



*Boosting and Enhancing YOungs' Next generation awareness for E.S.G. values Development*

## **REPORT ON THE SURVEY**

# **Understanding and Enhancing ESG Awareness among European Youth**

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## Introduction

**BEYOND** “*Boosting and Enhancing YOung’s Next generation awareness for E.S.G. values Development*” aims to bridge the gap between the EU’s actions on environmental sustainability and its stakeholders by enhancing the knowledge of EU interventions and ESG skills among graduates. Through an interdisciplinary approach, BEYOND engages academics, students, professionals, and European enterprises to promote awareness and sustainable development practices.

As part of the BEYOND project, a survey was conducted to explore how much young people—particularly university students—know about and understand ESG values (Environmental, Social, Governance), how relevant they consider these principles, and to what extent they influence their personal, educational, and professional decisions.

The data, collected from students at three European universities, paints an interesting and in some ways concerning picture. While awareness of environmental issues is growing, significant knowledge gaps remain when it comes to the Social and Governance pillars. Additionally, familiarity with European ESG policies is very limited.

### Who participated in the survey?

The sample primarily consists of young people aged 18 to 24, with a good portion between 25 and 34. Gender distribution is balanced, and nearly all respondents come from European countries, with a high presence of Italian and German students. Most are enrolled in undergraduate or graduate degree programs, confirming the survey’s effectiveness in reaching its intended audience: the next generation of decision-makers.

### ESG: a still unfamiliar concept

One of the most striking findings is that over half of the students said they either do not know what ESG means or have only heard of it in passing. Only 49% reported being familiar with the concept. Even among those who are, the focus is heavily skewed toward the Environmental pillar, which is much better known than the Social and especially the Governance pillars. This clearly signals a need for more balanced and in-depth education on ESG.

### The key role of education

Universities play a crucial role in ESG education: for 40% of respondents, their main source of ESG knowledge was their academic studies. Other sources include social media, traditional news outlets, and word of mouth. However, there are barriers that limit effective learning—namely lack of time, limited access to information, and, for some, the perceived complexity of ESG-related topics.

### ESG and business: a strong connection

Students strongly recognize the importance of ESG values in the corporate world. Over 90% believe that a company's ESG commitment is important or very important. Young people clearly understand ESG not only as an ethical issue but as a strategic and reputational asset for businesses.

### ESG and personal choices: planting the seeds of change

Nearly half of the students already take ESG factors into account—at least occasionally—when making purchasing or investment decisions. Another 43% intend to do so in the future. Only a small minority (11%) say they are indifferent, even if supporting ESG causes came at no personal cost. This suggests a strong potential to build “moral capital” that translates into conscious, sustainable behavior.

### EU ESG policies: poorly known, poorly communicated

Less than 3% of respondents claim to have a solid understanding of EU ESG policies. While 44% acknowledge the EU's efforts in this area, they feel that communication is ineffective, especially when it comes to reaching younger audiences. Active political or civic engagement remains low among students, although many stay informed. This calls for more inclusive strategies to involve youth in ESG and sustainability policymaking.

### ESG and the future: a career booster

Over 70% of respondents believe ESG knowledge will be useful in their future careers, with nearly one-third describing it as “extremely relevant.” This confirms that ESG is not just a matter of values, but also a tool for empowerment and career development.

### A reliable and robust survey instrument

From a methodological standpoint, the survey tool performed well: Cronbach's Alpha (0.76), KMO (0.75), and Bartlett's test all confirm solid internal consistency and structural validity. These metrics provide strong evidence that the instrument is suitable for assessing ESG understanding and engagement.

### Conclusions and Outlook

This survey offers a clear snapshot: European youth are open, curious, and willing to engage with ESG topics—but they need better tools to understand them and incorporate them into everyday life. University education plays a central role, alongside public communication and civic education.

Investing in ESG culture today means shaping more aware citizens and professionals tomorrow. And that is exactly where BEYOND wants to start.

## REPORT ON THE SURVEY

### Understanding and Enhancing ESG Awareness among European Youth

#### Survey Analysis

To support our plan to enhance awareness and proper understanding of ESG principles, values, indicators, and their implications for emerging decision-makers and young people, we conducted a survey comprising 21 questions covering various ESG-related topics, with a particular focus on university students. The respondents were students from three European universities. The results of this survey are presented in a technical report structured into seven sections, as outlined below:

#### 1. Demographic and Geographic Profile

In this section, the socio-demographic and geographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3. According to Figure 1, considering the total sample, the majority of respondents fall within the 18–24 age range (62.9%). However, almost one third of the responses were received from students aged 25–34. This distribution is more or less consistent across the universities that took part in the project. Figure 1 also illustrates the gender distribution of respondents. Overall, 52% of respondents are male and 48% are female, indicating a well-diversified and reliable dissemination.

Figure 1. Age and Gender Distribution

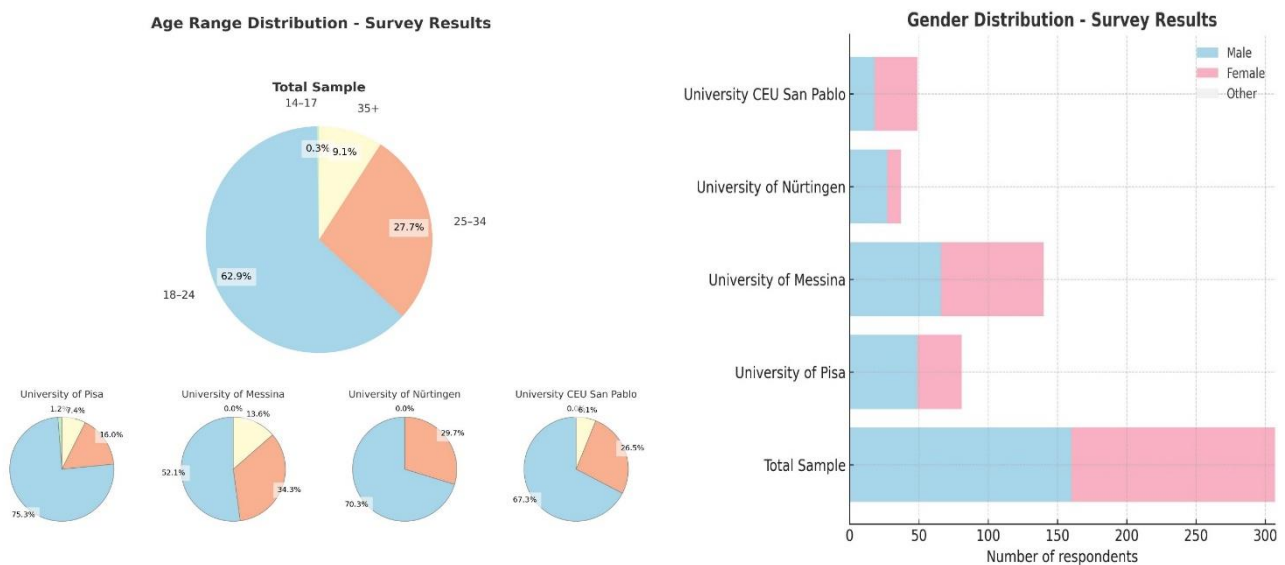


Figure 2 shows the educational level of respondents for the total sample and by institution. At least 83% of the students who participated in the survey are enrolled in undergraduate or graduate degree programs. About 3% are postgraduate



students. Information on the geographic distribution of the respondents is presented in Figure 3. Over 92% of the students are originally from a European country. Notably, the majority of respondents are Italian (62.2%), Spanish (13.7%), or German (13%).

Figure 2. Level of Education

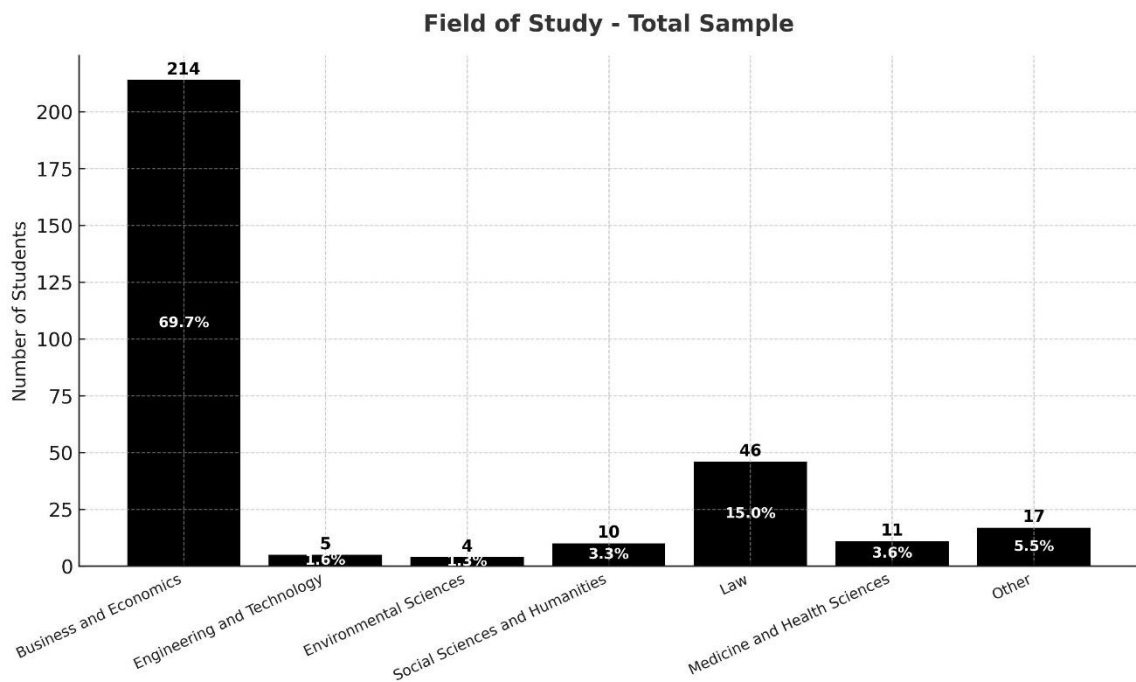
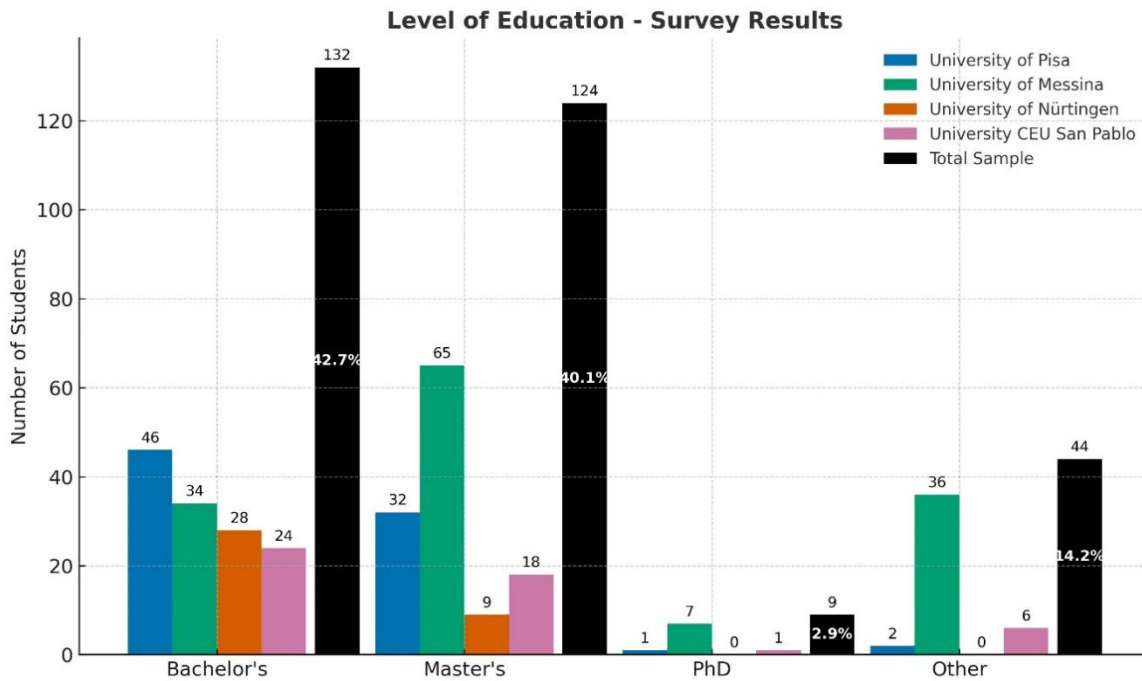
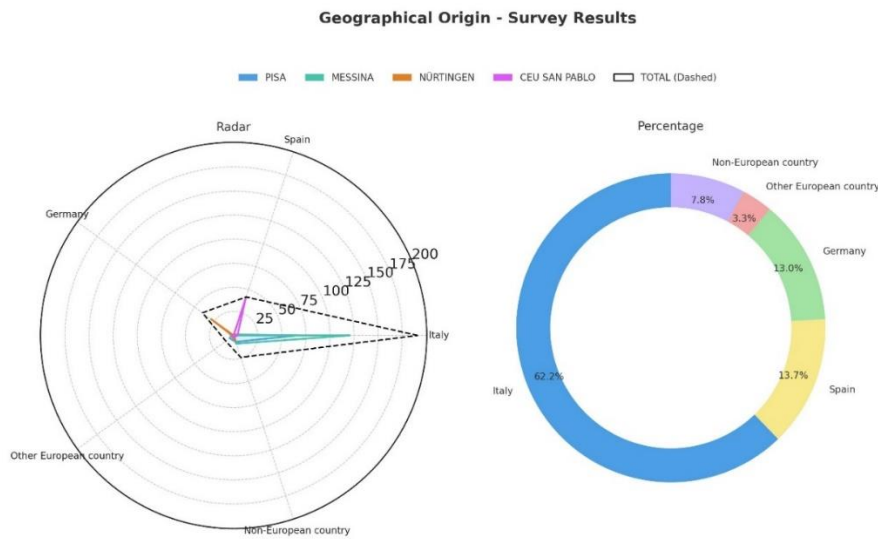




Figure 3. Geographical Origin



## 2. ESG Awareness among Respondents

The results of the survey analysis on the level of ESG awareness indicate that over half of the respondents have no idea about ESG or have only heard of it, highlighting the need for education and training on ESG-related subjects, values, policies, and their implications for daily life. According to Figure 4, 45.2% of students are familiar with ESG, while 25.2% have only heard of it, and 29.5% have no knowledge of ESG and have never heard of it.

Figure 4. ESG Awareness

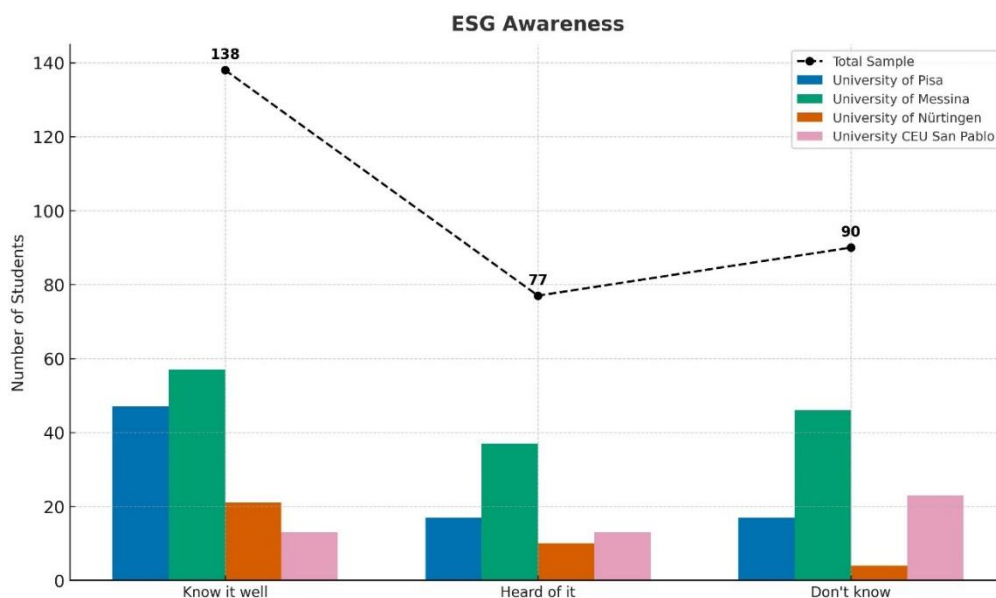


Figure 5. ESG Pillars

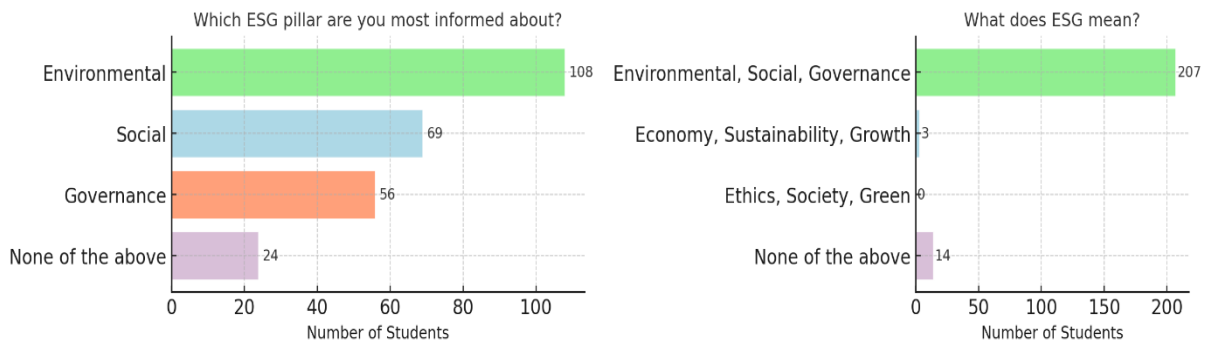
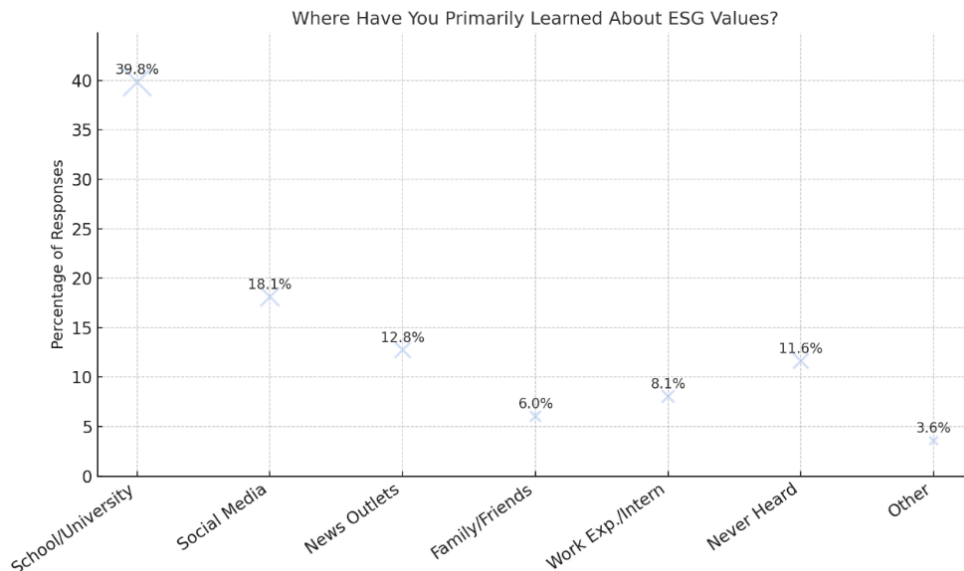


Figure 5 also demonstrates the respondents' awareness of the three ESG pillars. The Environmental pillar is the most well-known, while familiarity with the Governance pillar is the lowest. This emphasis on the Environmental pillar is understandable, given its increasing relevance and media coverage. However, it also implies that ESG training and awareness efforts should give equal attention to all three pillars and their indicators. In a non-compulsory question, over 92% of respondents selected the correct option regarding the concept of ESG and its three pillars (see Figure 5).

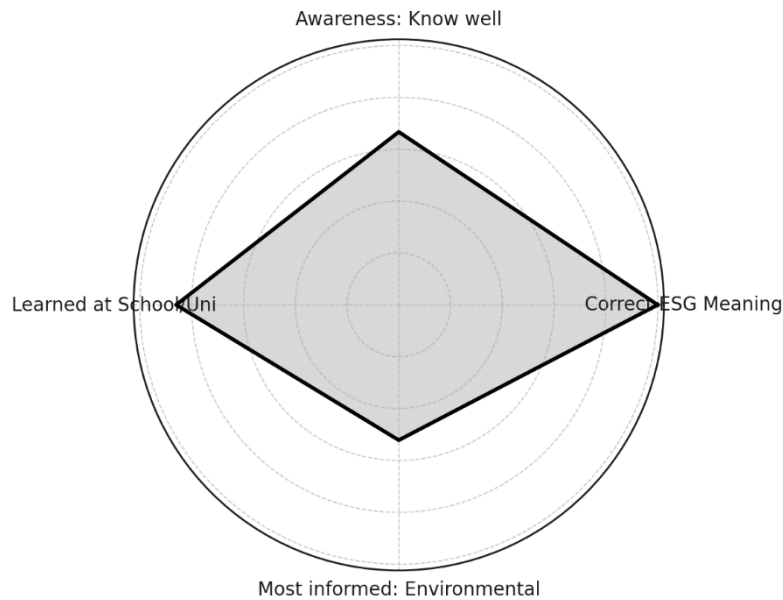
Figure 6. Sources of ESG Awareness



According to Figure 6, about 40% of respondents learned about ESG values during their studies at university or school, highlighting the crucial role of educational institutions in ESG training. Beyond the university, the influence of social media, news outlets, and word of mouth—at 18.1%, 12.8%, and 6% respectively—in raising awareness about ESG principles is also notable. Work experience or internships account for responses from over 8% of participants. Interestingly, about 12% of students reported having no exposure to ESG values. Figure 7 provides a holistic view of the ESG awareness of our total

sample, indicating that while respondents generally grasp the fundamental meaning and values of ESG, this understanding remains limited or somewhat biased.

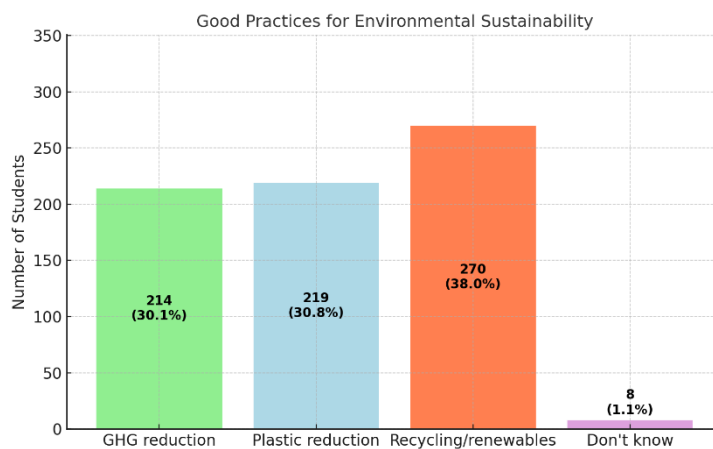
Figure 7. ESG Awareness: An Overview

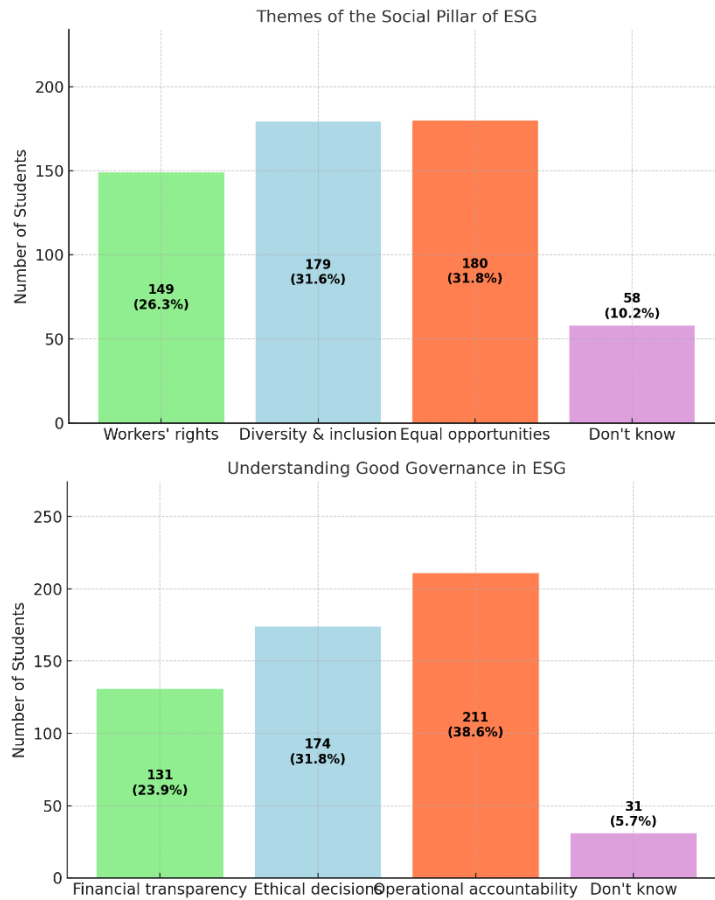


### 3. Recognition of ESG Principles and Indicators

This section refers to the evaluation of respondents' recognition and understanding of the ESG pillars, along with their associated values and indicators. Through a series of questions, we assess students' perceptions of the key sub-components of environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and sustainable governance, as well as their importance and relevance for businesses.

Figure 8. Understanding of ESG Pillars





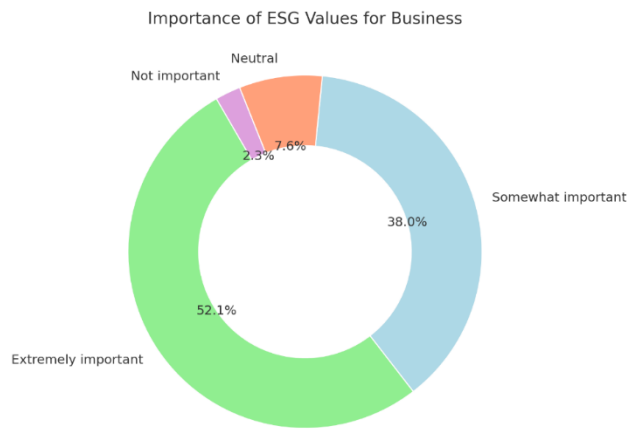
Regarding the Environmental pillar, Figure 8 shows the popularity of actions considered good practices for environmental sustainability among the survey respondents. Overall, students view the encouragement of recycling and the use of renewable energy (38%) as slightly more important for promoting environmental sustainability compared to other initiatives. However, the differences are not substantial. Other actions, such as reducing plastic consumption (30.8%) and curbing carbon emissions (30.1%), are also considered important in this context.

Regarding the Social pillar, respondents believe that ensuring equal opportunities (31.8%) and promoting diversity and inclusion (31.6%) are the main themes or solutions for achieving a socially responsible environment. Additionally, 26.3% of respondents identified respect for workers' rights as an important principle.

As for the Governance pillar, respondents' views indicate that ensuring accountability in business operations (38.6%) is the most relevant characteristic of good governance in firms. Promoting ethical decision-making (31.8%) and ensuring transparency in financial management (23.9%) are also seen as key aspects of sustainable governance from the respondents' perspective.

A comparison of the number of respondents who have no clear idea about the principles of ESG pillars shows that the lack of knowledge is significantly higher for the Social and Governance pillars. This is consistent with what was previously illustrated in Figure 5. These findings highlight a notable gap in the scope and depth of ESG training, particularly with regard to the Social pillar.

Figure 9. Business Significance of ESG Principles

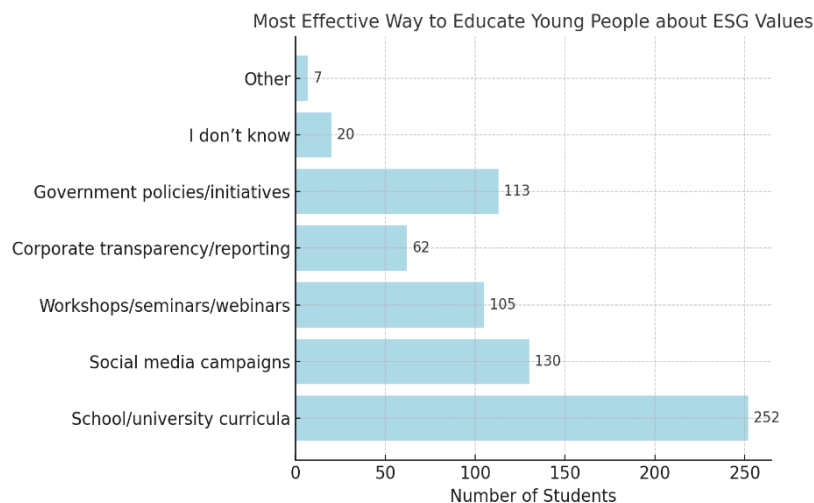


The implications and relevance of ESG values for businesses are also addressed in this survey. As shown in Figure 9, respondents express strong confidence in the importance of ESG commitment for companies. Over half of the respondents consider it extremely important, while 38% find it somewhat important. Only 7.6% remain neutral regarding its significance.

#### 4. ESG Training: Challenges and Solutions

The survey also aims to assess students' opinions on the most effective solutions for ESG training for youth, as well as the challenges and difficulties that limit their engagement with ESG education. According to Figure 10, the majority of respondents believe that the inclusion of ESG-related topics in university or school curricula is the most effective channel for educating young people about ESG values. ESG education through social media campaigns or influencers, government policies or initiatives, and relevant events are also considered effective solutions based on students' responses.

Figure 10. ESG Education



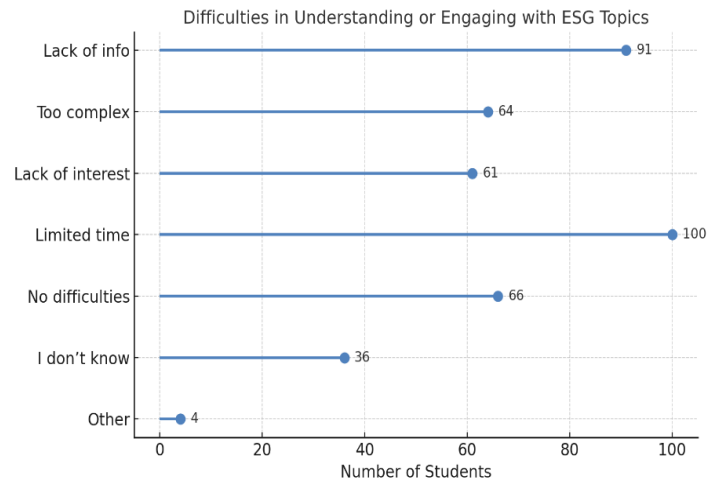


Figure 10 also shows that the main challenges in ESG education are a lack of time (24%) and limited access to information (22%). Additionally, 15.2% of respondents believe that the technical and complex nature of ESG-related topics is a significant barrier to effective ESG training. However, 15.6% of respondents reported no difficulty or limitation in improving understanding of ESG values. Furthermore, 14.4% of the sample expressed no interest in ESG education or considered it irrelevant. Less than 9% of respondents indicated that they had no opinion on the matter.

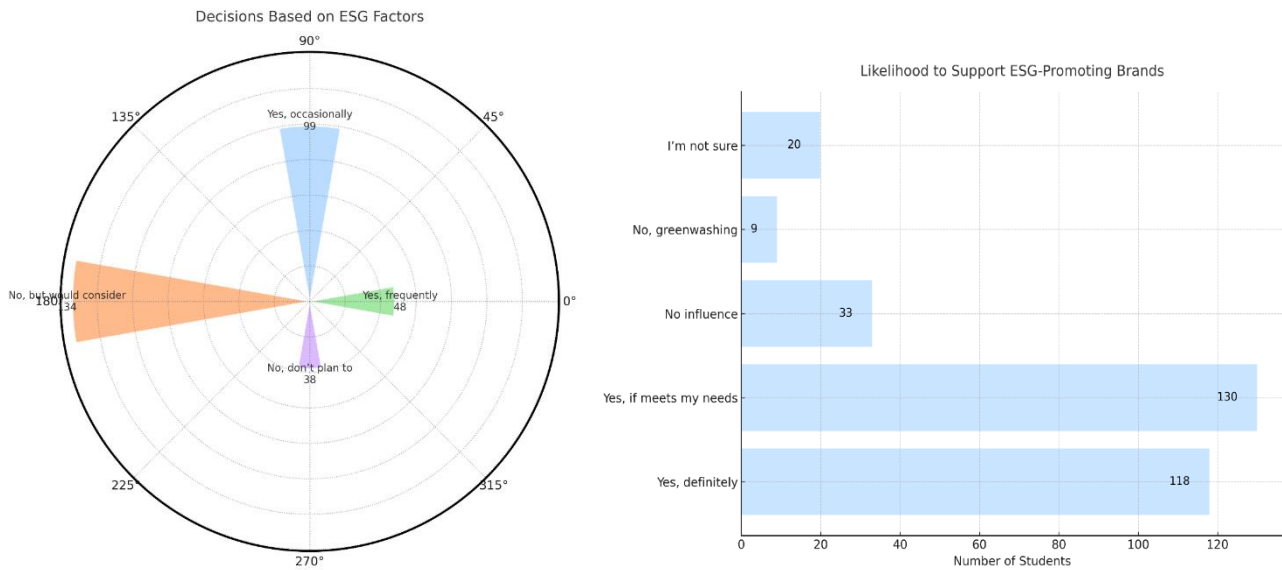
## 5. ESG Impact on Students' Decisions: Building Moral Capital?

The impact of ESG engagement in industry and among businesses, and its influence on the daily lives of young people, is another focus of this survey analysis. Based on the responses (see Figure 11), 15% of students frequently and 31% occasionally consider a company's ESG commitment—such as providing environmentally friendly and sustainable products or services—when making purchasing, consumption, or investment decisions. This ESG-oriented behavior among students contributes to the formation of moral capital, which is already evident in about 46% of respondents.

Furthermore, 42% of students who do not currently reflect ESG considerations in their daily decisions expressed an intention to do so in the future. However, 11.9% of respondents indicated no interest in supporting a brand or product based on its ESG responsibility, even when such support would come at no personal cost.

The likelihood that respondents would support a brand or company that actively promotes ESG values is also illustrated in Figure 11. Overall, most students are likely to support such brands, especially when the product or service meets their needs and standards. Specifically, 38% of respondents indicated they would definitely support ESG-promoting brands, while 42% would consider these aspects if the product or service satisfies their requirements. However, 10.6% of respondents stated that ESG promotion does not influence their decision. A small portion of students (3%) expressed skepticism toward ESG-promoting brands, citing concerns about potential greenwashing.

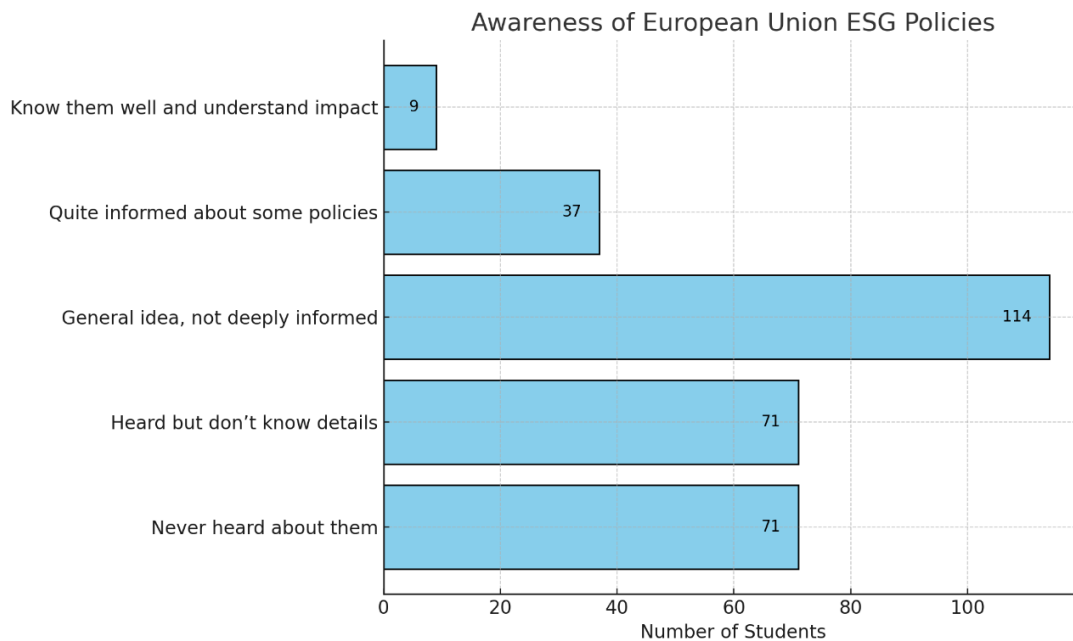
Figure 11. The Impact of ESG commitment on Consumption Behavior of Students

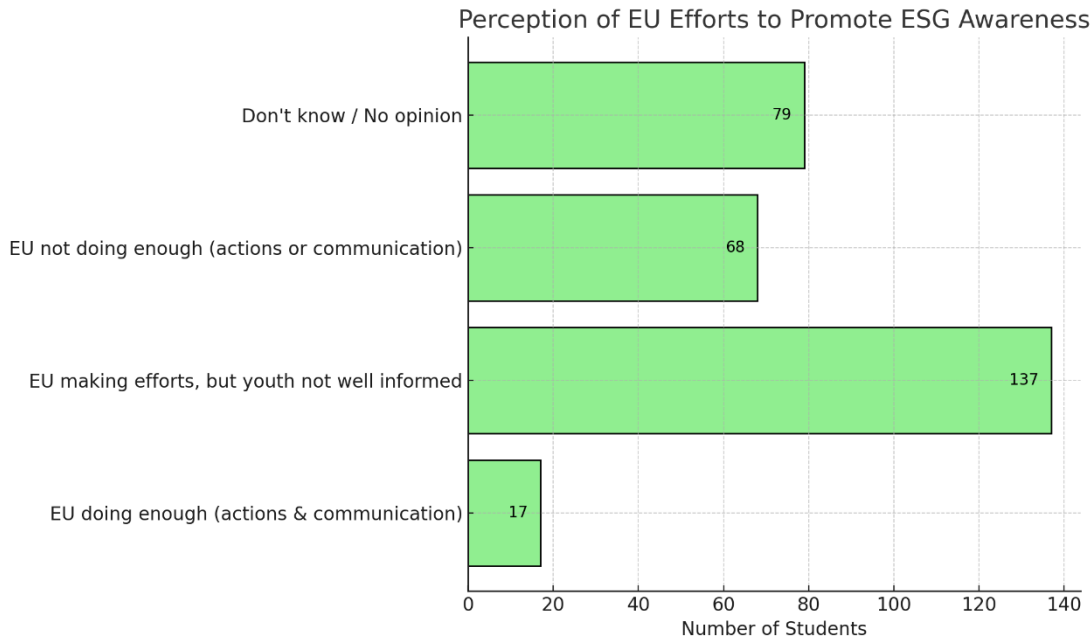


## 6. Insights on EU ESG Policies and its Implications

This section of the survey refers to the perceptions and perspectives of young people regarding the European Union (EU) ESG policies and their significance in encouraging and promoting ESG engagement, as well as in raising public awareness about ESG values and initiatives. Furthermore, this section assesses the extent to which students value participation and involvement in enhancing the policymaking process.

Figure 12. EU ESG Policies and Involvement of New Generations

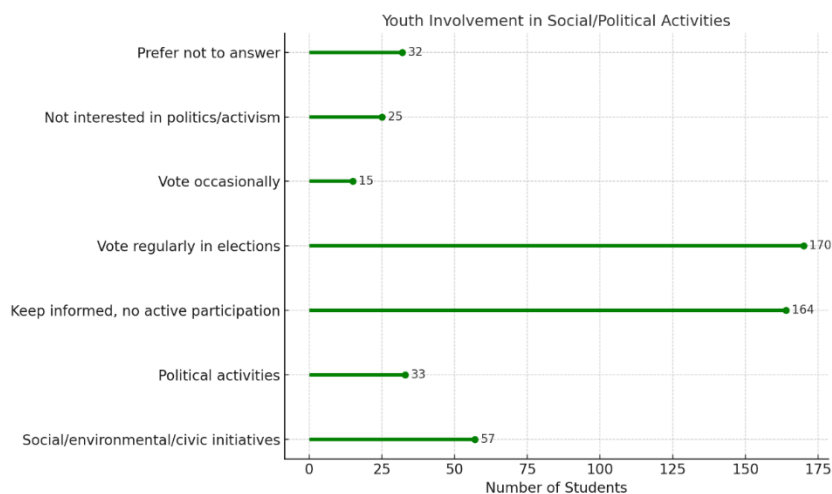




According to Figure 12, the majority of responses indicate that awareness of EU ESG policies is very limited. Specifically, only 3.1% of respondents reported a strong understanding of the policies and their impact, while 12.8% are fairly informed about certain specific policies. Approximately 40% of respondents have a general idea of the EU ESG policies but lack in-depth knowledge. Additionally, 24.6% have only heard of these policies without understanding what they actually entail. Meanwhile, 24.6% of respondents are completely unfamiliar with them.

As illustrated in Figure 12, only a small portion of respondents (5.6%) believe that the EU is doing enough in both action and communication regarding ESG. However, the majority (45.5%) think that while the EU's efforts in promoting ESG values are evident, the policies and initiatives are not well communicated to young people. Additionally, 22.6% of respondents feel that the EU's efforts are insufficient, both in taking action and in raising awareness.

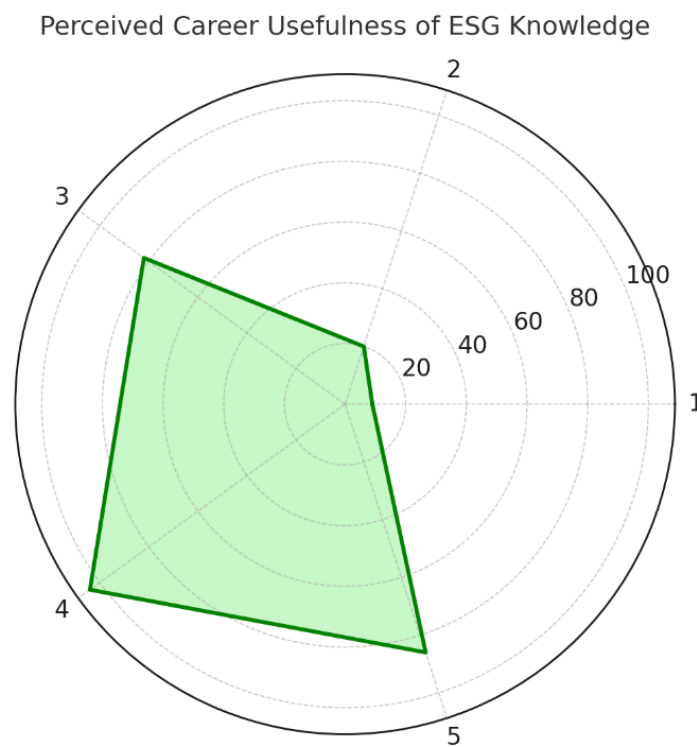
Figure 13. Willingness for Contribution



The level of interest and participation of these emerging decision-makers in social and political events or activities is also addressed in this survey. According to Figure 13, while many respondents are involved in political and social matters, their engagement is often limited. For example, around 34% of students vote regularly in elections, and 3% vote occasionally if they consider it important. Furthermore, 6.6% of students show interest in political activities such as debates, political groups, or activism. Engagement with social, environmental, or civic initiatives—such as volunteering or associations—is relevant for nearly 11.5% of respondents. However, 33% of respondents, while staying informed about political and social issues, prefer to remain passive and not participate. A smaller share, 5%, expressed no interest in politics or activism at all.

Lastly, Figure 14 highlights the perceived usefulness and practicality of ESG knowledge in students' future endeavors. The majority of respondents believe that this knowledge is genuinely valuable and beneficial for their future careers or professional lives. For instance, 29% of respondents find ESG knowledge extremely useful and relevant.

Figure 14. The Role of ESG Knowledge on Future Endeavors



## 7. Survey Analysis: Consistency and Reliability

In the final stage of our analysis, we assess the internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity of the survey instrument used in the ESG training project. This section presents both the methodological approach and the statistical outcomes of the psychometric evaluation.

To this end, we first integrated all collected datasets, cleaned the responses, and converted the survey questions into binary or numeric-coded columns suitable for quantitative analysis. This standardization step ensured that all items could be meaningfully analyzed together, regardless of original format or language version. Following data preparation, we

conducted a series of psychometric tests to evaluate whether the items function as a coherent and valid scale. The results are reported in Table 1.

The overall Cronbach’s alpha is 0.81, which exceeds the widely accepted threshold of 0.70 for acceptable reliability and 0.80 for good reliability. This suggests that the survey items demonstrate good internal consistency, meaning they tend to measure the same underlying construct and respondents answered in a consistent pattern. In practical terms, this level of reliability implies that the combined set of items behaves as a unified scale and can be interpreted meaningfully as a whole.

Table 1. Internal Consistency and Factor Analysis Metrics for the Survey

Measure	Value	Interpretation
Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	0.81	Good internal consistency ( $\alpha \geq 0.80$ )
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.78	Good sampling adequacy for factor analysis (0.70–0.79)
Bartlett’s Sphericity Test	$\chi^2(210) = 1184.27^{***}$ $p < 0.001$	Significant – items are correlated and suitable for factor analysis

Note: This table reports the key psychometric statistics for the full dataset of responses collected during the ESG training survey across participating EU universities. Cronbach’s alpha assesses internal consistency reliability, while the KMO and Bartlett’s tests evaluate whether the data structure is appropriate for factor analysis, thus supporting construct validity.

To further assess the structural validity of the survey, we computed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, which yielded a value of 0.78. This falls in the good range (0.70–0.79) and indicates that the correlations among items are sufficiently compact to justify factor analysis. Complementing this result, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was highly significant ( $\chi^2(210) = 1184.27, p < 0.001$ ), confirming that the item correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that sufficient inter-item correlations exist. Together, these metrics support the construct validity of the instrument.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction and varimax rotation identified multiple underlying dimensions—namely ESG knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions—that are consistent with the theoretical design of the questionnaire. The first factor explains approximately 22.6% of the total variance, and five components have eigenvalues greater than one, indicating a multifactorial but coherent latent structure. These findings confirm that the survey effectively captures complementary yet distinct dimensions of ESG understanding and engagement across respondents.

In summary, these findings indicate that the survey instrument is psychometrically sound. It demonstrates solid internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, and shows validity in structure and item correlation, supported by KMO and Bartlett’s tests. The design and structure of the questionnaire are statistically validated and align with best practices in survey methodology, providing confidence in its use for assessing ESG-related training outcomes across the full sample of European university participants.