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Together for a responsible community!

-course support 1-

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Erasmus+ Programme - Strategic Partnership
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Course Support

Together for a responsible community

Part 1

Erasmus + project: " **Together for a responsible community**"

Project no. **2021-2-RO01-KA210-ADU-000048442**

Partners

- BUMIR srl – Bucharest, Romania
- Organization for Promotion of European Issues (O.P.E,I.) – Paphos, Cyprus

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Course Support - Together for a responsible community

Part 1

Thematics:

1. Causes of environmental degradation and human involvement
2. The food chain and the cycle in nature
3. The 3 Rs Guide
4. Colour coding and general recycling rules
5. Right steps and pocket tips

C.1 CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND HUMAN INVOLVEMENT

Environmental degradation is an issue of great concern worldwide, as a warning from scientists who have long identified the negative effects of overuse and, on several occasions, abuse on the environment. It is important to note that environmental degradation has seen several major definitions in recent decades that may differ from each other, causing some confusion.

Accordingly, "Environmental degradation is a process by which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and overall environmental health. This process may be entirely natural in origin, or it may be accelerated or caused by human activities. Many international organisations recognise environmental degradation as one of the main threats facing the planet because humans have been given only one Earth to work with, and if the environment becomes irreparably compromised, it could mean the end of human existence."

Types of environmental degradation

a) *Water degradation:* Water degradation occurs as a result of continued pollution of water resources such as rivers and oceans, causing serious damage to local fauna and flora, both on land and underwater. The most important effects are irreversible damage to water quality, impacting on fisheries and the ability of people to continue to drink and live from water. Other related impacts: preventing fish from spawning,

contaminating the food chain, limiting drinking water, increasing infant mortality, and ultimately increasing disease.

b) *Land degradation (soil pollution):* Land degradation, which is also called soil pollution, has arisen as a result of excessive and illegal land use in highly populated areas. Examples of land degradation that have been identified by scientists are numerous. Some of them are the following; "water erosion (includes plate, stream and channel erosion), wind erosion, salinity (includes dry, irrigation and urban salinity), loss of organic matter, loss of fertility, soil acidity or alkalinity, loss of structure (includes soil compaction and surface sealing), mass movement, soil contamination. Most of them affect agriculture.

c) *Atmospheric degradation:* Atmospheric degradation refers to widespread air pollution. Atmospheric degradation is caused by several factors; however, vehicle and industrial emissions are considered to be the two most common causes. Atmospheric degradation is linked to global warming.

Causes of environmental degradation

a) *Land disturbance:* To increase food production, people and food producers use land to plant and produce products considered "foreign" to the area. Products such as garlic and onions and other herbs

b) Pollution: Pollution is visible both in water and on land, raising concerns about the long-term impact on human health. Examples: littering, dumping of rubbish outside designated areas.

c) Overpopulation: Overpopulation means that more people will demand more food and water, more frequently. This leads to more production that the land cannot afford, causing permanent damage.

d) Landfills: Excessive use of products, as already identified, leads to the creation of more landfill sites within a shorter distance of each other.

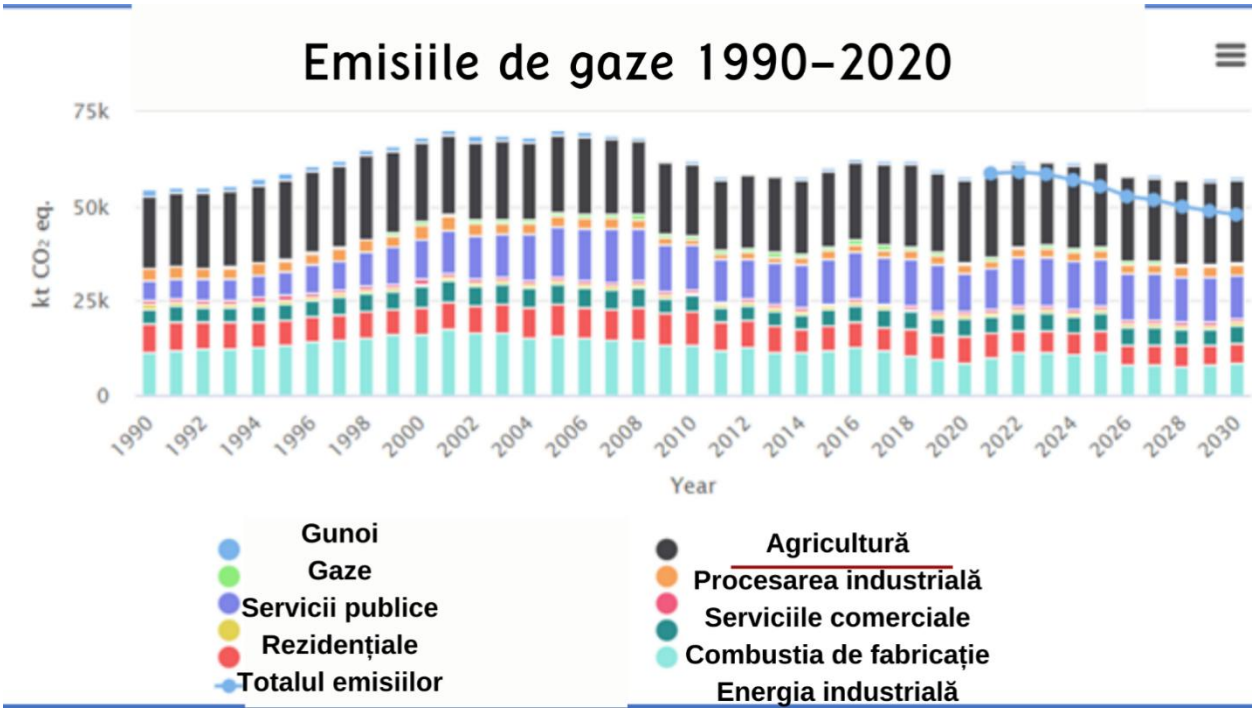
e) Deforestation: Deforestation is another common cause of environmental degradation and is clearly visible worldwide. It leads to poor air quality as trees absorb emissions.

f) Natural causes: Natural causes, such as earthquakes, avalanches, tides, storms and fires, can lead to total destruction of the environment. In many cases, natural causes are

triggered by human activity. For example: deforestation can lead to mass landslides; open burning can lead to major wildfires.

g) Harmful farming practices: on several occasions, farmers use practices that are not in line with the needs and desires of contemporary times, leading to serious negative impacts.

h) Flawed agricultural policies: Flawed agricultural policies are common in many countries, either because of poor research and planning or, even worse, to serve private or personal interests.



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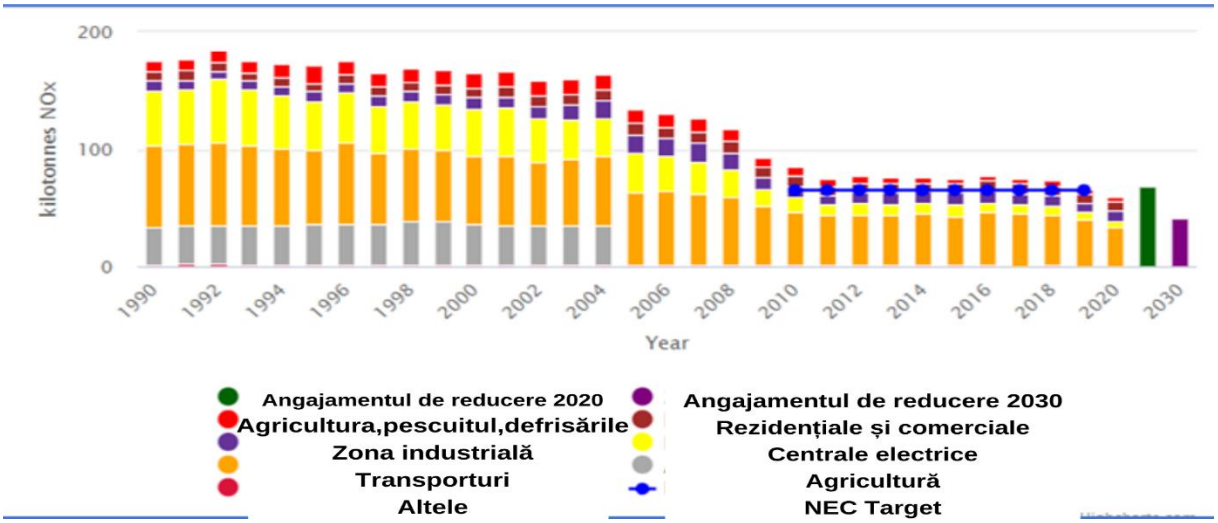
Graph 1 shows that the agricultural industry is the most important contributor to environmental degradation. This explains some of the causes, as identified, such as bad agricultural policies and ruinous practices.



C2: FOOD CHAIN AND CIRCUIT IN NATURE

The food chain is a chain that lists feeding relationships between the component organisms of a particular ecosystem. Each organism depends on the previous member of its food chain for food.

Man is closely linked to all the components of the chain. He is both consumer and producer. Human intervention can sustain or destabilise any of the component links.For example: grass is eaten by cattle, they produce milk and meat, man consumes them for survival but grows crops (or tends vegetation to feed his animals).

C3: THE 3 R'S GUIDE

When it comes to protecting the environment, the benchmark is the 3Rs-Reduce-Reuse and Recycle rule. The 3 Rs stand for Reduce - Reuse - Recycle. The phrase expresses awareness of environmental problems and a way to promote environmentally friendly behaviour among people. Two more steps have been added: Recovery and Disposal.

Reduction means reducing the amount of rubbish we generate.

Reuse means finding new ways to use things that would otherwise be thrown away.

Recycling means turning something old and useless (a wooden tray) into something new and useful (like a table or a dustpan).

Recovery - when it cannot be recycled, a way must be found to produce energy or new material by processing non-recyclable waste.

Disposal - secondary waste from the recovery process, which is generally in the form of ash or other waste, is taken to landfill for processing so as not to damage the environment.

Reduction:

The first step is to reduce the amount of waste each of us produces so that we end up having as little impact on the environment as possible. That's why it's a good idea to start by refusing plastic bags, plastic straws, plastic-wrapped fruit, plastic containers and disposable cutlery at the shops. *The key is to buy only the goods you need and in the right quantity.*

Other ways to reduce:

Choosing the items you need, not necessarily the ones you want right away (The question applies: Do I need a new one? And the 24-hour rule. You may not want that item after 24 hours, for example a mobile phone)

Smart shopping. When you go shopping try to target items that can last longer e.g. reusable water bottles.

Avoid wasting paper when you can: Wherever possible, instead of printing paper, opt for digital delivery.

Reuse:

It's the optimal solution to reduce the amount of waste you no longer use. Along with finding new ways to reuse a material that at first may be classified as waste. In addition to the environmental benefits, it is a way to save money in the long run.

Your asset - someone else's treasure: can the materials you want to throw away be used by someone else? Clothes, for example, can be donated instead of thrown away. Reuse also applies to furniture or objects made of wood or metal, which are repaired to create new pieces from them.

Plastic bottles can be turned into: jewellery holders, hair accessory holders, holders for pens, charcoals and other writing utensils, flower pots... Jars can be reused for homemade preserves or to store various accessories in the kitchen or garden.

Recycle:

Recycling is the introduction of residues or wastes into a technological process in order to achieve reuse and recovery or for environmental purposes. Recycling reduces the consumption of new raw materials and also reduces energy consumption and the level of contamination of the natural environment.

How do we recycle?

To make recycling easier to organise, waste is divided into two categories: recyclable household waste and residual household waste.

a) Recyclable household waste - this is waste that can be divided into the categories indicated on the bins (glass, plastic/metal and paper/cardboard). For example: magazines, newspapers, junk, envelopes; boxes, photos, egg cartons, pizza boxes (top only),

b) residual household waste - this is waste that is considered to be rubbish in the true sense of the word and cannot be recycled, such as: leftover food (meat, dairy, vegetable, eggs), disposable nappies, absorbents, pet waste/excreta.

Colour code:

Blue - paper and cardboard

Examples: A4 sheets, paper scraps, newspapers, magazines, post-it notes, envelopes, boxes, photos, paper bags, newspapers, paper-cardboard packaging; beverage cartons, egg cartons, maculature, pizza boxes, etc. **All recyclables must be clean and perfectly dry.**

Yellow - plastic and metal

Examples: plastic foils and bags, plastic cans and jars, toys, protective packaging, plastic cans and containers from various beverages (PET), plastic stoppers, plastic containers for food drinks, clean bags or foil, food sprays, metal packaging (cans, stoppers, tins, etc.).

Green-Glass

Can be collected: glass jars and containers from beverages and food;

Not to be collected: vases, glasses, glassware, high temperature glass, ceramics, porcelain, flower pots, light bulbs and lamps, glass and mirrors.

Grey/brown - biodegradable

This is the waste from which compost is made, a fertiliser that can be made by people living at home in their own backyards.

You can recycle: vegetable yard waste, coffee grounds, egg/nut shells, bread, vegetable and fruit scraps, wet products (newspaper, cardboard, shredded wood, dirty napkins, dirty paper), fresh or cooked fruit and vegetable scraps, bread and cereal scraps.

Black

Residual waste: this includes all waste that cannot be recycled.

You cannot recycle: nappies, contents of vacuum cleaner bag, food scraps (meat, dairy, vegetable, eggs), disposable nappies, absorbents

Red

Red means "hazardous waste", e.g. empty paint and paint packaging, used car oils, packaging contaminated with hazardous substances, certain medical waste;

Special waste

This category includes the following sub-categories: textile waste (clothing, footwear), vegetable waste (grass, trees, cut grass, etc.), bulky waste (furniture, carpets, mattresses, etc.), etc. These are collected free of charge as part of collection campaigns, based on a set schedule.

- For waste belonging to special categories, for example bulky items, it is recommended that owners ask their local town hall or owners' association how to proceed.

General recycling rules

- bottles, cans, jars must be emptied and cleaned. Most items need to be washed and dried before they are disposed of in the recycling facilities;

- after cleaning, the lids are removed from the cans and pressed to save space;

- soiled clothing should not be thrown in with clean clothing that can be recycled;

- paper and cardboard should be packed as tightly as possible, cut or torn

- any traces of oil or water or dirt of any kind indicate that the paper/cardboard cannot be placed in the blue category, but in the biodegradable category;

- hazardous waste must be collected correctly and with great care; for these there is the colour red.

- all residual waste should be placed in bags which are tied and placed in the black bin;

- household waste is not deposited directly in the black bin, but in bags that are closed/tied before being deposited in the container.

- to make it easier, use coloured bags at home.

Concrete steps for proper recycling: (S.C.P)

1. Sort
2. Clean
3. Press
4. Throw

In the first step - sorting - waste should be separated into the following categories: plastic, glass, cardboard, household (and metal - where appropriate). To make recycling easier, it is recommended to use separate containers (bins) from the outset, because sorting from the moment you throw the item away is quicker, easier and, over time, creates an automaticity. In the next step, it is recommended to clean objects when necessary, for example a tomato sauce can, not leaving leftover food in it. It can be taken out and washed in the sink and then moved on to the next step. Depending on the material and size you can press or fold. For example, for a plastic bottle, remove the cap and press it. In the last step you throw it in the right bin.

Pocket tips:

- Turning off the light.
- Replacing plastic bags with cotton bags or alternative materials such as compostable, biodegradable or reusable bags
- Turning off the tap when washing your hands
- Unplug electronics when not in use
- Buy LED light bulbs
- Turn off the tap when using soap
- Replace plastic containers with reusable or biodegradable materials.
- For a quick organic 'diet', glass jars, for example, can be a good replacement in the kitchen for plastic containers for rice, peas, beans, sugar, salt, etc..
- Replacing personal hygiene products with their natural equivalent. There are more sustainable alternatives for all the usual products: sponge, toothpaste, razor, soap, deodorant. These can often be found at the same price or cheaper than those normally used.

- Support local producers or use their own crops. Natural products from producers are prepared with care for nature and packaged appropriately so that they are packed with bio-degradable or reusable materials.

- Buy food according to how much you know you will consume (As a little trick, never go to the shop before eating or when you are hungry, then you will tend to buy more)

- Avoid burning waste in the open and use special waste disposal areas. The risks are huge, from starting fires that can spread to destroying land and vegetation. The waste we generate by burning can also become toxic to humans and nature.

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