

# Reduce today, protect tomorrow

A youth-led WhatsApp campaign on waste reduction and recycling

ERASMUS+ GREENCITIZENS

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION



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Project No. 2024-3-RO01-KA210-YOU-000287028



# We are drowning in waste

Every single day, billions of tons of waste are generated around the world – and most of it is completely avoidable. From single-use plastics and excessive packaging to mountains of food waste and poorly managed recycling, our daily habits are quietly fueling an environmental crisis.



## Single-use plastics

Plastic bags, straws, and cups used once and then discarded for centuries.



## Excessive packaging

Overpackaged products add unnecessary waste to every purchase.




## Food waste

One third of all food produced globally is thrown away every year.



## Improper recycling habits

Contaminated or unsorted recycling still ends up in landfills.

 The choices we make every day – what we buy, how we use it, and how we dispose of it – together shape the future of our planet.

# Why waste reduction matters

The solution starts with three simple but powerful principles: **Reduce** at the source, **Reuse** when possible, and **Recycle** correctly. Together, these actions protect ecosystems, reduce carbon emissions, and preserve precious natural resources.

## The 3R approach

Reduce → Reuse → Recycle. Applied consistently, this hierarchy transforms our relationship with waste and drives real environmental change.

### → Reduce at the source

Buying less and choosing products with minimal packaging reduces waste before it is even created.

### → Reuse products

Choosing reusable bags, bottles, and containers saves resources and reduces pressure on landfills.

### → Recycle correctly

Sorting waste properly keeps materials in circulation and out of oceans and landfills.

91%

Unrecycled plastic

Of all the plastic ever produced globally, only 9% has been recycled.

1/3

Food wasted

One third of all food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted worldwide.

700+

Species at risk

More than 700 marine species are threatened by plastic pollution in our oceans.

# Campaign objectives



## Environmental

- Promote waste reduction at the source
- Encourage responsible and proper recycling
- Increase awareness of sustainable consumption



## Digital

- Use digital tools for environmental awareness
- Develop young people's communication and media skills
- Promote environmental education among peers



## Civic

- Encourage community participation
- Strengthen environmental responsibility
- Inspire sustainable behaviors in families



# Why WhatsApp?

When our team of young participants explored the best channel for spreading environmental action, WhatsApp clearly emerged. It's not just a messaging app — it's where real conversations happen, trust is built, and community action takes shape.



## Direct and personal

Messages come directly from trusted contacts — friends, family, and classmates — making them far more likely to be read, shared, and acted on than anonymous social media posts.



## High everyday use

WhatsApp is one of the most-used apps among young people and families, with billions of active users every day. Reaching people where they already are is the key to effective advocacy.

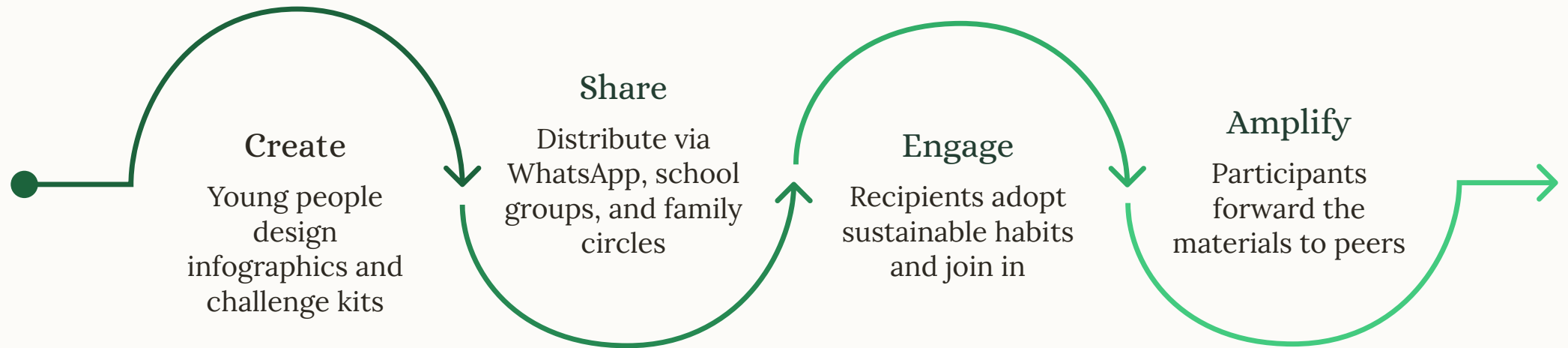


## Multiplier effect

Every person who receives and forwards a campaign message extends its reach exponentially — creating a true peer-to-peer chain of environmental awareness that grows without needing a budget.

# Campaign Methodology

The campaign follows a clear four-phase cycle – from content creation to amplification within the community. Each phase is designed to be simple, replicable, and entirely led by the young people themselves.



This methodology puts young people at the center as true **environmental ambassadors** – not just passive participants, but active agents of change in their own communities.

# Waste Awareness

The first action of the campaign focuses on building a clear and honest picture of how much trash we generate in daily life – and how invisible it has become. Many people do not realize that their individual habits add up to a huge collective impact.

Through impactful images, easily recognizable examples, and shareable infographics, participants help their networks connect everyday actions – buying a takeaway coffee, wrapping a sandwich in cling film, throwing away a receipt – to real environmental consequences.

- ✔ **Key message:** Small actions create big environmental change. Every choice matters, and it all starts with awareness.



# Recycling Tips

**Practical. Immediate. Effective.**

These are not abstract tips — they are concrete actions that young people and their families can take today, at no cost and with maximum impact.

The second campaign action provides practical and actionable recycling guidance, accessible to everyone — regardless of age or context. Campaign participants select and share easy-to-follow tips that simplify recycling and make sustainability more achievable for all.

## Rinse before recycling

Clean containers before placing them in the recycling bin to avoid contaminating the entire batch.

## Compost food scraps


Organic waste can be composted instead of ending up in landfill — reducing methane emissions and enriching the soil.

## Bring a reusable bag

Keep a reusable bag in your backpack or pocket — say no to single-use plastic at the checkout.

## Choose less packaging

When shopping, choose products with minimal or recyclable packaging to reduce waste at the source.

 **Key message:** Reducing waste starts with daily habits — and habits are contagious when shared.

# The 7-Day Waste Reduction Challenge

The most interactive element of the campaign, the **7-Day Waste Reduction Challenge**, invites participants – and everyone they know – to commit to sustainable actions for one week. Simple, fun, and easy to share.

## Use Reusable Products

- 1 Swap out single-use items for reusable alternatives each day of the challenge.

## Avoid Unnecessary Packaging

- 2 Choose bulk products or items with minimal packaging when shopping or eating out.

## Recycle Properly

- 3 Check local recycling guidelines and sort waste correctly throughout the week.

## Inspire Others

- 4 Tag a friend, share your progress on WhatsApp, and challenge someone new each day.

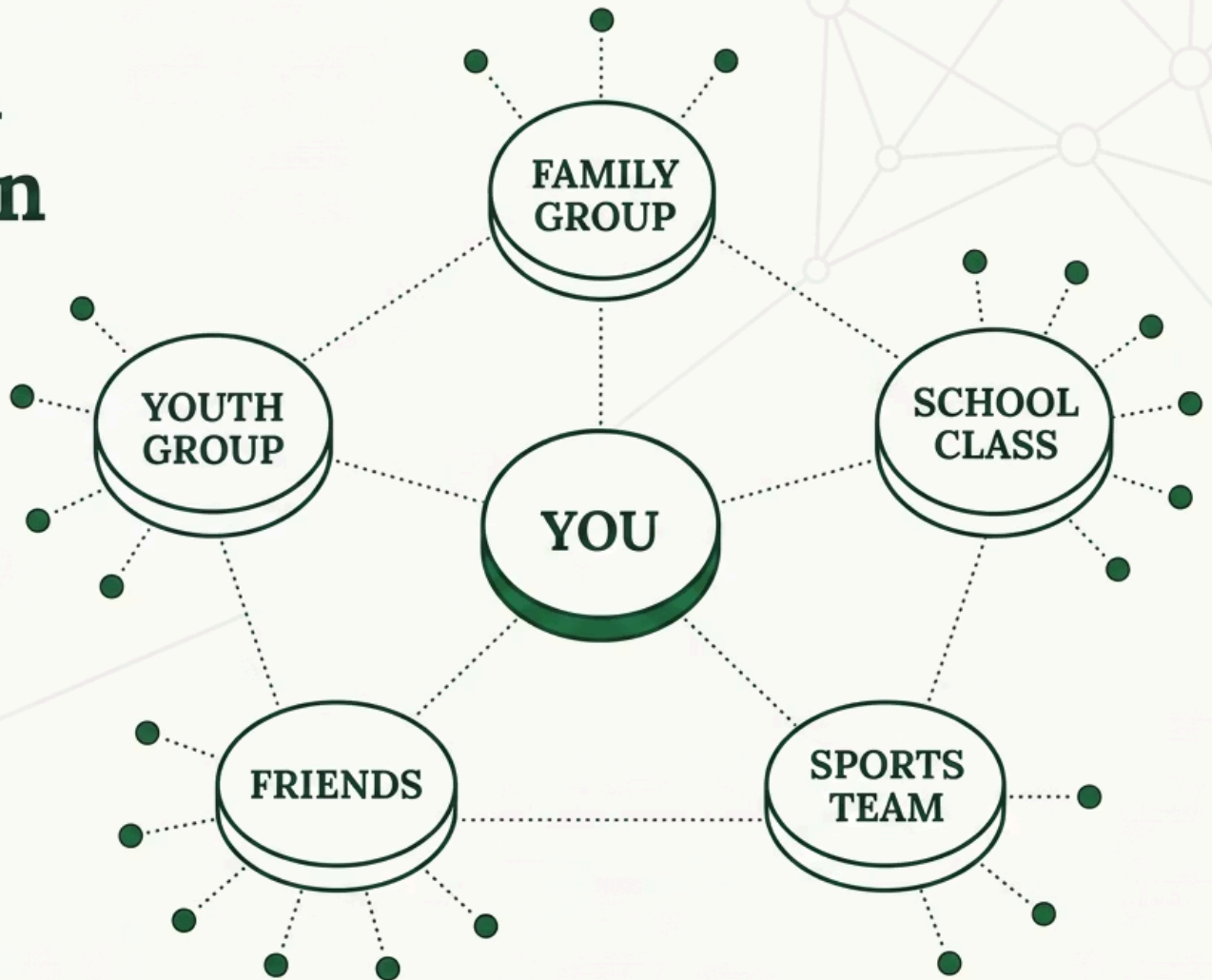
Take the challenge. Inspire others. Be the change you want to see in your community. 🌍



# Expected Impact

A young person who shares a message with 10 contacts — and each of them shares it with another 10 — reaches 100 people in just two steps. This is the power of peer-to-peer networks, and it is exactly the multiplier effect this campaign is designed to unlock.

**One 1 campaign participant's can grow an enviromental network on WhatsApp**



 **Greater awareness**

More young people and families understand the real impact of everyday habits on waste.

 **Better recycling**

Improved recycling and sorting habits at home, at school, and in communities.

 **Digital advocacy skills**

Young people develop practical skills in digital communication and civic participation.

 **Multiplier effect**

Every share expands the campaign's reach, creating a self-sustaining chain of action.

# Sustainability beyond the project

This campaign is designed to last over time. All materials created by the young participants are available for free, easy to adapt, and designed to be reused well beyond the conclusion of the Erasmus+ GreenCitizens project. The model is simple to replicate in any community, school, or youth group around the world.



## Schools

Integrate the campaign materials into environmental education and citizenship programs.



## Youth organizations

Adapt the methodology for youth clubs, scouts, and volunteer groups as a ready-to-use campaign toolkit.



## Local communities

Scale the peer-to-peer model to neighborhood groups, local councils, and civic networks.



## Environmental groups

Amplify existing advocacy activities with youth-designed content that speaks to younger people.

✔ The campaign model can be replicated anywhere: all it takes is a smartphone, a WhatsApp group, and the will to make a difference.

# Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

## Small actions today.

A sustainable future is built not only by governments or companies – it is built by millions of individual choices made by people like you. Every time you skip a plastic straw, sort waste correctly, or forward a message to a friend, you become part of something much bigger.

This campaign was created by young people, for young people – as part of the Erasmus+ GreenCitizens project: Digital empowerment for environmental civic action by young people in schools and communities.

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