

Youth and the Environment

The intelligent young people usually care about obtaining good education, they study in the libraries and work hard on themselves. With the introduction of low cost airlines in Europe, they frequently travel, learn and care about what is happening in the world. The majority is following the news and as a consequence, they are aware of the climate change, know about the Copenhagen summit and heard about the Kyoto protocol.

I am registered on the Couchsurfing project website and very often, young people from all over the world come to share a little bit of their lives at my place. I like the idea. Now, why I am mentioning this. I have 3 bags in the kitchen – one made of plastic, where plastic waste goes, one for the paper and the last one for the residual waste. This is one of the things I explain to my guests when they come. All of them are very bright young people, as I am being very careful about to whom to let my keys. However, soon or later, I notice banana skin in the paper and all kind of other objects in the plastic bag. I believe these small things have big meanings.

I am talking about the the care for the environment through the eyes of youth. Do they really care for the environment?

According to the the World Youth Report 2005, article 38, “young people continue to have a strong interest in protecting and preserving the planet's resources.” I browsed Internet to find a supportive statistics, however, without any success. The conflict between this positively described trend and a personal statistics, based on my couchsurfing observations, made me think – what can we do, how can we recruit more young people to this good cause and that is simply to separate the 3 kinds of waste?

Maybe we can organize a weekend seminar in a way, which won't be boring. I remember participating in building a dock on a lake in a rural area; it was almost 10 years ago, but I still have good memories, as it was connected to day-and-night swimming in the lake.

Alternatively, we can keep watching the tons of carbon dioxide released by cars moving between Brussels and Strasbourg every month. And yes, by the cheap airlines.

Or we can create an inspiring facebook group. There many different possible attitudes among which one can choose.

Youth will definitely play its role in moving forward in this field. As very well said, the mobilization and support of local youth organizations will be critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability.

Because, sometimes my parents or grandfather visit me and “do me a favor”: “Dana, here is the soup. P.S. I cleaned the kitchen floor, I put all the rubbish together and threw it away.” All the separation was wasted - we have to start with the youth, the older generation we will not change.