5 Things You MUST Remember in 2026 When Planning Climate Education Sessions

It's 2026. Another COP behind us, and you're once again standing before a group of twenty-somethings scrolling TikTok with one hand. How do you reach them?

The year 2026 places climate education in a completely new position. After years of intensive growth in young people's environmental awareness, it's becoming increasingly clear that the problem isn't a lack of knowledge, but a growing disconnect between educational narratives and everyday lived experience. The climate crisis now overlaps with the cost-of-living crisis, housing insecurity, and deteriorating mental health. In this context, climate education that doesn't account for young people's economic and social realities ceases to be effective.

European research from the **Energy Literacy for Youth** project, conducted across five countries, clearly shows that young people don't reject climate responsibility. What they do reject is abstract language and moralizing messages. The areas of interest they most frequently indicated concerned very concrete matters: how energy affects daily life and how to simultaneously save energy and money. For many respondents, conversations about climate were directly conversations about electricity bills, heating costs, or transportation prices. Where education began with global emission charts, interest quickly faded; where the starting point was household expenses or living

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conditions, real curiosity and engagement emerged. Here are the most important issues:

1. Forget facts without life context

The two most frequently chosen topics by young people? "How energy affects my daily life" and "how to save energy and money." For a generation living with rising bills, climate isn't an abstraction—it's a matter of economic survival. Climate education in 2026 must be education about everyday life. Otherwise it will be perceived as luxury discourse for those who can afford it.

2. Incorporate critical thinking, not populism

Research participants openly questioned, for example, the environmental credentials of electric cars. Instead of "correcting" them, create space for dialogue. Climate education builds trust through honesty, not through persuasion. Instead of "fixing" their views:

- teach working with incomplete data
- show contradictions
- create space for conversation

3. Show solutions, not just apocalypse

Climate anxiety is an epidemic among young people. The report is unequivocal: education focused solely on crisis overwhelms and demobilizes. Dose out hope—present innovations led by peers.

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4. Give agency, not lectures

Our educational materials, interactive scenarios instead of slides, transform listeners into co-creators of solutions. Young people want to act, not listen. Therefore:

- strengthen narratives about peer agency
- talk about local initiatives
- show concrete solutions

5. Include those you usually overlook

People with migration experience, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth are still invisible in educational materials. And research shows: when young people see themselves in content, they engage much more strongly. Climate education in 2026 must be:

- cognitively and emotionally flexible
- culturally grounded
- linguistically accessible

Energy Literacy for Inclusion REPORT available HERE: https://energyliteracyforyouth.eu/energy-literacy/

Very soon we'll be able to share innovative educational materials with you that combine climate, energy, and inclusivity issues.

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