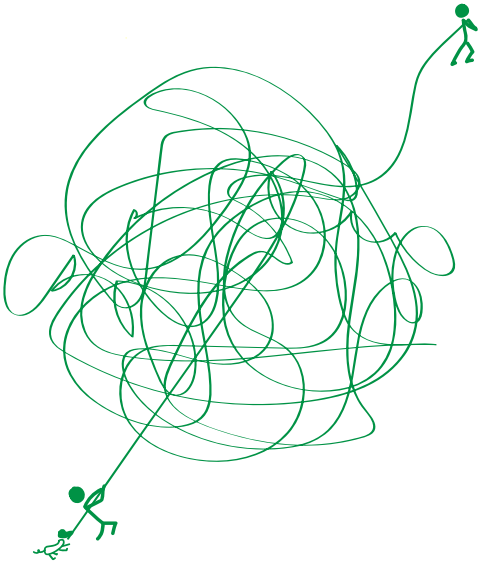

Together for the Climate

BASELINE STUDY, FINAL REPORT

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Baseline study: Final report

Introduction

This Final report is based on the findings from a representative survey and focus group discussions conducted within the Erasmus+ project Together for the Climate: New Solutions and Innovations for Youth Climate Action implemented by NESEHNUTÍ, Jane Goodall Institute Austria and Green Foundation. The project brought together young people and youth workers from Czechia, Slovakia, and Austria. The aim of this cooperation was to develop a new interactive tool for supporting young people in planning and implementing their local pro-climate group activities, building strong communities, and training skills and competences important for civic engagement.

This study – the first output of this Erasmus+ project - aimed to determine the attitudes towards climate change and climate action of young adults in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. It also explored the barriers and enabling mechanisms of local participation and action in the researched countries. And lastly, it aimed to learn about effective means and tools of communication and sources of information about climate change that will be used in the latter part of the project.

This research utilised a mixed-method, both quantitative and qualitative, research design. The quantitative research gathered an overview of information comparable across the countries included in this research. The qualitative research phase, which followed the quantitative phase, was designed to provide a deeper understanding and context of the main findings in the quantitative phase. Both data collection phases took place in each of the participating countries. The study incorporated elements of a participatory research approach, which included youth community members to generate more insider knowledge and achieve personal and potentially more effective social change.

Executive summary

In Austria, Czechia and Slovak republic overwhelming majority of young people have a positive approach to climate change. The group of deniers, those disinterested or unwilling to compromise their lifestyle, constitutes less than a fifth of the youth population. Young females and those living in urban areas are more likely to be doing all they can to fight climate change. Austria has the highest share of those young people who declare they do everything they can, double compared with Slovak and Czech youth. Slovak and the Czech respondents are very similar in their approaches to climate change. Their share of young people interested in climate change but who recognise they could do more is the same and constitutes 75% of the general youth population.

The level of knowledge on selected central topics related to climate change in Slovakia and the Czech Republic is very similar. In comparison with their peers from Czechia and Slovakia, young Austrians are more knowledgeable on almost all selected topic areas, and the differences are significant and, in some cases, striking. Whereas more than 60% of Austrians feel like they could at least generally explain the most common concepts related to climate change, more than 60% of Slovaks or Czechs have either not heard or have very shallow knowledge about the issues.

The overwhelming majority of young people in all three countries believe the widely accepted scientific claims that climate change is anthropogenic. Similarly, most young people believe that climate change is advancing faster than expected, which is why they also agree that we need to act now; otherwise, the situation will worsen dramatically. Most young people are also persuaded that climate change will affect their life.

Young Austrians have the lowest self-declared carbon footprint. Whereas Czechs and Slovaks have a high share of young people engaged in the low commitment activities (drinking tap water, sorting waste, not wasting food, saving energy, not using single-use plastics), only about a third of them incorporates more demanding activities in their current lifestyles. Females in all three countries are more likely to have the lightest footprint.

The most common way young people get civically engaged in the fight against climate change is by spreading awareness about a topic and signing a petition. About 40% to 50% of young people engaged in those activities over the last two years. Roughly a quarter of young people in all three countries engaged in online discussions or shared posts on social media platforms. Although young women were more likely to compromise their lifestyle on the personal level (individual climate action/carbon footprint) than men, this does not translate entirely into being civically more engaged.

This research also found that those with a low carbon footprint are more likely to be highly civically engaged. Those who declare higher knowledge are also highly likely to have a lower carbon footprint (individual climate action). In Slovakia and the Czech Republic, those who declare higher knowledge are more likely to engage civically.

The top three reasons that prevent young people from lowering their individual carbon footprint are:

- A lack of resources.
- Lack of ability to decide about these issues.
- A lack of options in the place where they live.

Money seems to be the main barrier for Austrians and the Czechs. At the same time, the lack of available options is the most significant barrier for Slovaks. Not seeing the point, insufficient time and information, and a dislike for public engagement are the top barriers to civic engagement (the last one is especially true for Czech and Slovak youth).

Young people think that it is primarily the role of businesses and industry, international actors (world community, most polluting countries, EU), the government and local authorities to lead the climate change fight. Young Czechs and Slovaks place themselves in a passive role and expect the state, scientific community, businesses and international community to act. In contrast, Austrians assign themselves much more active roles in pushing the more powerful actors to act.

While family and school are important in raising the awareness and awakening interest and sense of responsibility for our climate at an early age, they cease to be the primary source of information once young people reach high school. This is especially true for schools in Slovakia and Czech Republic. Social media is the most important source of information about climate change for the young generation in all three countries. The top two channels for getting informed about climate change are Instagram and Youtube in all three countries. Furthermore, while Facebook remains relevant in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Tik Tok and Snapchat are favoured in Austria.

Climate change elicits strong emotions in young people, and negative feelings such as anger, fear, helplessness, and grief dominate. Whereas Czechs feel foremost grief and helplessness, Austrians feel anger and fear, and about the same share of Slovaks feel all top four emotions about the same. A positive finding of this study is that most young people do not feel indifferent to climate change.

Methodology

The presented text results from the integration of qualitative (6 focus groups discussions) and quantitative research approaches (representative survey) that took place in each of the countries participating in the project. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected consecutively. The survey was carried out first, followed by focus group discussions. The data analysis of both phases took place independently, and the results were integrated in the final stage of writing up this Final report. Due to difficulties in the recruitment process and timing of the Focus Groups phase (COVID 3rd wave), the quantitative data built the foundation of the report, and the qualitative data analysis provided a deeper understanding and context for the quantitative analysis.

The study incorporated elements of a participatory research approach in which a youth advisory group, comprised of young people from each country, participated in the research process. The members of the youth advisory group were engaged in the process of drafting the questionnaire, carried out the focus group discussions and commented on the final report.

The representative quantitative survey was conducted from July 21 to August 10, 2021, on a sample of 1 516 respondents between 16 and 24 years of age (501 respondents in both Czech and Slovak Republic and 514 in Austria). The selection of respondents was obtained by quota sampling, and the results are representative by gender, age, region, and dwelling size. Data collection was conducted online by renowned and certified research agencies in all three countries coordinated by the Slovak 2Muse research agency.

The qualitative research was conducted through focus group discussions (FGD) and followed the quantitative phase in September and October 2021. This phase aimed to understand the approach to climate change and action and map young people's pathways to engagement and participation in this area, be it on the individual or collective level. This helped us better understand the barriers young people faced and critically assess the tools to engage them more in the latter part of the project. It also enabled us to contextualise the results from the representative survey.

The six focus group discussions were carried out by young people (peers of the target group, all females) from partner organisations in each participating country. Each focus group had a moderator and facilitator who was active in an environmental organisation. The role of the moderator was to guide the discussion, and the facilitator helped with direct observation to provide additional details on group dynamics, themes that appeared relevant after the focus group conclusion, and, where appropriate, suggested questions to the moderator. The moderators and facilitators received a moderation guide and a 2-hour online training on leading focus group discussions. Each focus group discussion was carried out in the local language.

In total, 27 respondents were interviewed, and despite efforts in Slovakia and Czech Republic, there was a disproportional number of female respondents. Based on the feedback from the recruitment process, the administrators of FGD in all three countries reported that it was hard to recruit male respondents. Men seem to be less involved in environmental organizations in general, and based on the administrators' experience, men were also less interested in the subject of climate change. Overall, the focus group discussions were balanced in terms of age. Each group had a mixture of young people with a positive attitude towards climate change and mainly were taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint and were, to various degrees, also engaged civically in helping fight climate change. About a third of respondents were also active in environmental NGOs.

Focus group discussion composition:

1. FGD Austria – six high school students (18 to 21 years old, four women and two men), held in person, Vienna
2. FGD Austria – four young adults (24-26 years old, one woman, three men), held online, participants from across Austria
3. FGD Czech Republic – three university students (23-24 years old, three women), held in person, Brno
4. FGD Czech Republic – six young people (mixed high school and university students) aged 18-21 years old (five women, one man), a combination of high school and university students, held in person, with participants from across Czechia
5. FGD Slovakia – five high school students (16-19 years old, four women, one man) held online, participants from across Slovakia
6. FGD - three university students (19-23 years old, two women, one man), held online, participants from across Slovakia.

The quotations used in this report are anonymised and translated from their original languages. They are slightly stylistically edited to ensure easier reading but retain their original meaning.

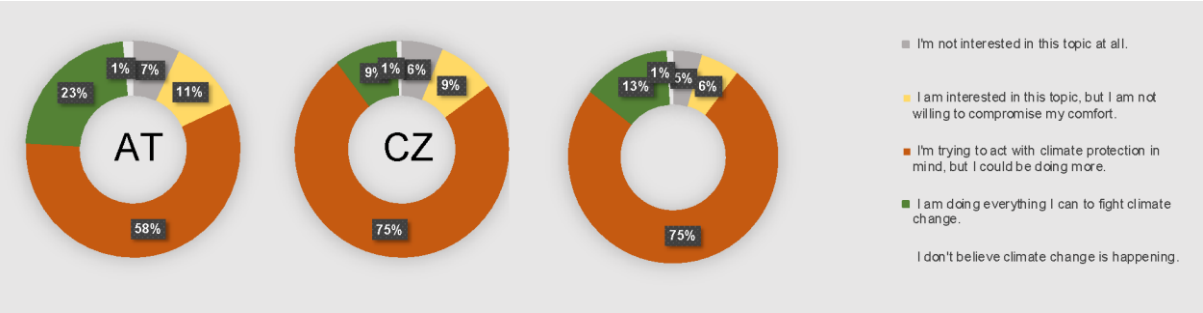
Chapter 1: Attitudes to climate change and action

This chapter looks at the questions that help uncover the attitudes towards climate change and climate action of young adults in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. We studied young peoples' basic approach to climate change and action. We also inquired how much young people knew about phenomena linked with climate change, whether they believe they are caused by climate change and how concerned they are about these issues. Lastly, we looked at some statements related to climate change which allow us to compare and uncover patterns in young people's attitudes.

Approach to climate change

To get an overview of the general stance of young people on climate change, we asked them about their **approach to climate change**. Figure 1 shows that the overwhelming majority (over 80 %) of young people in all three countries have a positive approach to climate change. The group of deniers, those disinterested or unwilling to compromise their lifestyle, constitutes less than a fifth of the youth population.

Figure 1: Approach to climate change–country comparison

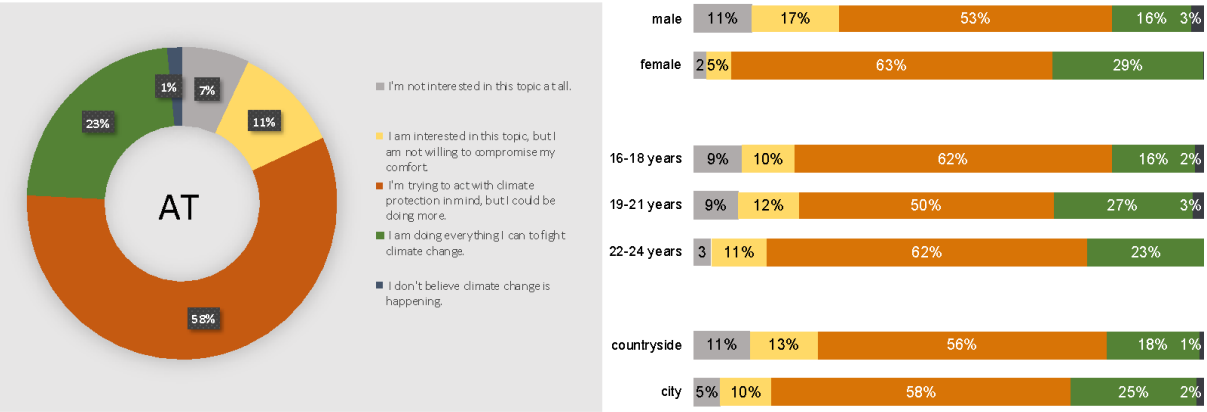


Austria has the highest share of those young people who declare they do everything they can, twice as much compared to Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Slovakia and the Czech Republic are very similar in their approach to climate change. The share of young people interested in climate change but who recognize they could do more is the same and constitutes 75% of the general youth population. One may question whether their perception is just a pose (an attitude) or whether it is reflected in their behaviour as well. As you will see in more detail in the chapter on climate action, in all three countries, those who declare to be doing all they can to have a low personal carbon footprint are highly engaged in civic activities that help fight climate change.

Similar to the results of other comparable studies, standard demographic variables play no significant role. However, there are interesting differences in the outlier categories. Men in all three countries are more likely to be deniers, disinterested in climate change, or unwilling to compromise their comfort than young women. This finding corresponds with the observation made by the project coordinators during the recruitment process for FGD, who reported that the recruitment of male respondents was an issue, and it resulted in a higher share of women in FGD.

As Figure 2 shows, one in four young people in **Austria** declare themselves as doing their most to fight climate change, and over half (58%) of young Austrians declare to be interested in the topic but could do more. 19% of young Austrians are either deniers of climate change, disinterested, or unwilling to compromise their lifestyle. The gender disparities are the most pronounced and statistically significant in Austria. Those who declare they are already doing the most to fight climate change and those interested in doing more are more likely females than males, and the difference is more than ten percentage points in both categories. In contrast, almost a third of the young male population in Austria declares themselves as deniers, disinterested or not willing to compromise.

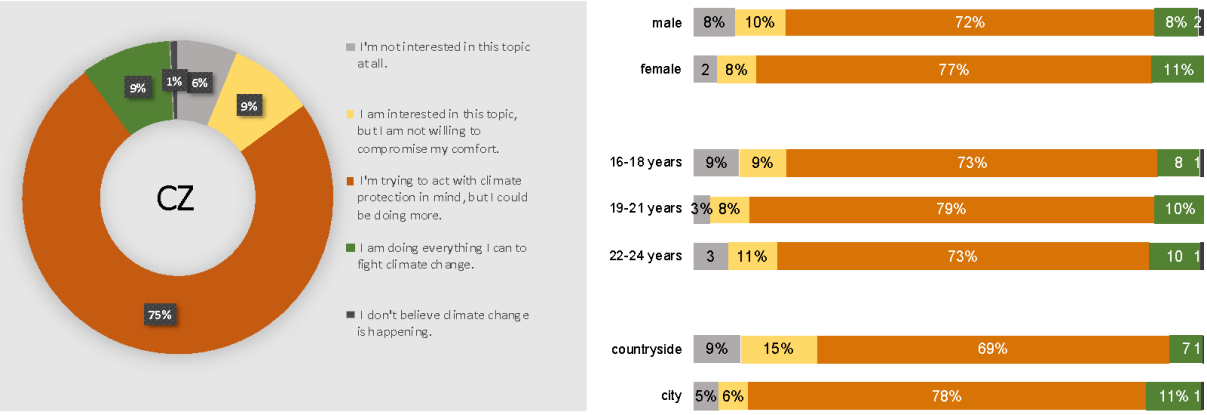
Figure 2: Approach to climate change in Austria – gender, age, and urban-rural comparison



Age plays a statistically significant role in the approach to climate change among young Austrians. The youngest group of Austrians (16-18 years old) lag behind their peers in doing all they can. This age group is significantly less represented in the group that "do all they can to fight climate change" (16% vs 27% or 23%). The zeal for doing all they can is almost double in the age group 19-21 years old; 27% of young people in this age bracket declare they do all they can. The oldest cohort (22-24 years old) has the lowest share of deniers, disinterested and unwilling to compromise. The Urban-rural divide is also visible and statistically significant in the approach to climate change. Although the share of people who are trying but could do more is practically the same (58% in urban and 56% in rural areas), there is a third less of those who say they do all they can in rural areas in comparison with those living in urban areas (18% in rural vs 25% in urban). As you will see later, the urban-rural divide also translates into the action, be it on the personal or civic action level. Also, the number of young people who are not interested in climate change is twice as big in rural areas (5% in urban vs 11% in rural areas).

In the **Czech Republic,** 3 out of 4 young people claim to be trying to act with climate protection in mind but could be doing more (Figure 3). Only 9% of young Czechs say they are doing all they can. 16% of young Czechs are either deniers of climate change, disinterested and unwilling to compromise their lifestyle. Gender plays some role in the Czech Republic but mainly among the deniers, disinterested and reluctant to compromise. Twice as many men belong to this group compared to women (20% men vs 10% women).

Figure 3: Approach to climate change in the Czech Republic – gender, age, and urban-rural comparison

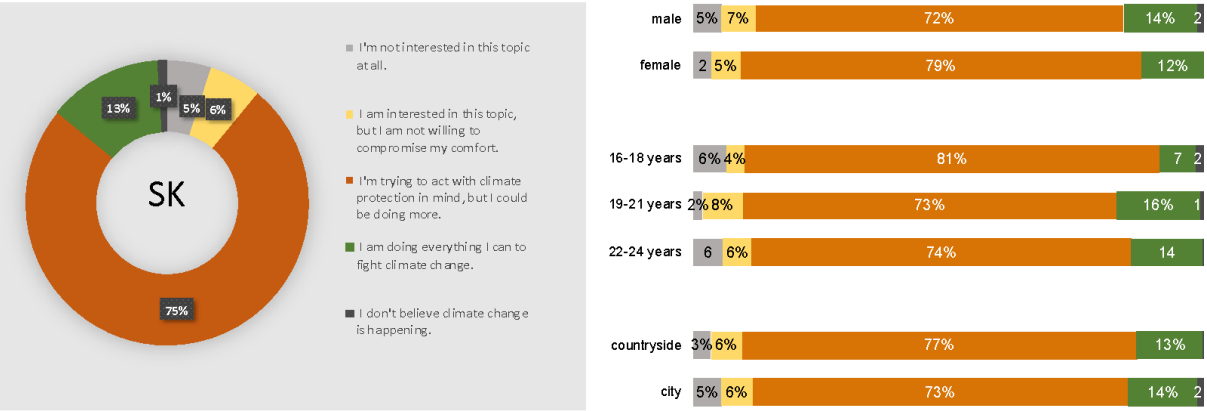


Age also plays some role in the Czech Republic, but it is not statistically significant, so we can only speak of trends here. The distribution of people who declare they do all they can is even among all age groups. However, in the youngest cohort (16-18 years old), 1 out of 5 declare themselves deniers, disinterested or unwilling to compromise their comfort, with the most significant differences being in the category of those not interested in the subject at all.

The Urban-rural divide is more pronounced in the Czech Republic than in Austria (and statistically significant). Young people in urban areas are more likely to do all they can (7% rural vs 11% urban) and people who are trying but admitting they could do more (69% rural vs 78% urban). The share of people who say they are unwilling to compromise their lifestyle is three folds in favour of urban areas. Only 6% of young people in urban areas declared they were unwilling to compromise their living standards, which contrasts with 15% of those living in rural areas. Also, the number of young people who are not interested in climate change is twice as big in rural areas (5% in urban vs 9% in rural areas).

Same as in the Czech Republic, three out of four young **Slovaks** declare they are trying to act with climate protection in mind but could do more (see figure 4). 13% of young Slovaks claim to do their most to fight climate change, and a similar share of young Slovaks (12%) are either deniers of climate change, disinterested or unwilling to compromise their lifestyle. Gender seems to play a minor role in the Slovak Republic. There are twice as many men who declare to be deniers, disinterested and unwilling to compromise compared to women (14% men vs 7% women); however, the numbers are low, so we cannot say that these differences would be similar in a larger sample.

Figure 4: Approach to climate change in Slovakia – gender, age, and urban-rural comparison



Age plays very little role in the Slovak Republic. The youngest cohort (16-18 years old) is least likely to be doing all they do to fight climate change, and the middle (18-21years old) cohort is least likely to be disinterested or disengaged in the subject. The Urban-rural divide does not demonstrate itself in Slovakia; the differences between the groups are not significant.

The focus groups discussions also provided invaluable information that helped us contextualise some of the findings above. Young people across the three countries believe that their peers know that climate change is happening. However, there is a large group that does not feel the urgency. The following quote from a focus group discussion in Austria illustrates the general principle well:

> *"Many people just live their life because they don't really see it clearly, whereby I think actually this year or also last year somehow woken up people a bit. But for many people it is not yet such a big issue, I think". (Female, AT, high school)*

The focus group discussions in the Czech Republic shed some light on the urban-rural divide as well as on the general attitude towards climate change and action:

> *"I think it's actually the most ecological to live in the city, because with so many tall buildings, you cram as many people in there as you can, and with so many of us in the world, it's just like an obvious way to protect nature, just let it be restored, revitalised. And at the same time, you can use all the opportunities that the city offers and the transportation. Because everyone in the village owns a car" (female, CR, university student).*

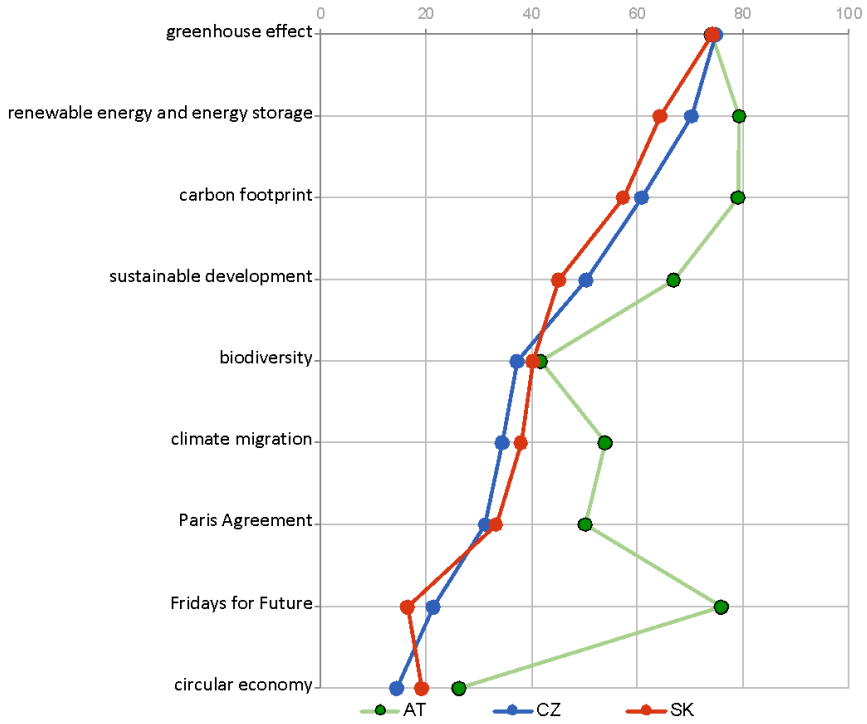
> *"We all know the threat [of climate change] exists. It's such an intersectional topic for Generation Z, just like school. If you don't have something to talk about, then you can talk about how everything is screwed up in this regard. But because I'm actually from a small village where only partial topics are on, like water drying up, the oligarchs and that stuff. But nobody really sees it in this context of climate change. And I would say that I was introduced to that context when I moved to Brno three months ago. I perceive it like it is a Western discourse. Like it's a topic that probably can't be avoided, and nobody will escape it, but I don't feel like it's my main topic yet. Still, rather I see it as an agenda of the European Union or international organisations in general [...] But that it's a theme that just permeates society to the West of us." (Male, CR, high school student).*

Knowledge and concern about climate change

In this segment, we focus on how much young people know and which aspects of climate change concern them.

Figure 5 illustrates the topics with which young people are the most familiar. Young people were presented with a list of the most common areas related to climate change, and they were asked to assess their knowledge about this area. They could choose from options: "I never heard about it", "I've heard about it before, but I couldn't explain what it's really about", "I know something about it, and I could explain the topic in general" and "I am familiar with the topic and could explain it well".

Figure 5: Topics young people are the most familiar with.



Note: the figure shows % of those who claimed "I know something about it, and I could explain the topic in general" plus those who claimed "I am familiar with the topic and could explain it well"

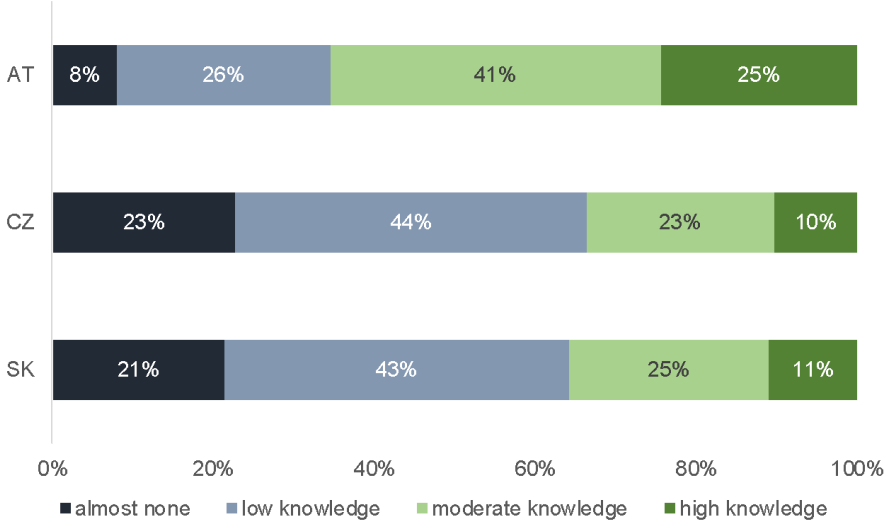
The level of knowledge on selected topics in Slovakia and the Czech Republic is very similar. Compared to their peers from Czechia and Slovakia, young Austrians are more knowledgeable on almost all selected topic areas. These differences are significant and, in some cases striking (ranging from 10 to 50 percentage points). Young people in all three countries know about the greenhouse effect, renewable energy, and carbon footprint the most; 60% to 80% of young people could explain these topics at least generally. The least known is the circular economy concept, and only 25% of young Austrians, 19% of young Slovaks and 15% of young Czechs could explain them at least generally.

The most significant knowledge gap between the countries lies in knowledge about Fridays for Future, climate migration, the Paris agreement and carbon footprint. The most striking difference appeared in the knowledge of Fridays for Future; only 17% of Slovaks, 21% of Czechs and 76% of young Austrians felt they knew about the topic to explain it at least in general terms. About the same amount of young people in all three countries could explain the greenhouse effect, biodiversity, and circular economy.

Furthermore, we were interested in a simple measure that could help us assess and compare between countries how much young people think they know about climate change. This score was created by adding up responses for the knowledge of topics mentioned in figure 5, and thus it ranges from 1 to 27.

The score was then divided into four categories. Category 'almost none' means young people primarily never heard about these topics, with a few exceptions. The 'low knowledge' category refers to young people who have heard about the issues but could not explain them in general terms. The 'moderate knowledge' category means that the young people know the topics and could mainly explain them in general terms. Last but not least, the ' high knowledge' category means that the young people could mainly explain the themes well.

Figure 6: How much young people know about topics of climate change



Note: This is a score measuring the degree of knowledge related to climate change and it was created by adding a score for the knowledge of topics mentioned in figure 5. The score ranges from 1 to 27, where 1 means almost no knowledge and 27 means high knowledge. For every topic that respondent said "I've heard about it before, but I couldn't explain what it's really about" s/he received 1 point, for "I know something about it, and I could explain the topic in general" s/he received 2 points and for "I am familiar with the topic and could explain it well" s/he received 3 points. The points for all responses were added up, and the score was then divided into 4 categories based on distribution. Its categories are described below:

Almost none - mostly never heard, some issues heard but could not explain (up to 7 points)
Low knowledge - mostly I heard but could not explain and some I could generally explain (8-13 points)
Moderate knowledge – mostly I could generally explain (14-18 points)
High knowledge – mostly I could explain it well (19 points and higher)

Whereas more than 60% of Austrians feel like they could at least generally explain the most common concepts related to climate change, more than 60% of Slovaks or Czechs have either not heard or have very shallow knowledge about the issues related to climate change. One in five young Slovaks (21%) or Czechs (23%) declare they know almost nothing or could explain only a few topics in general terms. In comparison, only 8% of Austrians declared almost no knowledge of climate change. Third of Slovaks (36%) and Czechs (33%) are moderately or well informed about the issues related to climate change. Twice as many young Austrians, 66%, declare they are moderately or well informed about the issues related to climate change.

When looking at the data, we wondered whether there is a relationship between the extent of knowledge about climate change topics and the approach to climate change. We concluded a statistically significant and moderately strong positive relationship between those two variables in all three countries. The young people who declared they knew more about climate change were more inclined toward a positive climate change attitude, and they were interested more and were more likely to do all they could to fight climate change.

Table 1: List of issues connected with climate change young people are concerned about (whole list)

	AT	CZ	SK
Plastic waste in nature and in the oceans	81.7%	87.8%	88.2%
Air pollution	76.5%	80.8%	85.0%
Deforestation of the **Amazon** rainforest	78.6%	81.8%	79.0%
Mass **extinction** of plant and animal species	77.6%	80.2%	77.4%
Increase in **temperature** on the planet	77.8%	73.9%	81.0%
Extreme **weather** on the planet	73.5%	73.7%	84.2%
Suffering of wild **animals**	75.5%	78.4%	76.0%
Extreme **weather** in our region	73.0%	70.7%	79.0%
Rising **food prices** due to drought and soil fertility loss	65.2%	72.5%	79.6%
Thawing of permanently frozen **Arctic** soils (permafrost)	68.9%	72.7%	74.7%
The retreat of **Alpine** glaciers	75.1%	67.1%	72.9%
Rising number of **military** conflicts in the world	68.7%	69.9%	73.9%
Environmental **disasters** related to **oil and gas** extraction	73.9%	64.5%	67.7%
Coral reef die-off	72.0%	64.9%	67.7%
Increase in number of **epidemics**	61.9%	67.9%	73.7%
Rising **ocean levels**	70.0%	62.9%	69.5%
Malnutrition in drought-affected countries	69.3%	61.7%	70.9%
Rising **inequality** between rich and poor countries	71.2%	59.3%	70.9%
Floods in our region	68.3%	56.9%	70.5%
Drought in our region	57.0%	60.9%	70.9%
Mass **migration** from the affected countries to our region	59.5%	61.9%	63.9%
Less snow in our region	60.5%	53.3%	61.5%

Note: The table shows % of young people, who are either quite or very concerned about the presented phenomena. The regional environmental issues are labelled yellow, humanitarian issues related to climate change are labelled grey.

Global issues seem to be, in general, more concerning than local or regional issues. The top issues of great concern are plastic waste in nature and the oceans, air pollution, deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, mass extinction of plant and animal species, increase in temperature on our planet, and related extreme weather events. Three out of four young people in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are quite or very concerned about these phenomena. On average, young Slovaks appear to be more concerned about these issues than their peers from the other two countries. What is noteworthy is that the top three issues most young people find concerning are somewhat broader environmental issues that are less directly caused by climate change than the issues that ranked below.

Table 2 shows a list of phenomena that young people think are caused by climate change. Three out of four young people in all three countries believe that most of these environmental issues are caused by climate change. The overwhelming majority of young Austrians, Czechs and Slovaks (85% and more) think that the thawing of permanently frozen Arctic soils (permafrost), rising ocean levels and extreme weather in our region and the world are caused by climate change (see Table 2 below). As we can see, less than half of young people associate humanitarian issues, such as rising inequality between rich and developing countries, increase in the number of epidemics and the rising number of military conflicts, with climate change. Table 1 (above) shows that the humanitarian issues related to climate change are in the bottom half of the rank of concerning issues. We found out that the relationship between the level of concern and believing an event is caused by climate change is significant, positive, and substantial in all three countries. For example, the more people believe that extreme weather is caused by climate change, the more likely they will be concerned about extreme weather events.

(*Note: Please beware that it does not mean it will be the only reason, these phenomena are always multidimensional).* This helps us partially explain why young people find these humanitarian issues of lesser concern than the global issues more directly related to nature conservation.

Table 2: List of phenomena that young people think are caused by climate change

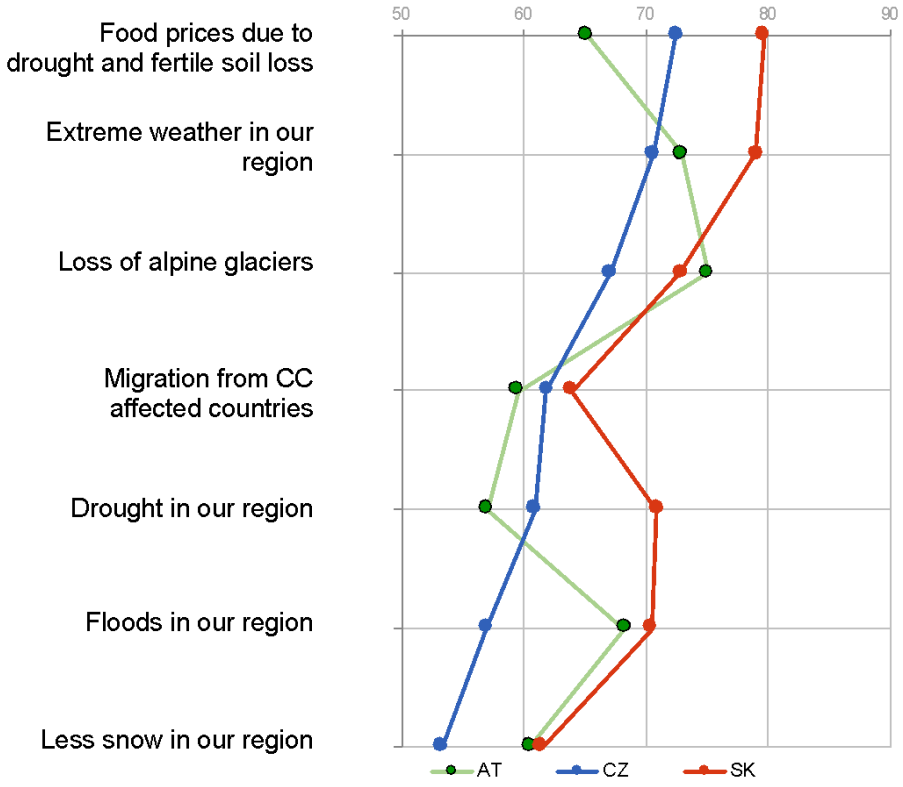
	AT	CZ	SK
Thawing of permanently frozen **Arctic** soils (permafrost)	90.0%	93.5%	94.2%
Rising **ocean levels**	88.6%	92.0%	93.6%
Extreme **weather** in our region	86.6%	86.2%	92.8%
Extreme **weather** on the planet	84.8%	92.9%	94.7%
Floods in our region	84.2%	75.5%	87.2%
Mass **extinction** of plant and animal species	82.6%	78.1%	89.5%
Drought in our region	82.0%	85.8%	93.8%
Coral reef die-off	81.1%	77.5%	85.6%
Suffering of wild **animals**	77.3%	62.0%	78.1%
Malnutrition in drought-affected countries	77.0%	71.2%	80.8%
Rising **inequality** between rich and poor countries	49.0%	30.0%	46.5%
Increase in number of **epidemics**	45.1%	36.2%	62.1%
Rising number of **military** conflicts in the world	40.4%	21.6%	40.5%

Note: The table shows % of young people, who believe that the phenomena is definitely or rather caused by climate change.

The colour-coding in Table 2 nicely reveals that from the selected countries, young people in Slovakia believe in the interconnectedness between climate change and the chosen phenomena the most. In contrast, young Czechs are significantly more sceptical about the causality that the given phenomena is caused by climate change.

Coming back to the list of issues connected with climate change that young people are concerned about (shown in Table 1 above), Figure 7 (below) focuses on the regional ones. Like in the case of the overall ranking, young Slovaks are generally more concerned about almost all the selected regional issues than their peers from the Czech Republic and Austria. As we can see, there are similarities in patterns between Slovakia and the Czech Republic: the top three regional issues are food prices due to drought and fertile soil loss, extreme weather and loss of alpine glaciers. Young Czechs are least concerned about less snow and floods, and Slovaks are least concerned about less snow and migration due to climate change. The top three regional issues in Austria are the loss of alpine glaciers, extreme weather, and floods. Austrians are least concerned about migration from climate change affected countries and drought.

Figure 7: List of issues connected with climate change young people are concerned about (regional issues)



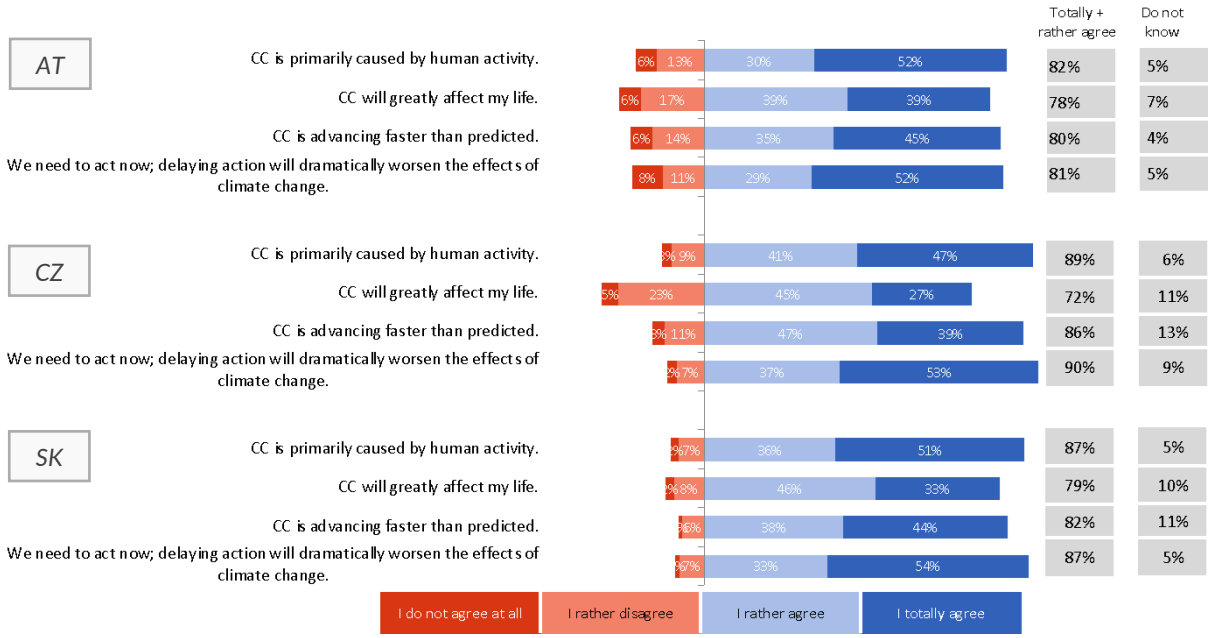
Note: The table shows % of young people, who are either quite or very concerned about the presented phenomena.

Attitudes towards climate change

This research focused not only on the general stance on climate change. It aimed to learn more specific beliefs that young people commonly hold on climate change. We asked young people to share their agreement or disagreement with 13 statements. Then, we separated the statements into three groups according to factor analysis (which helps with grouping statements based on similarity). They are also displayed in such manner below.

The overwhelming majority of young people in all three countries believe the widely accepted scientific claims that humans cause climate change (89% of Czechs, 87% of Slovaks, and 82% of Austrians totally or rather agree with the statement). Similarly, most young people believe climate change is progressing faster than expected (86% of Czechs, 82% of Slovaks, and 80% of Austrians totally or rather agree). They also agree that we need to act now, or the situation will worsen dramatically (90% of Czechs, 87% of Slovaks, and 81% of Austrians totally or rather agree). Most young people are also persuaded that climate change will affect their life. The differences between countries are significantly different: Czechs are slightly less persuaded by this claim (79% of Slovaks, 78% of Austrians, 72% of Czechs totally or rather agree).

Figure 8: Statements related to alignment with scientific data



Note: the colored graph shows % of young people who were able to express an opinion about this statement (thus gives a total of 100%). The grey column in the middle labelled "totally and rather agree" shows the percentage of those who were able to express an opinion and agreed with the statement. The last grey column on the right side shows % of those who said they do not know.

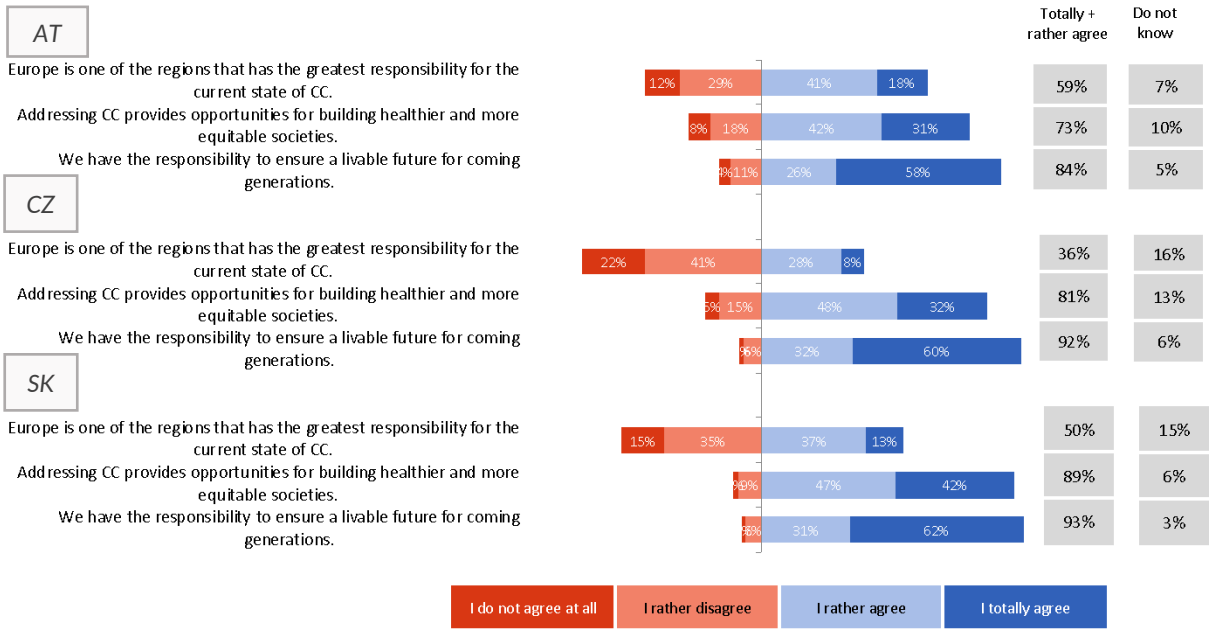
The findings from focus groups discussions corroborate this perception of the world. Our sample was skewed towards young people who are more knowledgeable, individually active and civically engaged in the fight against climate change than the average. Nevertheless, their words offer good insight:

> "It is certainly important to do something about it, because of the impact it has on all of us. But it also affects future generations, and it can also have a high impact on our quality of life. Maybe not now, but in a few years' time, I think for sure." (female, SR, university student)

> "As far as I'm concerned, I think so too especially for the future. In like 10-15 years it will already be felt here, actually we feel it even now if we look at the temperatures." *(female, SR, university student)*

An overwhelming majority of young people in all three countries believe we are responsible for future generations. However, the perception of Europe's share of responsibility splits the countries in three ways. Most young people in the Czech Republic (63%) do not believe Europe has the most significant responsibility for the current state of the climate, Slovaks are split on this question in half, and 59% of Austrians think Europe indeed carries the biggest responsibility. We must note that 15% of Slovak and Czechs did not know how to position themselves towards this statement (the most NA responses to this question). Slovaks see climate change and the current state as an opportunity the most.

Figure 9: Statements related to past and future responsibility, and our perspectives for future



Note: same as Fig.8

Respondents in all focus group discussions feel a sense of urgency to act now and also mentioned they feel great responsibility for future generations often:

> "I agree that we are probably one of the last generations, maybe even the last, that can experience nature and planet Earth to a degree where it will still be a very good place to live. Therefore, it is important for future generations to keep the planet in the best possible shape, and it seems that we are at that crossroads where it is up to us to decide how we choose to do that. And we are already finding out that it is no longer good." (male, SK, high school).

Another male university student from Austria put it this way:

> *"the discourse has now shifted, because more people are actually directly affected, also in the global North, and it's no longer about 'Oh man, the cute animals are dying' or something like that, but no, it's now really about people dying."*

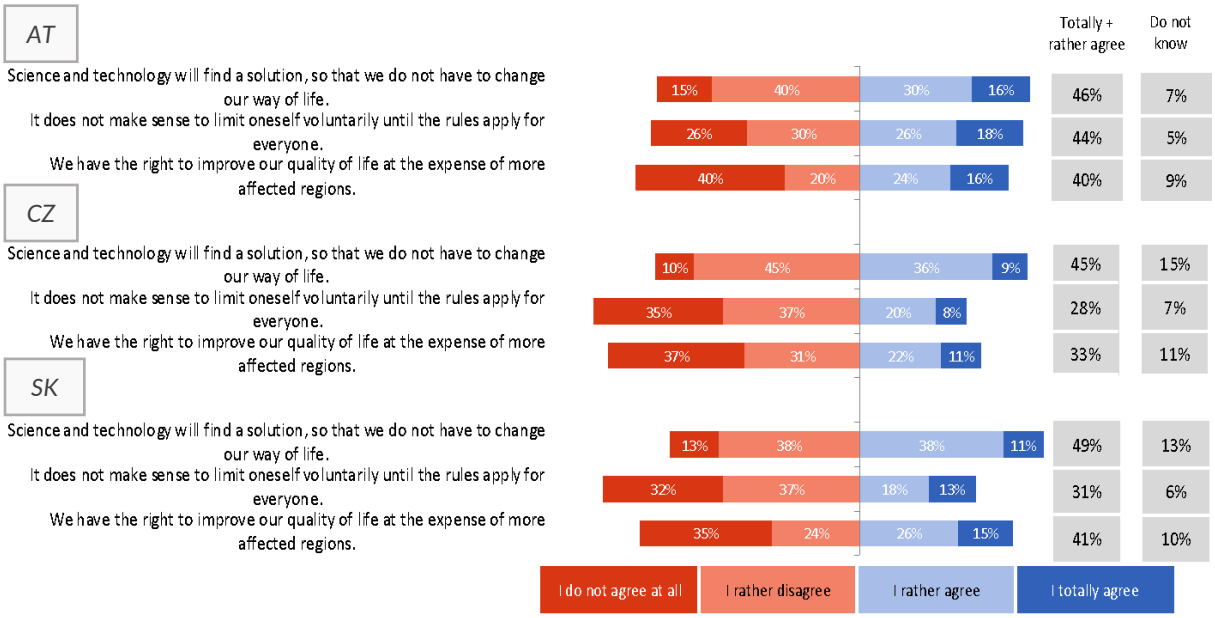
Almost half of the young Slovaks are technology optimistic or rather rely on technology to address climate change so that they don't have to change their lifestyle. The same is true for 46% of Austrians and 45% of Czechs. More than a third of young people in all three countries are Eurocentric and feel we have the right to improve our quality of life over other regions. Respondents from focus groups belonged to the other camp who feels responsible for people in other regions:

> "Because if we want to talk about climate change, we also have to talk about working conditions, human rights and, in fact, all the issues that are terribly intertwined." (Female, CR, university student)

Young Czechs and Slovaks believe it makes sense to limit oneself voluntarily even if others don't (72% and 69%, respectively). Austrians are more hesitant in this respect, as 44% of them disagree with that statement. An activist from Slovakia is not so optimistic:

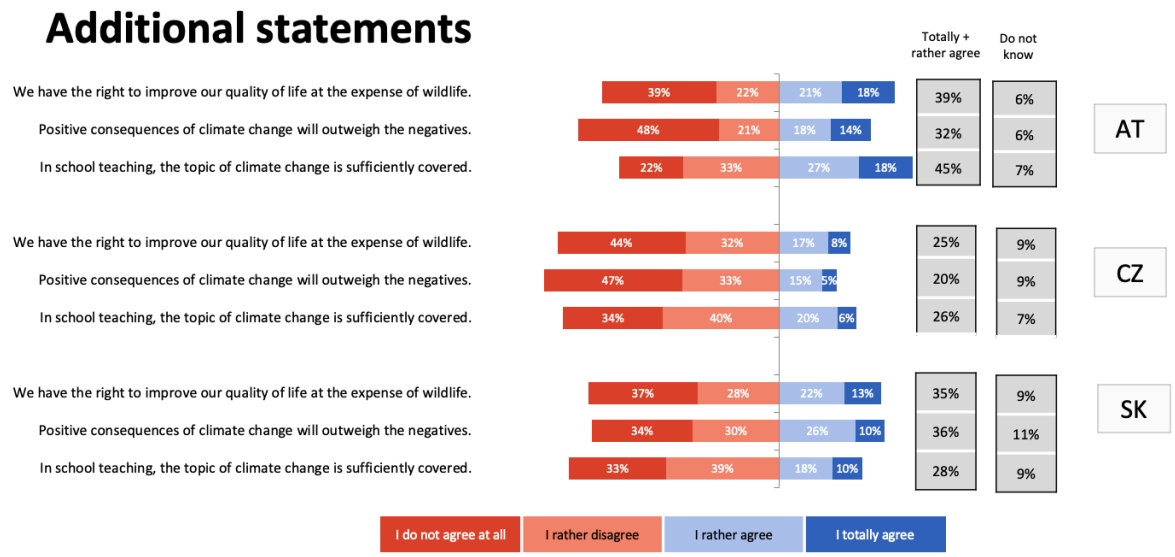
> "I try to promote recycling where I can. I still don't understand that there are people, especially our age, who don't recycle. I am not entirely successful, because most of them think that it makes no sense at all if everybody does not do it, but at least I am trying to do it this way" *(Female, SR, university student)*

Figure 10: More controversial statements on addressing climate change



Note: same as Fig. 8

Figure 11: Additional statements



More than a third (39%) of young Austrians agree that we have the right to improve our quality of life at the expense of wildlife, which is nearly the same as the share of young Austrians believing in our right to improve our quality of life over more affected regions. The comparison of these two aspects slightly differs with young Czechs (25%) and Slovaks (25%), who agree less with our right to a better quality of life over nature exploitation, as opposed to 33% of Czechs and 41% of Slovaks who believe in our rights to improve at the expense of affected regions. While most young people disagree that the positive consequences of climate change will eventually outweigh its risks, approximately a third of Austrians and Slovaks and a fifth of Czechs see it otherwise. More young people in Austria (45%) consider the school coverage of climate change sufficient, compared to their Czech (26%) and Slovak peers (28%).

Chapter 2: Climate action

This chapter looks more specifically at climate action that is part of the daily life of young people in Austria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. It can be looked at in many ways and we opted for two main streams: personal climate action and civic engagement with the aim to fight climate change. People often do not make distinctions between these categories, which was also confirmed by respondents of the focus groups, but we believe it is important to distinguish between these two theoretically. On one hand, we looked at personal environmental action, thus ways in which young people themselves help reduce their personal carbon footprint through individual action related to their personal lifestyle choices and consumption. On the other hand, we also looked at civic engagement, thus activities that are aimed at their peers, and other general public or political actors they believe help fight climate change.

Individual climate action

Individual action on climate change can include personal choices in many areas, such as diet, modes of transportation, household energy use, and many others. To ascertain what young people in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia do on the individual level, we asked them which of the listed 15 activities reducing their carbon personal carbon footprint (consumption of goods and services) belong to their current lifestyle.

The top five ways young people reduce their individual carbon footprint align across all countries. These include drinking tap water, sorting waste, trying not to waste food, saving energy and limiting single-use plastics. The activities which are the hardest are restricting the consumption of animal products and meat, preferring clean energy sources, and limiting car journeys. As we see in Table 3, young Austrians significantly differ from their Czech and Slovak counterparts in that they opt more to buy local and eco-friendly products and buy things less second hand. The latter finding is puzzling because it is the only and a quite stark outlier, and we thought it had perhaps more to do with the term used rather than the activity itself (Ich kaufe Second-Hand ein). However, the respondents of focus group discussions in Austria used exactly these words without being prompted by the moderator when speaking about their contribution to fighting climate change. The respondents offered another explanation, which is that firstly buying second-hand has become trendy only in the last few years. Secondly, purchasing second-hand perse is not more climate-friendly as it can lead to buying more things than necessary. These are illustrated by the following quote:

> *"I wanted to add, about shopping second-hand. I mean it became trendier in the last few years and I think it's great, that people now pay more attention to it. But what I find stupid is, there is a trend when people buy extra things in second-hand despite the fact that they are too big for them or they don't quite like them and want to refit it later "…"you then refit it later and then it does not quite work either, and then you throw it away or something. One should pay attention to that." (Female, AT, high school student).*

Table 3: List of activities young people carry out to reduce their personal carbon footprint

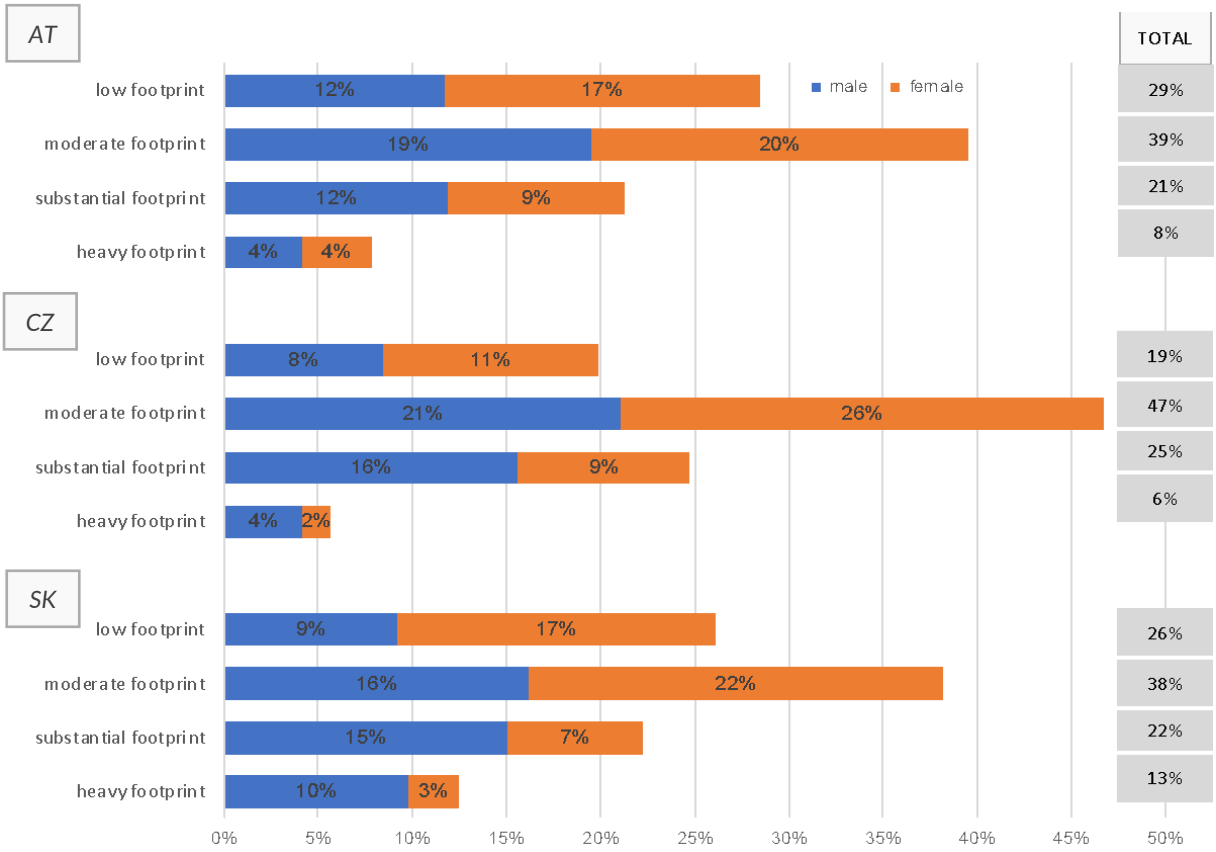
	AT	CZ	SK
I opt to drink **tap water** over bottled water	75.1%	80.8%	73.9%
I **sort my waste** consistently	68.9%	80.6%	74.5%
I try **not to waste food** (minimal stocks)	74.9%	79.0%	76.0%
I **save energy** (electricity, heating)	60.5%	74.7%	73.7%
I limit **single-use plastics**	73.0%	68.7%	77.4%
I **save water** (shower, toilet, dishes...)	54.7%	67.3%	71.1%
I try to **avoid waste**	55.8%	64.3%	64.5%
I do **not replace functional** products (clothes, electronics...)	56.6%	59.3%	56.9%
I restrict **air travel**	50.4%	54.3%	58.9%
I buy things **second hand**	30.9%	51.3%	50.9%
I opt to **buy local** and **eco-friendly** products	69.1%	49.1%	56.9%
I limit **car journeys**	44.9%	44.1%	48.7%
I prefer **clean energy** sources	51.6%	37.7%	45.7%
I limit my **meat** consumption	49.6%	36.3%	38.1%
I limit my consumption of **animal products**	48.6%	33.1%	38.1%

Note: The table shows % of young people, for whom are the following individual actions part of their current lifestyle.

Looking at the overall picture, at least half of young Austrians incorporated almost all these 15 individual climate actions in their daily lifestyle. Whereas Czechs and Slovaks may have a high share of young people engaged in the low commitment activities (tap water, sorting waste, not wasting food, saving energy, not using single-use plastics), only about a third of them incorporate the hardest activities in their current lifestyles. In Austria, the share of young people engaged in each individual climate action never drops under 45%, except for second-hand purchasing. This trend becomes more apparent in Figure 12 below, which describes the score of the personal carbon footprint of young people. This score was calculated by adding the number of activities listed in Table 3 that young people consider a part of their current lifestyle. Youth with a low footprint carries out the overwhelming majority of these activities as part of their current lifestyle. A moderate footprint means young people carry out more than seven but less than twelve of the listed activities, and a substantial footprint means they carry out more than three but less than eight activities. A heavy footprint means that almost none of these activities belong to their lifestyle.

As we can see on the chart below, young Austrians have the lowest personal carbon footprint. 71% of young Austrians declare that at least half of the selected activities are part of their current lifestyle. Although the differences are not big, Slovaks have the heaviest personal carbon footprint of the three countries. More than a third of young people in Slovakia (35%) do less than half of the activities as part of their lifestyle. Czechs have the highest share of those with a moderate carbon footprint (do more than seven but less than twelve activities) but least of those who are really personally committed to a low carbon footprint (19% vs 29% in Austria and 26% in Slovakia). The share of the Slovak youth with a low personal carbon footprint is similar to that of Austria. However, Slovakia has almost twice as many young people with a heavy footprint, in other words, those who do almost none of these activities (three or fewer activities)

Figure 12: Personal carbon footprint of young people - comparison across countries and gender



Note: This is a score measuring how much carbon footprint young people have, meaning how many activities do they carry out in order to reduce their carbon footprint mentioned in Table 3. The score was calculated by adding up all activities the respondents declared they carry out. Thus the score ranged from 1 to 15 and was then divided into 4 categories based on distribution. Its categories are described below:
low footprint – young people carry out 12 and more activities
moderate footprint - carry out more than 7 but less than 12 activities
substantial footprint - carry out more than 3 but less than 8 activities
heavy footprint - carry out 3 and less activities

As Figure 12 illustrates, females are more carbon footprint conscious in all three selected countries. In Austria, young females are more likely to have a low personal footprint, and in Slovakia, two-thirds of young people who have a low footprint are women. The trend is also present in the Czech Republic, although the difference is not so stark as in the other countries. Men in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are, on the contrary, more likely to have a heavy and substantial footprint. In Slovakia, young men in Slovakia compose two-thirds of those with a heavy or substantial footprint. Compared to women, twice as many men in Czechia have a heavy footprint. The difference is not so stark in Austria, but the trend is also the same: men are more likely to have a substantial footprint than women.

The respondents of focus groups also speak of low commitment activities becoming ingrained in their lifestyle, including opting for tap water, sorting waste, not wasting food, and saving energy. They believe that these have become a norm for Generation Z (young people who are currently roughly 10 to 24 years old) in general. The quantitative research corroborates this as we can see an overlap with the top activities of personal climate action from Table 3. However, mostly Slovak and Czech respondents expressed the opinion that not wasting food, saving energy, and drinking tap water had, in many cases, been part of their lifestyle before climate change discussions became prominent and that they were already part of the lifestyles of their parents. Two quotes from two Czech FGD illustrate it well:

> *"I believe that many people, a lot of people around me recycle, but they actually do not care about the environment." (CR, Female, university student).*

> *"I try to do the bare minimum, such as I try to take care of my waste, I used to try to shop zero waste before, but lately I have been unable to do so, as my life is currently more hectic. But actually, I try to save energy and water, which has not always been about climate but we simply did not have money. So running water and lights on have always been a big topic in our household." (CR, Female, university student).*

These quotes help illustrate that people have various reasons for carrying out these activities. Even the most popular ones could, in their mind, be mainly unrelated to fighting climate change. Instead, they could rather be measures to save money.

Comparing statements on climate action young people carry out individually across countries, Austrian young people were more critically thinking and mindful about their individual climate actions. Young Austrians were more likely to use words such as

> *"I learned to be more aware" (Female, AT, high school)*

and they were ready to make conscious choices that may not be fully in line with individual carbon footprint recommendations (like buying one item from fast-fashion clothing line) and being at peace with these choices.

Civic engagement

When prompted about what they do to fight climate change, young people do not distinguish between individual climate action and civic engagement activities. However, from an analytical point of view, we found it important to separate those two and look at how young people get engaged civically to make a change. When discussing civic engagement, we mean action aimed at peers, the general public, and political actors that young people believe help fight climate change. We presented young people with a list of nine activities and asked them if they had engaged in the activity in the last two years.

The most common way young people get engaged in the fight against climate change is to spread awareness about the topic and sign a petition. About 40% to 50% of young people engaged in those activities in all three countries over the last two years. Roughly a quarter of young people in all three countries engaged in online discussions or shared posts on social media platforms.

About a fourth of young people in the Czech Republic (22%) and Slovakia (28%) voted in elections according to the candidate's climate agenda. In Austria, the share was higher; over one-third of young people declared they voted according to the candidates' climate agenda. This difference can be explained by the position of the parties that carry the green agenda in their respective national politics. The Green party has a stronger role and power in Austrian politics than the Progressive Slovakia party or Pirates in the Czech Republic. These political parties got the most votes from people who are highly committed to the climate change agenda (they do everything they can to fight climate change, score low on footprint score above and high on activism score below).

Table 4: List of all political activities young people get engaged to fight climate change

	AT	CZ	SK
Spreading awareness about climate change within the community, drawing attention to unsustainable behaviour	47%	41%	43%
Signing a petition	46%	40%	51%
Engaging in online discussions, creating or sharing posts, etc.	26%	25%	23%
Voted in elections based on the candidates' climate agenda	36%	22%	28%
Financial support for activities to combat climate change	22%	17%	16%
Volunteering for an NGO or civic initiative working on climate change	18%	9%	14%
Protest, strike, march	24%	8%	9%
Organising your own actions, petitions	18%	5%	9%
Engaging in civil disobedience	13%	4%	8%

Note: The table shows % of young people, who declared they have engaged in these actions in the last two years.

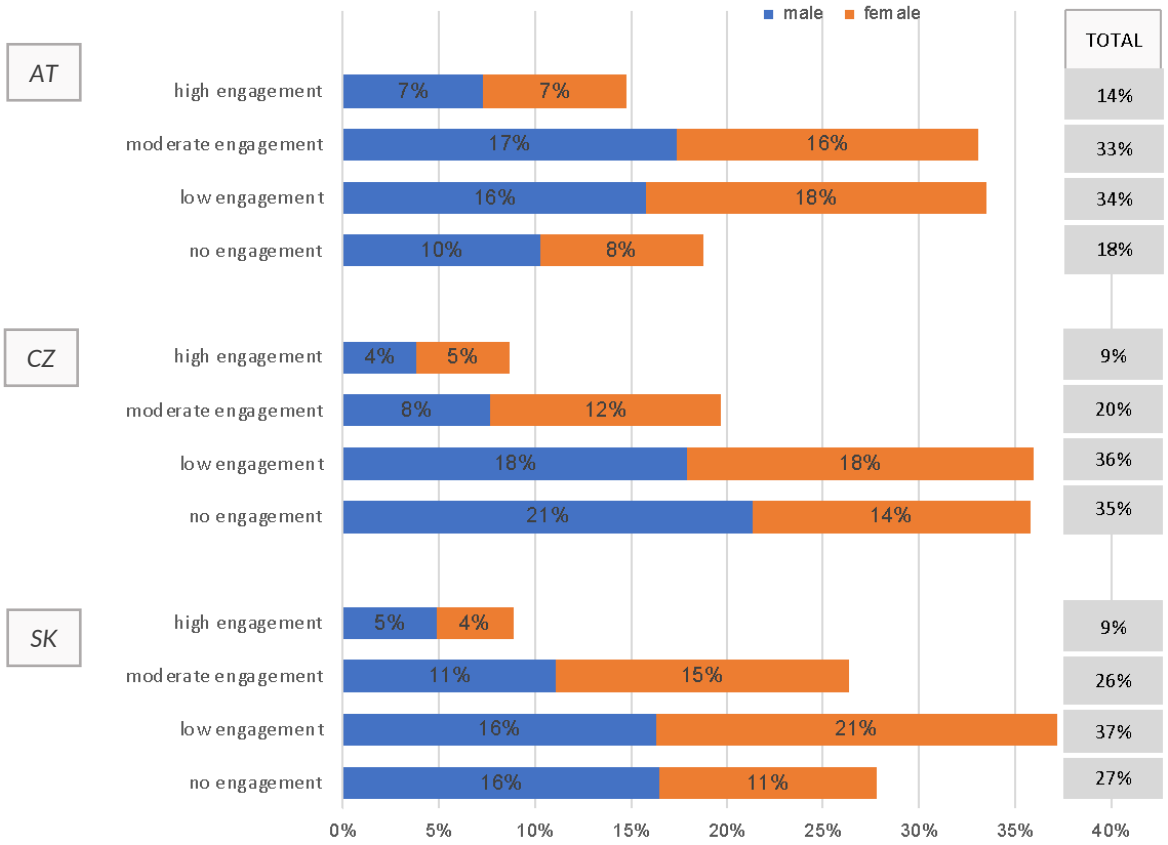
Further analysis of the data showed that those people who are willing to get engaged in the low commitment activities, such as signing petitions, spreading awareness in the community, voting according to candidates' climate agenda and proactive online activity, rarely get engaged in the most demanding activities such as civil disobedience, organizing their own actions and volunteering. Thus any future planned activities should take that into account to set the expectations on both sides.

We were also curious about who initiates engagement in these civic activities, whether the respondents themselves or other actors. On average, civic activities were the sole initiative for approximately 48% of Austrian, 63% Czech and 57% Slovak respondents. Friends, family members, and other influential people were among the other top motivators. For example, organizing own actions came from the personal initiative of 42% of Austrians, while 14% were motivated by friends, and 13% by family members and other people such as teachers or influencers. Friends are more motivating for the Czech respondents, from whom 35% organize activities out of their initiative, whereas friends' initiative accounts for 22%, and that of family and other influencers for 9% respectively. Approximately 33% of Slovak youth organize activities from personal initiative. In Slovakia, family members (22%) and other people (17%) are more influential than friends (13%).

We wanted to analyze further the commitment of young people to climate change geared towards public and political actors and thus came up with a civic engagement score. This score was calculated by adding the number of political activities young people engaged in for the last 24 months listed in Table 4. The score was divided into four groups. Those young people who are highly engaged carried out at least half of these activities. Moderately engaged young people carried out three or four of these activities. Young people who declared low engagement carried out one or two of these activities, and those who did none of these activities were labelled as non-engaged.

Young Austrians have the highest self-declared civic engagement to address climate change; 47% declare they carried out at least three or more activities mentioned above. Czechs have the highest share of those who are not engaged: over a third of young people (35%) in the Czech Republic declare they are not civically engaged to fight against climate change. In comparison, a fourth of young Slovaks (27%) claimed to be disengaged, and only less than a fifth (18%) of Austrians have not engaged in the last 24 months.

Figure 13: Civic engagement of young people – country and gender comparison



Note: This is a score measuring civic engagement of young people, meaning how many political activities do they carry out in order to fight climate change mentioned in Table 4. The score was calculated by adding up all activities the respondents declared they carry out in the last 24 months. Thus, the score ranged from 1 to 9 and was then divided into 4 categories based on distribution. Its categories are described below:
no engagement – young people carry 0 activities
low engagement – do 1 or 2 activities
moderate engagement - young people carry 3 or 4 activities
high engagement – young people carry 5 to 9 activities

Although young women were more likely to compromise their lifestyle on the personal level (individual climate action) than men, this does not translate entirely into being civically more engaged. Slovak and Czech females do engage more civically in the fight against climate change but the differences are not as striking as in case of individual action. Females in Slovakia do have a significantly higher share among the group of moderately engaged and those who carried out only one or two activities and significantly less among the group of disengaged. Females in Czech Republic do have a significantly higher share among the group of moderately engaged and significantly smaller share among the group of disengaged. There are no differences in case of young Austrians, whose civic climate action is more gender balanced.

This finding could appear strange especially considering the significant gender differences in individual climate action or general approach to climate change analyzed at the beginning of this report. The research of Rada mládeže Slovenska into self-efficacy and political efficacy of young people lends an explanation here. Young females in Slovakia and Czech Republic believe that their voice and action carry lesser weight in politics and society in general and they also believe that their actions have lesser impact. This translated also into gender differences in political participation: young women were less likely engaged in actions which were geared towards political actors and were more likely to be interested in informal activities and volunteering. Although we lack the data for Austria, it is plausible that the situation is similar and thus we believe that this can explain why civic engagement is more gender-balanced than individual action or general approach to climate change.

Relationship between attitude towards climate change, knowledge, individual climate action and civic engagement to fight climate change

Table 5 below shows a correlation between some of the scores we have presented thus far, such as level of knowledge (introduced in the first chapter), individual climate action (personal footprint), and civic engagement presented in this chapter. The goal is to show how are these scores interrelated or connected. We believe this information could be relevant when setting up the goals and expectations for the upcoming activities with young people and communication campaigns.

As shown in Table 5, all of these scores are related.[1] The colour-coding helps us see how strong the relationship between the two scores is. No colour means the connection is so weak that we should treat it as if it was not there. Dark yellow suggests a strong relationship between the two scores.

The table below shows that individual footprint and civic engagement have a positive and moderate (Austria and Slovakia) or even strong relationship in the case of the Czech Republic. This means that those with a low footprint are more likely to be highly engaged. Similarly, footprint and knowledge about climate action have a positive and moderate relationship in all three countries. Thus those who declare higher knowledge are also highly likely to have a lower footprint (individual climate action). And lastly, there is a positive relationship between civic engagement and level of knowledge. In Austria, the relationship is weak. However, in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the relationship is moderate or even strong. This means that those who declare higher knowledge in these two countries will be more likely to engage civically.

Table 5: Relationship between knowledge, individual climate action and civic engagement to fight climate change

	AT	CZ	SK
Footprint - Civil engagement	.327**	.432**	.331**
Footprint - Knowledge	.308**	.323**	.342**
Civil engagement - Knowledge	.178**	.432**	.354**

weak relationship
moderate relationship
strong relationship

*Note: ** All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.*

We also looked at the relationship between attitude towards climate change, individual climate action and civic engagement to fight climate change. Figure 14 is an output of correspondence analysis, which helps to look for clusters based on how young people in all three countries responded to the three questions. The graph below shows that young people are clustered into three groups (segments):

1. segment: young people who are fully committed to climate change
These young people declare that they do all they can to fight climate change; they have a low footprint and high engagement. You probably have many of these young people within your networks. In the next phase of the project, these young people can be peer influencers. They can be beneficial in being the trusted peers who young people turn to for more information and guidance and can grow into roles with more responsibility.

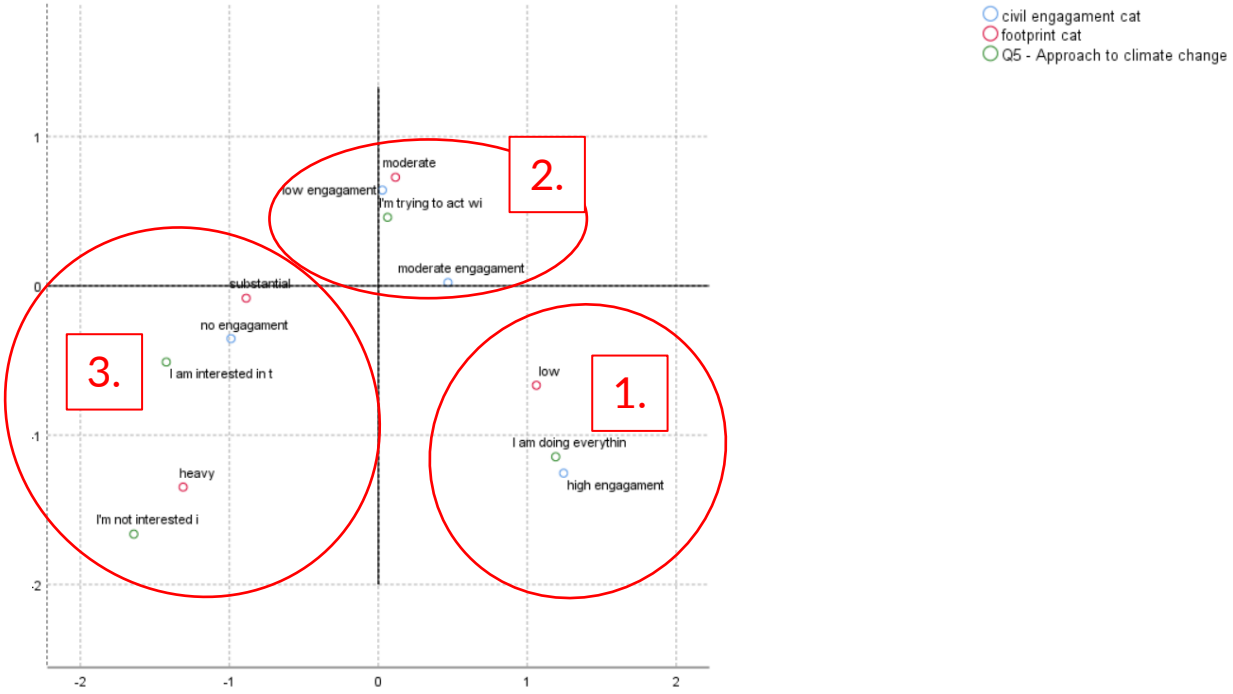
2. segment: young people who could do more
These young people declare that they are acting with climate protection in mind but could be doing more. They have a moderate footprint and moderate to low levels of civic engagement. We believe that these would be ideal candidates for your primary target group for the next activities and communication campaigns.

3. segment: young people who are deniers and disinterested
These young people declare that they are either disinterested in climate change, they are deniers or are too comfortable to change their behaviour. They have a heavy to substantial footprint and are not

1 All correlations are highly statistically significant, thus with 99% probability the correlation is not per chance but if we repeated the data collection we would come to similar results.

civically engaged in the fight against climate change. It would be our recommendation not to target this group in your subsequent activities and communication campaigns.

Figure 14: Segmentation of young people based on their attitude towards climate change, individual climate action and civic engagement to fight climate change



Chapter 3: Barriers and enablers

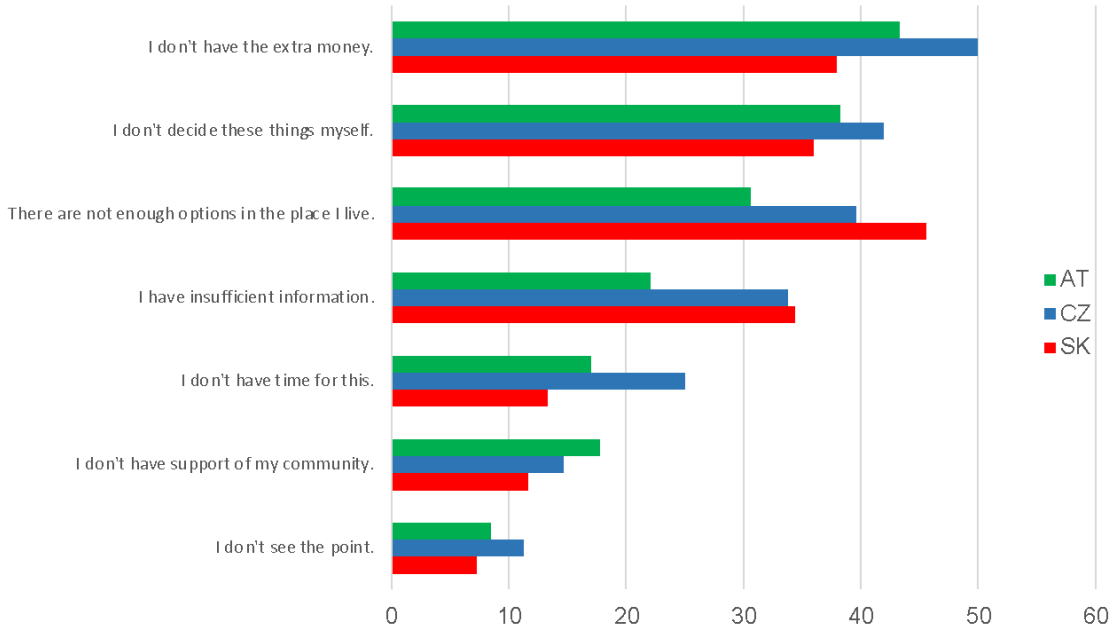
This chapter looks more specifically at barriers and enablers that prevent or help young people fight climate change in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. On the one hand, we aimed to understand the barriers young people have that prevent them from doing more to fight climate change, and we again looked at individual and civic levels separately as we suspected that they would differ. On the other hand, we looked at the main actors who should take action in the climate change fight and what makes it easier for young people to become more aware and proactive. Understanding these mechanisms will help us better understand how to incentivize young people to do more individually or civically.

Barriers - individual climate action

To analyze the barriers to climate action on an individual level, we asked respondents what prevents them from reducing their carbon footprint and gave them seven options. They could choose any number of them. As we can see in Figure 15, the reasons why young people do not take more individual climate action broadly align across all three countries. The top three reasons that prevent them from doing more are lack of resources, lack of ability to decide about the issues, and lack of options in the place where they live. Money seems to be the main barrier for Austrians and Czechs. A lack of available options is the most significant barrier for Slovaks.

Out of all young people who can still improve in lowering their carbon footprint, half of Czechs believe they lack the resources, 42% lack the ability to decide and 39% claim that there are not enough options in the place they live. The order is the same for Austrians; just the share is smaller: 43% lack the resources, 38% lack the ability to decide and 31% claim that there are not enough options in the place they live. The most significant barrier for Slovak is the availability of options in the places where they live (46%); 38% of young Slovaks think that they can't afford to do more, and 36% claim they lack the ability to decide.

Figure 15: Biggest barriers that are preventing young people from lowering their personal carbon footprint - country comparison



Note: The graph shows % of young people, who are not taking more action to lower their personal carbon footprint because of the given reason listed. Respondents could choose multiple reasons for not taking action thus the total exceeds 100%.

Although all respondents thought individual climate action makes sense, there were also sceptical voices about the extent to which it is effective:

"We believe this narrative of individual consumption and individual omnipotence that one could actually do something alone against climate change, is nonsense. Especially if we look at the areas where the most emissions really occur: that is in road traffic and in energy production and then, of course, also in meat consumption and in the way we eat, and these are areas that can be tackled through political legislation. International cooperation is of no use if we outsource our production or energy generation to other countries that do not have such legislation. So saving a litre of water is I think more like "nice housekeeping" or even little stinginess. It's not going to save the world. It's like eating up food because people are worse off somewhere. That's why it won't get any better." (male, AT, university student). He later added: "I am a quasi-vegan, I don't travel, I recycle, I participate in protests, I vote..., but still I don't have an expectation actually that anything will change."

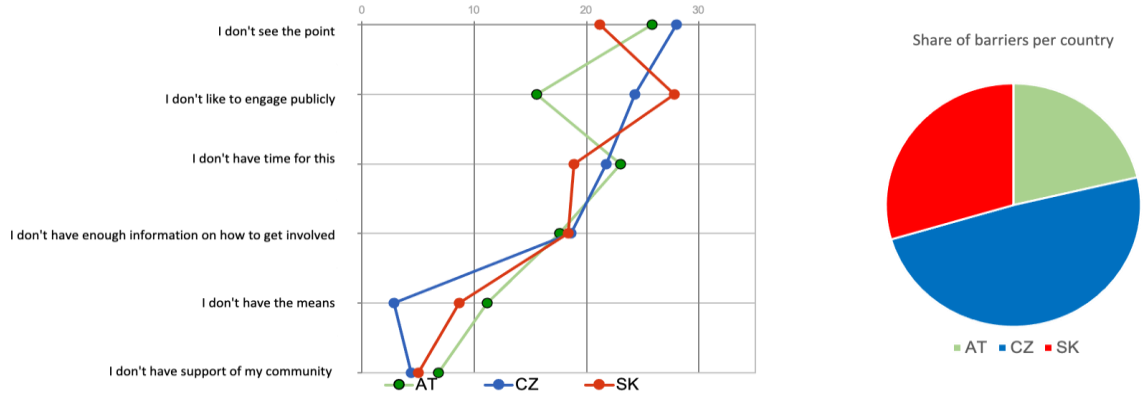
Respondents in focus groups also thematized that cost is a prohibitive factor in being more climate-friendly:

"When I have to buy a new pair of pants, I do not want to buy fair-trade ones because they are so expensive. The cheap pants cost a hundred euros, and that's just a lot, and when I think okay maybe it fits me now but in two months maybe no longer. So I do not want to buy a hundred euros pants and then I think to myself should I go to Zara and buy me a pair or not. It is just hard to do without fast fashion because of the money." (female, AT, high-school student)

Barriers – civic engagement

To analyze the barriers to civic engagement related to climate change, we asked respondents what prevents them from being more engaged in each of the political activities listed in Table 5. We gave them the same seven options to choose from as with individual climate action. The graph on the right side of Figure 16 shows the share of a particular barrier out of all the barriers that prevent young people from getting engaged civically. As we can see, the reasons why young people don't engage civically more generally align across all countries. The most frequently named barriers were that young people don't see a point, they feel like they don't have time, don't have enough information, and don't like to engage publicly (the last one is true, especially for Czech and Slovak young people). An interesting finding was that young Czechs were declaring twice as many barriers in civic engagement compared to Austrians and Slovaks. Our data could not provide a clear explanation as to why that was.

Figure 16: Biggest barriers that are preventing young people from more civic engagement - country comparison



Note: The graph at left shows the share for the particular barrier from the overall number of barriers preventing young people from getting civically engaged. Respondents could choose multiple reasons not to get engaged in the particular political action. The graph on the right side shows a share of barriers mentioned in each country from the overall number of barriers mentioned.

Enablers

In this segment, we focus on the main actors who should take action in the climate change fight and on what makes it easier for young people to become more aware and proactive. For the former task, we asked respondents who should act in the fight against climate change, and respondents could choose up to five actors. The latter was dealt with extensively in the focus group discussions.

As Table 6 shows, young people think it is primarily the role of businesses and industry, international actors (world community, most polluting countries, EU), the government and local authorities. There are striking similarities between Czech and Slovak young people in three aspects which are noteworthy and distinguish them from the young Austrians. Young Czechs and Slovaks downplay their role as individuals: only 24% of Czechs and 28% of Slovaks believe that they should be the top actors (they are in the last third of the list). In contrast, 43% of Austrians take on their responsibility and assume the fifth place in the rank of actors. Secondly, Czechs and Slovaks rely more on the government to take a leadership role than the Austrians (55% and 48% vs 42%). Thirdly, Czechs and, to a lesser degree, Slovaks strongly believe that it should be experts and scientists who should act, which would help to explain the scientific optimism Slovaks expressed in chapter 1. Lastly, almost a third of Slovaks and Czechs believe that environmental NGOs should act, which could be positively perceived; however, it seems like too big of a shoe to fit. Austrians have much more modest and realistic expectations from environmental NGOs.

Table 6: Main actors who should act in fight against climate change

	AT	CZ	SK
Businesses and industry	60%	42%	52%
The world community	55%	54%	43%
Most polluting countries	46%	51%	52%
EU	44%	50%	42%
Myself	43%	24%	28%
Governments, local authorities	42%	55%	48%
Historically most polluting countries	34%	34%	37%
People who have money; investors	33%	35%	30%
Experts and scientists	32%	60%	49%
Influencers and celebrities	17%	15%	13%
Environmental NGOs	11%	28%	31%
Banks and insurance companies	10%	4%	4%
Local communities	9%	10%	11%

Note: The table shows % of young people, who believe it is the responsibility of these actors to act in the fight against climate change. The respondents could select up to 5 actors.

To summarize, young Czechs and Slovaks place themselves in a passive role and expect the state, scientific community, businesses and international community to act. In contrast, Austrians assign themselves much more of a central role in the process of fighting climate change while not ignoring the impact the larger actors have. This attitude is nicely reflected in the focus group discussions. Whereas young people in all countries agreed that the top actors have the biggest impact, young people in Austria see their role in exerting public pressure via civic engagement to force the change of laws and their enforcement.

> *„When it comes to climate change the impact of the individual is so incredibly small that you can't actually change that much at the grassroots level, and that's why I actually think it's one of the most important political issues […]Governments simply have to act.“ (Female, CR, university student)*

„I think that the global market and the big companies and the transportation have the biggest impact, and I cannot do anything about those issues myself, and it is the European Union and the other big countries that should be promoting this kind of thing in the first place.“ (Female, SR, university student) „I believe political parties need to make the first move“ (Female, SR, university student)

“On the one hand, you have to put a lot more pressure on politics because: Who else makes the laws? So we have to exert pressure, as we are doing now, for example, in case of the Lobau tunnel construction. I think it is very, very important to win this fight, because it will be more than symbolic and because it shows what people can achieve. A project that has been around for such a long time and to be able to stop it. That is also what gives people hope again, that they can achieve more and I think together they can achieve more.” (female, AT, working)

The focus group discussions provided further insight on factors that enable more or intensified individual climate action or civic engagement:

- Personal experience provided by family or school is important to start early in childhood or primary school; siblings are very important role models
- Provide hands-on experiences like a visit to a landfill, meat factory, textile factory or internship, research projects or BA/MA thesis assignments
- Visual images – short clips or documentary films explaining the basic facts to be shared on social media
- Greenfluencers and positive role models – Greta Thunberg, but also their peers
- Awareness building and positive campaigns, not only scaremongering but also concerts and workshops on the street, discussions at summer festivals
- environmental NGOs should:
    - communicate better about how to join specifically and create community and a feeling of togetherness
    - diversify campaigns - some young people are deterred by radical action, so offer both shocking and more moderate activities and campaigns
    - raise awareness by showing practical steps to implement into young people’s lifestyles

Chapter 4: Tools of communication

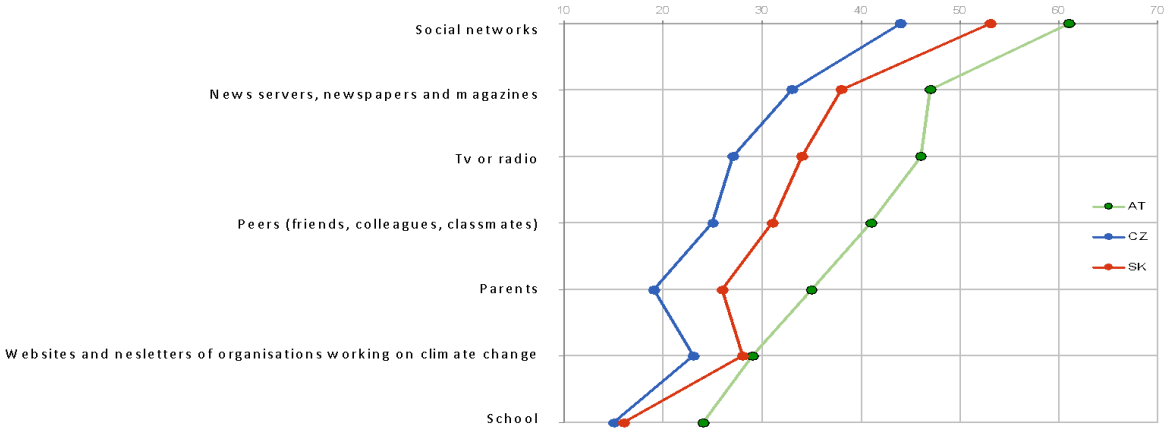
This chapter looks more specifically at aspects that ought to help with the communication about climate change to increase climate action in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. On the one hand, we looked at what communication tools young people use to get their information about climate change. On the other hand, we looked at what emotions are connected with climate change in the respective countries. The reason to include this aspect in the analysis is that the topic of climate change elicits strong emotions, and we consider it essential to be aware of them for an effective change approach.

Sources of information

We asked young people what source of information they use to learn about climate change and followed up with questions about how often they get the information. As shown in Figure 17, social media are the most important source of information about climate change for the young generation in all three countries, which is not surprising. 61% of young people in Austria, 53% in Slovakia and 44% in Czechia use it at least once a week to learn about climate change. The other sources are news servers and magazines, TV and radio. Peers play an important role, especially in Austria, where 41% of young people get information about climate change from their peers at least once a week. Also, in Slovakia and Czech Republic, 31% and 24% of young people respectively get info from their peers at least once a week.

This graph also clearly shows that in comparison with Slovaks and Czechs, more young Austrians receive information about climate change at least once a week, thus on a regular, at least weekly basis, which increases the likelihood of retention and support, making it a habit. NGOs working on climate change are doing a considerably good job at informing young people. Every fourth person in Austria and Slovakia gets informed about climate change at least once a week. In Slovakia and the Czech Republic, school is not a source of regular weekly information about climate change. Only 15% of young people in the Czech and the Slovak Republic get their information from a school every week. In Austria, every fourth person gets informed by the school at least once a week.

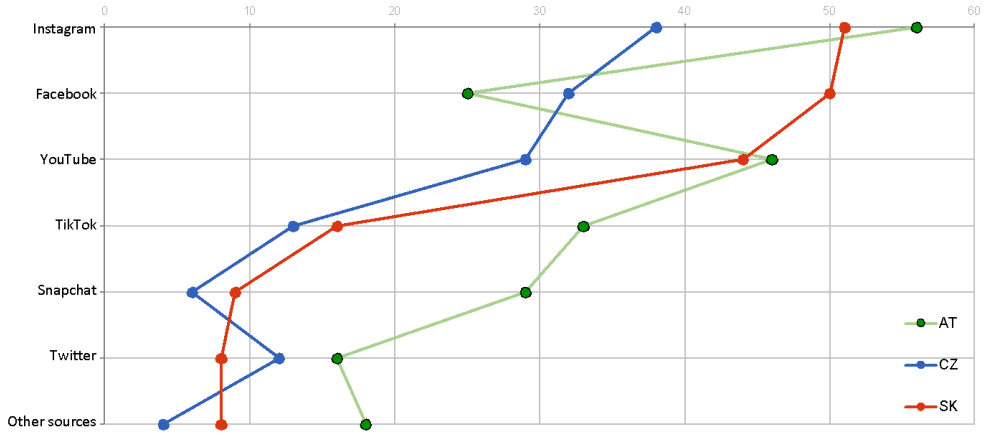
Figure 17: Sources of information about climate change - country comparison



Note: The graph shows % of young people, who get their information about climate change using the given source at least once a week and more often.

Those young people who responded that they use social media received a follow-up question asking which social media they use to get information about climate change and how often. The top two channels for getting informed about climate change are Instagram and Youtube in all three countries. Facebook is relevant in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and Tik Tok and Snapchat are relevant in Austria. Whereas most young people in Austria and the Czech Republic use Instagram at least once a week, In Slovakia, Instagram and Facebook are equally relevant.

Figure 18: Use of social media for the purposes of getting information about climate change - country comparison

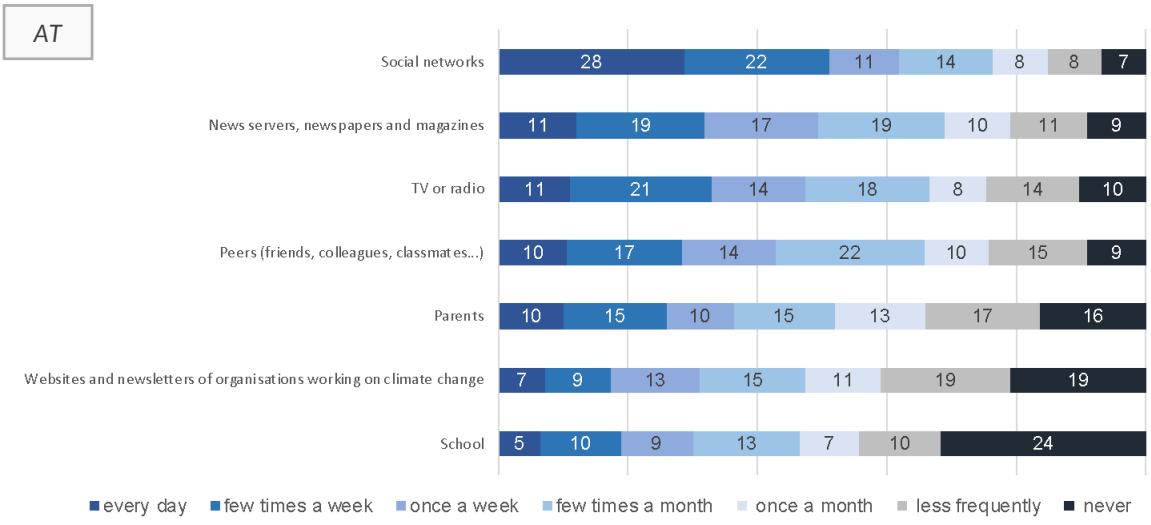


Note: % of those who claimed that they receive information about climate change via specific social media platforms at least once a week or more (only those who said they use social media to get their information about climate change)

The most frequently used sources of information about climate change in **Austria** are social networks; every fourth person gets information about climate change via this channel daily, and little less than a fourth of young people do it a few times a week. 31% of young people use it daily, and 16% use it at least a few times a week. A little less than half of the young population is also reachable using media outlets, like news servers and TV& radio (followed by 47% and 46% at least on a weekly basis). Only then come peers and parents, who play a more significant role in the lives of Austrian young people than their peers from the Czech and Slovak Republic.

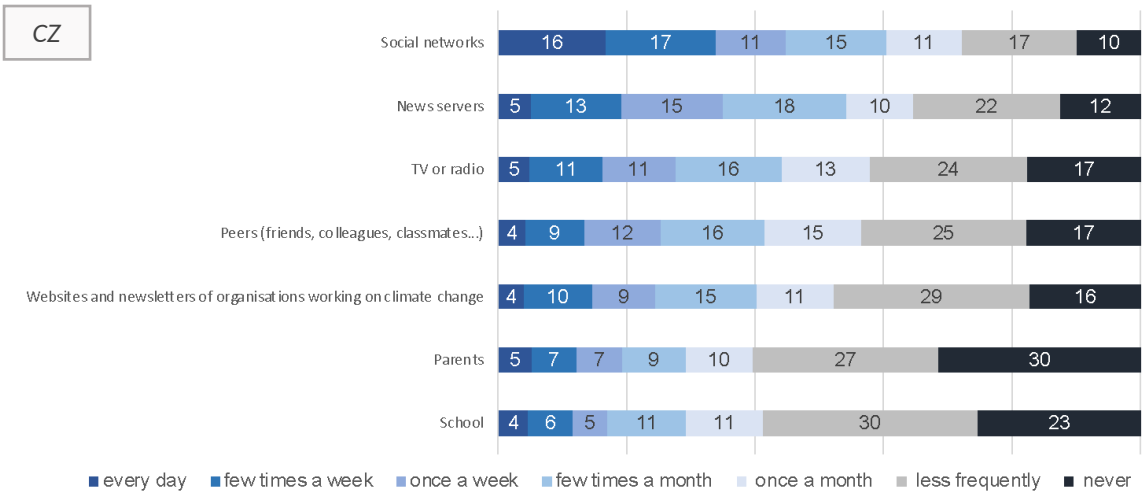
Figure 19: Sources of information about climate change - Austria

AT



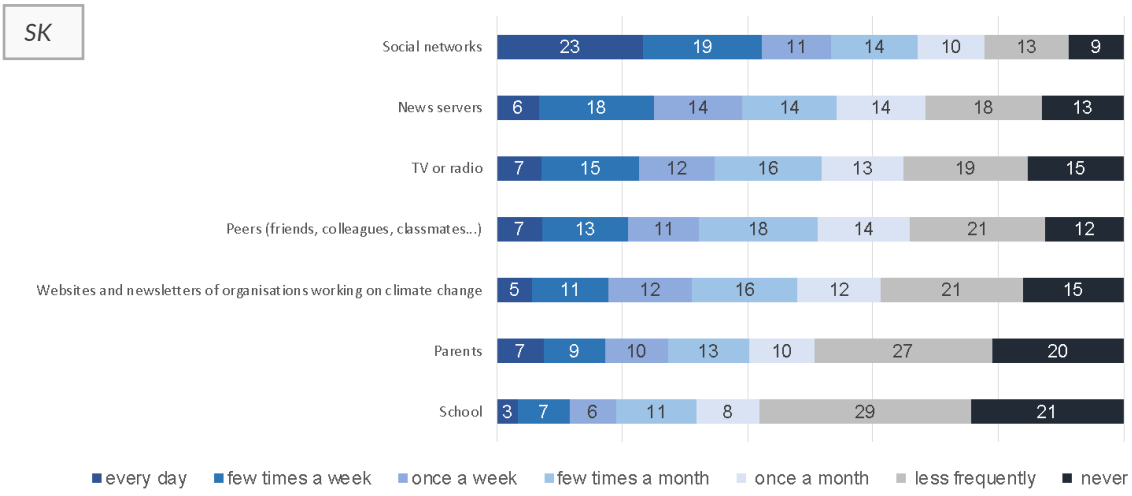
44% of **Czechs** are informed about climate change via social networks at least once a week, and this is the least of all compared countries. Only 16% of young people use Instagram daily to get informed about climate change, and 12% use it a few times a week. Instagram and Facebook have a similar reach: about a third of young people get information through these channels weekly. Other social media platforms are largely marginal. Apart from social media, the next most important source of climate change info are news servers and TV&radio, but only 33% and 27%, respectively, use it at least once a week. The role of parents and school is on a regular, weekly, or even monthly basis rather marginal.

Figure 20: Sources of information about climate change - Czech Republic



Most young **Slovaks** get the most information about climate change via social networks; 23% of young Slovaks draw their climate information this way daily, and 19% a few times a week. Every fourth young Slovak receives information about climate via Instagram and Facebook daily, and roughly about every fifth young person does so using these channels a few times a week. As in the other countries, the second most important source are news servers and TV&radio; 38% and 34% of young people get informed via these channels at least once a week. School plays a minor role in regular weekly updates on climate issues.

Figure 21: Sources of information about climate change - Slovakia



The focus group discussions in all three countries help us contextualize these findings. Firstly the peers play a more important role than the quantitative data would have us believe. Many young people, especially those interested in the topic but could do more, seem to have a peer who supplies them with information, videos and interesting articles and whom they trust and turn for consultation.

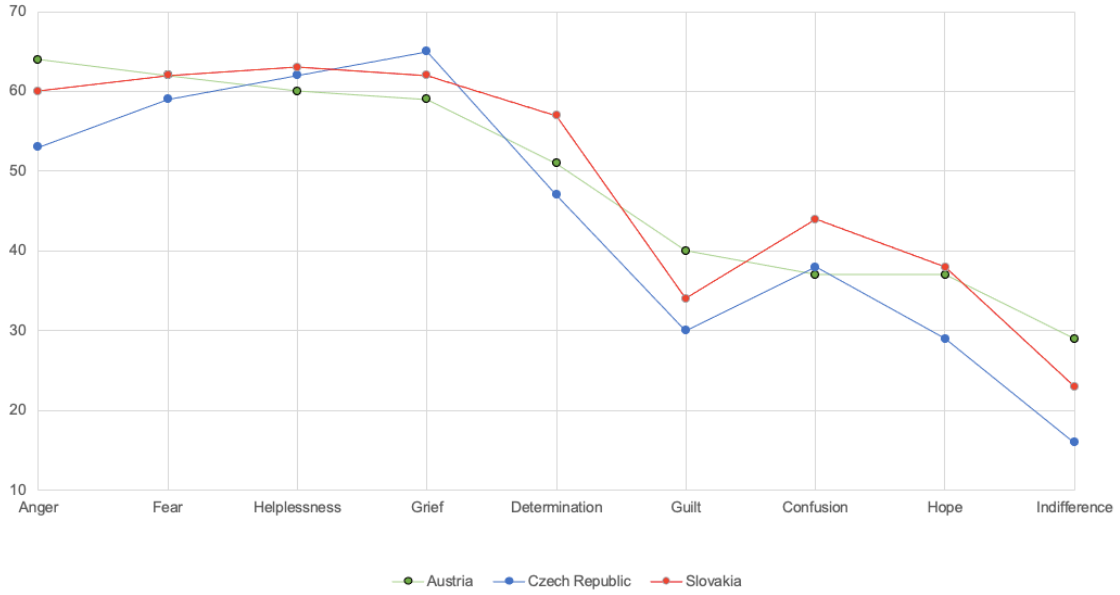
Additionally, the discussions shed light on the role of family and school. From the respondents' stories about how they started, parents and school seem crucial, especially at an early age.

> *"If it was promoted more in primary schools, then those children would perceive it differently, and probably they would be more involved in some organizations, protests, activities in adulthood." (female, SR, university student).*

Emotions

We asked the respondents what emotions thinking about climate change elicits in them and gave them a list of five negative ones, two positive ones and one neutral. As Figure 22 shows, negative feelings such as anger, fear, helplessness, and grief dominate. Whereas Czechs feel foremost grief and helplessness, Austrians feel anger and fear, and about the same share of Slovaks feel all top four emotions about the same. Most young people do not feel indifferent to the subject of climate change, which is positive news.

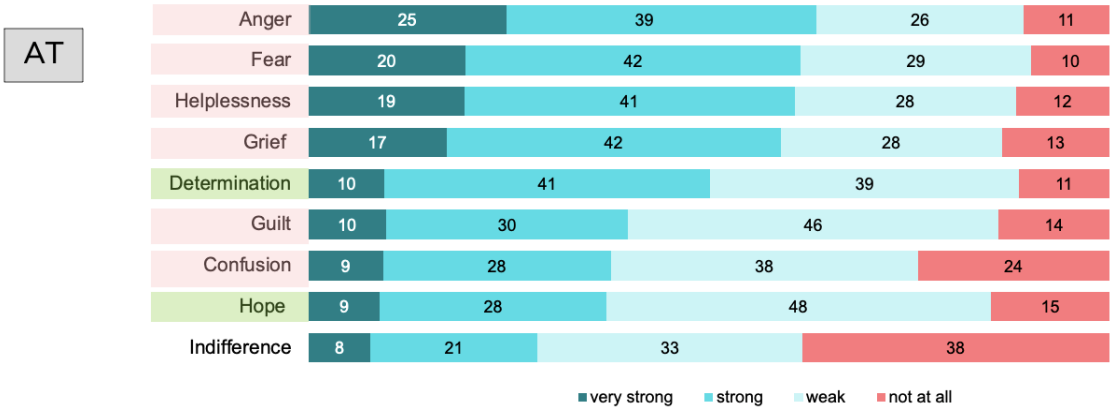
Figure 22: Emotions about climate change - country comparison



Note: % of those who claimed that they feel the following emotions very strongly or strongly

In connection with climate change, young people in Austria feel primarily negative emotions, but determination ranks in the middle. They are most often angry (64%), fearful (62%) and helpless (60%). Little over half of Austrians feel determined about climate change.

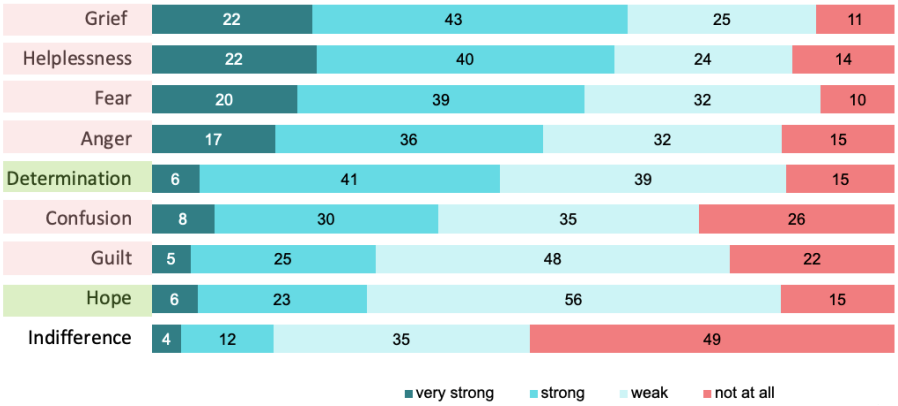
Figure 23: Emotions about climate change - Austria



Climate change elicits predominantly negative emotions also with young Czechs. 59% feel fear, 62% feel helplessness, and 65% feel grief. Only 16% feel indifferent to the subject, which is the least among all countries.

Figure 23: Emotions about climate change – Czech Republic

CZ



Negative emotions prevail in connection with climate change also in Slovakia. However, positive emotions of determination and hope rank in the middle section of the graph. Young Slovaks feel mostly helpless (63%), grieving (62%), and fearful (62%). 57% of young Slovaks feel determined about climate change, and 38% feel hope.

Figure 25: Emotions about climate change - Slovakia.

SK