and in good physical condition as he/she may have to work long hours continuously under adverse conditions that may put his/her life at risk, be able to work under pressure and have well-developed crisis management skills.



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<p>Agriculture</p>	<p>Agronomist, organic farmer, urban agriculture/gardening site operator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The agronomist is responsible for crop management as well as for the study and development of new methods for more sustainable and ecological ways of cultivation (e.g. limiting the use of pesticides, reducing water consumption, etc.). The position therefore requires a high level of expertise and advanced knowledge of the characteristics of soil, plants and agriculture in general. - An organic farmer aims to minimize the impact of farming on the environment and at the same time improve the quality of his products. He must therefore be environmentally aware, willing to learn about new farming methods and have an advanced knowledge of agriculture. He should also be aware of subsidy programmes. - As the largest percentage of residents in Greece live in cities, the need for green spaces has been raised and such are urban farming/gardening spaces that give citizens the opportunity to get even closer to nature. They can also be therapeutic or as a means of inclusion for vulnerable social groups. The operator of such a space should have environmental and social awareness, organisational skills, knowledge of agriculture and horticulture, communication skills and skills for seeking funding.
<p>Tourism</p>	<p>Green business owner, hiking trail guide, travel blogger/vlogger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurship and sustainability go side by side. Whether referring to a restaurant that uses only organic products, or a hotel with a zero environmental footprint, or a bicycle rental business. The entrepreneur must be innovative, not afraid of risk, have financial, digital, communication and leadership skills and of course be environmentally conscious. - Greece is a mountainous country full of beautiful hiking trails. But visitors often need a guide to discover these trails as well as for safety. The guide should love nature, have communication skills, know the area well, and be able to handle emergency situations. - The internet and social media in our lives for good and people are also using them to get information about their holidays. So, a travel blogger, focusing on green and sustainable tourism, will travel and recommend destinations that adopt green practices by writing articles and uploading videos and photos on social media. Therefore, they should enjoy travel, be environmentally conscious, have creative writing and video and image editing skills, and be comfortable with social media exposure.
<p>Art</p>	<p>Photographer focusing on the environment, jewelry maker from garbage and recyclable materials,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A picture is worth a thousand words and there is no better way to showcase the beauty of nature and the negative effects of climate change and human intervention than a photo. This job requires a good knowledge of photography, environmental awareness, a love for travelling and knowledge of image editing. - Jewelry does not have to be made of expensive materials. All it takes is



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	<p>artwork maker from garbage and recyclable materials</p>	<p>creativity, imagination, financial and communication skills to sell this jewelry and basic knowledge of the materials used. - The same applies to art. Sculptures, installations and paintings can be made from materials that people consider useless. Creativity and imagination are the key.</p>
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Sources: (Bianchi, Pisiotis & Cabrera Giraldez, 2022); (Briggs, 2023); (EDUJOB, n.d); (Environmental Science, n.d); (EOPPEP, 2011); (Epichiro, 2016); (ERTOPEN, 2021); (GLOBSYN, n.d); (Grant, n.d); (Investopedia, n.d); (ILO, 2022); (Indeed, 2023); (Nature Guide Network, 2023); (Online Degree, n.d); (Purdue University, n.d); (Szalok, Bende & Kozina, 2019); (WIKIFARMER, n.d); (WorkBC, n.d); (World Economic Forum, 2021)

In addition to the skills listed in the above table, there are also competences that every person who wants to act in a sustainability-oriented way must have. Some of them are valuing sustainability, critical thinking, adaptability, individual initiative and more, and are described in detail in the [“GreenComp, the European sustainability competence framework”](#) developed by the European Commission.

5. Field research findings

5.1. Description of participants

To identify the adult training needs on green professions and sustainable tourism, the project partners in Greece carried out a research based on online questionnaires. The survey involved young adults, municipal employees, adult educators, teachers, experts, academics, etc. and a total of 56 responses were collected (Figure 1).



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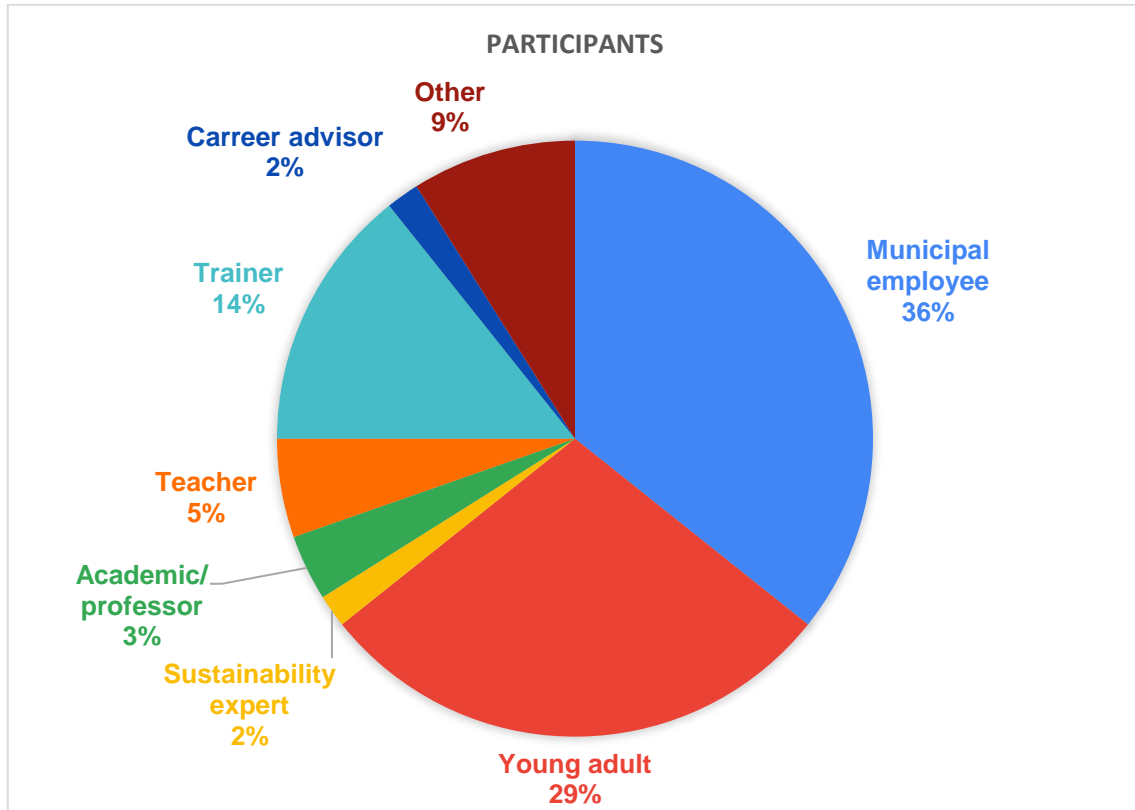


Figure 1

Most of the participants, i.e., 75%, were women (the corresponding percentage among young adults was 62.5%) and belonged to the age group of 40-59 (about 60%) (Figure 2).

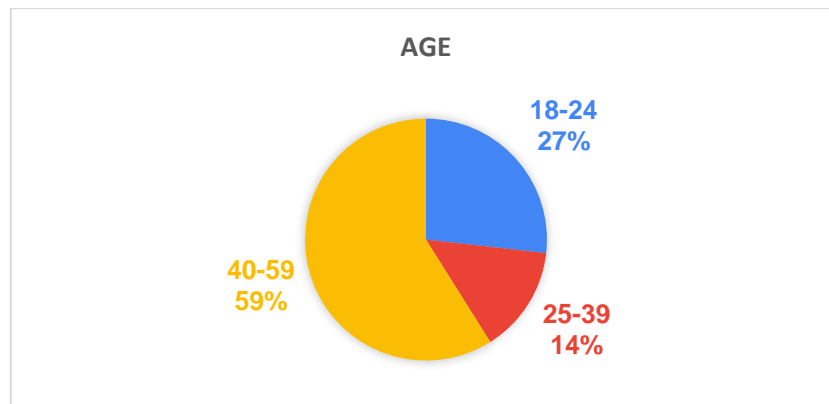


Figure 2



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Also, more than 75% held a university degree (bachelor, master, or PhD) (Figure 3), although this percentage decreases (50%) if we focus on young adults separately (Figure 4).

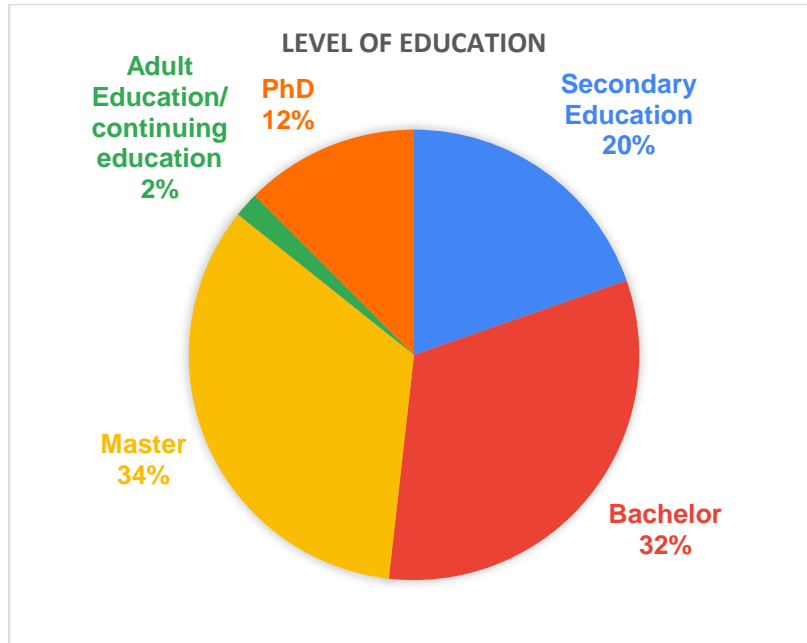


Figure 3

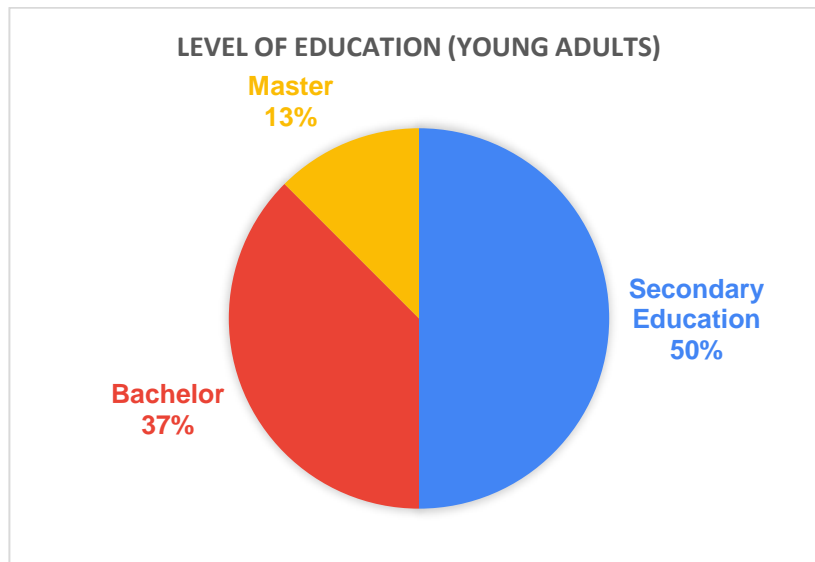


Figure 4



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Moreover, approximately 60% of the young adults surveyed were employed, with most having less than 5 years of work experience, while 25% had never worked (Figure 5).

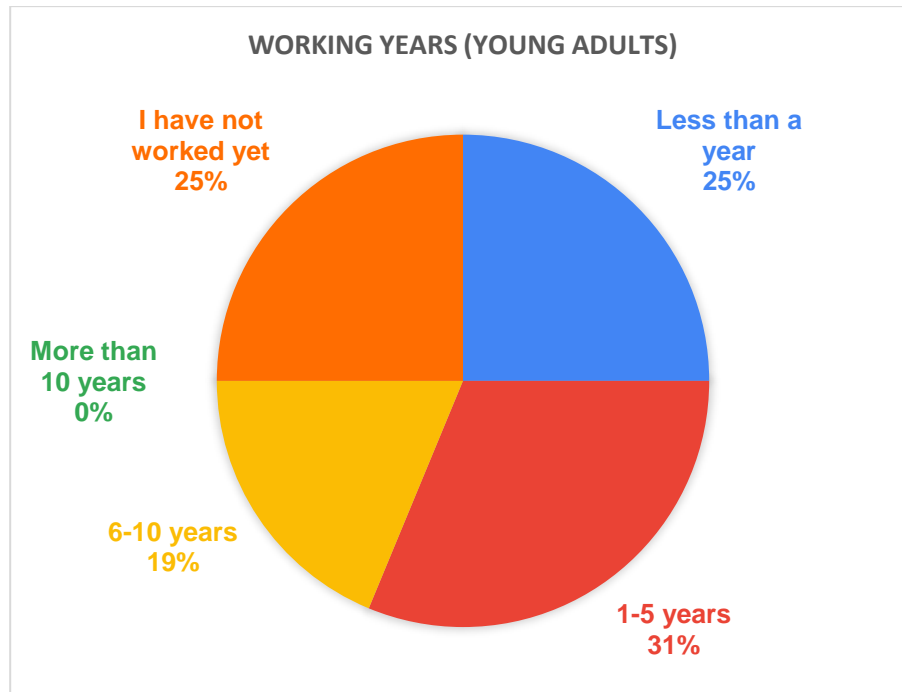


Figure 5

5.2. Familiarity with sustainable practices and related terms

Regarding participants' familiarity with sustainable practices and related terms, the survey showed that most participants use sustainable practices in their everyday life and are familiar with related terms. In particular, 75% of participants were aware of the terms "sustainable tourism" (Figure 6) and "citizen participation", although the percentage was slightly lower for this term among young adults (Figure 7), and about 60% of participants use sustainable practices, with responses including recycling (the most popular answer), energy and water saving, using public transport and bicycles, using secondhand clothes, etc (Figure 8).



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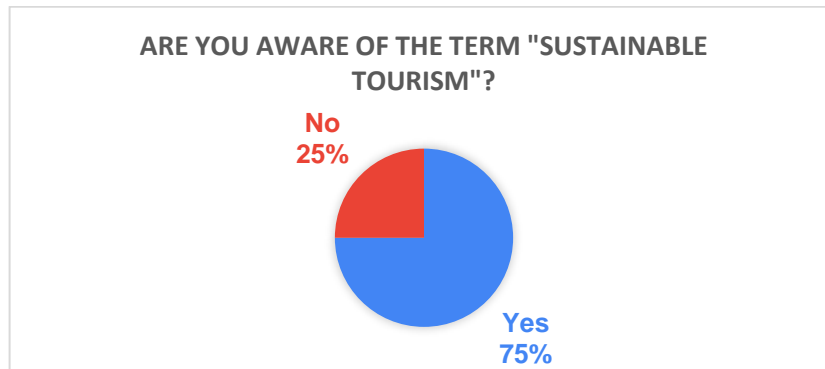


Figure 6

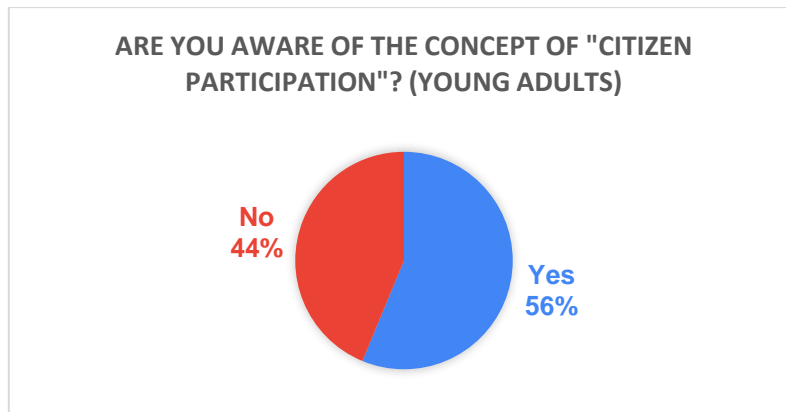


Figure 7

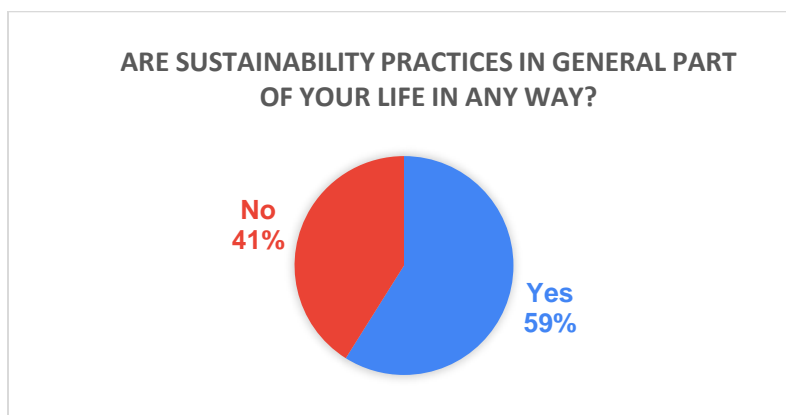


Figure 8



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Particularly interesting are the participants’ responses regarding the term “green job”, as although in the overall sample it appeared that 55% were aware of the term, if we isolate the responses of young adults, it appeared that only 37% of them were aware of the term (Figure 9).

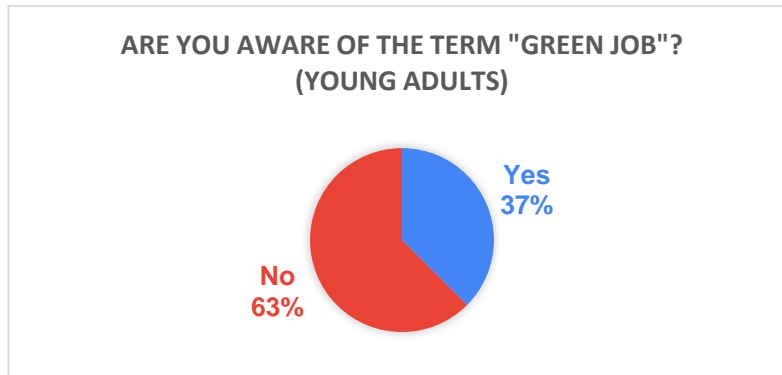


Figure 9

5.3. Familiarity with E.U and national policies and initiatives

However, despite their familiarity with the above terms, most participants are not aware of policies and initiatives for sustainability and sustainable tourism in Greece and the EU, and they do not believe that Greece is implementing such initiatives. More specifically, 55% of respondents believe that Greece does not implement initiatives for environmental protection and sustainable tourism (Figure 10), with this figure increasing to 75% if we only focus on young adults.

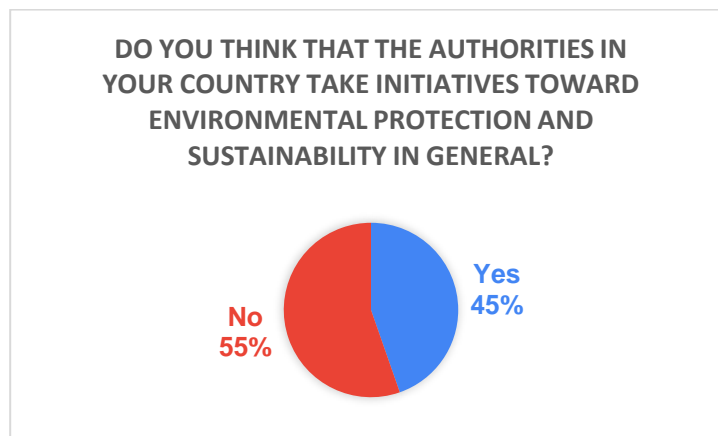


Figure 10

It is remarkable, however, that most of the responses from municipal employees are positive (Figure 11).



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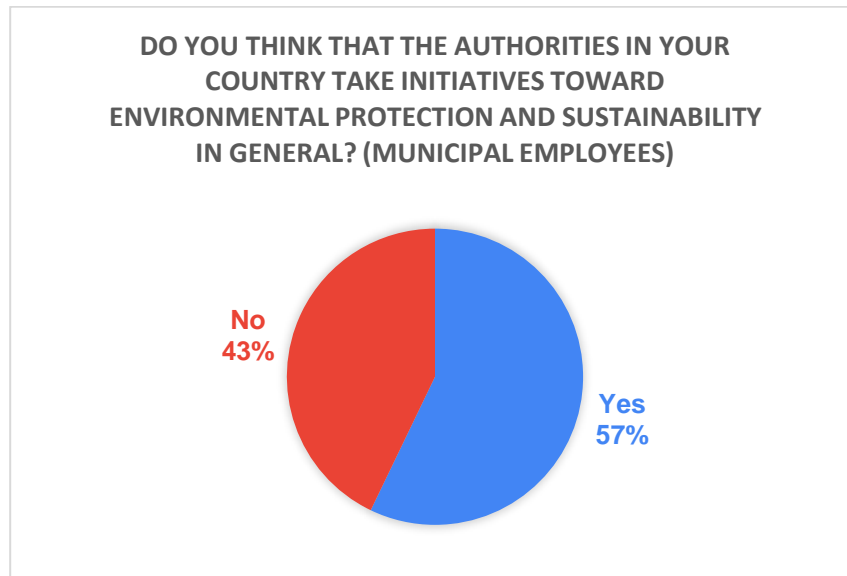


Figure 11

As far as EU and national policies and initiatives are concerned, the vast majority of participants, with percentages ranging from 75% to 91%, are not aware of any. However, even among the positive responses, there were very few who mentioned any policy or initiative, with some examples being the European Green Deal and Agenda 2030 at EU level and Clean Blue Paros, Tilos Project and PlastiCK at national level. Among young adults, the proportion of people who did not know any sustainable tourism policy was even higher. A notable example was the question about EU policies on sustainable tourism where no one answered that they were aware of any. Also, the percentage of people who were aware of local businesses implementing sustainable tourism practices was also low, namely approximately 14% (Figure 12).



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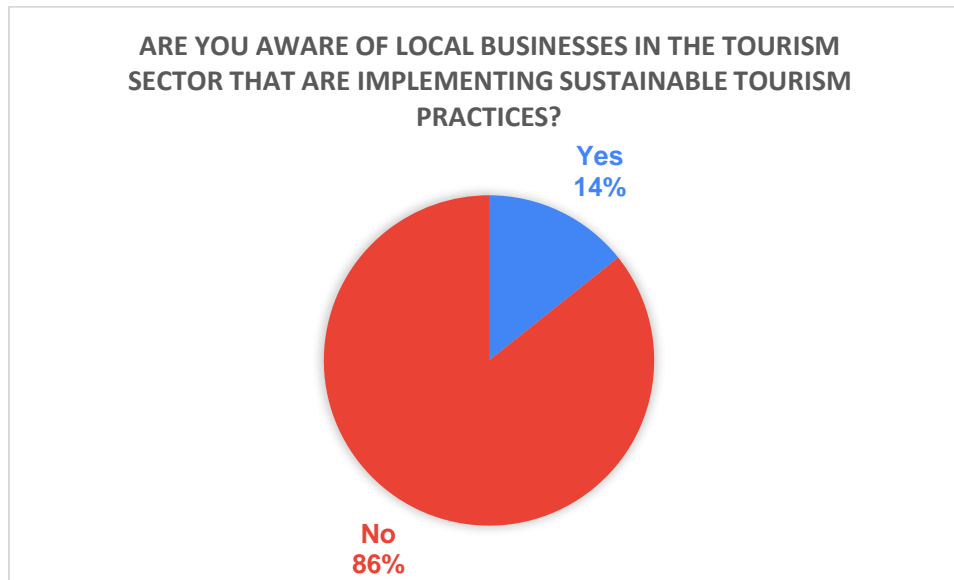


Figure 12

When asked about what sustainable tourism practices they are aware of, several participants focused on the use of renewable energy sources, water and energy conservation and waste management, while several participants also mentioned the promotion of agritourism and local products. In terms of ideas and suggestions, many interesting responses were given, such as involving tourists in sustainable development through festivals and events, stricter controls on construction and building standards, controls on tourist inflows and incentives for local businesses to implement sustainable practices. However, approximately 60% of respondents did not provide an answer.

5.4. Green skills & professions

According to the survey participants, in order for an employee to practice and promote sustainable tourism, they should have environmental awareness, communication skills, collaborative mindset, knowledge of foreign languages, digital skills, while creativity, financial skills and entrepreneurship were also mentioned. Approximately 40% of the participants did not answer the question. All participants also stated that employers and tourism workers should receive training on sustainable tourism practices. It is noteworthy, however, that only 9% of participants - and none of the young adults - have received any training in their lifetime on sustainability (Figure 13).



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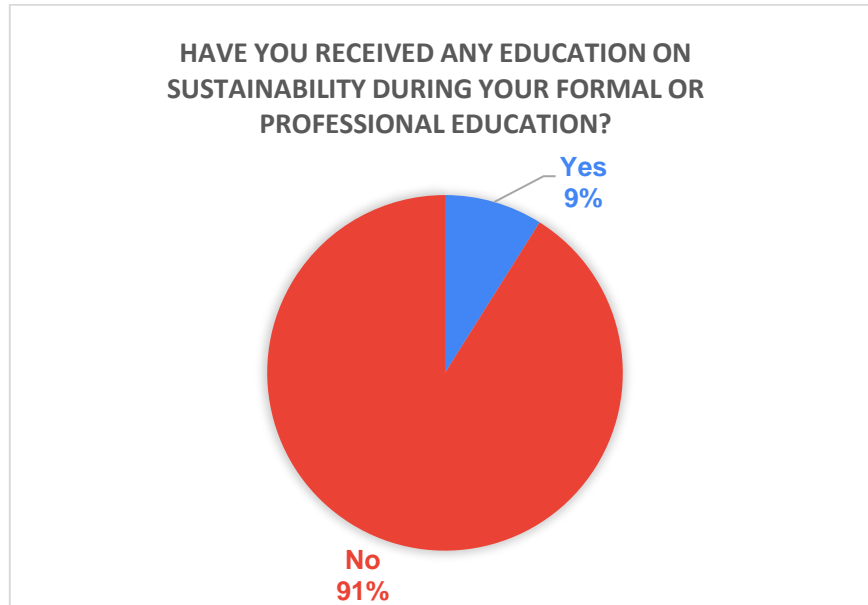


Figure 13

On the other hand, it is encouraging that 84 % of the participants overall and 81% of the young adults would like to participate in a training course on sustainable tourism (Figure 14) and in fact 56 % of the young adults (Figure 15) and 50 % of the participants overall would be interested in finding a green job.

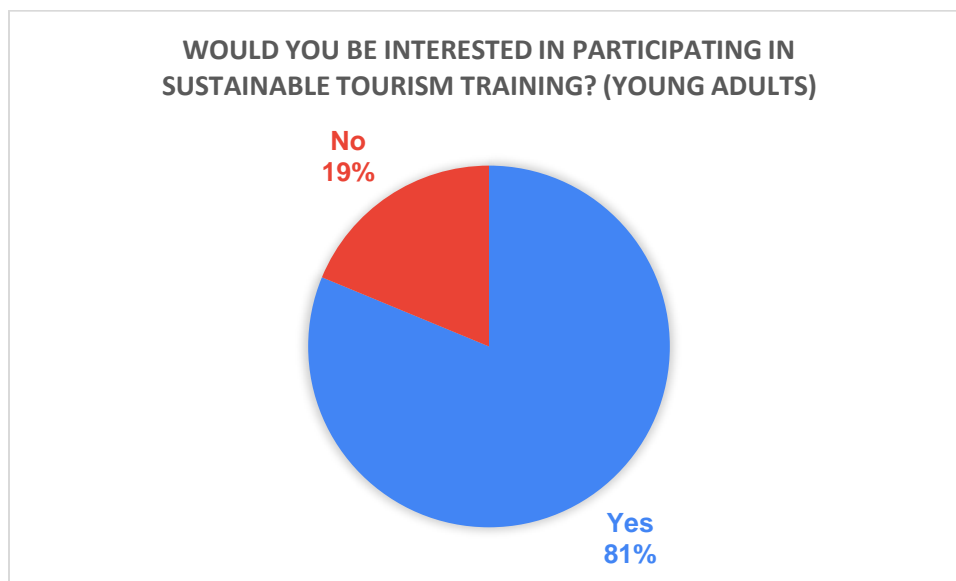


Figure 14



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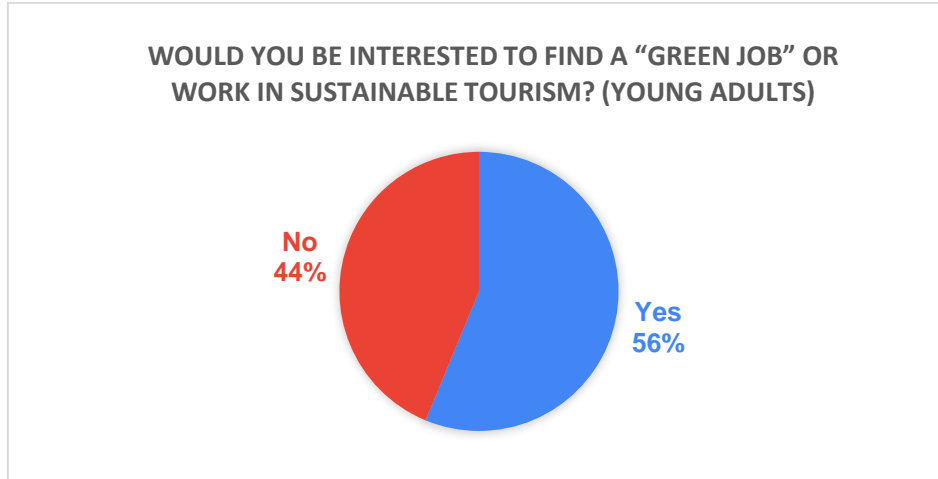


Figure 15

However, as one participant noted, if someone is already working, they will not easily leave their job for another one, without this implying that they are not interested in sustainability. The reasons that would motivate participants to work in a green profession include the positive impact it would have on the environment, the love of nature and greater interaction with it, the growth prospects of the green professions sector and higher salaries. When participants were asked to name some green professions, the most popular answers were agronomist and environmentalist, while environmental engineer, farmer, forester, natural landscape guide and renewable energy plant technician were also mentioned. Last but not least, almost 80% of the participants would be interested in learning more and getting involved with the PREPARE project (Figure 16).



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Figure 16

5.5. Conclusions

Overall, the survey shows that although there is a basic level of knowledge of sustainability-related concepts and practices, most people are not aware of policies and initiatives that are currently being implemented. The reasons for this may be because there are not enough policies and initiatives for sustainability and sustainable tourism, especially at national and local level, and that there is not enough dissemination and promotion of these policies and initiatives. It also appears that the professionals surveyed (municipal workers, adult educators, etc.) have a higher level of awareness than young adults, which is probably due to more personal and professional experiences as well as education, as none of the young adults have received any training on sustainability. However, it is worth noting that all participants rated training in sustainable tourism practices as very important for employees in the tourism industry and the vast majority showed interest in receiving training themselves. Also, given that most participants are already working, the percentage of those who would be interested in engaging in a green profession is very high. It is therefore evident that there is a potential and a willingness to develop sustainability training, sustainable practices and green professions, and according to the responses collected there is an increased interest in participating and engaging in the PREPARE project.



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6. Feedback on national co-creation workshop

6.1. Description of the co-creation workshop

As part of the WP2 activities, the project partners in Greece organized 2 online Co-Creation Workshops, aiming at presenting the project and its objectives to municipal workers and young adults and recording their views on sustainability, sustainable tourism, and green skills and professions. A total of 30 people (24 women, 6 men) participated, of which 19 were municipal employees, 7 young adults, 2 career advisors, 1 academic and 1 tourism professional. The first part of the Co-Creation Workshops included presentations related to the project and its objectives, while the second part included an extensive discussion with the participants to record both their level of knowledge and their views on issues related to environmental protection, sustainable tourism, and green professions.

6.2. Findings

Most participants had no previous exposure to the concepts of green tourism and green professions and that essentially their only interaction with green practices is recycling. Also, hardly any of them were aware of European and governmental policies related to environmental issues and therefore there was no comfort from the participants to discuss them. Most participants had no previous exposure to the concepts of green tourism and green professions and that essentially their only interaction with green practices is recycling. Also, hardly any of them were aware of European and governmental policies related to environmental issues and therefore there was no comfort from the participants to discuss them.

As for local initiatives and actions, more examples were mentioned such as educational programmes for school students on recycling, Social Cooperatives active in the recycling of cooking oil from businesses, a training programme for unemployed people to become mountain guides, municipal vegetable gardens, and an organisation aiming at mapping and maintaining the paths of Andros. Common problems and challenges were identified in most of the above actions, which included limited funding, or no funding secured after the end of the European funding programme, insufficient know-how for planning, organising and coordinating the action and lack of acceptance/participation by the local community.

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Regarding training on skills related to sustainability and green tourism, the vast majority of participants have not received such training, and most were not aware of the professional opportunities that can result from green skills. In fact, most participants had difficulty understanding the concept of “green profession”. It was also reported by municipal employees that although municipalities have Community Centres and Labour Offices to help unemployed people in their job search, there is no specific orientation concerning training in green skills or finding a job in green sectors. They also report that the initiatives organised by their municipality on the environment involve either children and schools or people over 35+ who have now got a family which may indicate that information about green actions either does not reach young people or that there is less interest from young people. On the other hand, a young adult reported that because the funding is low for most environmental initiatives, the workload is heavy and there is no professional security, young people are not motivated to work on these initiatives.

Nevertheless, most participants considered that a shift to green jobs is necessary and will be beneficial. Some mentioned that every profession can have a “green aspect” and that it is important to have training in this area. It was also mentioned that it is important that training in a green profession takes into account existing skills and competences, especially when it comes to low-skilled people, as this will make it easier to include people from vulnerable social groups. It was also stressed that sustainable tourism can also improve the quality of life of the community, mentioning the examples of the tourist exploitation of the Kifissos River and the paths of Andros, which can lead to the cleaning and conservation of these natural landscapes and thus to the protection of the environment. Furthermore, municipal employees pointed out that they would like to have a green economy and environmental protection officer/consultant in their municipality and that there could also be a training provided to all employees so that each department of the municipality takes sustainability into account.

6.3. Conclusion & Key Challenges

In conclusion, the participants’ level of knowledge about existing European and national green policies is quite low as well as the level of familiarity with the concept of “green jobs”, which was also revealed through the survey via questionnaires. Through the discussion and the examples mentioned regarding local initiatives, the functioning of municipalities, and personal experiences of the participants,



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it emerges that there are common problems and challenges regarding the implementation of green initiatives and the promotion of green professions, which in summary are:

- Insufficient training of municipal employees responsible for sustainability and/or sustainable tourism initiatives, which leads to insufficient planning and organisation and poor results,
 - Lack of long-term funding / failure to ensure the sustainability of initiatives leading to their premature termination,
 - Lack of information provided to young people on the implementation of the initiatives,
 - Lack of involvement of the local community in the initiatives leading to non-acceptance/ non-participation by the community,
 - Not including green skills and vocational training in municipal labour offices,
 - Inadequate information provided to young people about green jobs and the opportunities they offer.

7. Case Studies

In order to further examine ways in which environmental protection and tourism development can go hand in hand, the project partners in Greece searched for tangible examples of initiatives that combine environmental sustainability and tourism development. For the identification of these case studies, the partners carried out desk research and also invited an expert / academic in tourism to consult them. Out of the case studies identified, the following two were selected as the best examples:

Name of Case Study:	Clean Blue Paros
Country:	Greece
Short Description:	Clean Blue Paros is an initiative of the international organization Common Seas, in collaboration with the Municipality of Paros, WATT, the Cyclades Preservation Fund, WWF and the Hellenic Recovery Recycling Corporation, which is being implemented



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on the Greek island of Paros since 2019, aiming to minimize, and eventually eliminate, the use of single-use plastic, thus cleaning the landscapes, coasts and seas of the island. The above initiative is implemented in three phases, investigation, intervention and influence. The investigation stage involves conducting marine, waste and social audits to identify the existing situation regarding the amount of plastic waste on the island and in the sea and to record the views of the local community on the use of plastic. These audits are carried out with the help of volunteers who have first been trained by the initiative's coordinators. In fact, by 2021, 185 volunteers had been trained. The data from the audits are used to design and adjust the interventions implemented to meet the objectives of Clean Blue Paros, which are the following 7:

- Clean Blue Business: over 100 businesses have committed to reducing their plastic footprint with Clean Blue Paros providing them with consultancy and data on their progress and impact
- Drink Tap Water: a campaign to promote the use of the island's tap water to reduce the use of plastic water bottles
- Ocean Plastics Academy: an educational guide with activities aimed at motivating students to reduce plastic use. More than 500 teachers have already been trained in the use of the guide and around 2500 students have been reached
- The GOPA project: a gamification campaign to stop the littering of cigarette butts (*gopa/γόπα* in Greek) into the environment
- Community Dishes: the use of metal reusable dishes at community events
- Tote bag workshops: an initiative to promote the use of handmade tote bags made from upcycled materials with the aim of reducing the use of plastic bags. 60 volunteers have already been trained as part of the initiative
- Improving Waste Management: a project to optimise waste management across the island, aiming to increase recycling and reduce landfill.

Following the intervention stage is the influence stage which aims to replicate and scale good practice. As part of this stage and in addition to the active engagement in media and social media (over 200 media clippings and 200000 reaches through social media posts) Clean Blue Paros has developed 25 tools to support other communities that want to become "Clean Blue" and 4 government proposals to fight plastic pollution.

Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study

The reduction of plastic use is now a priority both at European level after the adoption of the EU Single-use plastic directives, and at national level with the incorporation of the above directives into Greek legislation. Moreover, another priority is the waste management of cigarette butts as from 2030 tobacco companies



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	<p>will have to contribute financially to this process. Clean Blue Paros responds directly to the above priorities as the reduction of plastic use is one of its main objectives and through the GOPA Project the pollution from cigarette butts is also combated. In fact, the 2019-2021 report shows that there is already a significant positive environmental impact on the island.</p> <p>Furthermore, under the European Green Deal, the European Union promotes green tourism by, among other things, encouraging businesses to become greener, supporting the development of green skills and fostering the use of statistics and data for better environmental management. These are put into practice at Clean Blue Paros through the participation of businesses in the initiative, regular audits and reports and the training of entrepreneurs, volunteers, teachers and students.</p> <p>Finally, Clean Blue Paros contributes to the overall awareness raising on environmental issues both through the active involvement of the local community and through the promotion of the initiative and its results.</p>
<p>How this Case Study could be used/ transferred</p>	<p>Clean Blue Paros can be implemented in coastal communities/areas with (high) tourist activity as it includes both actions for the protection of the coast/sea and the active participation of tourism businesses. In fact, Clean Blue Paros has developed and compiled 25 tools that have been used in Paros and can be applied in other communities. It is worth noting that the Clean Blue initiative has already been transferred abroad as Common Seas is already implementing Clean Blue Maldives and Clean Blue Indonesia. This shows that this initiative could also be implemented in larger communities than Paros. The initiative also includes actions that could be implemented in non-coastal areas (e.g., clean blue business or tote bag workshops), as reducing the use of single-use plastic would be beneficial in any area. Finally, Clean Blue Paros is a very good case study as it combines environmental protection, green skills development and active participation of the local community.</p>
<p>Website link:</p>	<p>https://commonseas.com/countries/clean-blue-paros</p>

Sources: (Common Seas, n.d.), (European Commission, n.d.)

<p>Name of Case Study:</p>	<p>Bike Friendly</p>
<p>Country:</p>	<p>Greece</p>

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<p>Short Description:</p>	<p>The "Bike Friendly" label is an initiative of the Greek non-profit organization NATTOUR, in collaboration with the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (EPPF) and supported by Travel Media Application and Bikemap, that was launched in 2017 with the aim of protecting the environment through the development of cycling tourism. The "Bike Friendly" activities operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment and Energy.</p> <p>Through the "Bike Friendly" label, a network of hotels and municipalities/tourist destinations friendly to tourists-cyclists is created, aiming to attract tourists who either would like to explore parts of Greece by using their bicycle as a means of transport or would simply like to use their bicycle for short rides around their hotel during their holidays. Hotels and municipalities/tourist destinations that intend to become part of the "Bike Friendly" network must meet a set of internationally recognised criteria which are also posted on the initiative's website. At the same time, the network includes partners/businesses that provide bicycle rental services, technical support/repairs, bicycle tours, etc. So far, 24 businesses, 124 hotels and 8 municipalities (Kos, Chios, Alexandroupolis, Rethymno, Skiathos, Leros, Edessa, Aristotelis of Halkidiki) are members of the "Bike Friendly" network.</p> <p>Alongside the creation of the network, the "Bike Friendly" initiative has developed an online course, through which participants can be certified as "Greek Bike Specialists". The Greek Bike Specialist is a course/certification for cycling tourism in Greece and is addressed to independent travel agents, travel agencies and tour operators. By joining the educational platform, participants will have the opportunity to be informed about the opportunities and benefits of cycling tourism in Greece, and discover the certified "Bike Friendly Hotels" and "Bike Friendly Partners" throughout Greece. The beneficiaries who successfully complete the training program will receive the "Greek Bike Specialist" certificate and will be entitled to organize trips for their clients in the bike-friendly regions of Greece, in cooperation with the members of the "Bike Friendly" network (hotels and cycling businesses).</p>
<p>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study</p>	<p>Transport/mobility is a major source of environmental pollution as transport emissions account for 25% of total greenhouse emissions and, under the EU Green Deal, the European Union aims to reduce net greenhouse emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990. For this reason, and to promote green tourism, the EU has developed a "Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy" and an action plan to minimise greenhouse emissions. Initiatives such as "Bike friendly" can also contribute to this direction as it promotes the use of bicycles either as a means of transport to</p>



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	<p>the destination or upon arrival at the destination, thus reducing the use of more polluting means of transport such as cars.</p> <p>Also, as mentioned in the previous case study the EU supports practices that make businesses greener as well as the development of green skills. The above are also enhanced in the "Bike Friendly" initiative both through the participation of hotels and businesses in its network and through the development of the "Greek Bike Specialist" training programme/certification. Last but not least, using a bicycle instead of a car brings people closer to nature and therefore contributes to raising awareness on environmental issues.</p>
How this Case Study could be used/ transferred	<p>The above initiative could easily be implemented in other countries or regions as any hotel, business or municipalities that meet the criteria, which are international, could participate in a similar network. An important element for the success of the initiative will be communication/promotion to make it known to the stakeholders and to convince the potential participants in the network that their involvement in the network will increase visibility and boost tourism. As in the case of Greece, the ministries of tourism of each country could also support the initiative. The training programme could also be transferred to other countries, although it is possible that adaptations may be needed depending on the needs, specificities and challenges in each country. But especially in countries that do not have a "bicycle culture" it could have an even greater impact.</p>
Website link:	https://www.bikehotels.travel/en/

Sources: (Bike Friendly, n.d.), (European Commission, n.d.)

During the research to identify suitable case studies, the project partners in Greece also detected the following good practices that could be applied in other countries in the context of promoting sustainability and green tourism.

Name of Case Study	Website link
Just Go Zero Tilos	https://www.justgozero.com/tilos
Sustainable Sailing Greece	https://sustainablesailinggreece.com



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Paths of Greece	https://www.pathsofgreece.gr/en
Sani Resort Zero Carbon Footprint Project	https://sani-resort.com/gr/%CE%B1%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%B1/zero-carbon-footprint-project
Mikro Papigo Eco Living	https://www.mikropapigo.gr/pages/sustainability
Smart Trikala	https://trikalacity.gr/en/smart-trikala

8. Policy recommendations

Based on the above case studies, but also on the findings from the desk research, the survey and the co-creation workshop, the project partners in Greece, in collaboration with the academic who also contributed to the identification of the case studies, drafted the following two policy recommendations that will contribute to achieving the objectives of the above and similar initiatives, the expansion and dissemination of green tourism initiatives and the promotion of green skills and professions.

1. **Promotion of green tourism initiatives by the government through targeted campaigns both nationally and internationally.**

More often than not, the success of an initiative is ultimately determined by people's participation. In the case of both Clean Blue Paros and Bike Friendly, the participation of businesses and municipalities is required. However, in order for businesses and municipalities to participate, incentives are needed and one of them is promotion and an increase in tourist activity and therefore increase in their profits. Thus, when such initiatives are supported by the state with systematic promotion, the stakeholders will know that their participation is equivalent to an increase in visibility and customer numbers. Furthermore, making green tourism initiatives known to the general public can help the initiatives to find more active supporters (volunteers, funders, etc.) and can also contribute to the creation of new initiatives and/or the transfer of existing practices to other regions. It is important to note that both the questionnaire survey and the workshop revealed that people are not aware of such initiatives and this is something that the workshop participants stressed that needs to change



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2. **Focus on education and raising environmental awareness among young people through the integration of environmental literacy and green skills/professions courses in school education and through green professions training programmes for young people entering the labour market with the aim of creating a "green generation".**

During the co-creation workshops a term that was often mentioned by the participants was "education", as very few of them had received any "green" education during their lifetime, which was also shown by the questionnaire survey. It also emerged from the desk research that a very small percentage (the lowest in Europe) of professionals are involved in green professions, and that there are only limited public training programmes regarding green professions. Clean Blue Paros and Bike Friendly are two initiatives that also focus on education as Clean Blue Paros has developed a course for school students which has been proposed to the government to be included in school education, while Bike Friendly has developed a training programme for travel agents and tour operators. It is therefore important that the government continues in this direction either by supporting existing courses and programmes or by developing new ones. In terms of school education, for example, courses could focus on environmental awareness in the earlier grades and on green skills and professions in the older grades so that students have a first-hand look at the career opportunities that exist. Such an orientation in education and vocational training will therefore create a young generation who are both environmentally aware and green professionally oriented, so that they can actively contribute to environmental protection and the development of green industries.

Other policy recommendations identified that could contribute to the protection of the environment and the development of green tourism are:

- Promotion of the cooperation and the development of partnerships between governments, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the local community and other relevant actors should be the basis for the growth of sustainable tourism and the expansion of green skills and professions related to sustainability, with a focus on the tourism sector, in order to ultimately boost the green economy.
- Authorities at both international and national levels, in particular governments and regional and local authorities should promote environmentally sustainable growth and support efforts to meet national and international commitments.
- Encourage and support the development of initiatives that incorporate the involvement/employment of people with green skills, as such initiatives can contribute to the local economy, the social inclusion and the environmental protection of the tourism destinations.



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9. SWOT Analysis

Based on the findings presented throughout the National Report, the following SWOT Analysis for environmental protection, sustainable tourism and green professions in Greece was developed.

<p>SWOT ANALYSIS ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GREEN JOBS IN GREECE</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greece is a country with a wealth of natural environment, combining both islands and a extensive coastline as well as mountains. 2. Greece is already an established globally renowned tourist destination 3. Greece as a member of the European Union has access to funding programmes for the protection of the environment and the growth of the green economy. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Despite recent progress, environmental policies are still deficient and there is an absence of a concrete decarbonisation strategy 2. Very low proportion of the workforce engaged in green professions 3. In many tourist areas there is excessive building and infrastructure that is not environmentally friendly 4. Tourist traffic increases dramatically during the summer months, resulting in overcrowding and a major increase in pollution 5. Low level of public awareness of policies, actions and initiatives related to green (economic) growth
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alternative and sustainable tourism is becoming a global trend 2. The development of technology and data analysis offers “smart” tools for green growth and waste management 3. Environmental protection and green growth is becoming a priority for the government 4. Promoting green skills and 	<p>Opportunity-Strength (OS) Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of green tourism professions that will contribute to the protection and enhancement of the environment and the sustainability of tourism 2. Development of initiatives for the growth of sustainable tourism with the support of the EU and/or the Greek government 3. Extension of the tourist season through the development of other types of tourism 	<p>Opportunity-Weakness (OW) Strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of alternative and green tourism will reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment 2. Using technology for improved waste management and other green initiatives 3. Running campaigns and promotional activities to raise public awareness



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professions is an EU priority		
Threats 1. Environmental degradation can damage both the quality of life of residents as well as tourism 2. Low level of public awareness and low visibility of green (tourism) initiatives can lead to their failure 3. The lack of funding due to economic instability in Greece	Threat-Strength (TS) Strategies 1. Global promotion of green tourism initiatives 2. Ensuring proper use of EU funds to guarantee the sustainability of green initiatives 3. Using green tourism as an asset for environmental protection	Threat-Weakness (TW) Strategies 1. Building green awareness and developing green skills through educational programmes for schools 2. Promoting green jobs through training programmes for young adults entering the labour market or professionals looking to upgrade their skills 3. Development of policies and enactment of laws to protect the environment

10. Conclusions

Given the data from the above sections of the National Report, it is safe to say that Greece still has a long way to go in terms of sustainability, green tourism and green professions.

First of all, as far as environmental policies are concerned, Greece, although it participates in international climate treaties, does not receive a positive evaluation from international organisations, while in many cases the country fails to meet the environmental targets set by the EU. In addition, the sharp increase in tourism during the summer months, which is an important part of the Greek economy, is also having a significant impact on the environment due to overbuilding, overconsumption of natural resources, the increase of waste and over-exploitation of the coastline.

In terms of green jobs, although there are many sectors in which they could be practised, Greece ranks last in Europe, with only 1% of workers engaged in a green job. At the same time, the relevant training programmes are few and have only started to be offered in recent years.

Furthermore, as revealed by the primary survey, the level of awareness of the participants (mainly municipal workers and young adults) on sustainability, green tourism and green professions is low as few of them were aware of relevant initiatives, actions or initiatives and hardly any of them were informed about green professions and the professional opportunities they offer, as they had never received any relevant information/training.

However, there seems to have been a shift in the right direction in recent years. Greece has started to incorporate European environmental directives into Greek legislation, while at the same time it has supported sustainable/green tourism initiatives. In recent years, therefore, more and more initiatives for environmental protection and green growth have been emerging, in which there is also extensive use of technology (e.g. smart cities) and data analysis (e.g. recording and managing waste volumes). In fact,

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several of them, such as Clean Blue Paros, are already having a positive impact on both the environment and the local community. Finally, as can be seen from the questionnaires and workshops, it seems that professionals and young adults recognise the importance and necessity of developing green skills and professions, and many stated that they want to learn more about green professions and receive training either to engage in a green profession or to make their current employment "greener".

This suggests that the government should invest more in education, both at school and adult education level, in order to create a 'green generation' that is both environmentally aware and has the right skills to be actively involved in protecting the environment. There must also be systematic and continuous promotion of initiatives relating to environmental protection and sustainable tourism, thus informing the public and stakeholders of their existence and encouraging businesses and municipalities to become actively involved, as this will increase their visibility and tourist flows. Last but not least, it is worth noting that in most initiatives it is very crucial to have the active involvement of the local community and therefore cooperation and the development of partnerships between governments, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the local community and other relevant actors should be fostered.

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