



YOUTH
ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

This national research report presents the findings of a literature review and an online survey conducted as part of the **YEE-HUB project**, aimed at exploring the attitudes of young entrepreneurs towards ecological practices. The first task of this project focuses on gathering insights into how ecological awareness shapes the actions of young business owners, particularly in relation to their roles as entrepreneurs, consumers, family members, and community participants. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of ecology within these groups.

The diagnosis was carried out in two key stages. Step one involved a detailed analysis of existing research on the attitudes of entrepreneurs—especially millennials and Generation Z—towards ecology. This review provided a foundation for identifying trends and gaps in pro-ecological behaviours among young business leaders.

Step two involved conducting an online survey to collect primary data on the ecological attitudes of young entrepreneurs born between 1990 and 2004. The survey assessed the consistency of their pro-environmental behaviours across different life roles, as well as the key factors enabling or hindering the adoption of sustainable business practices.

The research was conducted across five partner countries: Poland, Turkey, Germany, Italy, and Spain. This report refers to specifically to the research conducted in Poland.

This report consolidates the results of both steps, offering valuable conclusions and recommendations for promoting ecological behaviours among the youngest generation of entrepreneurs. The insights gained will contribute to the selection of character criteria for the ideal eco-entrepreneur.

LITERATURE RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

The field research methodology for this project involved a comprehensive analysis of eight studies or reports on the pro-ecological behaviour of entrepreneurs in the respective country. These reports, published between 2004 and 2024, were reviewed with a focus on correlating national data with broader European and global trends.

The literature review was guided by several key aspects:

- Entrepreneurs' behaviours in the ecological context

- Factors positively or negatively influencing pro-ecological behaviour
- Pro-ecological behaviours as customers and citizens
- The level of knowledge and awareness about the impact of business on the natural environment
- Challenges faced by companies in implementing pro-ecological activities
- Market and legal conditions affecting the adoption of sustainable practices
- Examples of successful pro-ecological activities that led to financial benefits
- Other relevant insights and findings

This approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the current state of pro-ecological entrepreneurship and the identification of key factors supporting or hindering sustainable business practices.

RESULTS

➤ **Entrepreneurs' behaviours in the ecological context**

A theme that appears in many studies of big business (corporations and large companies) is the development of solutions, in the context of the services provided and products manufactured, that are designed to respond to changing ways of caring for the environment. Among other things, this includes attention to the carbon footprint of a service or product, measured from its creation, through its operation and disposal. It is also worth emphasising the emergence of non-economic factors in the context of business performance evaluation. We are talking here about ESG, which has also given rise to new products and support procedures in the financial industry. We can say, repeating the position of the European Commission, that the financial industry will play a key role in the ecological transformation of the entire European economy.

An example we can cite here is the granting of a loan of several billion euros by one bank on the basis of its assessment under the ESG criteria. In addition, the bank, in pursuit of a long-term strategy of supporting pro-environmental measures and the real transformation of the client's business, based the interest rate on the commitment taken out, on the annual verification of non-financial indicators. In practice, this means that the customer must maintain a high ESG rating in order to pay fixed low repayments, thus genuinely caring for the environment.

The environmental measures most frequently cited by company employees, i.e. those closest to the day-to-day running of the organisation, are segregating rubbish (53%) and replacing lighting with energy-efficient lighting (43%). A

challenge is that companies hardly communicate their environmental activities to a wider audience. The analysis of the collected data showed that only 3% of the content published in social media by entrepreneurs, relates to their environmental support activities. Here, the leaders are the automotive, packaging production and energy and fuels industries.

When looking at small companies (micro, small and medium-sized), it is worth emphasising that the main reason for their establishment - from the founders' point of view - is to gain financial independence and the freedom to make decisions and implement their ideas independently. The factor indicated most often as the one of least importance for running a business and its development was pro-ecological activities. Bearing in mind the factors influencing the development of entrepreneurship and the challenges of running a business, which will be discussed in the next section, it is possible to accept the hypothesis that missional for business founders is far less important than financial factors, which are expected to translate into a change in their professional and social status and how they will think of themselves.

➤ **Factors positively or negatively influencing pro-ecological behaviour**

The declaration of the European Commission in the context of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 determines to a large extent the introduction of further regulations, legislation and, consequently, requirements and regulations for their implementation. The scope of their action is expanding in parallel, affecting small areas of business such as the creation of environmental declarations, as well as a global shift in thinking about what a carbon footprint is and putting these reflections into action through the practical implementation of eco-design as a pillar of building a circular economy.

Regulations stemming from the above have both very positive and negative impacts on businesses. An example of the former is sending a clear signal to companies of the coming change and inspiring them on how to be a leader in its implementation. At the opposite end of this continuum are the increasing costs of the day-to-day running of organisations, unclear or contradictory internal regulations of individual countries, and increasingly difficult access to finance - especially for heavy industry companies, for which the requirements placed upon them are almost impossible or too costly to implement. The European Commission professes to be aware of these factors and constraints - e.g. in the area of the lack of technology that would be more environmentally friendly and allow the manufacture of products with similar parameters (strength, elasticity, precision, quantity, reliability, etc.). At the same time, acting with considerable inertia, it sometimes takes months to design new solutions and push them through legislation. This fact makes the practical implementation of environmental measures in many large organisations much more difficult.

When approaching the issue of implementing changes in behaviour and habits to more eco-friendly ones, we could say that awareness is key. In other words, concrete knowledge of the need to take care of the environment, the consequences of failing to do so and, of course, the benefits of making decisions in a way that takes care of the environment.

According to research, the probability of experiencing flash floods, heat waves, droughts, fires and crop failures is 2 to 7 times higher for people born in 2020 than for their grandparents, i.e. people born between 1950 and 1970. We are therefore talking about less than eight decades. Does this awareness have any significant impact on actual behavioural change in terms of implementing environmental measures? More about this in one of the following sections.

The main factor indicated by entrepreneurs as the reason for taking pro-environmental measures is the desire to achieve savings (mainly in terms of the amount of energy consumed or additional waste management charges). Second place, according to the number of indications, is taken by the need to comply with new regulations. We can therefore conclude that their implementation is necessary, as without them businesses would take even less action to care for the environment.

A modern approach to the effective implementation of pro-climate policy is to extend the traditional methods described above (legislation, shared responsibility for the planet), with communication focused on those areas of operation that are important to both entrepreneurs and citizens. Top of the list are energy security, energy costs, health and cost of living in general. Highlighting the relationship between caring for the environment and whether we will have access to energy, how much we will pay for it, and whether we and our relatives will be able to enjoy health and well-being, is pointed out by the authors of the research as the right direction in changing communication as such, but also the whole narrative related to the promotion of ecology. Speaking the language of business-to-business, marketing communication, this will be a change of language to H2H or human-to-human, which is expected to be much more engaging for the audience and thus increase the effectiveness of such a message as more persuasive.

➤ **Pro-ecological behaviours as customers and citizens**

Surveys unequivocally show that citizens expect companies to be responsible in implementing environmentally friendly measures. 60% of Poles and as many as 69% of global respondents believe so. In addition, 50% of respondents declare that they are able to pay more for products that have a positive social and environmental impact. However, in the context of the rather poor communication of companies in this regard and the widespread phenomenon of green-washing, it is difficult to expect this to be an actual motivator for companies to take a real interest in greening their business.

The above figures stand in surprising opposition to other results. They concern actual customer behavior, not their declarations. Well, they show that 61% of consumers can't afford more expensive pro-environmental products, 49% don't believe that green measures are effective. Exactly the same percentage of citizens are not ready to completely abandon convenient solutions in favor of greener ones. The seriousness of these data is added by the last result - 40% of consumers are tired of the omnipresence of the topic of taking care of ecology.

Further data on specific behaviors indicate that we are pro-environmental mainly when it pays off for us, when such actions or decisions are forced upon us or when it is convenient for us. These statistics indicate that:

- 83% of people turn off lights and switch off unused appliances when leaving home
- 84% segregate trash
- 78% buy groceries more thoughtfully to avoid wasting them
- 33% buy more expensive products if they are better for the environment

An important aspect here is also the question of attitudes, towards whether ecology is fashionable and its “practice” can translate into personal benefits. People who declare in surveys that they care about a positive image make their pro-environmental decisions contingent on whether their undertaking or implementation is accompanied by the possibility of receiving praise, appreciation or recognition in the environment. Both in the real world and on social media.

The conclusion of the analysis is the discrepancy between the declarations and the actual actions of Poles in the field of ecology. The support for pro-environmental initiatives expressed in the surveys, as well as expectations towards manufacturers and service providers, do not translate into actual purchasing decisions or pro-environmental behavior. This is confirmed by the case study analysis of IT equipment purchases. As many as 83% of respondents said they would take environmental factors into account when making a purchasing decision, and 37% were willing to pay more for it. Ultimately, only 15% of them took such action.

- **The level of knowledge and awareness about the impact of business on the natural environment**

Data analysis in this area again seems very interesting. Well, at the level of the boards of directors of large companies and corporations, there is widespread knowledge and awareness of the impact of business on the environment and the resulting need to act responsibly and make decisions with an eye on the long term.

Encouragingly, this stance is being taken by board representatives of organizations from a wide variety of industries. From logistics and courier and postal services, to beverage manufacturers, and banks, to mining and furniture companies. But is the approach of top management fully effectively cascaded to directors and lower-level managers? Does it reach employees at all?

As a result of the growing need to meet the legal changes implemented by the European Commission as part of the European Green Deal, ventures and initiatives are being created to broadly support organizations, and especially their managements, in dealing effectively (primarily for business) with the new regulations. Examples of such activities include the establishment in the NGO sector of organizations focusing on the ESG area - including the Polish ESG Association, the ESG Institute (as part of the activities of the X.B.W. Ignacy Krasicki Foundation) and the ESG Impact Network Association, or the Climate Leadership initiative established in 2023.

The data published in the report on the attitudes of managers outside the company's boards of directors, while holding senior positions in the structure, seem to go some way to answering the question posed a few paragraphs earlier. Well, they show that only 38% of these managers are convinced that the implementation of modern technologies in office buildings will positively affect green change. Reporting on non-financial ESG factors has even fewer supporters (26%), while calculating an organization's carbon footprint is important to only 24% of managers. In this situation, it is difficult to expect employees themselves to be of a different opinion, since their immediate superiors declare the beliefs indicated above.

The declarativeness in terms of environmental awareness is also confirmed by the data on attitudes toward the costs of the climate transition. Well, when asked about the negative impact of this process on the economy and, consequently, on their incomes, the majority of respondents expressed awareness of the threat of such consequences and, at the same time, stressed that they were ready to bear them. Discrepancies in the understanding of what these consequences are actually supposed to be divide supporters of the changes, as will be described in the next section of this summary.

As a good sign in terms of awareness, one can consider the statistic that 78% of citizens consider it appropriate to invest public funds in renewable energy sources. Unfortunately, when asked about priorities for government action, only 14% indicated ecology as the most important. At the same time, the same survey indicates 56% support that the topic of taking care of the climate should be addressed immediately. This raises the questions: who should do it? On whom should this responsibility rest, if not on those in power? In this aspect, the analyzed data reveals a lack of consistency in respondents' attitudes.

There is a fairly popular position among citizens that the countries most responsible for causing the climate catastrophe should shoulder the greatest burden of corrective action. Since China and the US are indicated here, additionally, the bearing of costs by Europeans seems far from justified. In this context, the European Commission's attitude and restrictive regulations are interpreted as a blatant injustice. It is further exacerbated by the fear that the costs of governments and corporations will be passed on, in the form of increased tax burdens and increased prices for products and services, directly to citizens. Such a line of thinking can hardly be denied logic. Awareness of the described state of affairs should therefore be the basis for legislators to formulate laws in such a way as to minimize the actual costs borne by citizens.

➤ **Challenges faced by companies in implementing pro-ecological activities**

The diversity of industries, and within them a wide range of different business profiles, creates a huge challenge in terms of simultaneous harmonization of regulations and their adaptation to the specific functioning of each economic sector.

Here we can also find the source of many of the challenges faced by entrepreneurs. In the context of the presence of ESG itself, we can mention:

- difficulties in integrating ESG issues with business objectives,
- lack of common ESG standards in the industry or too many standards,
- too much emphasis on external evaluators (such an audit is a big investment).

Global organizations, by virtue of their reach and scope, include sustainability goals in their business plans. At the same time, smaller organizations, which do not have the capacity to lobby their interests so strongly, face challenges in matching the requirements of legislation, sometimes requiring contradictory or unclear actions.

Companies in the mining and manufacturing industries, face two main constraints. The first is access to technology - current solutions often do not allow the implementation of measures expected by the European Commission. The second is financing. The implementation of state-of-the-art technologies allowing to realize the assumptions of a closed-loop economy requires resources that these companies do not have, or for which incurring such liabilities, due to the distant prospect of return on the investments made, is a solution that strongly threatens their business viability. To put it another way - in order to implement the change, these companies would have to borrow heavily, and the burden of having to service their financial obligations could lead first to their loss of liquidity, then their ability to compete effectively with their competitors, and ultimately to bankruptcy. No sensible entrepreneur would want to take such a risk without a guarantee of support from European Union mechanisms. Evidence of the difficulty of practical implementation of technological change is the fact that currently only 12% of raw materials used in industry are recycled.

Implementation of the **Paris Agreement** is more difficult than it seemed before. Well, currently as many as 41 of the 42 sustainability indicators stand in the face of failure, and 30 of them are completely off the scale. The data quoted earlier (12% share of recycled raw materials in production) and the above results clearly indicate that we still have a lot to do, and that the measures we are taking are moving too slowly towards our goal. When asked about this aspect, Poles express far-reaching disappointment. 50% of respondents stated that the actions taken by the European Commission do more harm than good, and 16% took the firm position that environmental degradation at the present time is an irreversible process and nothing more will be done about it. These figures sound very pessimistic, and precisely for this reason they should be a reason for us to implement measures that make a real difference - from legislation, to communication, and actual support for organizations in implementing changes.

Among the challenges identified in the survey, in addition to the technological and financial areas, are:

- high decision-making inertia, especially in very large companies and corporations.
- the need to change employee attitudes - implementing new habits and ways of doing things,
- introduction of new systems - such as supplier selection or carbon footprint calculation and monitoring,
- training employees to implement pro-environmental procedures.

We can also measure the effectiveness of pro-environmental management of raw materials and production processes based on an indicator expressed by the date from which, as a country, we have already consumed natural resources for 12 mths (only this amount can be regenerated by the planet) and are drawing them at the expense of future generations or poor countries. In 2023, it was 02.05 for Poland. This means that for the next 8 months (2/3 of the year) we are draining the environment, which has no chance to regenerate.

In the perception of a large part of citizens and entrepreneurs, the implementation of pro-environmental regulations will initially bring a lot of negative economic effects, which may result in the deterioration of their professional situation, as well as the collapse of many companies.

- increase in energy prices - 34%
- increase in prices of food products - 29%
- difficulties in the agriculture and forestry sector - 28%

The survey shows that 79% of employees indicate their companies as those where green measures are taken. At the same time, only 26% of employees, indicate that their organizations want to be truly green, as this is in the area of company values.

A very important issue here is the question of proper understanding of concepts and what is and what is not a department of

➤ **Market and legal conditions affecting the adoption of sustainable practices**

An analysis of the available data indicates that despite the emergence of regulations and practices that support the implementation of pro-environmental measures, we can still speak of the predominance of those elements that underlie the challenges and difficulties. This is primarily because there is a significant discrepancy between the attitudes of management and employees located in lower parts of the company structure. In addition, ambiguities related to the interpretation of regulations and their legitimacy complicate the process of engaging citizens, consumers and businesses in taking real action to protect the environment. All this is compounded by unfair marketing practices that deliberately mislead customers, thereby building their distrust of pro-environmental communication in general.

In the context of regulatory implementation, we can talk about such factors hindering the implementation of pro-environmental measures (such as decarbonization) as:

- lack of government support through relevant regulations, tax exemptions, subsidies, etc,
- the need to rebuild infrastructure at one's own expense,
- the rapid growth of regulations, which, by trying to fit them into local (national) regulations, appear not to be unified,
- lack of appropriate technological solutions to continue the existing business profile (e.g., steel or concrete production), which would be greener.

Supportive, on the other hand, are, e.g. through measures reducing practices from the green-washing category, the following legal acts:

European Union Taxonomy - a common language for green investments Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 18, 2020 on establishing a framework to facilitate sustainable investments. This is a tool to facilitate investment decisions by companies and investors for more sustainable economic activities. The mechanism is intended to provide uniform criteria for determining whether an economic activity is “environmentally sustainable.”

Reporting in Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR). The SFDR regulation targets the financial institution sector, which is charged with providing detailed information on the sustainable products offered, both in documentation provided to customers, cyclical reports and relevant websites.

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). The CSRD aims to ensure compliance with other EU sustainable finance initiatives, in particular the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) and the Taxonomy Regulation. It is intended to simplify reporting requirements and ensure that companies required to report present reliable and comparable information.

A market challenge is the aforementioned narrative adopted in persuading people to implement environmentally friendly behavior. Currently, the main emphasis in this communication is on the need to comply with the provisions of the so-called European Green Deal.

As any form, even a small one, of coercion is perceived very negatively in Poland. As a society, we do not like to have someone else's will imposed on us. This attitude has its justification in our history. Well, coercion is associated with foreign rule (123 years of partition and absence from the maps of the world) and the strong influence of foreign governments (44 years of Russian

military presence in Poland and membership in the Warsaw Pact bringing together countries from the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The repercussions of these experiences are still felt in many aspects of life today.

Thus, such a narrative will not be conducive to a positive perception of the promotion of pro-environmental initiatives, much less the need to bear the costs associated with their implementation.

Factors positively influencing the introduction of greater attentiveness to how companies produce, use and process products:

- The implementation of the Environmental **Product Declaration (EPD)** in some European countries - the 2021 EY and ING report called this approach eco-design;
 - The impact of EPD implementation in other countries indirectly affects companies in Poland - they have to prepare these declarations when establishing or extending cooperation with Western business partners;
 - Implementation of certification of the quality of buildings in terms of their environmental impact and preparation for comfortable use, including by neuroatypical people (Breeam, Leed, DGNB, Well, Fitwel), as part of conscious management of neurodiversity;
 - Growing awareness in the design of buildings and entire cities with attention to ecology - creating ecological channels, understanding the phenomenon of ***thermal stress*** against plants, taking into account the impact of scant snow cover during winters, on the deeper penetration of cold into the ground and the impact of this phenomenon on the degradation of building foundations, etc;
- **Examples of successful pro-ecological activities that led to financial benefits**

The source of good practices is primarily the so-called big business. It was corporations, especially from the finance and insurance sector, that were the first to be covered by the new regulations. This was done to maximize the impact of new legal acts on the economy. In order to develop, organizations use financial instruments. Basing the conditions for their acquisition and service costs on the ESG rating of these companies resulted in an almost immediate translation of the effects of implementing regulations intended to support a sustainable economy into the activities of many sectors of the

economy. The European Commission used the leverage mechanism in this aspect to significantly increase the scope of its impact.

Here are examples of practical implementation of these mechanisms:

1. Dutch Philips, to which a consortium of 16 banks granted a loan for EUR 1 billion, and its costs were based on the results of the Sustainalytics rating.
2. Credit Agricole Bank provided financing to the energy company Enel based on the ESG rating it obtained.
3. Introduction of green bonds, which can only be used for investment in the implementation of environmental protection goals. The first Polish company to issue such bonds is PKN Orlen. Their total value is EUR 500 million. As many as 180 investors from 26 countries applied before their issue.

Among the good practices, we can also point out the following activities:

Bank BNP Paribas builds competences and commitment of employees by creating:

- Sustainable Development Area - formal structure
- Sustainability Council - informal structure. It consists of 22 people representing key areas and business lines of the bank and over 250 Sustainability Officers - employees of the bank who promote a culture based on sustainable development in their teams and take into account ESG factors, related trends and regulations in their daily work. They completed the ESG Academy prepared especially for this purpose - a seven-month comprehensive educational program with the participation of experts from the bank's partner organizations

ElektroEko works for the development of a zero-emission economy.

- building its own network for collecting used electrical and electronic equipment, accessible and convenient for residents, while cooperating with processing plants throughout Poland – effect: collection of 1.5 million tons of electronic waste, which constitutes over 40% of the total mass collected in Poland in the years 2006-2022.

Intensive eco-education, which raised awareness of electronic waste from 40% in 2019 to as much as 75% in 2023.

Data on smaller entrepreneurs only speak of activities focused on achieving positive economic effects. Therefore, they undertake activities related to waste segregation and proper implementation of waste management policy (to avoid the need to pay fines), replace lighting with energy-saving ones, implement water and energy saving procedures – promoting turning off taps, replacing washbasin faucets and soap dispensers with electrical controls, promoting turning off lights or installing motion-sensitive controllers (in order to achieve savings). There are also practices such as replacing paper towel dispensers with dryers or machines that allow the use of a cotton towel, the roll of which is subject to replacement and disinfection, so it is reusable. However, there is a lack of clear data on the actual savings - to what extent the cost of electricity used by a hand dryer (obtained in Poland mostly from fossil fuels) is lower and more ecological than using paper towels. The use of towels certainly generates a waste stream in the form of used sheets and garbage bags, in which they are collected.

➤ Other relevant insights and findings

Cross-sectional analysis of materials allowed us to obtain additional and important in the context of positive impact on shaping pro-ecological attitudes.

- The awareness of Poles in understanding the concept of greenwashing is growing (an increase of 6 percentage points). Currently, it is 35% of the population.
- Poles are increasingly vigilant against eco-scams. We notice it most in social media messages from food brands - also 35%.
- We are tired of promoting ecology in product advertisements.
 - The number of support for all 5 factors positively describing advertisements referring to ecology has decreased
 - Support for 4 out of 5 factors negatively assessing advertisements referring to the economy has increased (including more and more people do not believe their content - 34% and consider them irritating - 15% increase from 7%. For 10%, they are a reason to discourage buying the advertised product).
- Family and health are still the most important values for Poles. They were indicated by 68% and 72% of respondents, respectively.
- Environmental protection is important to 31%, ecology to 24%, and sustainable development to 19%, respectively.

- Comfort and convenience of life were placed above ecology and sustainable development - 29%
- The development of eco-awareness may be heralded by high results in categories such as:
 - Social justice (ESG factor) - 31%
 - Knowledge, education - 36%
 - Justice - 49%
 - Safety - 57%

Poles consider organic food to be better and worth buying:

- Organic food is healthier than regular food - 63%
- By eating organic food, we support local agricultural producers - 62%

The expectations of Poles in terms of implementing pro-ecological changes focus on aspects related to an agreement between politicians beyond divisions and ending the long-term battle of the warring parties. The data clearly indicate that eco-attitude is not popular among young entrepreneurs, and the main focus of business development is on profits and maintaining financial liquidity, which in turn gives a sense of freedom and the possibility of self-determination.

ONLINE SURVEY

METHODOLOGY

The environmental attitude survey was conducted among young entrepreneurs born between 1990 and 2004. This anonymous survey was designed to gather insights into their attitudes toward climate change, its impact and the ecological actions undertaken.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections:

1. Respondent Profile
2. Business Data
3. Personal Shopping Preferences
4. Citizenship Behaviour
5. Knowledge & Learning Preferences

The survey consisted of 35 open and closed questions, providing both qualitative and quantitative data on the respondents' environmental attitudes and behaviours of young people.

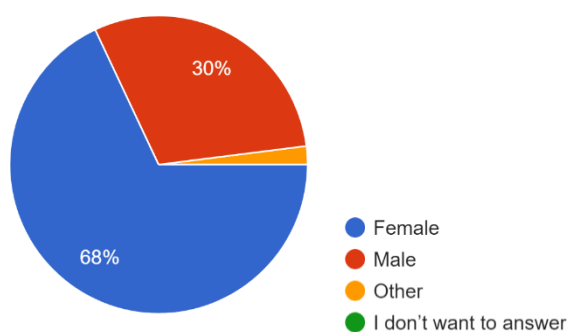
The online survey in Poland was conducted between 01.10.2024 and 23.10.2024, with a total of 50 participants. The data collected were analysed collectively.

RESULTS

A. RESPONDENT PROFILE

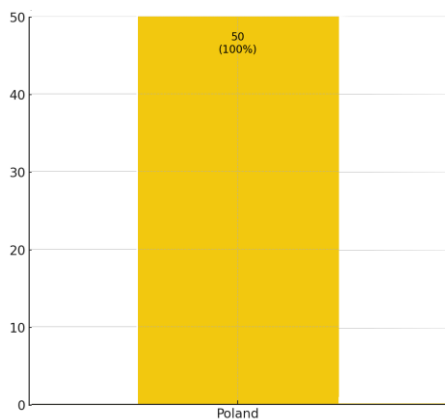
Gender

50 responses



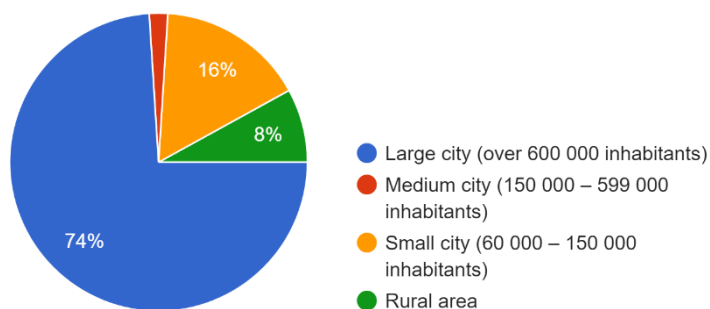
Nationality

50 responses



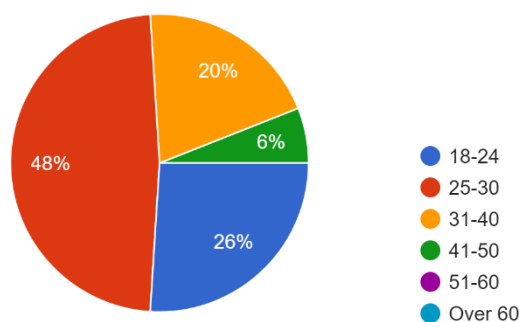
Place of residence

50 responses



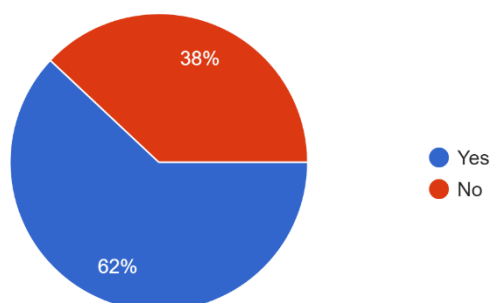
Age

50 responses



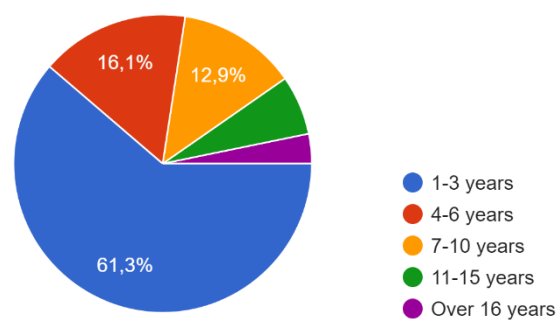
I have run my own business (I have been self-employed)

50 responses



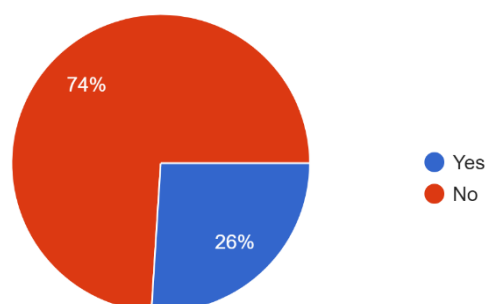
(if you answered 'yes' to the previous question) How long have you been self-employed?

31 responses



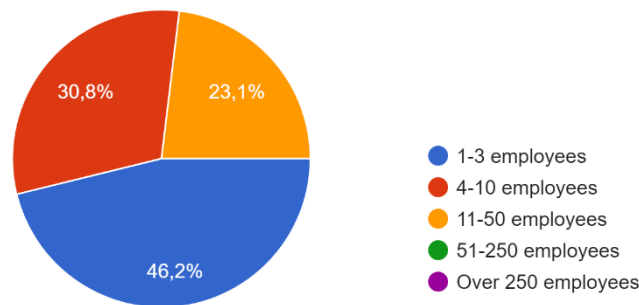
I employ staff

50 responses



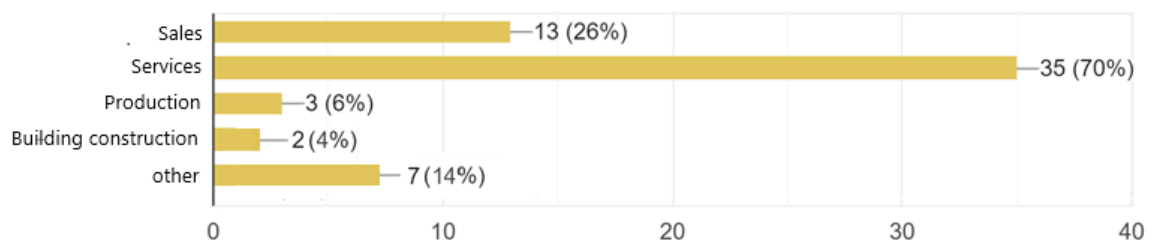
(if you answered 'yes' to the previous question) How many employees do you have?

13 responses



What is the profile of your business?

50 responses



B. BUSINESS DATA

1. What is your competitive advantage? Why do your clients buy from you and not your competitors?

You can select up to 3 answers.

50 responses

- I offer a lower price - **8 responses (16%)**
- **I offer higher quality - 19 responses (38%)**
- I offer quicker delivery - **3 responses (6%)**
- **I guarantee a better quality of service - 21 responses (42%)**
- I use environmentally friendly materials - **3 responses (6%)**
- My company cares about sustainability - **9 responses (18%)**
- I offer better value for money - **8 responses (16%)**
- Our suppliers are exclusively companies that operate ecologically - **1 response (2%)**
- My company guarantees after-sales service - **7 responses (14%)**
- **I have unique services/products - 17 responses (34%)**
- I am more flexible than my competitors - **16 responses (32%)**
- I have a personal relationship with my clients - **24 responses (48%)**
- My company has a stronger reputation than its competitors. - **8 responses (16%)**
- I have a personal brand that is more recognisable than my company - **9 responses (18%)**
- Other - **3 responses (6%)**

2. When planning your business activities, what do you intend to invest in over the next 6 months?

You can select up to 3 answers.

50 responses

- **Advertising/promotion – 23 responses (46%)**
- **New products/services – 20 responses (40%)**
- **Innovative solutions to improve your business operations – 18 responses (36%)**
- Activities related to the materials management considering their quality, durability (lifespan), and safety of raw materials from which they are made – **3 responses (6%)**
- Implementing solutions to reduce the amount of waste generated – **5 responses (10%)**
- Implementing water-saving solutions - **5 responses (10%)**
- Implementing energy-saving solutions - **7 responses (14%)**
- Actions to support your and your employees' well-being (health status, mental and physical fitness, satisfaction levels, and work-life balance) - **14 responses (32%)**
- Purchase of new equipment (computers, machinery, cars, etc.) - **13 responses (26%)**
- Don't know yet – **2 responses (4%)**
- I am not going to invest – **3 responses (6%)**
- Other: - **5 responses (10%)**
 - Invest in the refurbishment of an office to work in and premises to host the first clients
 - Improving personal competencies through studies
 - adjusting positions and tasks to individual employees' predispositions, taking into account their preferred communication styles

3. How do you select service/technology/solution/product suppliers for your business? Choose 3 determining factors:

50 responses

- Good reviews of the supplier on the internet – **12 responses (24%)**
- Personal relationship with the supplier- **11 responses (26%)**
- Lowest price - **10 responses (20%)**
- **Recommendation from a person you trust - 19 responses (38%)**
- Attractive price of the service/product - **18 responses (36%)**
- **Quality of the service/product offered by the provider - 24 responses (48%)**
- **Flexibility in cooperation - 22 responses (44%)**
- Convenient forms of financing the purchase (deferred payment, credit, etc.) - **9 responses (18%)**
- Environmental care and sustainability in supplier operations - **4 responses (8%)**
- Parameter compliance of purchased services/products with environmental guidelines for my industry - **6 responses (12%)**
- Length of time the company has been on the market (credibility through experience) - **11 responses (22%)**
- Other - **4 responses (8%)**

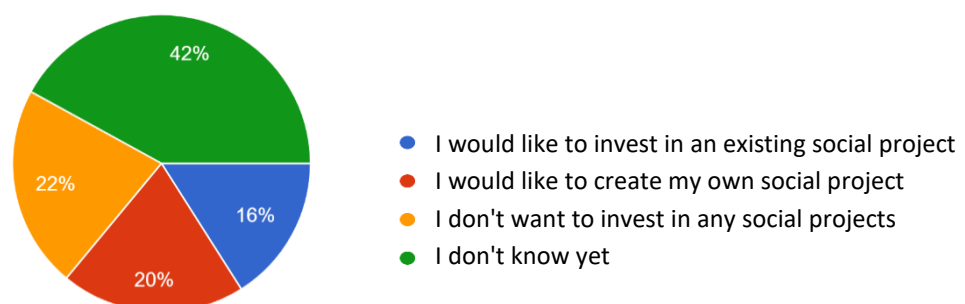
4. What pro-social or pro-environmental action undertaken by you so far are you most proud of?

30 responses

- None – **9 responses**
- Replacement of ordinary light bulbs with energy-saving bulbs and installation of motion detectors
- Joint neighbourhood cleaning project
- Pro-social, supporting education of young people e.g. through Tell a Story for schools programme
- Reduce detergents
- Activating the company to develop the communication area within the project teams
- Not wasting energy and segregating film and waste paper packaging
- Introducing training in the company on green Kazien to improve by eliminating waste and trash
- Reducing the company's carbon footprint
- Helping a person in need
- supporting local minorities in learning the Polish language
- I cooperate with NGOs
- I rely on locally-produced products
- Pro bono support
- I work in an online environment so I save on fixed assets and transport.
- I separate waste at work and at home, collecting donations for the local animal shelter
- Youtube channel providing programming knowledge for free.
- educational and cultural activities
- From promoting the environmental ballad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uag253gMpS4>
- Developing and learning to be a specialist
- Less plastic consumption, waste segregation
- Reducing car use

5. Would you like to invest in an existing social project? Or would you like to create your own social project to make your company's resources more efficient and useful?

50 responses



6. When after establishing your business would you consider investing in social projects?

50 responses

- Since the beginning - **8 responses (16%)**
- **When I achieve financial freedom and have the resources to invest in non-business projects - 10 responses (20%)**
- When regulations will oblige me to do so - **0 responses (0%)**
- When my clients will start to expect it - **2 responses (4%)**
- When I come across a project that will also support my business - **8 responses (16%)**
- When I come across a project that is in line with my values and beliefs. - **7 responses (14%)**
- When I pay off loans, leases and debts - **4 responses (8%)**
- I don't know when. - **5 responses (10%)**
- I am not going to invest in social projects.- **5 responses (10%)**
- Other – **1 response (2%)**

7. What kind of social projects does your company invest in? *You can select up to 3 answers.*

50 responses

- **Dedicated to children - 14 responses (28%)**
- **Dedicated to people in need - 16 responses (32%)**
- Dedicated to animals – **11 responses (22%)**
- Dedicated to culture - **12 responses (24%)**
- **Dedicated to ecology - 15 responses (30%)**
- Other - **4 responses (8%)**
- My company does not invest in social projects - **9 responses (18%)**

8. What environmental regulations do you know that apply to your business?

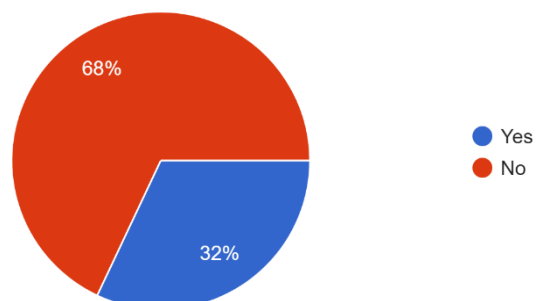
50 responses

Summary of answers:

- Don't know/no regulations apply - **16 responses**
- BDO (Waste Database) - **3 responses**
- Waste management law - **3 responses**
- Recycling regulations - **3 responses**
- Energy and water saving practices - **5 responses**
- ISO Standards - **2 responses**
- EU regulations - **3 responses**
- Environmental Protection Act - **2 responses**
- CO2 emission reduction regulations - **2 responses**
- Other specific regulations - **7 responses:**
 - 'ESG reporting and BREEAM certification'
 - 'Regulations on greenwashing and ethical advertising'
 - 'Photovoltaics'
 - 'Ecological lubricant for track maintenance'
 - 'Project for tariffs on products from China'
 - 'Union project on sustainability reporting for small companies'
 - 'Gas emissions regulations'

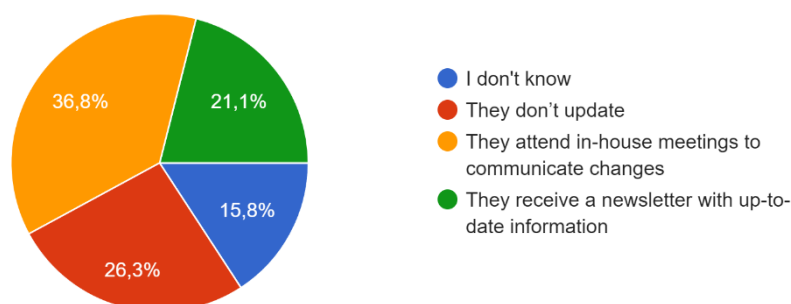
9. Do you have an eco-strategy at your company? Do you have regulations specifying how the company cares for the environment?

50 responses



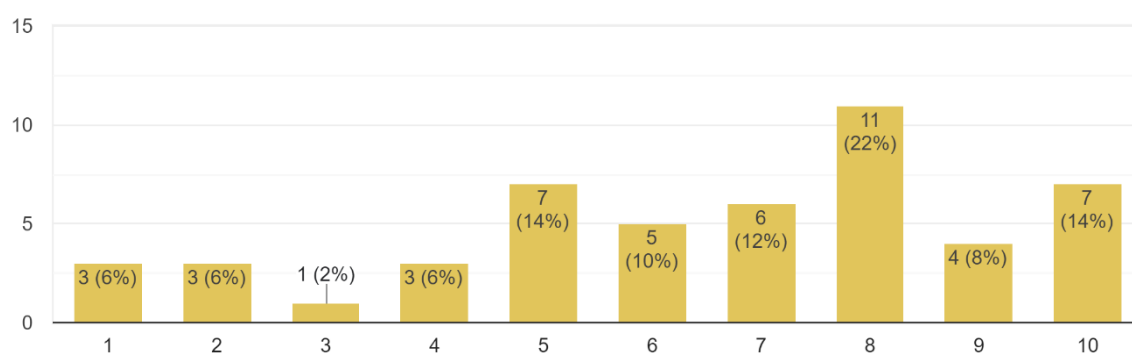
10. (if you answered 'yes' to the previous question). How do your employees update their knowledge of the strategy

19 responses



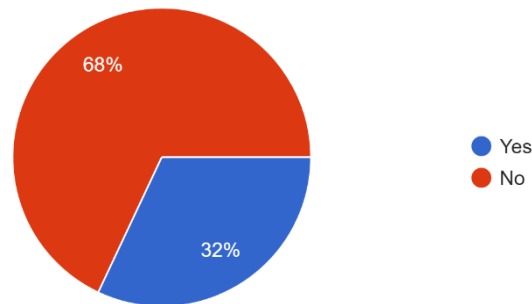
11. Determine on the scale below, to what extent you care about the positive impact on the environment in your company. (1- I don't care, 10 - I care a lot)

50 Responses



12. Does your company communicate to its customers that it operates in an environmentally friendly way?

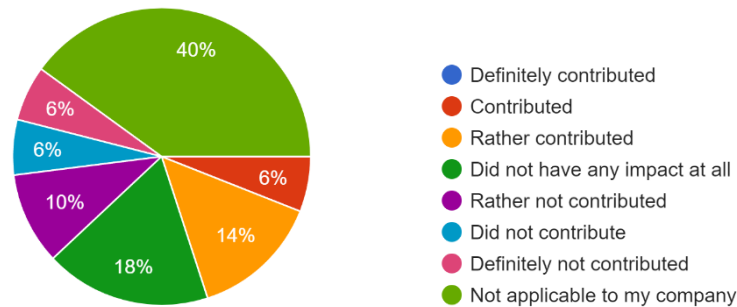
50 responses



13. To what extent has the implementation of eco-friendly activities contributed to your company's profits?

You can select only one answer.

50 responses



14. Select those environmentally friendly actions you take as a company. - Select 3 actions that you focus on the most.

50 Responses

- **We reduce the use of water - e.g. turn off taps, and use reusable bottles. - 24 responses (48%)**
- **We reduce energy consumption - e.g. turn off lights when leaving rooms, use energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances - 25 responses (50%)**
- We reduce the amount of waste generated - **17 responses (34%)**
- We implemented an electronic document workflow - **17 responses (34%)**
- We limit the number of printouts - **18 responses (36%)**
- We send all customer documents electronically - **16 responses (32%)**
- We use reusable packaging – **8 responses (16%)**
- We buy from suppliers that provide easily recyclable packaging - **5 responses (10%)**
- **We segregate our rubbish - 22 responses (44%)**
- We use green transport for the company - **3 responses (6%)**
- When buying company equipment, we consider whether it has been produced in an eco-friendly way- **3 responses (6%)**
- We do not carry out environmentally friendly activities -**7 responses (14%)**
- **Other - 5 responses (10%):**
 - We use packet filling (e.g. cling film) for our single brand business cards as well as other materials such as toilet paper rolls, egg cartons

- As an online service company, I do not produce waste. I take the power consumption of components into account when purchasing computer equipment.
- We only use vegan products
- Global innovation in R&D and the replacement of materials that have been used for decades with 'eco' materials
- I do not run a business

15. In order to implement additional eco-friendly actions, my company needs... *Select up to 2 answers from the list below.*

50 Responses

- More time - **10 responses (20%)**
- **Grants, subsidies, and refunds for such implementation** - **20 responses (40%)**
- Clear customer expectations in this area - **11 responses (22%)**
- Legislation obliging my company to do so - **2 responses (4%)**
- **Greater financial profitability of implementing such a change** - **10 responses (20%)**
- I don't need anything else - I am happy with the eco-friendly activities I have implemented in my company. **7 responses (14%)**
- I don't know what could help make my company more eco-friendly - **12 responses (24%)**
- **Other - 4 responses (8%):**
 - Nothing, we operate very well and we are aware of the things that have the greatest environmental impact. We don't do greenwashing or focus on things that have seemingly high value but actually minimal value.
 - I do not intend to implement
 - I do not run a business
 - This does not apply to me

16. To what extent do you think the environmental activities of entrepreneurs like you can make a real difference to the environment and reduce negative ecological changes, such as the greenhouse effect, pollution of the planet, overconsumption of natural resources, etc.?

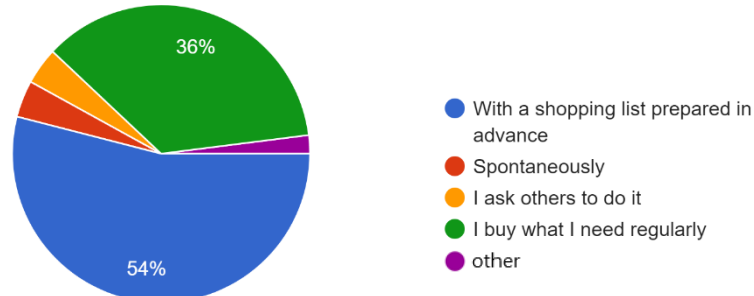
50 Responses

- Definitely, they can make a difference to the environment - **8 responses (16%)**
- **They can make a difference to the environment** - **13 responses (26%)**
- Rather, they can make a difference to the environment - **8 responses (16%)**
- **I have no opinion** - **13 responses (26%)**
- Rather, they cannot make a difference to environmental improvements - **3 responses (6%)**
- They cannot improve the environmental situation - **1 response (2%)**
- Definitely, they cannot improve the environmental situation - **4 responses (8%)**

C. PERSONAL SHOPPING PREFERENCES

17. I do my grocery shopping (for my household)

50 Responses



18. When going grocery shopping (select all the behaviours you undertake):

50 Responses

- **I choose big supermarkets where I can buy everything in one place - 35 responses (70%)**
- **I take a reusable bag with me - 41 responses (82%)**
- I choose local shops run by small entrepreneurs - 6 responses (12%)
- I buy only what I need - 20 responses (40%)
- I buy more to stock up just in case - 14 responses (28%)
- I buy what I currently feel like - 13 responses (26%)
- I follow a set route in the shop, corresponding to my shopping list - 15 responses (30%)
- I choose larger packs of products that I can keep open for a long time because it is more economical and eco-friendly - 13 responses (26%)
- **I pay attention to expiry/use-by dates - 32 responses (64%)**

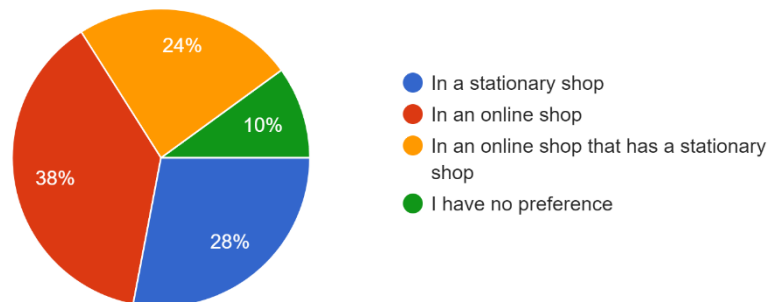
19. When choosing products, I pay attention to ... Select the 3 most important factors that determine your decision

50 Responses

- **Quality - 35 responses (70%)**
- **Price - 36 responses (72%)**
- How they were produced - 8 responses (16%)
- The number of positive online reviews - 2 responses (4%)
- Whether they are ecologically packaged - 8 responses (16%)
- **Value for money - 25 responses (50%)**
- Product brand - I have my personal preference - 5 responses (10%)
- Special offers available - 23 responses (46%)
- The ability to tailor the product to my needs - 12 responses (24%)
- Does the company have a sustainability strategy? - 0 responses (0%)
- Their composition - do they contain natural/organic ingredients? - 22 responses (44%)
- Whether the company announces its eco-friendly actions - 3 responses (6%)
- Recommendation from relatives - 9 responses (18%)
- **Other - 2 responses (4%):**
 - Allergens, availability (I don't like to change the products I prefer), inflation and changes in pack size
 - whether they are vegan

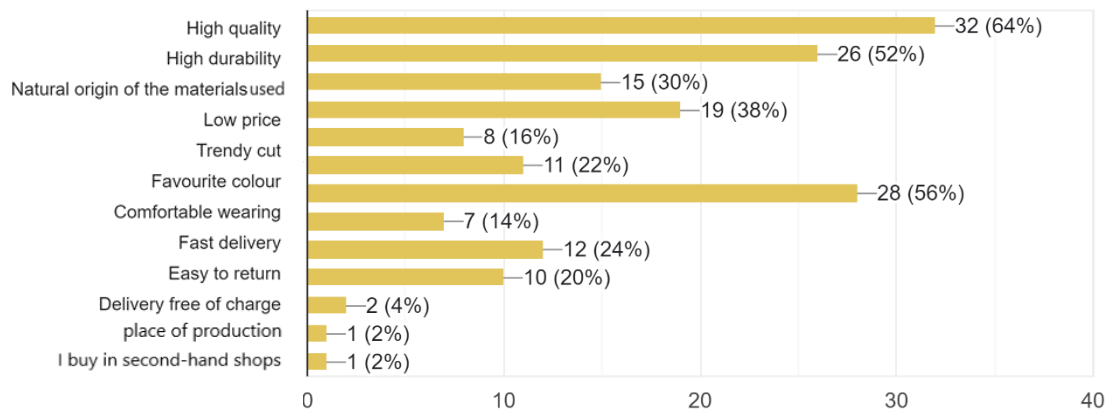
20. I usually buy everyday items, clothes, electronics, etc. (not including food)

50 Responses



21. When deciding to buy clothes, I choose primarily by paying attention to... Select the two factors most important to you.

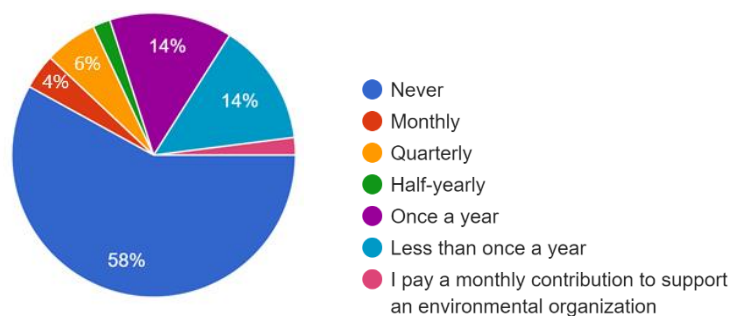
50 Responses



D. CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

22. I invest private funds in environmental activities. (For example, you financially support pro-ecological organisations, such as Green Peace or WWF; you co-finance the collection of electro-waste; you co-finance the cleaning of parks/forests; you are financially involved in tree planting projects, saving endangered animal and plant species; you remotely adopt animals of endangered species).

50 Responses



23. As a citizen, I take the following environmentally friendly actions: (open question)

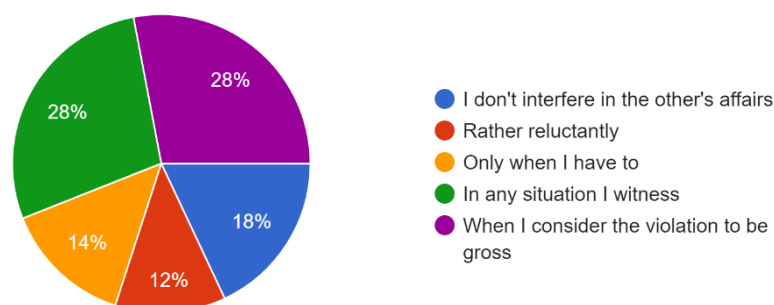
50 Responses

Summary of answers:

- Waste separation (segregating rubbish/waste) – **21 responses**
- Saving electricity and water – **10 responses**
- Using public transport or walking/cycling instead of driving – **7 responses**
- Using renewable energy (photovoltaics, solar panels, etc.) – **3 responses**
- Minimizing consumption (reusable packaging, second-hand clothes, minimizing meat consumption) – **6 responses**
- Participating in environmental campaigns (cleaning forests, environmental NGOs, etc.) – **4 responses**
- Listening to audiobooks instead of buying books – **1 response**
- Planting trees – **1 response**
- Veganism and environmental education (activism, discussions, Instagram) – **1 responses**
- Nothing/no action – **9 responses**

24. Do you point out to other people that they should take care of the environment with their behaviour? (e.g. dispose of waste in appropriate containers, don't leave rubbish in the forest/park). Select one answer

50 Responses



25. What eco-friendly initiative can you suggest for implementation in your country?

50 Responses

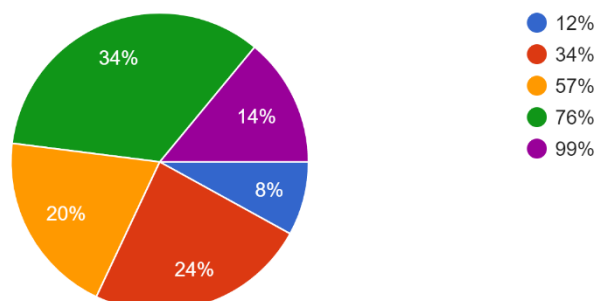
Summary of answers:

- No idea/No suggestion – **11 responses**
- Waste segregation and recycling (including bottle return systems, plastic reduction) – **7 responses**
- Environmental education – **5 responses**
- Tree planting initiatives – **3 responses**
- Reducing unnecessary packaging – **3 responses**
- Protests, advocacy, and public campaigns – **2 responses**
- Second-hand clothing and circular economy – **2 responses**
- Reducing meat consumption – **2 responses**
- Increased access to public waste bins – **2 responses**
- Promotion of renewable energy sources (solar, photovoltaics) – **2 responses**
- Other suggestions (meat tax, fuel alternatives, public transport improvement, etc.) – **11 responses**

E. KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING PREFERENCES

26. What percentage of all companies in Europe are SMEs?

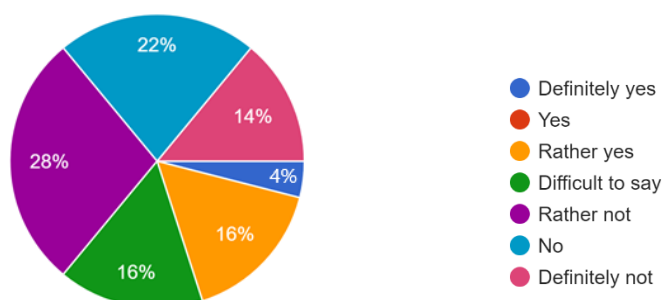
50 Responses



Only 7 (14%) respondents indicated the correct answer " 99%."

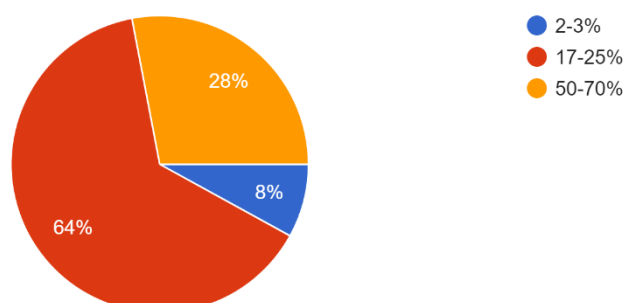
27. Do you think your company has a negative impact on the environment?

50 Responses



28. What percentage of industrial pollution in Europe are SMEs responsible for?

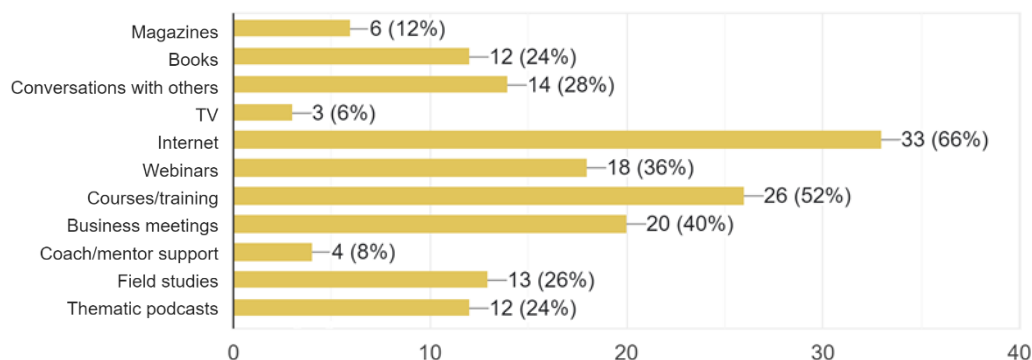
50 Responses



14 (28%) respondents indicated the correct answer '50-70%'.

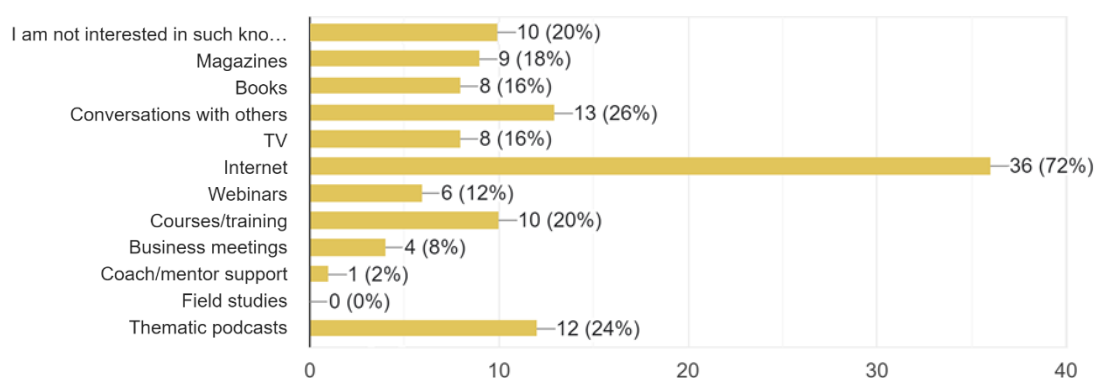
29. What is the main source from which you draw your knowledge about running a business? You can select up to 3 answers

50 Responses



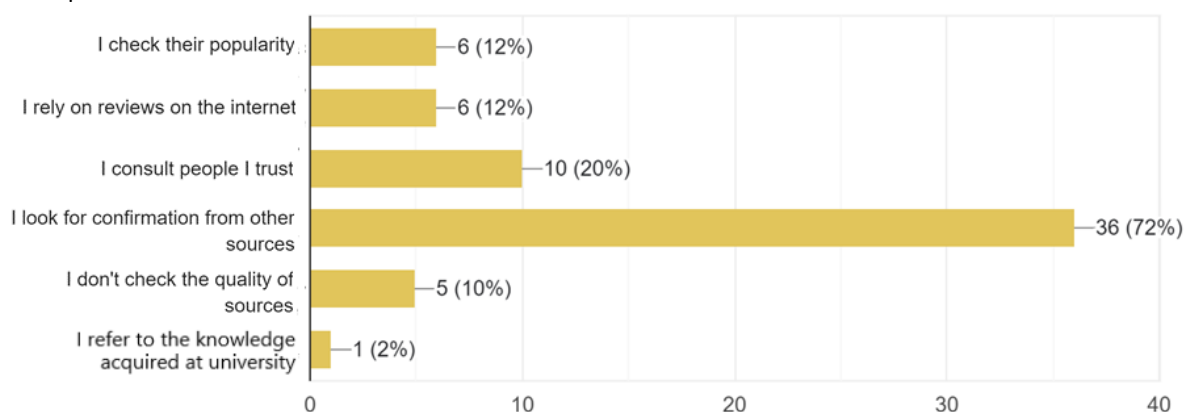
30. From which sources do you draw your knowledge of the factors affecting environmental pollution?

50 Responses



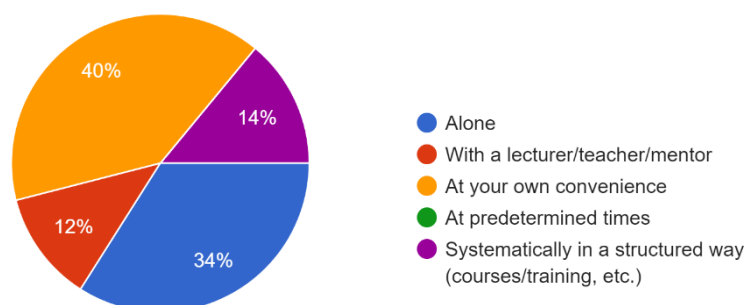
31. How do you verify the quality of the sources from which you draw your knowledge? You can select up to 2 answers.

50 Responses



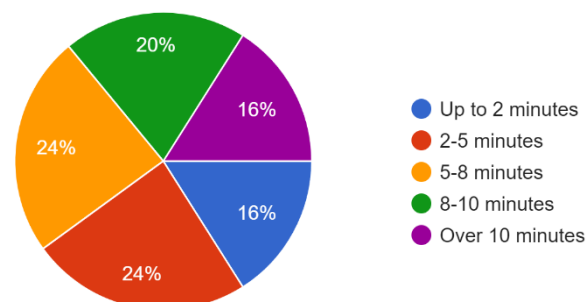
32. How do you most enjoy learning?

50 Responses



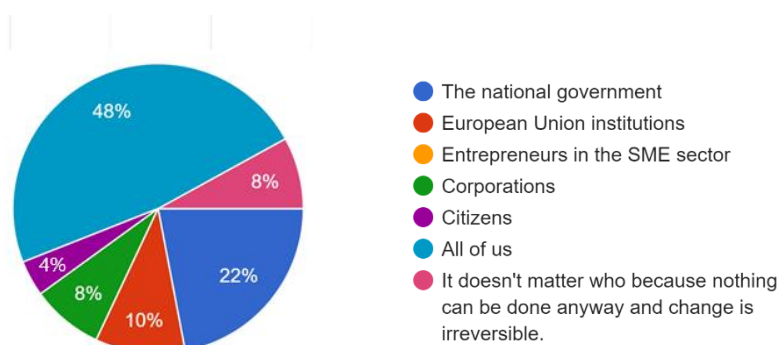
33. How long should the most convenient learning videos last?

50 Responses



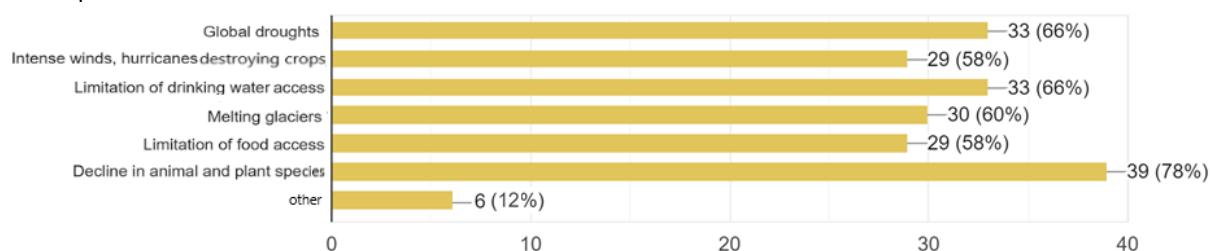
34. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for environmental action? Choose one answer.

50 Responses



35. What kind of risks can be caused to the environment by negligence of environmental measures?

50 Responses



SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Among the survey respondents, the dominant majority are entrepreneurs conducting service activities (70%). The second largest group in terms of numbers are companies providing services (26%), and the last significant result is from manufacturing companies.

As a competitive advantage, entrepreneurs were most likely to choose 3 areas (48%) and offer better quality of service (42%). 34% of respondents indicated unique services, while 32% indicated greater flexibility than the competition. This means that young entrepreneurs see their business effectiveness in a proactive approach to the needs of customers with whom they maintain personal relationships.

Only 6% declared working with ecological materials, and even fewer, only 2%, cooperated with suppliers who operate ecologically. It is worth emphasizing here that a significant number of indications were given to the declaration of concern for sustainable development, which received as many as 18% of indications.

Investment priorities include advertising/promotion (46%), introducing new services/products (40%) and introducing innovative solutions to improve the company's operations (36%). A significant number of entrepreneurs (32%) also plan to respond to the needs of employees by investing in activities supporting their well-being.

Unfortunately, activities aimed at implementing pro-environmental solutions are not very popular with young entrepreneurs. Reducing the amount of waste generated is important only for 10% of respondents. The implementation of solutions aimed at saving water achieved the same result. Plans to implement activities allowing for energy saving were the most popular. We can therefore say that the results of the study are consistent with the results of analyses of previous studies. The main reason for engaging in pro-ecological activities are savings or financial gains. Among the respondents there was also a group of entrepreneurs who do not plan any investments for the next six months and they constitute 6% of the respondents.

When choosing services from suppliers, the main argument is their quality (48% of indications), which may be a factor determining business effectiveness. The second most important factor is flexibility in cooperation (44% of responses), which, due to the competitive advantages indicated earlier, may be quite strongly related to them. Only 8% of entrepreneurs indicated that care for ecology and sustainable development is important to them when

selecting subcontractors. We can therefore conclude that the key factor in selecting suppliers for young entrepreneurs is the business efficiency that they achieve by cooperating with them while providing their own services. The pro-ecological approach seems to be far behind.

As the most popular pro-ecological activities, entrepreneurs indicate replacing lighting with energy-efficient ones or installing motion sensors that activate them. 64% of entrepreneurs do not show any willingness to invest in social projects. At the same time, every fifth has an idea to create their own.

Among those entrepreneurs who see the need to invest in social projects, the most popular are projects dedicated to people in need (32%), ecology (30%) and children (28%).

Looking at the knowledge of entrepreneurs about the environmental regulations that apply to them, we can say that the vast majority of them are unfortunately not familiar with them. These data confirm the results regarding the issue of environmental strategy and its presence in the companies of young entrepreneurs. 68% declare that they do not have one.

The same percentage of entrepreneurs also declare that they do not inform their clients about any pro-ecological activities that they implement in their company. Additionally, as many as 40% of the survey participants are convinced that implementing pro-ecological activities did not contribute to the increase in their company's results. None of the respondents indicated a decisive impact of these activities on improving the condition of their company. A certain level of certainty in this respect is expressed by 20% of respondents, declaring that pro-ecological activities contributed to the growth of their organization.

When listing specific activities, entrepreneurs indicate (apart from those mentioned earlier, such as replacing lighting with energy-saving ones) that they use ecological company transport (6%), when making decisions about purchasing company equipment they take into account whether it was produced in an ecological way (also 6%), they buy packaging that is easy to recycle (10%).

The main motivator for implementing pro-ecological activities indicated by the respondents are subsidies for this purpose (40%). For 22%, clear expectations of their customers will be motivating, while 20% indicate that they need more time. The same number of respondents expect greater profitability of implementing pro-environmental policies. In turn, almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the

respondents stated that they have no idea what could help their companies implement the aforementioned activities.

Interestingly, 16% are convinced that pro-ecological activities of such companies as they conduct do not have a real impact on improving the natural environment. As many as 26% of respondents have no opinion on this topic. On the other hand, 58% of entrepreneurs see such a possibility, which in the context of previous habits may fill us with some hope.

Analyzing the results in the context of purchasing attitudes as consumers, we can reach a dominant attitude that is focused on the economic efficiency of decisions made. None of the entrepreneurs stated that it matters to them whether the company whose products they buy implements a sustainable development strategy, and only 6% expressed the view that their purchasing decisions are influenced by whether the company communicates its pro-ecological activities. They choose online stores or those that also have stationary branches (66%) as their main place of shopping. Only 28% express a preference for shopping in stationary stores. We can therefore assume that once again the issue determining decision-making is the issue of profitability. When it comes to buying clothes, quality (64%), comfort (56%) and durability (52%) are most important. Only 4% of indications justify their purchasing decision with whether the company cares about the environment, and half of this value takes into account the place where the clothes were manufactured.

Looking at civic activities, we can see that 58% of respondents do not invest any private funds in pro-ecological activities, 14% do it once a year, and the same number less often. We can therefore talk about certain occasional decisions, e.g. investing in annual, popular campaigns organized by the NGO sector.

Interestingly, the respondents do not express much desire to interfere in the behavior of other citizens when their behavior negatively affects the environment. Less than 1/3 react in every situation they witness. An interesting aspect of the research is the position popular among entrepreneurs that pro-ecological activities in Poland should be implemented starting with education. At the same time, most of these entrepreneurs are unable to give the correct answer (86%) to questions about the share of SMEs in all companies in Europe. In addition, only 16% declare fear that their business may negatively affect the environment. The same number have no opinion, and 64% are convinced to varying degrees that such an impact does not exist at all.

The main source of knowledge about ecology for Polish entrepreneurs is the Internet (72%), followed by conversations with others (26%) and thematic

podcasts (24%). Also 72% of respondents verify the collected information in other sources.

According to the respondents, responsibility for pro-ecological activities should be borne by all of us (48%), governments (22%), European Union bodies (10%), corporations (8%), and the same number believe that no actions make sense, because they will not bring any results anyway. This information is supplemented by an indication of the real effects of neglect in the field of ecology - a decrease in the number of animal species (78%), global droughts and limited access to drinking water (66% each), melting glaciers (60%) and reduced access to food and natural disasters (58% each).

Summing up the collected data, we can therefore assume that young entrepreneurs are aware of the category of consequences of neglect in the field of care for the natural environment. At the same time, they themselves do not see the impact of their own businesses on ecology, and their actions in this area are conditioned by profit or savings, not beliefs or personal values. They only do what is absolutely necessary, and they condition the taking of new actions by receiving a subsidy for their implementation and customer requirements.

This means that in Poland we cannot talk about the profile of a young entrepreneur who, with his decisions as a company owner and consumer, supports pro-ecological activities because he believes in the rightness of such conduct. All activities should be considered reactive and focused on savings or possibly motivated by achieving financial profits.

The basis for creating a profile of a pro-ecological entrepreneur must therefore be theoretical models, the construction of which includes features, behaviors, values and beliefs, allowing them to be scaled through development and promotional projects, to other entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the behaviour of Polish eco-entrepreneurs reveals a generally pragmatic approach among young entrepreneurs. Based on the literature review and the results of the online survey, these individuals prioritise profitability and financial independence, often relegating environmentally friendly initiatives to a secondary role. Although aware of the environmental consequences of negligence, the entrepreneurs surveyed are primarily driven by savings and customer demands, rather than a personal commitment to sustainability.

Despite a high awareness of environmental issues, many young Polish entrepreneurs take a selective approach to environmental practices. The literature indicates a general trend in which cost-effective solutions such as energy-efficient lighting and waste reduction are most popular. However, only 6% of respondents prioritise environmentally friendly materials and even fewer work exclusively with sustainable suppliers. Survey data shows that 68% of respondents do not have an environmental strategy in place and many are unaware of current environmental legislation.

Financial incentives, such as grants and subsidies, are the main motivators for green initiatives, with 40% of respondents stating the need. Explicit customer expectations also drive green activities, although only 8% consider sustainability as a factor when choosing suppliers. Legislative and consumer pressures play a lesser role in motivating eco-investment, with the majority viewing green activities as financially neutral or even costly.

The results of the survey suggest that the ideal eco-entrepreneur in Poland would combine the pursuit of profit with proactive environmental responsibility, integrating environmentally conscious decisions into their actions without relying solely on external incentives. A well-defined eco-strategy, compliance with environmental regulations and a genuine commitment to sustainable development are essential. Currently, the eco-entrepreneur model in Poland remains largely theoretical, as most young entrepreneurs prioritise reactive and financially motivated eco-practices over intrinsic environmental values.

In conclusion, while Polish young entrepreneurs show a basic environmental awareness, a shift towards a value-based, proactive eco-entrepreneur model is necessary to align with broader European environmental goals.



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