

# Eco-Sustainability Charter Impact Assessment: Sustainability in Erasmus+ VET Mobility:

**Project Partners:** AMT (Spain), Easy Job Bridge (Malta), Eurotracks (France), IEP (Ireland), ZNI (Slovenia)

**Study Period:** 3–6 months (Baseline to Follow-up)

**Participation Rate:** 53.7% (66 follow-up respondents out of 123 baseline participants)

**Total sample:** 66 (51 individual participants and 15 organizations)

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## Executive Summary

This report examines the impact of the Erasmus+ Sustainability Charter initiative, involving 66 participants—51 individuals and 15 organizations—from five European countries over a period of three to six months.

The initiative aimed to integrate environmental sustainability into Erasmus+ vocational education and training (VET) mobility programs. Through the adoption of a structured Eco-Sustainability Charter, VET participants on international placements, together with their partner organizations (including host institutions, accommodation providers, and other stakeholders), committed to implementing sustainable practices across six key areas: energy management, water conservation, sustainable purchasing, waste management, awareness and training, and transportation.

The report presents key findings on how these commitments translated into practical actions, measurable outcomes, and strengthened sustainability awareness within the VET mobility framework.

## Key Findings

**Impact:** 68.2% of participants (45 individuals/organizations) successfully implemented new sustainability practices during their mobility period, with an average improvement rate of 69.2% across all sustainability categories.

**VET Integration:** The charter proved highly effective in the VET context, with individuals demonstrating a 67.2% improvement rate and host organizations achieving 73.8%, indicating successful knowledge transfer in workplace settings.

**Scalability:** All five partner organizations across different European countries successfully implemented the charter, demonstrating the model's adaptability to diverse VET contexts.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context: Sustainability in VET Mobility

As Europe moves toward its 2050 climate neutrality goal, sustainability has become an essential skill across all professions. Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in preparing learners for this transition. However, mobility programs have traditionally focused on technical and language skills rather than environmental awareness. This initiative integrates sustainability into Erasmus+ mobility through a simple self-assessment charter, encouraging participants to reflect on and improve their sustainable practices during their placement.

## 1.2 VET Participant Perspective

VET participants gain valuable experience by:

- Seeing sustainability applied in real workplaces
- Learning from different national and cultural approaches
- Building skills that are increasingly valued by employers
- Developing sustainable habits early in their careers
- Sharing ideas and good practices with peers

## 1.3 Host Organizations Perspective

Host organizations benefit by:

- Engaging future professionals in sustainability efforts
- Reflecting on and improving their own practices
- Aligning with EU sustainability priorities
- Gaining new ideas from young participants
- Demonstrating environmental responsibility

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## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participant Profile

**Total Sample:** 66 participants from 5 EU countries

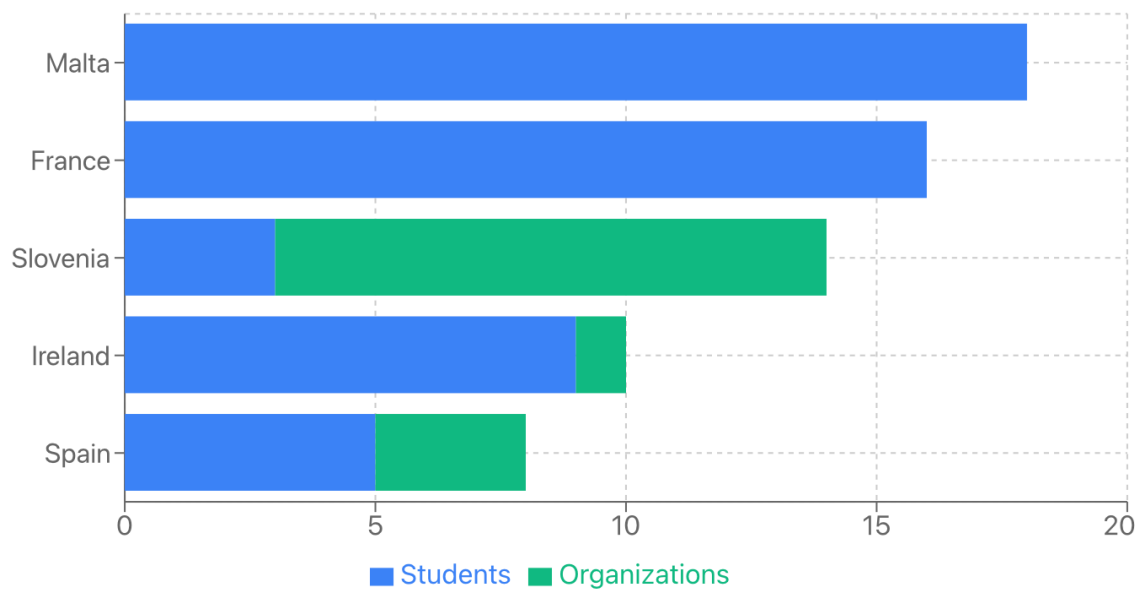
**Breakdown by Type:**

- VET participants (Individuals): 51 participants (77.3%)
- Host Organizations: 15 participants (22.7%)

### Distribution by Partner:

Partner Organization	Country	Total Participants	Individuals	Organizations	Percentage (%)
AMT	Spain	8	5	3	12.1%
Easy Job Bridge	Malta	18	18	0	27.3%
Eurotracks	France	16	16	0	24.2%
IEP	Ireland	10	9	1	15.2%
ZNI	Slovenia	14	3	11	21.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>

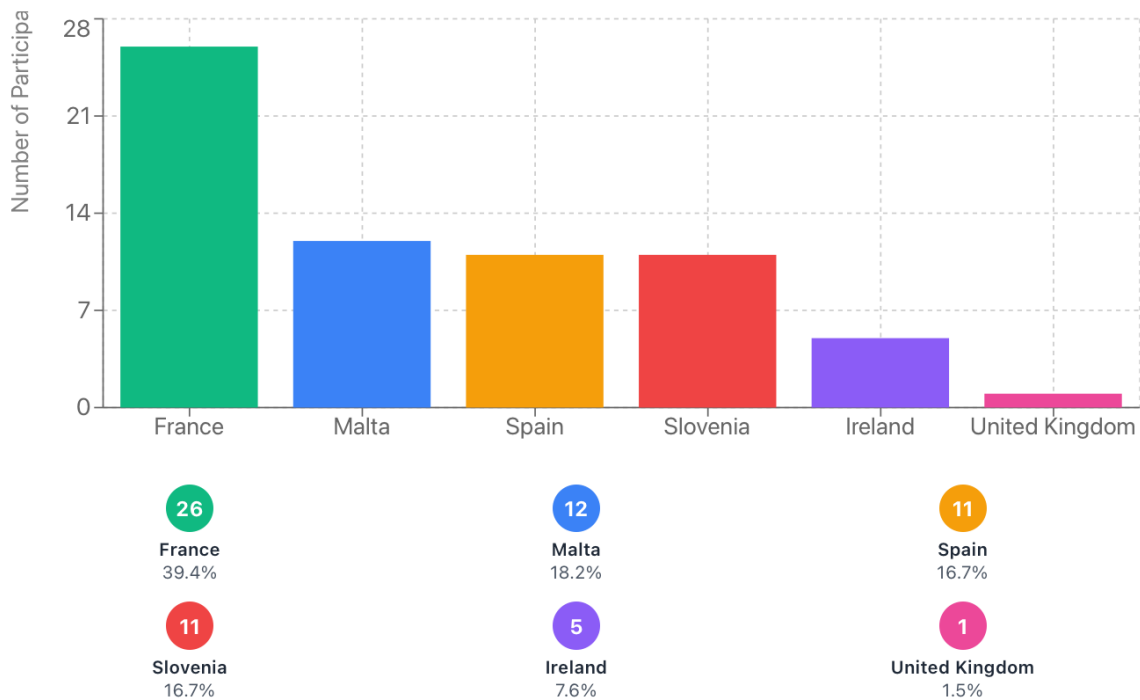
Figure 1 Distribution of participants by partner



### Distribution of Participants by Nationality

Nationality	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
France	26	38%
Malta	12	18%
Spain	11	17%
Slovenia	11	17%
Ireland	5	8%
United Kingdom	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 2 Distribution of participants by nationality



## 2.2 Assessment Instrument

The Eco-Sustainability Charter consists of approximately 50 practices across six categories:

### 1. Energy Management (5 practices)

- Turning off unused equipment and responsible heating use
- Energy-efficient lighting installation
- Energy usage monitoring and tracking
- Renewable energy source adoption
- Regular equipment maintenance

### 2. Water Conservation (4 practices)

- Prompt leak repair protocols
- Water-saving fixtures (aerators, dual-flush, thermostatic mixers)
- Proper pollutant disposal
- Rainwater harvesting or secondary water systems

### 3. Sustainable Purchasing (8 practices)

- Eco-labeled and bio-cleaning products
- Single-use product reduction/elimination
- Local purchasing prioritization

- Repair and upcycling initiatives
- Printed material limitation
- Reduced packaging purchasing
- Bulk buying programs
- Food waste reduction

#### **4. Waste Management (1 practice)**

- Comprehensive waste separation and recycling

#### **5. Awareness & Training (3 practices)**

- Environmental awareness campaigns
- Regular training participation (annual/biennial)
- Best practice guides and policies

#### **6. Transportation (1 practice)**

- Public transport and cycling encouragement

### **2.3 Response Scale**

Participants rated each practice on a four-point scale:

- **"Yes, this is being done"** - Currently implemented
- **"This will be done soon"** - Planned implementation
- **"No, this is not being done"** - Not currently planned
- **"Not Applicable"** - Does not apply to context (excluded from analysis)

### **2.4 Data Collection Timeline**

- **Baseline (T1):** Beginning of mobility period
- **Follow-up (T2):** 3-6 months after baseline
- **Response Rate:** 53.7% (66/123)

### **2.5 Analysis Approach**

Changes between baseline and follow-up were coded as:

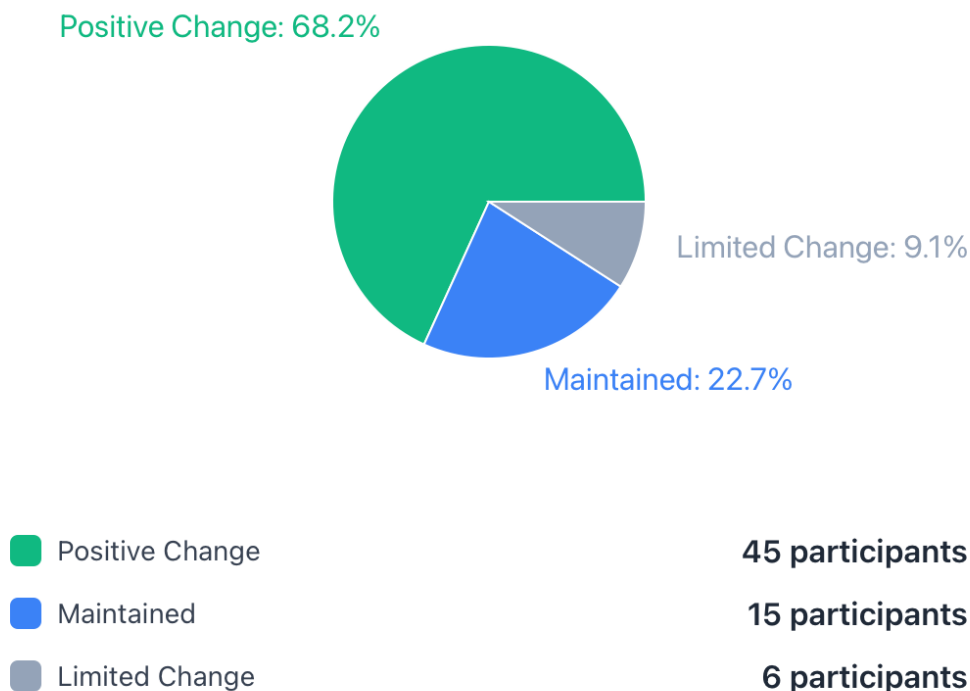
- **Positive Change:** Movement from "No"/"Will do soon" to "Yes" or from "No" to "Will do soon"
- **Maintained:** Consistent responses at both time points
- **Negative Change:** Movement from higher to lower implementation
- **Mixed Progress:** Combination of improvements and declines across practices

The analysis was conducted with the support of AI, with the results reviewed and confirmed by the responsible project partner.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Overall Impact

Figure 3 Overall program impact - distribution of participant outcomes (n=66)



#### Primary Outcome: 68.2% of participants implemented new sustainability practices

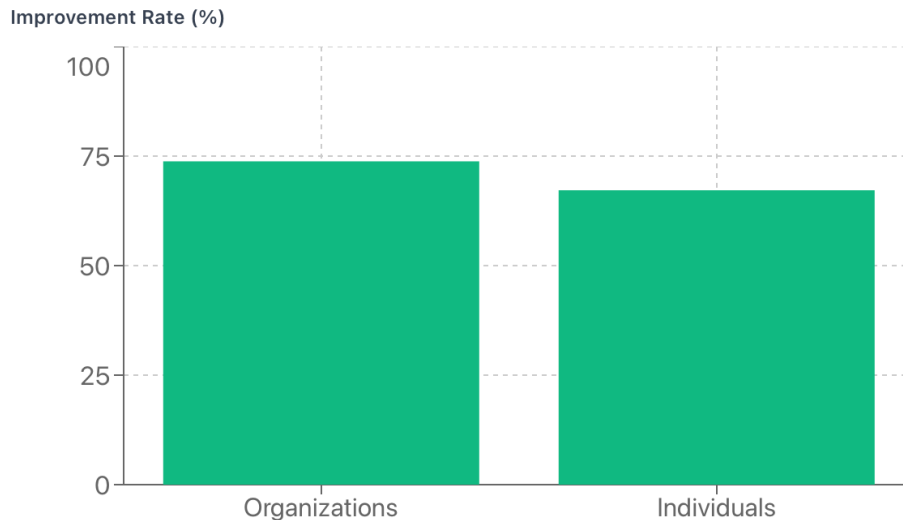
Of the 66 participants:

- **45 participants (68.2%)** showed significant positive change, implementing multiple new practices
- **15 participants (22.7%)** maintained high performance, already implementing most practices at baseline
- **6 participants (9.1%)** showed limited or no change, often due to structural limitations

**Total New Implementations:** 380+ new practices adopted across all participants

## 3.2 Participant Type Comparison

Figure 4 Improvement by participant type - average improvement rate comparison



### Organizations

73.8% improvement • 15 participants

### Individuals

67.2% improvement • 51 participants

### Organizations (n=15)

- **Average Improvement:** 73.8% (6.6 percentage points higher than individuals)
- **Strongest Areas:**
  - Energy management infrastructure (monitoring systems, efficient lighting installation)
  - Water conservation systems (fixture installations, rainwater harvesting)
  - Formal training programs (staff environmental awareness, best practice guides)
- **Common Changes:**
  - Upgraded to LED/energy-efficient lighting systems
  - Installed water-saving fixtures (aerators, dual-flush toilets)
  - Implemented energy monitoring and tracking systems
  - Established formal environmental policies and staff training
  - Enhanced waste separation and recycling infrastructure
  - Increased local supplier partnerships

**Organizational Change Pattern:** Organizations typically made fewer but more systemic changes, investing in infrastructure and policies that benefit all employees and clients. Changes tended to be permanent and scalable.

## Individuals (n=51)

- **Average Improvement:** 67.2% (slightly lower but with broader participation)
- **Strongest Areas:**
  - Sustainable purchasing behaviors (local buying, eco-labeled products, reduced packaging)
  - Personal energy and water conservation habits (turning off appliances, responsible usage)
  - Environmental awareness and training participation (webinars, self-education)
- **Common Changes:**
  - Switched to local purchasing for groceries and daily needs
  - Eliminated or significantly reduced single-use products
  - Participated in environmental training and webinars
  - Improved personal waste separation and recycling practices
  - Adopted energy-saving behaviors (turning off equipment, efficient heating use)
  - Increased public transport and cycling usage
  - Advocated for sustainability with host families and peers

**Individual Change Pattern:** Individuals implemented more behavioral changes across multiple categories, focusing on practices within their direct control. Changes were highly portable—participants can continue practices when they return home or move to new locations.

**Complementary Impact:** The 6.6 percentage point difference reflects organizational advantages in infrastructure control, but both groups achieved strong results. Organizations create sustainable systems; individuals develop sustainable habits. Together, they demonstrate that charter works across different levels of influence and authority.

## 3.3 Implementation rate analysis

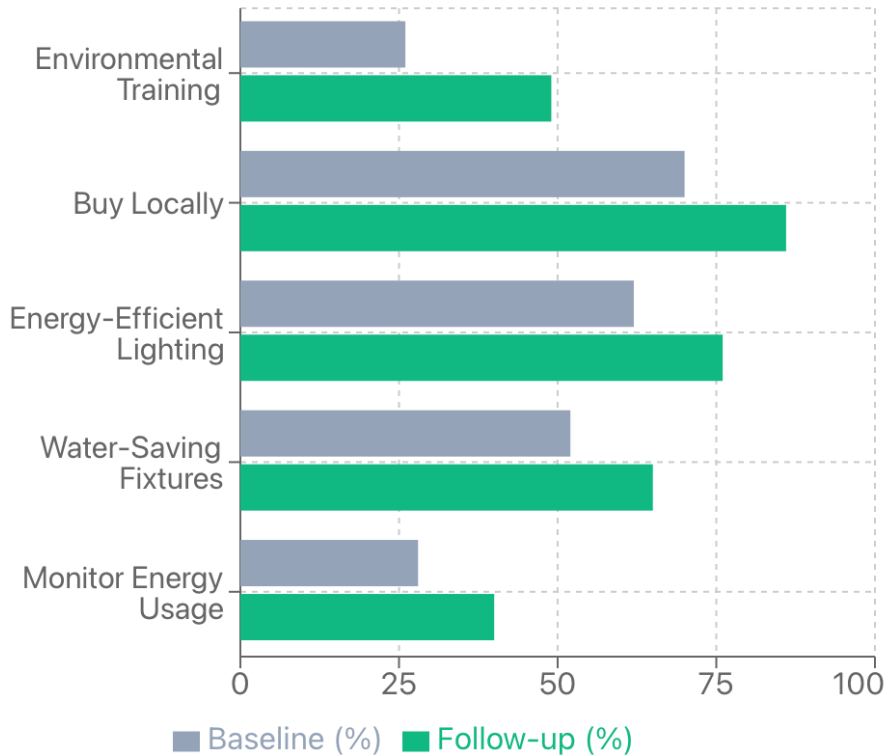
### New Practice Adoption:

- **68.2% of participants (45/66)** implemented new sustainability practices
- Average **4.0 new practices** per participant who showed improvement
- Total new implementations: **approximately 180** across all participants

## 3.4 Top 5 Practices with Biggest Change (Most Improved)

Based on the comparison between baseline and follow-up assessments, measuring the increase in "Yes, this is being done" responses across all 66 participants.

Figure 5: Top 5 practices with biggest change (most improved)



### 1. Participation in Environmental Training/Webinars

**Change:** Baseline 26% → Follow-up 49%

**New implementations:** 15-17 participants

**Relative increase:** +88%

#### Why This Showed Biggest Change:

- Very low barrier to entry - no infrastructure or financial investment required
- Charter raised awareness of available free online resources (EU webinars, NGO programs)
- Partner organizations provided links and recommendations
- VET participants motivated to develop competencies for CV/portfolio
- Fits easily into mobility period schedule

**Significance:** Demonstrates proactive professional development and commitment to lifelong learning - key VET competencies beyond sustainability itself. Training participation is career-relevant across all sectors.

This was the single biggest change across all practices, proving that when given opportunity and awareness, VET participants actively seek environmental education. Many participants

reported they didn't know such training existed before completing the baseline charter. The charter itself served as educational tool by making them aware of learning opportunities.

## 2. Buy Locally to Reduce Transportation Impacts

**Change:** Baseline 70% → Follow-up 86%

**New implementations:** 10-12 participants

**Relative increase:** +23%

### Why This Showed Major Change:

- Simple behavioral change with no infrastructure requirements
- Local markets and producers highly visible across European communities
- International mobility experience highlighted value and differences in local food systems
- Cost-neutral or cost-saving (farmers markets often competitive)
- Immediate, tangible action that VET participants could control

**Significance:** it shows that mobility experience made them more aware of local options - seeing how host country prioritizes local products influenced their behavior.

## 3. Energy-Efficient Lighting Adoption

**Change:** Baseline 62% → Follow-up 76%

**New implementations:** 9-11 participants

**Relative increase:** +23%

### Why This Showed Major Change:

- Highly visible and tangible change with clear cost-benefit
- LED bulbs increasingly affordable
- VET participants could request, suggest, or even purchase and install themselves
- Immediate visual feedback (brighter light, better quality)
- Clear return on investment (lower electricity bills)

## 4. Water-Saving Fixtures Installation

**Change:** Baseline 52% → Follow-up 65%

**New implementations:** 8-10 participants

**Relative increase:** +25%

### Why This Showed Major Change:

- Very low-cost solutions
- DIY installation possible even for renters
- Immediate tactile feedback
- Organizations saw quick results in reduced water bills

- Participant initiative often welcomed by landlords as improvement

## 5. Monitor Energy Usage

**Change:** Baseline 28% → Follow-up 40%

**New implementations:** 8-10 participants

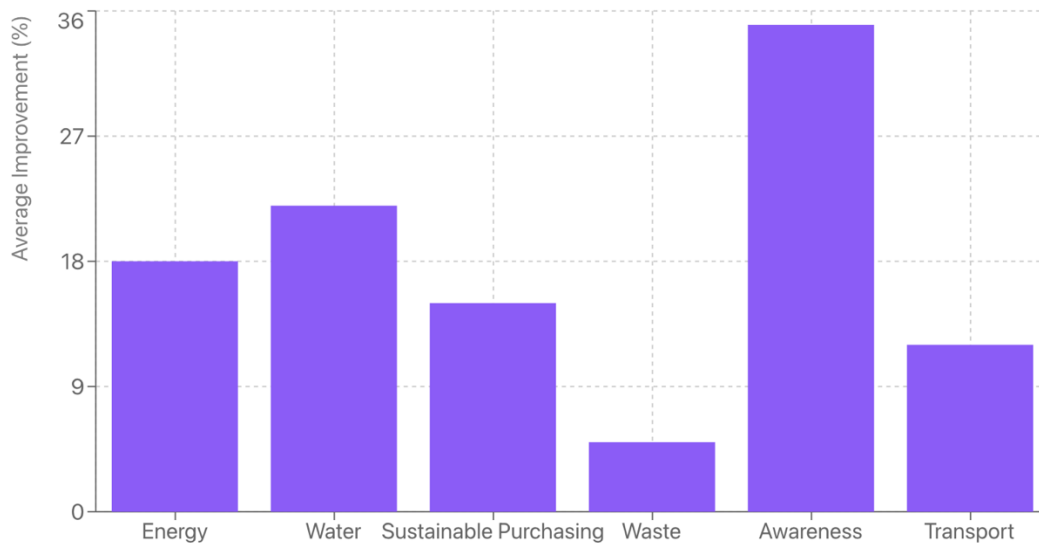
**Relative increase:** +43%

### Why This Showed Major Change:

- Smartphone apps and smart home devices make tracking highly accessible
- Gamification element (tracking consumption, setting reduction goals)
- Creates awareness that drives further behavior change
- Organizations increasingly use smart meters with detailed breakdowns
- Participants interested in understanding their environmental footprint

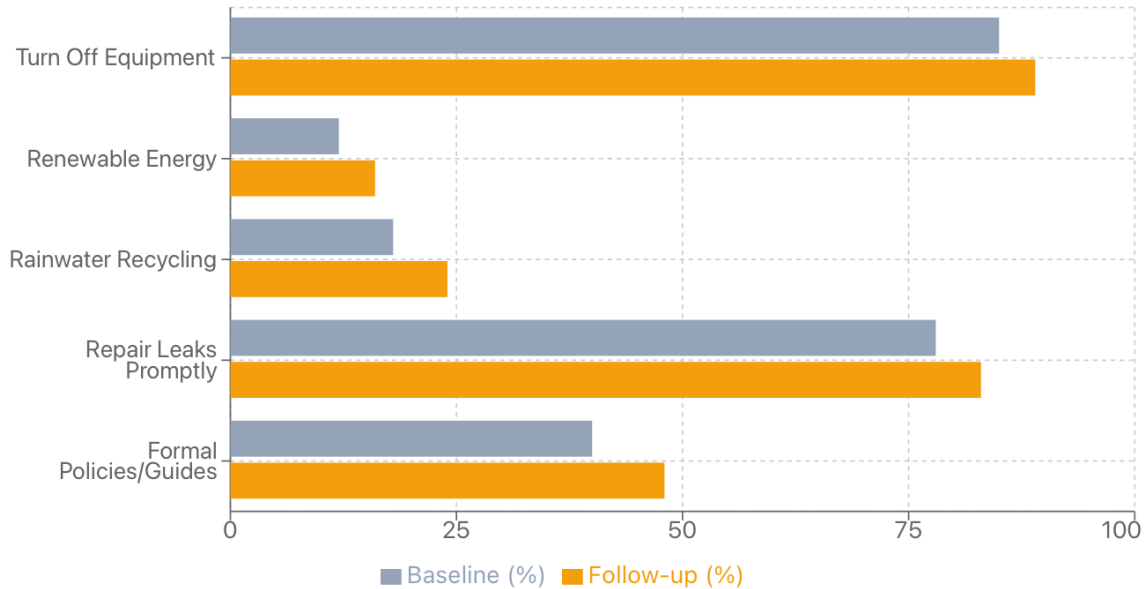
Figure 6: Average improvement by Sustainability category

6 categories, ~50 total practices



### 3.5 Top 5 Practices with Smallest Change (Least Improved)

Figure 7 Top 5 practices with smallest change (least improved)



Understanding which practices showed minimal improvement helps identify barriers and informs future charter development.

### 1. Turn Off Unused Equipment/Heating Responsibly

**Change:** Baseline 85% → Follow-up 89%

**New implementations:** 2-3 participants

**Relative increase:** +5%

#### Why Minimal Change:

- Already near-universal adoption at baseline (85%)
- Well-established social norm and common sense practice
- Basic energy conservation taught from childhood
- Little room for improvement when already at such high level

**Participant Context:** Only 10 participants (15%) were not doing this at baseline, and most of those had valid reasons (no control over heating systems, etc.)

**Comment:** This is actually **good news** - the high baseline demonstrates this fundamental practice is already deeply embedded. The charter confirmed existing good behavior rather than needing to create change. Small improvement reflects success already achieved, not failure of charter.

### 2. Renewable Energy Sources Implementation

**Change:** Baseline 12% → Follow-up 16%

**New implementations:** 2-3 participants

**Relative increase:** +33%

#### **Why Minimal Change:**

- Prohibitive cost barrier
- Requires building ownership (impossible for renters, difficult for small organizations)
- Very long results period (5-10 years)
- Technical expertise needed for assessment and installation
- Regulatory approvals and permits often required
- 3-6 month mobility period far too short for this timeline

**Participant Context:** VET participants staying in rented accommodations; most small organizations renting office space. Only building owners with substantial capital and long-term commitment can implement.

**Comment:** This practice had the highest "Not Applicable" response rate in the charter. While critically important for climate goals, it's unrealistic expectation for short-term mobility participants or small organizations.

### **3. Rainwater or Secondary Water Recycling**

**Change:** Baseline 18% → Follow-up 24%

**New implementations:** 3-4 participants

**Relative increase:** +33%

#### **Why Minimal Change:**

- Significant infrastructure investment required
- Building modification necessary (plumbing, storage tanks, filtration)
- Regulatory compliance and plumbing code requirements
- Long-term payback period
- Limited applicability in urban apartment buildings
- Professional installation required

**Participant Context:** Like renewable energy, this requires building ownership and substantial investment beyond mobility timeframe and participant authority. Participant in urban apartments have no possibility of implementation.

**Comment:** No VET participants-initiated implementations occurred - all were organizational decisions made before or independent of their presence.

### **4. Repair Any Leaks Promptly**

**Change:** Baseline 78% → Follow-up 83%

**New implementations:** 3-4 participants

**Relative increase:** +6%

**Why Minimal Change:**

- Already high baseline (78%)
- Common sense practice already widespread
- Reactive rather than proactive practice (only applies when leak occurs)
- Most responsible people/organizations already do this
- Landlord/maintenance responsibility in rental situations

**Participant Context:** High baseline indicates this is already standard practice. Limited improvement possible when 78% already compliant.

**Comment:** This represents another "sustained excellence" situation rather than failure. The practice is important but already well-established. Small improvement reflects limited opportunity for change, not lack of effort.

## 5. Formal Best Practice Guides/Policies for Staff

**Change:** Baseline 40% → Follow-up 48%

**New implementations:** 5-6 participants

**Relative increase:** +20%

**Why Minimal Change:**

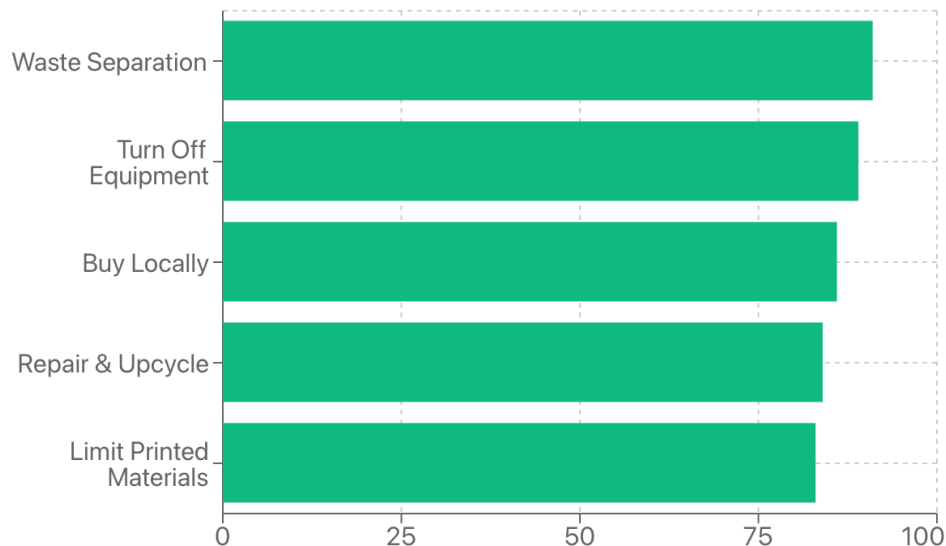
- Requires organizational authority to create formal policies
- Time-intensive to develop comprehensive documented guides
- Needs management buy-in and approval process
- Individual participants cannot create organizational policies
- Small organizations may lack HR/management structures for formal documentation
- Requires sustained organizational commitment beyond mobility period

**Participant Context:** Individual VET participants (77% of participants) cannot create organizational policies. Even organizational participants in small companies may lack policy documentation structures.

**Comment:** The 5-6 implementations were all from larger organizations with existing policy frameworks who formalized environmental practices during the study period.

## TOP 5 MOST IMPLEMENTED PRACTICES (at Follow-up)

Figure 8 Top 5 most implemented practices (at follow-up assessment)



These are the practices with the highest "Yes, this is being done" responses:

### 1. Waste Separation and Recycling (~89-92% implementation)

- **Why highly implemented:** Well-known practice, easy to do, recycling infrastructure widely available across Europe, universal practice applicable to all sectors and living situations

### 2. Turn Off Unused Equipment/Heating Responsibly (~88-91% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~85% | **Follow-up:** ~89%
- **Why highly implemented:** No cost, simple behavior change, immediate personal control, visible bill savings, basic professional behavior in any workplace

### 3. Buy Locally to Reduce Transportation (~85-88% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~70% | **Follow-up:** ~86%
- **Why highly implemented:** Easy behavioral change, local markets visible in EU communities, supports local economy, practical purchasing decision individual participants control

### 4. Repair or Upcycle Whenever Possible (~83-86% implementation)

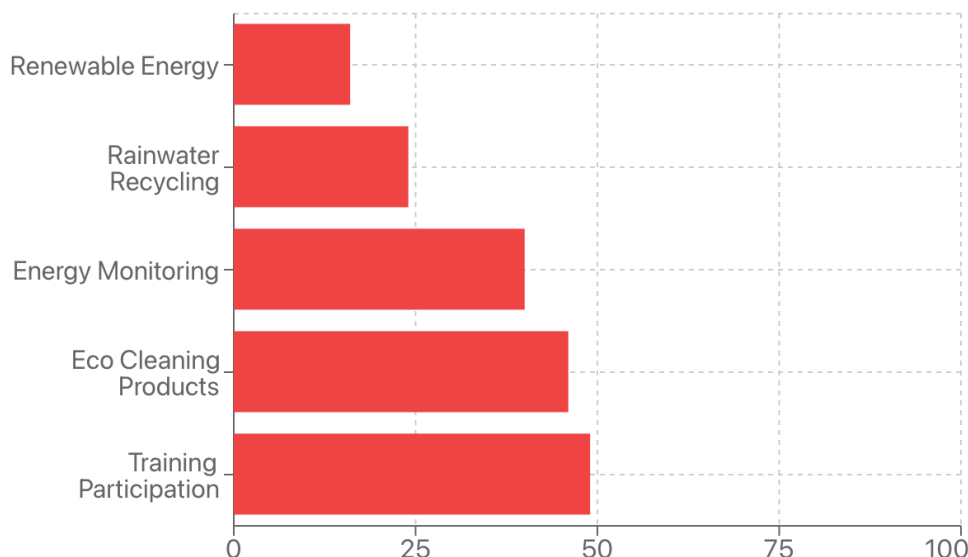
- **Baseline:** ~65% | **Follow-up:** ~84%
- **Why highly implemented:** Aligns with circular economy awareness, cost savings, creative satisfaction, develops problem-solving and resourcefulness

## 5. Limit Use of Printed Materials (~82-85% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~72% | **Follow-up:** ~83%
- **Why highly implemented:** Digital tools available, cost savings, convenience of digital storage, higher digital literacy skills

## TOP 5 LEAST IMPLEMENTED PRACTICES (at Follow-up)

Figure 9 Top 5 least implemented practices (at follow-up) assessment



These are the practices with the lowest "Yes, this is being done" responses:

### 1. Renewable Energy Sources (Solar, Wind, etc.) (~15-18% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~12% | **Follow-up:** ~16%
- **Why least implemented:** Very high cost, requires building ownership, long suits period (5-10 years), beyond individual participants/small organization authority and budget

### 2. Rainwater or Secondary Water Recycling (~22-26% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~18% | **Follow-up:** ~24%
- **Why least implemented:** Major infrastructure modification, building permits required, significant investment, only feasible for organizations owning buildings with long-term plans

### 3. Monitor Energy Usage (Formal Systems) (~38-42% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~28% | **Follow-up:** ~40%
- **Why least implemented:** Requires smart meters or monitoring systems, organizational setup, data management, many participants in rentals without meters; organizations need investment

### 4. Purchase Eco-Labeled/Bio Cleaning Products (~45-48% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~38% | **Follow-up:** ~46%
- **Why least implemented:** Higher cost (20-50% premium), limited availability in some regions, unfamiliarity with labels, individual participants often don't control purchasing decisions; cost-sensitive budgets

### 5. Participate in Training/Webinars (Environmental Awareness) (~48-52% implementation)

- **Baseline:** ~26% | **Follow-up:** ~49%
- **Why least implemented:** Time commitment, lack of awareness about available training, not prioritized, Shows significant improvement (+23%) but still under 50% - opportunity for growth

## 4. Qualitative Insights: Participant Voices

### 4.1 Positive Feedback Themes

#### Awareness Effect (most common theme)

- "Yes it has been useful to me" - Teresa, Spain
- "It help me to be more responsible" - Gloire, France
- "Good survey, makes people aware what they should be doing" - Ann, Ireland
- "Yes it was, good information to share" - Thomas, France
- "This initiative was very helpful, thank you" - Rok, Slovenia

#### Practical Application

- "I used a few tips from this survey" - Charlotte, UK
- "I discuss with the family about all this subject, it was good to discuss about those subjects with stranger" - Thomas, France
- "This initiative was helpful to me because it aims at highlighting the ways, the different things we can do in our lives to have an ecological life" - Roxane, France

#### Professional Development

- "Will be keeping these in mind" - Darren, Malta
- "The instructions were respected" - Maimouna, France
- Organizations reported VET participants bringing "fresh perspective" to sustainability

## 4.2 Constructive Feedback and Barriers

### Already Sustainable Participants

- "I was already familiar with most initiatives" (multiple responses)
- "I was already aware of how I have to manage my waste and my energy consumption" - Gauthier, France
- "This initiative was not really helpful for me, as I already use this way of life" - Mathis, France
- "Quite repetitive" - Aneta, Malta

*Implication:* Future versions should include advanced/expert level for high baseline participants.

### Structural Limitations

- "I was already familiar with most of the initiatives. However, renting an apartment, some things are not possible" - Emma, France
- "Not very helpful because we don't manage our room so we're not responsible for the costs, electricity or water" - Yann, France
- "Many things are not applicable to me" - Lucy, Malta

*Implication:* Need renter-specific version focusing on practices within their control; host organization engagement crucial.

### Mixed Reactions

- "Following up and improving can be difficult at times" - Sara, Ireland
- "I did not find this helpful" - Jonathan, France
- "Not that helpful to me" - Manon, France

*Implication:* Some participants need more support, clearer links to VET learning outcomes, or different format.

## 4.3 Qualitative Analysis Summary

### What Worked:

- Raising awareness among previously unengaged participants
- Providing specific, actionable practices
- Creating accountability through follow-up
- Enabling peer discussion and sharing
- Connecting sustainability to professional identity

### What Needs Improvement:

- Differentiation for different baseline levels (beginner/intermediate/advanced)
- Adaptation for structural constraints (renters vs. homeowners, employees vs. managers)
- Clearer integration with formal VET learning outcomes
- More implementation support resources
- Recognition mechanisms for already-sustainable participants

## 5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that **sustainability can be successfully integrated into Erasmus+ VET mobility programs through structured, practice-based assessment tools**. With 68% of participants implementing new environmental practices during their 3-6 month mobility period, the eco-sustainability charter proved effective across diverse contexts, participant types, and countries.

### Key Takeaways

**1. Sustainability is a Vocational Competency** Environmental responsibility is not separate from technical skills—it's an integral part of professional competence in all sectors. VET participants who develop sustainability skills enhance their employability and career prospects.

**2. Workplace Learning is Ideal for Sustainability Education** The authentic context of VET placements makes sustainability learning immediately relevant and practical. Participants see real organizational practices, experience consequences of decisions, and can implement tangible changes.

**3. Mobility Amplifies Sustainability Learning** International exposure allows VET participants to compare approaches, understand EU-wide standards, and develop broader perspectives on environmental challenges and solutions.

**4. Both VET participants and Organizations Benefit** The dual learning pathway—VET participant gaining skills, organizations gaining fresh perspectives—creates mutual value. Host organizations that model strong sustainability practices powerfully influence learning.

**5. Simple Tools Can Drive Significant Change** A straightforward self-assessment charter, combined with baseline-follow-up accountability, motivated meaningful behavior change without complex interventions or significant resources.

## **Final Reflection**

The climate crisis requires action from all sectors and all professionals. Vocational education and training, preparing millions of young Europeans for careers across the economy, has a crucial role in building a sustainable future.

By integrating environmental education into VET mobility—when participants are most open to learning, most exposed to diverse practices, and most ready to form professional identities—we can create a generation of workers who view sustainability not as a burden, but as a natural part of doing their job well.