



Youth Rising Above Climate Anxiety

Module 6

Collective Action



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Module Overview

This module explores how young people can move from isolated concern about climate change to practical, inclusive collective action. It introduces community based organising, youth movement building, and the role of shared emotional resilience in achieving climate impact.

01 Why Collective Action?

02 Local Power – How Communities Mobilise

03 Youth Movement Building

04 Participation for All – Inclusion and Justice

05 Climate Emotions and Collective Resilience

06 From Awareness to Action – Planning for Impact

By the end of this module, you will have:



Knowledge

What is Empowerment?

Skills

Understanding Emotional Resilience



Behaviours

FiStrengthsding Your



Attitudes

From Worry to Action



Learning Objectives of Module 6

Knowledge

- Understand why collective action is more effective than acting alone
- Recognise different models of community organising and movement building
- Identify barriers to inclusive youth participation in climate action

Skills

- Map opportunities for local community based action
- Plan group based initiatives using structured tools
- Communicate about climate issues with clarity and empathy

Learning Objectives of Module 6

Behaviours

- Collaborate in inclusive, respectful ways
- Take initiative in group settings
- Practice active listening and shared decision making

Attitudes

- Increased confidence in shared agency
- Commitment to equity and climate justice
- Openness to emotional resilience through connection

Why Collective Action?
Understanding the Limits of
Individualism

Unit 1



1.1

The Solo Climate Hero Myth



Many campaigns focus on personal choices like recycling or eating less meat. These actions matter, but they are not enough on their own. Climate change is shaped by large systems , energy, transport, finance, policy and no individual can shift these alone. The idea of a single “climate hero” can be inspiring, but it can also be misleading and disempowering.

For further insight, see the article [“*What can individuals do about climate change? Find community.*”](#) from Yale Climate Connections, which explains how change requires both personal and collective efforts.

1.2

The Scale of the Problem Requires Shared Youth Action

Climate change is global, urgent, and interconnected. It affects many parts of daily life, from food and housing to jobs and mental health. Because of its scale, individual action is not enough - coordinated, sustained action is essential. Young people across Europe and beyond are working in groups to raise awareness, push for policy change, and lead community projects.

To see how this fits with the bigger picture, explore the [*World's Largest Lesson on climate and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)*](#), which links personal action with global cooperation.



1.3

Seeing the Bigger Picture: From “I” to “We”

Collective thinking means asking “What can we do together?” rather than “What can I do alone?”. It helps us connect issues, like how climate change links with transport, housing or social inequality and spot solutions that work across these areas. This kind of thinking also supports teamwork, shared responsibility, and a deeper understanding of systems.

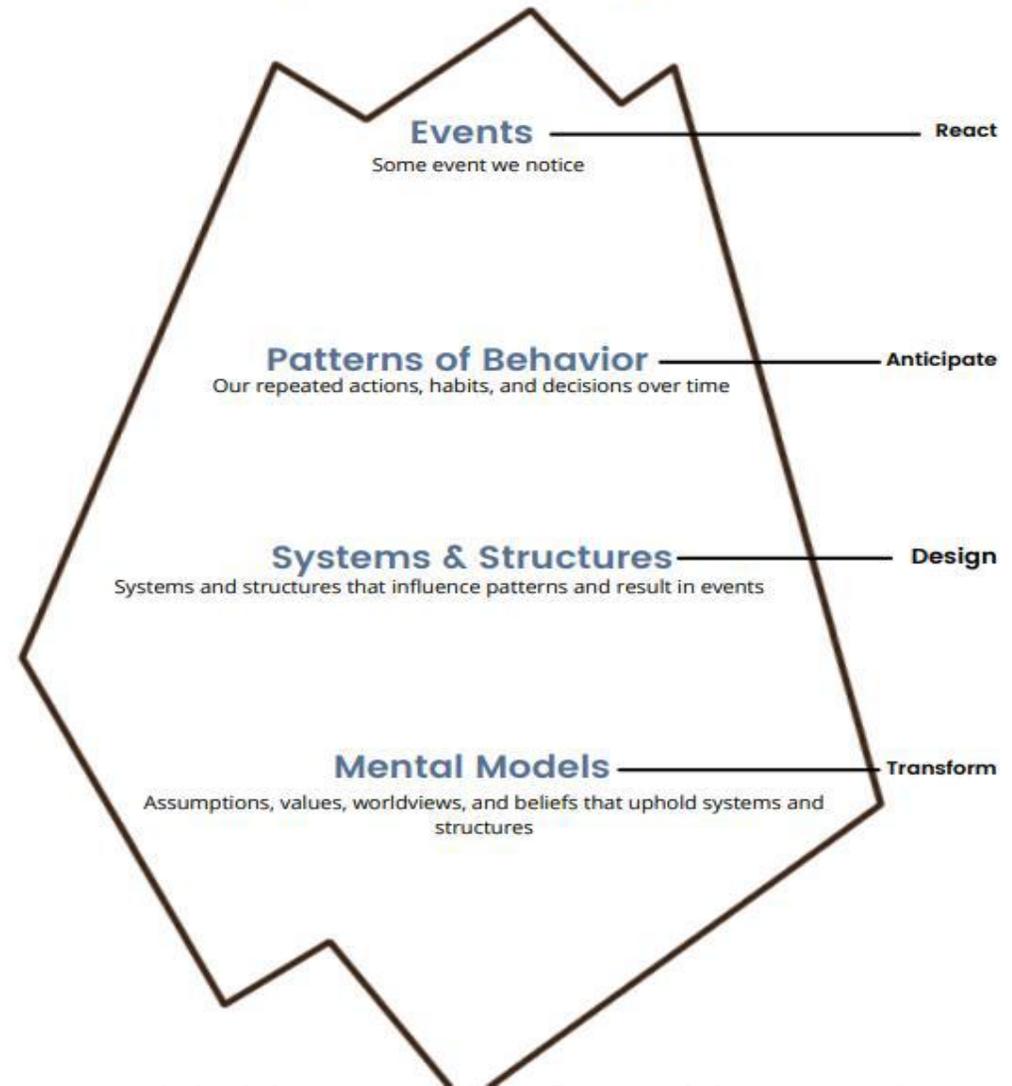
1.3 - Activity

The Systems Iceberg Model

Explore real events worldwide with a systems thinking lens in these [education tools from World's Largest Lesson](#).

Other activities that support this kind of systems thinking can be found in [youth workshops run by Young Friends of the Earth Europe](#).

The Systems Iceberg Model



1.4 What is Collective Impact?

Collective impact is a structured approach to working together towards a shared goal. It includes five key elements: a common agenda, shared ways of measuring progress, coordinated but diverse roles, regular communication, and support structures to keep things moving. This model is used in many successful youth and community led climate initiatives.

To learn more about Collective Impact, see the explainer [“*Collective Impact 101*”](#) from Articulous, which introduces the framework with examples from various community settings.



[Watch this short video on What is ‘Collective Impact’ from Inclusive Design](#)

1.5 Reflection: Alone or Together?

Think about a time when you tried to do something important on your own.

What challenges did you face?

Now think of a time when you worked on a shared goal with others.

What made it easier or more effective?

What kind of support would help more young people take action together?

Take a couple of minutes to reflect and write your answer down – and/or discuss your thoughts in a group.



- Individual actions are valuable, but not enough to solve complex problems
- Working together allows us to influence systems and share responsibility
- Collective thinking helps us see connections between issues and find stronger solutions
- Young people are already creating change through movements, projects and partnerships



1.6 - Unit 1 Summary: *Why Collective Action Matters*

Unit 2

Local Power: How Communities Mobilise for Change



2.1 What Is Community-Based Climate Action?

Community-based action means local people coming together to respond to climate challenges in ways that fit their specific area. This might include shared gardens, energy co-operatives, repair cafes or local education campaigns. These initiatives are grounded in everyday life and often led by people who live in the community themselves.

To explore examples of the community based approach, [this video by the EU Climate Pact](#) highlights stories of local groups across Europe who are taking climate action in practical, inclusive ways.



2.2

Case Study: Transition Town Totnes (UK)

In the town of Totnes, local people created projects around food, energy, housing and transport to reduce their environmental impact and strengthen their community. The initiative began in 2006 and helped spark the wider Transition Towns movement, which has since spread to hundreds of communities.



Their work shows how small towns can become more resilient while reducing emissions through shared effort, not individual sacrifice. Learn more about their methods through the [Transition Network's community action resources](#).

2.3 Example - EU Climate Pact Ambassadors

Across the EU, young Climate Pact Ambassadors are working on local projects from [sustainable fashion events in Slovenia](#) to [climate education in Portuguese schools](#). These efforts are supported by the European Commission but driven by citizens, particularly young people.

These examples show how community organising doesn't always mean protest, it can also mean quiet, practical work that changes daily habits and builds resilience. [The Climate Pact website includes summaries of each project](#), written by the participants themselves.



THE POWER OF ORGANIZING

Stories of Community Organizing

2.4

Case Study: Youth-Led Action in Poland's Silesia Region

In the Silesia region of Poland a coal-heavy area youth-led groups have organised education campaigns and climate workshops for peers and local authorities. They focus on building bridges with older generations, showing that energy transition can happen with dignity and local leadership.

This story is featured in [the Commons Library's climate organising case studies](#), which document real-world youth strategies in challenging contexts.



2.5 - Activity

Mapping Local Opportunities

Draw a simple map of your community, neighbourhood or town.

- Where are the spaces where climate action could take place?
- Who already runs local activities that could link to climate topics?
- What kinds of actions are missing, and who could help make them happen?



2.6

Unit 2 Summary : The Power of Local Action

- Local communities can lead meaningful climate action that fits their context.
- Projects succeed when they build on what already exists and include local voices.
- Youth-led efforts are happening across Europe from towns to capital cities.
- Community mobilisation can be quiet and practical, not just public or loud.

Unit 3 -

Youth Movement Building: Campaigns, Protests and Coalitions



3.1 - Why Do Movements Matter?

Climate movements have helped shift public awareness and influence political decisions. Large-scale campaigns like the **School Strikes** have made climate a central issue for media and governments. Movements work by changing the narrative showing that climate action is urgent, possible, and widely supported. To understand how this happens, check out examples collected by **Generation Climate Europe** and **Youth & Environment Europe**, which show how young people are organising across borders and topics.

3.2 - Case Comparison: Fridays For Future vs Just Stop Oil



3.2 Case Comparison: Fridays For Future vs Just Stop Oil

Both [Fridays for Future](#) school strikes and [Just Stop Oil](#) have drawn attention to the climate crisis, but in very different ways. The School Strikes focus on peaceful, youth-led walkouts and visible presence in public spaces. Just Stop Oil uses more disruptive tactics to create pressure and provoke debate. Both aim to push for urgent policy change.

Comparing these movements can help learners think critically about strategy, messaging and public response. The Commons Library includes [practical guidance on understanding the role of disruption and risk in social movements](#).

3.3

Tools for Organising: Local to Global

Youth campaigns succeed when they combine storytelling, coordination, and clear goals. Effective strategies often include:

- **Local organising (in schools, clubs or communities)**
- **Online campaigning (social media, petitions)**
- **Regional or global coalitions (networks and partnerships)**

For practical support, the [*Youth Climate Action Toolkit*](#) (and others from organisations like [*Earth Uprising*](#) or [*UNICEF*](#)) includes templates, planning guides and communication tools for building campaigns.

3.4 Intergenerational and Cross-Movement Alliances

Youth movements are strongest when they work with others, including older activists, teachers, union members or artists.

Examples of successful cross-generational alliances can be found the intergenerational dialogues hosted by [Elders Climate Action](#).



These alliances bring experience, networks and wider credibility. They also help shift power and avoid the pressure of young people having to “fix everything” alone.



3.5 - Activity

Analysing a Movement's Impact

Choose a youth-led campaign or movement you've heard of (e.g. Fridays for Future, Just Stop Oil, Stop Cambo, or another local group).

- What is their main goal?
- What tactics do they use?
- How do they communicate their message?
- Who are their supporters

This activity encourages you to explore strategy and public response, rather than just whether you “agree” with the group.

3.6

Unit 3 Summary: Building Power Through Movements



Movements change what is seen as possible or urgent



Youth action ranges from strikes and protests to education and lobbying



Campaigns use a mix of local, digital and global strategies



Strong coalitions can include people of all ages, sectors and backgrounds

Participation for
All:
Inclusion, Equity
and Climate
Justice

Unit 4



4.1 - Who Gets Left Out of Collective Action?

Not everyone has equal access to participate in climate action. Barriers include language, disability, income, location, age, education and discrimination. Young people from rural areas, migrant backgrounds or lower-income families may not have the same time, resources or support to get involved.

Understanding who gets left out and why helps ensure climate action is more inclusive, fair and effective. For more on this, [SALTO Youth's work on accessibility in youth projects](#) offers useful insights.



4.2 - What Is Climate Justice?

Climate justice connects climate action with fairness. It recognises that the impacts of climate change are not equal and neither are the responsibilities.

People in wealthier countries contribute more to emissions but often face fewer immediate impacts. Climate justice focuses on equity across class, race, geography and generations.

To learn more, the “[*Toolkit for Intersectional Movement Building*](#)” by Young Friends of the Earth Europe explains how race, gender and class influence climate experiences and access to action.



Watch this short video on [What Is Climate Justice?](#) from [Sharing Perspectives](#)

4.3 - Making Youth Action Inclusive

Inclusivity means designing projects that are welcoming and relevant to different groups. This includes:

Practical tools for this are found in youth participation guides by organisations such as the European Youth Forum and Climate Outreach.



Using clear, accessible language



Meeting in places that are safe and physically accessible



Providing travel support or covering costs



Respecting cultural differences



Creating space for listening, not just speaking

4.4 - Activity

What Are the Barriers in Your Context?

As a group or individually, reflect on...



- Who is not currently involved in your local climate efforts?
- What stops them from joining in or being heard?
- What could you or your group do differently to make things more accessible or inclusive?

This activity works well as a facilitated group conversation, paired with a local context scan or youth mapping tool.



4.5

Real Example: MAPA Voices in Fridays for Future

Fridays for Future MAPA (Most Affected People and Areas) highlights voices from regions most affected by climate change but often excluded from decision-making. Their work shows how global youth organising can prioritise equity, not just visibility.

For further insight, [explore their storytelling campaigns](#), which highlight how climate and social injustice intersect.





Climate change affects people unequally, and action must reflect that.

Participation should be designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind

Climate justice connects the environment with social fairness

Inclusive movements reach more people and create more lasting change

4.6 – Unit 4 Summary: Inclusion Makes Action Stronger

Collective
Action and
Climate
Emotions

Unit 5



5.1 Climate Emotions Are Real and Widespread

Many young people feel anxiety, grief, anger or helplessness about climate change. These feelings are natural, and they're often a sign of care and awareness.

Ignoring these emotions can lead to burnout or disengagement but acknowledging them can be the start of finding energy and direction.

Recent studies and resources from organisations like [the Climate Mental Health Network](#) show that collective action can ease distress and increase agency.



Youth Rising Above Climate Anxiety

When people act together, they often feel more hopeful and supported. Collective action gives a sense of purpose and reminds us we're not alone. It also allows for mutual care, checking in with each other, sharing responsibilities, and celebrating small wins.

To learn more, check out the work of [Force of Nature](#), a youth-led organisation that supports climate emotions and peer-to-peer connection through group workshops and storytelling.

5.2 - Acting Together Builds Emotional Resilience

FORCE OF
NATURE

5.3 Collective Grief and Collective Hope

Grief about environmental loss such as destroyed ecosystems or species extinction can be shared and expressed in community. At the same time, hope becomes more grounded when it's based on relationships and action, not just optimism.

This balance is explored in Britt Wray's work on climate and mental health. Her [talks](#) and books show how emotional honesty and group connection can help sustain climate action over time.



In this quick talk, Wray explores how climate change is threatening our well-being -- mental, social and spiritual -- and offers a starting point for what we can do about it.

5.4 The Power of Dialogue and Storytelling

Creating space to talk, share personal stories and listen to others can reduce isolation. It helps people process emotions and learn from different perspectives. These skills are also key to building stronger, more inclusive climate groups.

Explore podcasts like [Outrage + Optimism](#) or *Force of Nature's* ["We Feel This Too"](#), which model how storytelling supports emotional resilience and shared learning.



5.5 – Reflection Activity: When Have You Felt Supported?

Think of a time when you felt anxious or overwhelmed about climate change or another issue.

- Did you share it with anyone?
- What helped you feel supported?
- How could we build more support into climate organising?

This reflection can be done individually or discussed in small groups, and works well after sharing a podcast excerpt or short story.



5.6 - Unit 5 Summary: Emotions Are Part of Action



- Climate change can bring up strong and difficult emotions
- Collective action supports emotional resilience and agency
- Talking, listening and storytelling reduce isolation
- Emotional honesty helps build lasting, healthy climate movements

Unit 6 – From Awareness to Action: Planning and Sustaining Collective Initiatives



6.1 - What Makes Collective Action Work?

Group action doesn't succeed by chance it needs structure, trust, and a shared goal.

Setting clear roles, responsibilities and group agreements helps everyone feel respected and involved.

Taking time to agree on how to make decisions and solve problems also avoids conflict and confusion later.



Resources like the [*Youth Activist Toolkit*](#) from Advocates for Youth offer templates and guidance for group roles, meeting rules and collaborative planning.

6.2 - Making Decisions as a Group

- Simple voting
- Consensus-based decisions
- Rotating facilitators
- Using hand signals or check-ins in discussions

Good group decision-making is fair, inclusive and efficient. It's important to choose methods that suit the group and context, such as:



Practical tips on facilitation, time-keeping and shared leadership can be found in the [Campaign Accelerator Toolkit](#) from groups like The Commons Social Change Library.



6.3

Scaling Up: From Small Action to Wider Change

Many youth-led initiatives start with a single event, project or meeting. Scaling up can mean:

- Repeating the action in more places
- Connecting with other groups doing similar work
- Sharing the model or resources for others to adapt
- Measuring impact and learning as you go

[The Mindchangers programme](#) showcases examples of youth projects that have grown in size or impact across countries in Europe.



6.4 - Activity: Create a Basic Collective Action Plan

In pairs or small groups, draft a simple plan for a youth-led climate initiative. Include:

- A goal
- A list of actions
- Roles and who will do what
- What support or resources you'll need

How will you measure progress? Use a basic template or whiteboard to guide the process.

Templates like those used by the European Climate Pact in their [Youth Climate Pact Challenge \(YCPC\)](#) are useful starting points for this exercise as well.

6.5 - Case Study: Youth Project from Mindchangers

One Mindchangers project in Romania supported secondary school students to lead campaigns on food waste. With training and support, they designed posters, delivered workshops and persuaded school canteens to reduce waste. What started as one school's idea became a local government pilot.

This is an example of how small, youth-led projects can influence policy when supported and well planned.



6.6 – Unit 6 Summary: Turning Ideas Into Action



Collective action
is more effective
when roles and
plans are clear

Decision-making
should be fair and
inclusive



Small projects can
grow and inspire
wider change

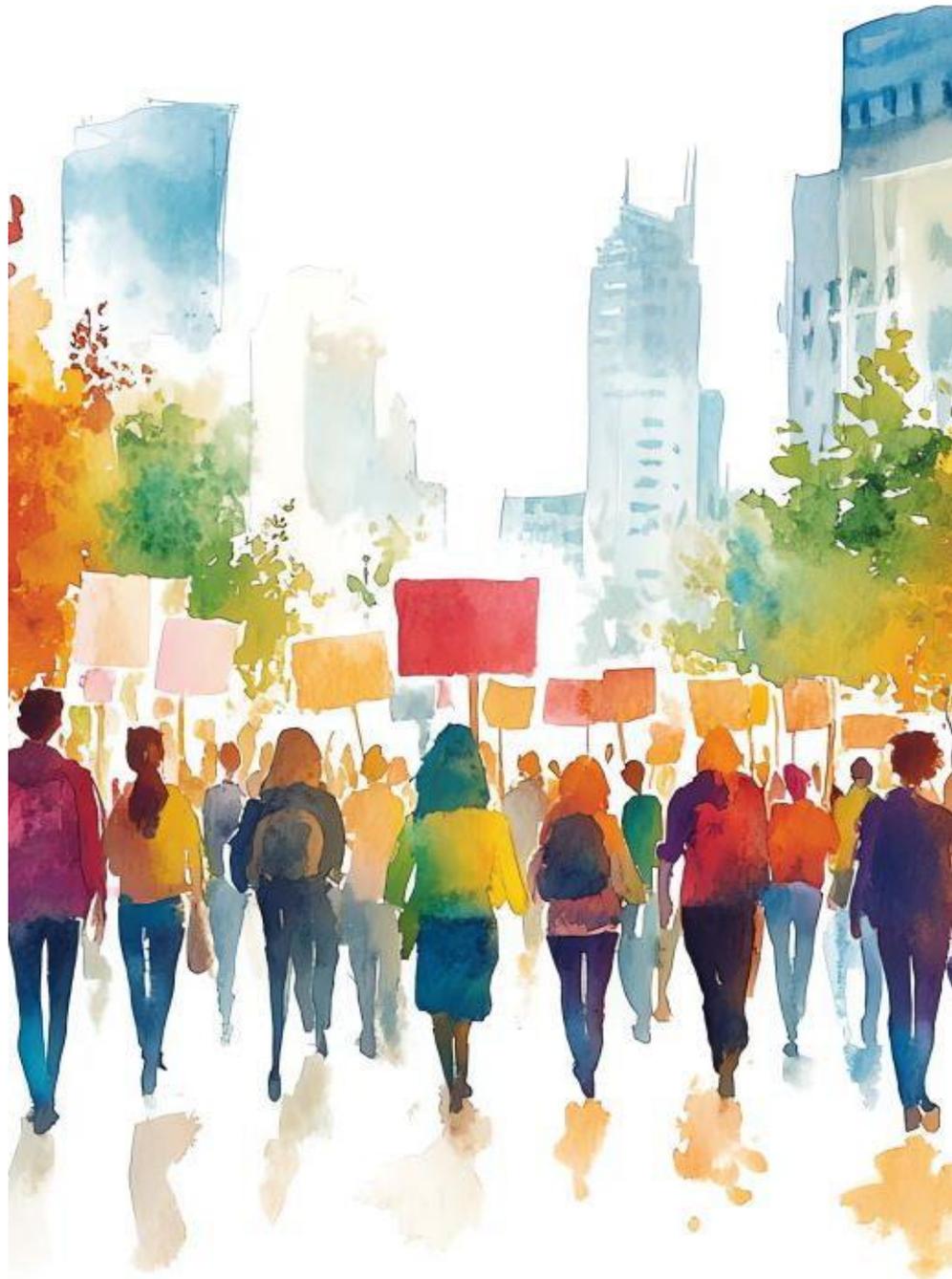
Tools, templates
and partnerships
support long-term
impact



You've now explored how young people across Europe and beyond are turning concern into collective action. From local organising to global movements,



and from emotional resilience to practical planning, this module has shown you that impactful change is already happening and that you can be part of it too!



Conclusion and Next Steps

Key messages to take away from this module:

- You don't need to act alone, collective action is stronger
- Inclusion and social justice are essential to real climate solutions
- Emotions are valid and can become a source of strength
- Practical tools and partnerships are out there and available to help you take the next step

Next steps:

- Start or join a group that shares your values
- Use the templates and other resources provided to begin your own project
- Stay connected build networks that support your energy and ideas
- Keep learning and sharing what works with others

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