

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Ensuring sustainable patterns in both production and consumption

Student Officer: Alkistis Papanikolaou

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Alkistis Papanikolaou and I am currently attending the eleventh grade in the German School of Athens. This year I will have the honor to serve as a co-chair in the Economic and Social Council. This will be my third time chairing and I will be the expert chair on the topic of ensuring sustainable patterns in both production and consumption. Living in a society in which young teenagers weekly protest against the far-reaching implications of climate change while attacking their governments on their passive stance towards the issue, ensuring sustainable production and consumption affects all of us and is vital if we want to safeguard a viable future for the prospective generations. Furthermore, this issue is one of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely Sustainable Development Goal 12, which the United Nations wish to have achieved by 2030.

This study guide serves the purpose of providing you with basic information regarding the topic. However, you should always be reminded that the study guide is the basis of your research and that if you want to be well-prepared you should also conduct thorough research on your own. Having said that, the links in the bibliography may be proven useful to most of you. Should any questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at: papanikolaou.alkistis@gmail.com.

I wish you best of luck and I look forward to seeing you all with well-prepared resolutions!

Kind regards,

Alkistis Papanikolaou

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Industrialization of the past years and overconsumption has led to environmental degradation, water scarcity and depletion of Earth's resources. With more and more people being born, the needs of the Earth keep growing and according to the United Nations, if people keep exploiting Earth's resources at such a rate, with the growing demographics three planets in the size of Earth will be needed to cover our needs. Additionally, inequalities are foreseen to be growing since the rich will starve for more in order to cover its overconsumption needs while the poor will be trying to secure the essentials.¹



Figure 1 Sustainable Development Goal 12 Logo

Consequently, the world community is trying to seek measures so as to combat the problem and halt this worrying foreshadows. By ensuring sustainable patterns in consumption and production we ensure that we apply means that will stop focusing on the short term economical profit. On the contrary, we apply measures that will safeguard a habitable planet for the generations to come. Such measures cater for ending world hunger, improving water accessibility, as well as establishing green economies leading to further economic development and reduction of social disparities.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Sustainability

The term sustainability refers to financial practices that rather than focusing on short term profits, they actually try to eliminate the impact that they may have on future generations such as environmental degradation or other possible social disparities. Sustainability can also be described as corporate. This term is mostly used when referring to the management of a company and to the behavior of the stakeholders towards their personnel. A common corporate sustainability problem could be that of companies often not providing their employees with healthy working conditions which could then result to cancer or other health problems.

¹ "SDG Spotlight: Goal 12." *USask Health Sciences*, healthsciences.usask.ca/news-and-announcements/announcements/2019/sdg-spotlight-goal-12.php.

Sustainable public procurement

Sustainable public procurement is the procedure, during which a government disposes its public funds to a product which encourages sustainable development. Such a product must further boost healthy competition between companies and the qualitative economic growth of a state as well as be environmental friendly. Last but not least, it should aid companies which try not to harm the environment through the production of their goods and provide their workers with healthy working conditions.

Resource Efficiency

Resource efficiency describes the technique, during which a product is manufactured while using the least possible amount of natural resources trying to achieve its maximal usage. People are trying to exploit Earth's finite reserves in such a style that will decrease environmental degradation to its fullest extent with the aim of achieving more with less.

Leapfrogging

Leapfrogging happens when a less economically developed country escapes developing stages and its economy improves. This can be achieved in terms of sustainable development when such a country applies technologies which are eco-friendlier and more innovative that enable the nation to achieve economic growth faster. For example, instead of relying on fossil fuels for its energy production, a less economically developed state may adopt immediately a more sustainable solution such as solar energy production or hydroelectricity generation.

Green Economy

Green economy describes an economy which applies sustainable public procurement. That means that public and private enterprises invest in businesses which respect the environment and its workers. Furthermore, a green economical country has really low carbon dioxide emissions while it also tries to reduce its social disparities and halt environmental degradation by applying resource efficient techniques.

Surplus value

With the term surplus value, we describe the concept that an employer pays an employee less money than he or she deserves for the money that the employer receives when he is selling his product. It is actually a form of exploitation since the employee's salary is disproportionate to his work.

Subsidy

A subsidy is a form of financial assistance awarded from the state to a company, institution or entrepreneur so as to reward the acceptor for a socially beneficial economic policy that one has implemented. It can be in a form of a cash fee or tax alleviation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sustainability challenges

In order for sustainable patterns to be established in consumption and production, one must combat the root problems that serve as obstacles. One common sustainability challenge that overconsumption has led to is the social disparities between classes or even between more economically developed nations and less economically developed ones. Overconsumption drives a person to always wish for more. Since some people are more financially secure than others, it is easier for them to obtain goods and keep striving for more. However, the less well-off population is still striving for its basic needs resulting into social inequalities since one part of the population obtains more than it is needed for its survival while the other part of the population does not even obtain the basic goods for its needs. ² In order for the alleviation of social disparities, one must find ways to reduce the gap between the poor and rich by providing the poor with vacancies of sustainable jobs that meet the criteria of acceptable working conditions.

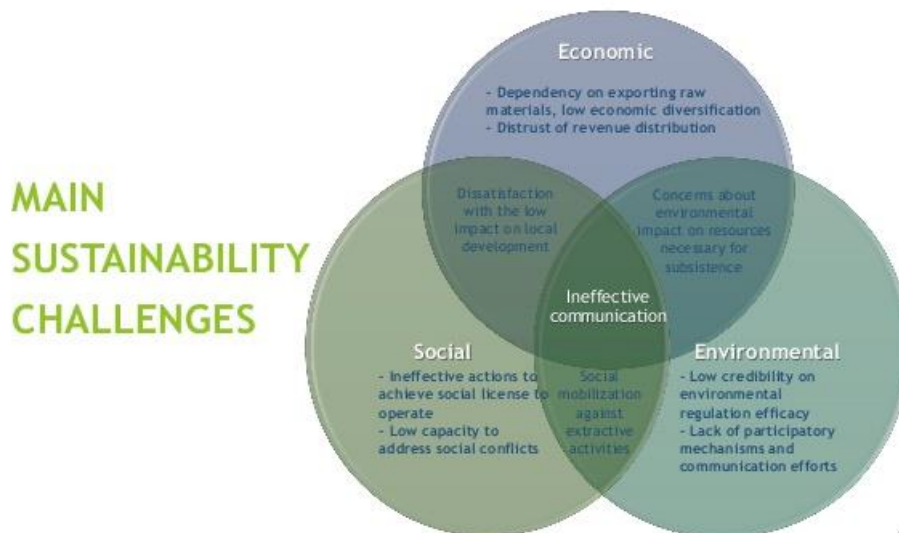


Figure 2 The main sustainability challenges divided into the three main pillars

² Hoyos, Sandra Carrillo. "Extractive Industries and Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunitie..." *LinkedIn SlideShare*, 5 Oct. 2014, www.slideshare.net/SandraCarrilloHoyos/extrac.

Regarding social inequalities between states, it is often the case that more economically developed nations can apply new technologies more easily so as to achieve sustainability patterns while the less economically developed ones often lack the funds or the expertise. Nevertheless, a less economically developed nation has the opportunity to leapfrog meaning that it can avoid stages which could further harm its environment and biodiversity due to the fact that it can learn from the sustainability techniques that MEDCs have established instead of making the same mistakes.

Furthermore, the issue of world hunger is really prevalent since with a growing population estimated by 2050 more food will be needed in order to cover the nutritional needs of the global human population. Consequently, equal food distribution should be achieved between nations. Moreover, the energy needs of our planet will grow, as well, meaning that a new energy resource will be needed since the Earth is a planet with finite resources that are now scarce. According to the United Nations, if such a resource is not found humanity will theoretically need three planets of the same size of Earth in order to cover its needs which is not viable.

Additionally, carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere are growing to such a rate that the polar ice has shrunk substantially and many cities with a low altitude now face the danger of sinking. In addition, the vast carbon footprint is held accountable for diseases such as cancer and other chronic anthropogenic diseases. Furthermore, poor water management and contamination of water resources due to the excessive use of fertilizers has led to a scarcity of water. Fertilizers used in order for a more profitable production of various plant based products during rainfalls flow towards water sources such as lakes and rivers from which drinkable water could be exerted. Consequently, chemicals contained in the fertilizers contaminate drinkable water reducing the amount available. Moreover, the excessive use of water in household premises as well as in the manufacturing of products contributed to its ever growing depletion. Last but not least, another sustainability challenge to be tackled is the loss of biodiversity. Due to excessive deforestation and habitat loss, many animals lost their homes and could not survive anymore since they could not cover their nutritional needs. Consequently, with the consumption of polluted water and high carbon footprint in the atmosphere resulting into many forest fires, many animals are nowadays classified as extinct.

Three main objectives of Sustainable consumption and production

In order to ensure the establishment of sustainable patterns in production and consumption, one must focus on three main pillars, namely: the environmental, the social and the governmental ones.

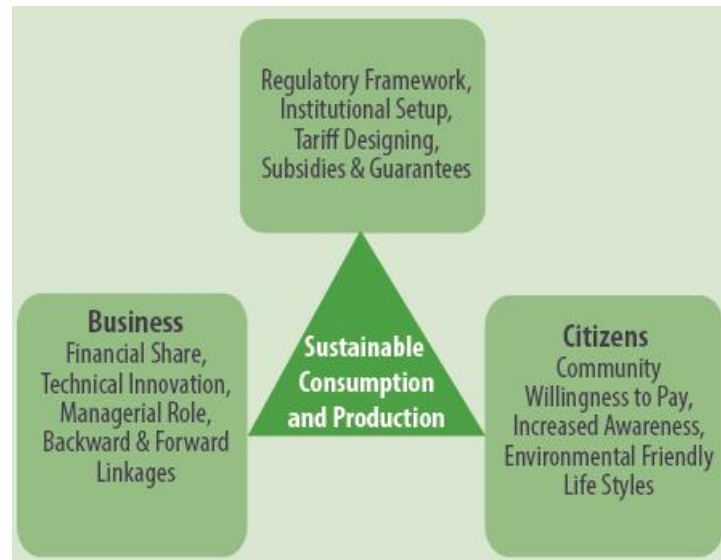


Figure 3 The three main pillars of establishing sustainability patterns

Environmental objective

Regarding the environmental aspect, international efforts should be pursued so as to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in order to eliminate the impact of environmental degradation as well as the expansion of diseases and of extreme environmental phenomena. Carbon dioxide emissions are destroying the ozone layer trapping greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere. Therefore, forest fires have become a common phenomenon further deteriorating the situation.

Furthermore, businesses should examine to what extent a packaging is environmentally friendly instead of focusing on the company's short-term profits. This implies that they should reduce the amount of plastic and eliminate the water usage during the manufacturing and packaging of their products. They should also eliminate their power generation by depleting finite energy resources and instead find other alternatives. Therefore, they should try to achieve resource efficiency which will both benefit the company on the long-term and future generations, as well.

Social objective

In regard to the social aspect, communities should introduce a eco-friendlier lifestyle. This means that people should not focus on materialistic values in an attempt to project a higher social status leading to overconsumption. For example, many people nowadays opt for fast fashion clothes in an attempt to hinder their social exclusiveness. However, fast fashion clothes make use of vast water resources as well as electricity power.

Furthermore, companies should provide their workers with several social perks such as paternity and maternity leave as well as reduce the amount of their surplus value.³ Additionally, stakeholders should prohibit child labor if there is any involved during the manufacturing of their product and they should respect the wishes of their employees as well as encourage them to address potential problems they may be facing in their working environment.

Governmental objective

Concerning the governmental actions, a government should propose sustainable ways of production to company stakeholders as well as make sure that the company meets its long profit needs. Furthermore, a government should distribute its public funds to green companies so as to encourage them to have healthy competition with other companies as well as encourage other companies to adopt such measures. Additionally, governments should try to establish green economies meaning that they should eliminate their carbon dioxide emissions and try to rely on more resource efficient on more energy efficient techniques for their electricity production.

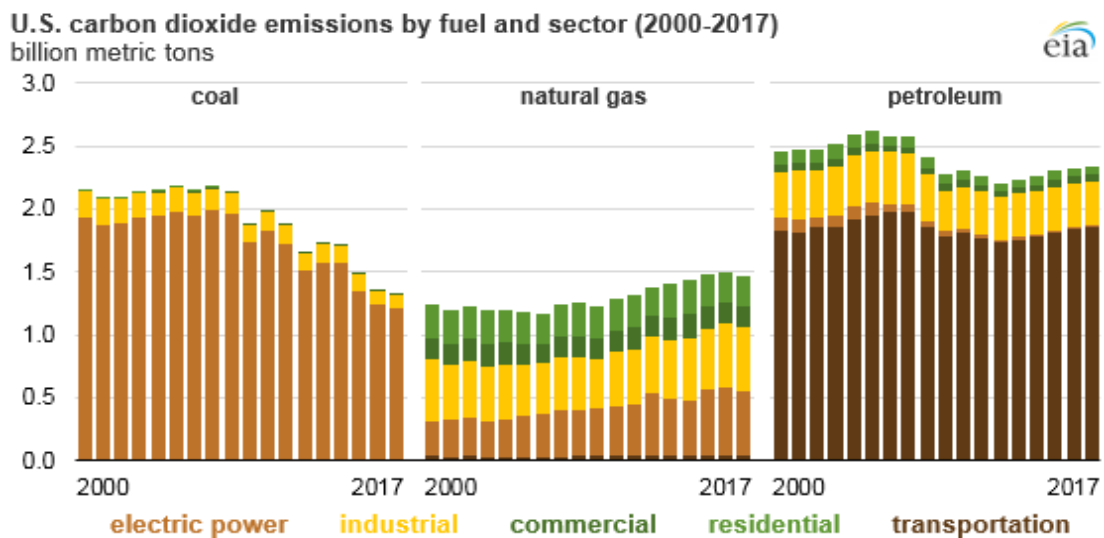


Figure 4 This chart three charts present the US carbon footprint categorizing them under the categories of fuel and section

³ Un. "Green Economy." UNEP - UN Environment Programme, www.unenvironment.org/es/node/20880.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Brazil

In 2016, Brazil with the help of the United Nations initiated a program, called Partnership on Action for Green Economy, which would help the country adjust her economy swiftly to that of a green economy. This program has enabled Brazil to offer her public funds to green enterprises as well as rely on reusable energy sources such as solar energy or hydroelectricity for its power generation. Consequently, Brazil now protects its natural habitat from further environmental damage and biodiversity loses while establishing a social inclusive environment for its people. Brazil can be used as an example of a South American country leapfrogging and its example can be used as guidance for other nations wishing to leapfrog, as well.

China

Although China accounted for about one third of the global carbon dioxide emissions and was the first carbon dioxide emitter in 2017, the Chinese government has implemented several laws which aim at combating the problem. For example, the government has gathered efforts in order to improve its public transportation system as well as urge its citizens to buy electric cars. Furthermore, the country is transitioning from coal as its primary electricity supplier to natural gas which is thought to be eco-friendlier. It has also begun to adopt more resource efficient solutions such as hydrogen power and nuclear power generation.


CHINA		Main pledges and targets	
PARIS AGREEMENT	Ratified	Yes	
	2030 unconditional target(s)	Peak CO2 emissions latest by 2030 Non-fossil share: 20% in 2030 Forest stock: + 4.5 billion m ³ by 2030 compared to 2005 Carbon Intensity: -60% to -65% below 2005 by 2030 [33-47% above 2010 by 2030 excl. LULUCF for peaking and non-fossil targets] [36-53% above 2010 by 2030 excl. LULUCF for carbon intensity targets]	
	Coverage	Economy-wide	
LONG-TERM GOAL(S)	Long-term goal(s)	None	

Figure 5 The goals the Chinese government has set out according to the Paris Agreement which could inspire other countries

Turkey

Turkey is one of the fastest growing economies in the world meaning that its industries are thriving and intensively producing goods for the world community. However, such a massive production has resulted in poor water disposable, consumption of finite energy resources as well as a rise in carbon dioxide emissions

and generation of waste. This has led to further deteriorating of its environment and sustainability prospects. Furthermore, the government of Turkey is not a signatory to the Paris Agreement meaning that it does not implement measures to combat climate change that suffice international goals and standards.

United States of America

The United States of America is not a signatory to the Paris Agreement with President Donald Trump justifying the climate crisis as something natural and not worrying and by characterizing climate activists as “perennials prophets of doom” in the latest World Economic Forum in Davos. The USA releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and is ranked as the second largest emitter globally. Its electricity power stations and its transportation system are the roots of the problem and the US government has many times rejected plans which would improve the ecological footprint of the country. For example, in August 2018 the Affordable Clean Energy Rule was adopted which provided fossil fuel producers with greater authorization regarding their coal-fired power plants’ production and additionally, in January 2020 a new law was introduced which removed environmental protecting rules about watercourses and wetlands. ⁴

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom passed in 2008 the Climate Change Act which proposed measures so as to limit the carbon footprint of the country to 80% by 2035. Although this plan was successful, the government established an additional green economy plan in 2018 which would try to halt the carbon dioxide emissions in the country by 57 percent by 2032, called the Green Growth Strategy. Some measures that this plan proposes include the transition to eco-friendlier public transportation so as to reduce the carbon dioxide footprint released in the atmosphere as well as opting for more resource efficient energy production techniques such as solar energy and natural gas in an attempt to better make use of its natural resources. Last but not least, the UK government is also committed towards funding greener enterprises.

United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations environment Programme was founded in 1972 with the purpose of protecting the environment and helping Member States to adopt eco-friendly policies. Since environmental degradation and other environmentally related issues such as the loss of biodiversity and climate change are needed to be

⁴ “U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis.” *U.S. Energy-Related CO2 Emissions Fell Slightly in 2017 - Today in Energy - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)*, www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=36953.

combated so as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 12, the UNEP tries to assist nations by providing them with data and by guiding them into adopting eco-friendly policies in their investment sectors as well as highlighting the environmental problems each country may have. Furthermore, it also reports on how far the Sustainable Development Goal has been achieved and it has also launched several initiatives such as the Eap Green or the Switch Initiative, both of which focus on the further development and establishment of a green economy in European States.

United Nations Development Programme

The United Nations Development Programme was established in 1965 with the purpose of achieving sustainable development and equal wealth distribution among Member States. The UNDP is also responsible for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It works towards the elimination of social inequalities while advocating for the protection of the environment and for the creation of green jobs. It may assist Member States so as to achieve those goals by sharing data and information on the issue while also by reporting on the current situation regarding the economic development in the country.

Food and Agricultural Organization

The Food and Agricultural Organization was founded in 1945 with the purpose of combating world hunger and accomplishing equal food distribution. Nowadays, it also specializes in helping farmers find sustainable agricultural techniques which will benefit the environment and the farmers themselves. In this way, it also helps with the combating of poverty and the reduction of social inequalities especially between the people of rural and urban areas. Last but not least, it also works towards the elimination of malnutrition due to the fact that it helps farmers establish techniques which will stop the contamination of crops and waters so as for the elimination of food waste and food scarcity, as well.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
November 22 1965	The United Nations Development Programme is established.
June 5 1972	The United Nations Environment Programme is founded
June 5-16 1972	The United Nations Conference on Human Environment takes place.
June 3-4 1992	During the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration are established.

21 March 1994	The United Nations Convention on Climate Change is endorsed.
24 August-2 September 2002	During the World Summit on Development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation is adopted.
9 July 2013	The United Nations High-level political Forum is formed.
2016	The Sustainable Development Agenda is established, which includes the ensuring of sustainable production and development patterns as the 12 th Sustainable Development Goal.
22 April 2016	The Paris Agreement is ratified.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations Framework Convention on climate Change (UNFCC)

Being effective since the 24th of March 1994, it is the first universal convention to propose measures so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and put a halt to the environmental degradation caused by humans.

Paris agreement

Signed on the 22th of April 2016, the Paris Agreement aims to prevent the universal average temperature to rise above 2 degrees Celsius and to achieve sustainable, nonpolluting economic practices.

10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production

Adopted in June 2012 at the United Nations Conference on sustainable development, this framework urges all Member States to work together towards a more sustainable future while establishing initiatives which will help less economically developed nations to “leapfrog”.

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation was established in 2002 during the World Summit on sustainable development and it included a 54 page long document elaborating on means to better achieve sustainable development such as reducing the amount of people not having access to drinkable water as well as halting the biodiversity loss.

United Nations Resolution on Sustainable Development and Implementation of Agenda 21 (A/C.2/67/L.45)

Endorsed on the 26th November of 2012, it calls for the establishment of a trust fund on sustainable development and consumption under the scope of the United Nations Environment Programme as well as that the Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will report on the progress made towards a sustainable future economy to the General Assembly.⁵

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Sustainable Public Procurement and eco-labeling project

There has been considerable effort by UN agencies such UN Environment Programme which has established several initiatives. For example, it has established the Sustainable Public Procurement and eco-labeling project which tries to emerge the aforementioned concepts so as to raise the request for sustainable products. This initiative helps countries to develop eco-labeling and public procurement and also contains raising-awareness campaigns so as to inform the citizens on the importance of this project. It mostly applies to countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Eap Green

A further example is that of Eap Green initiative. This initiative helped several countries in Eastern Europe to establish green economies. It was founded by the European Commission and it specialized in building resource efficient techniques as well as reducing the environmental degradation during the production of a product. In order for the initiative to be successful, there was intergovernmental dialogue as well as intergovernmental assistance by the exchange of information and data.

SCP Clearing House Project

Last but not least, the SCP clearing house project is an example of how individuals can cooperate with companies so as to ensure sustainability. It includes research and projects in a database which is easily accessible from all over the globe so as for people to be able to examine and assess the work that is being done. Additionally, it includes an e-library in which people can read publications and other forms of documentations as well as upload their own proposals and ideas in form of publications.

⁵ "United Nations Official Document." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2FC.2%2F67%2FL.45&Lang=E.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The establishment of green economies

Although there has been considerable effort so as to establish sustainability patterns in consumption and production, the world community has not exploited its full capabilities yet. With that being said, governments should work towards the establishment of green economies. That means that they should seek opportunities to create green jobs. They can also covert to more resource efficient alternatives of energy production. For example, rather than relying on fossil fuels, they start relying on hydroelectricity, solar power or wind power, to name a few. Furthermore, in order to urge private enterprises to become greener, governments should adopt the technique of public procurement. Additionally, another way would be to offer subsidies or other perks to enterprises which are greener or raise taxation to those who are not.

Eco-friendly transportation options

Moreover, governments should enhance their public transportation system by adding more routes, reducing the price of the ticket and making it available more often. Governments could also build bicycle paths which would enable more people to use their bicycles more often since many people find it dangerous to roam around with a bicycle in a big city. Furthermore, governments could also encourage their citizens to switch to more eco-friendly cars. For example, many people opt for a diesel car because they believe that it is cheaper rather than opting for an electrical vehicle which is actually the most eco-friendly. Thus, governments should once again find ways so as to urge their citizens to switch to more-ecofriendly alternatives.

Intergovernmental cooperation

In addition, there should be World Summits every year taking place between governments so as to exchange data and information on the establishment of green economies. This could include the discussion of what still needs to be done for its full implementation as well as the aiding of Less economically Developed Countries with technical assistance so as for them to leapfrog. However, Less Economically Developed Countries could refer to the UN agencies specialized in the topic such as UNEP and UNDP so as to be assisted.

Raising awareness

Last but not least, governments should work towards the sensitization of their citizens towards the issue. This could be achieved through educational programs. For example, there could be a subject regarding economics in school which would teach pupils about sustainable developments and ways to implement it.

Additionally, there could be raising awareness campaigns which would inform them on the negatives effects of fast fashion and overconsumption so as to enable them to be more social responsible by proposing them to recycle, opt for eco-tourism, use public transportation etc.

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