



Proceeding Paper

# Environmental Protection and Social Entrepreneurship Activities: The Vision of the Young People <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** The involvement of the young people in adopting sustainable behaviors and their possible activities as social entrepreneurs is important, in terms of the future adults who will make decisions on sustainable economic development. The objective of the study is to find out what are drivers, barriers and practices in the vision of young people and adolescents in Romania, in terms of social entrepreneurship. The study took place online and aimed to facilitate access to quality information related to the integration of the sustainable development principles in daily behaviors of young people, their willingness to become involved in social entrepreneurship activities. As a working methodology, a questionnaire is applied to adolescents and young people, before and after the seminars they participate, in which they are asked about how they see their involvement in some activities of the environmental protection and in social entrepreneurship activities or in what way they want to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and which sustainability goals they would choose first.

**Keywords:** young people; sustainable development goals; social entrepreneurship



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## 1. Introduction

A pilot study on how Romanian adolescents understand and approach the SDGs is provided in this paper. Young people participated in workshops in which they were provided with knowledge on sustainable development and its objectives in the 2030 agenda. The SDGs was presented as a common regulatory framework with actors at all levels and at the same time as a universal agreement of human development [1]. Participants were also provided with information related to the concept of social entrepreneurship. The aim of providing this information was the awareness of the young people about pro-environmental behavior, but also the understanding of the importance of social entrepreneurship as a basic pillar in achieving the SDGs [2] and the role and necessity of the social entrepreneurs in solving the actual social and environmental issues [3].

Designing questionnaires [4] about the knowledge/information, awareness and behaviors of young people regarding social entrepreneurship and sustainable development [5,6] is an important task. The questionnaire was designed using information from the literature and taking into account the age of the participants and also that the surveyed adolescents were not necessarily enrolled in an environmental study program.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used for this study consisted in developing a questionnaire based on the literature and its application to young high school and university students. Two questionnaires were applied before and after the workshops [7] and the questions were

about the perceptions and the actions in support of the SDGs, respectively, the social entrepreneurship.

The workshops addressed to young people who do not necessarily have in the curriculum disciplines related to the environmental sciences or to sustainable development and also tried to capture the opinion of young people living in the rural areas, so less exposed to pollution or debates related to sustainability in their daily lives. The aim was to spread information about sustainable development and social entrepreneurship and to test their openness in receiving this information that may be useful to them in the future.

### 3. Results

The number of respondents was 104 for the questionnaire before the workshop and 84 for the questionnaire after the workshop. The ages of the respondents were between 14 and 21 years old, with the majority of them being women (>60%) and from the rural area (>50%). They considered that when it talks about sustainability they think mainly about its social dimension (63.1%), that related to human communities, health and well-being, respectively, that when it talks about social entrepreneurship, they think first of all equal opportunities for all areas of the globe (56.6%).

They also considered that sustainability and social entrepreneurship are interconnected (73.8%) and at question about what they would be prepared to do to have a sustainable behavior they choose to schedule a few hours a month to volunteer in an area they think is important to community life (44%), planting trees (35.7%), stopping consumerism because they would rather fix a small defect on an object (gadget, device), instead of buying a new one (33.3%), and some of them also want to participate in programs to spread sustainable behaviors in schools, high schools.

### 4. Discussion

The participants' answers show their interest in sustainable development and their desire to become involved in social entrepreneurship actions. The social dimension of sustainable development, respectively, quality education and equal opportunities were chosen as the main ones.

**Author Contributions:** Both authors of the article were involved both in the elaboration of the questionnaire applied to the participants, and also in the writing of the paper in almost equal proportions. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the fact that we have asked and obtained the consent to participate in the study only to the participants. We informed the participants that the data will be processed in accordance with EU Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data supporting reported results can be found in figshare [8].

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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