

Young Reporters for the Environment Handbook for students and educators 2015

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Technical Coordination: Gosia Luszczyk and Yukiko Tsuburaya

Text: Pedro Marcelino

Illustrations: Jason Wilkins

Graphic Design: Ian Gibb

Video Companions:

Produced/directed by Pedro Marcelino

Featuring Kristin Rodrigo, Vinh Le

Graphic Facilitation by Jason Wilkins

Voice Over by Peder Myhr

Edited by Vinh Le

Subtitles: Kirk Lilwall

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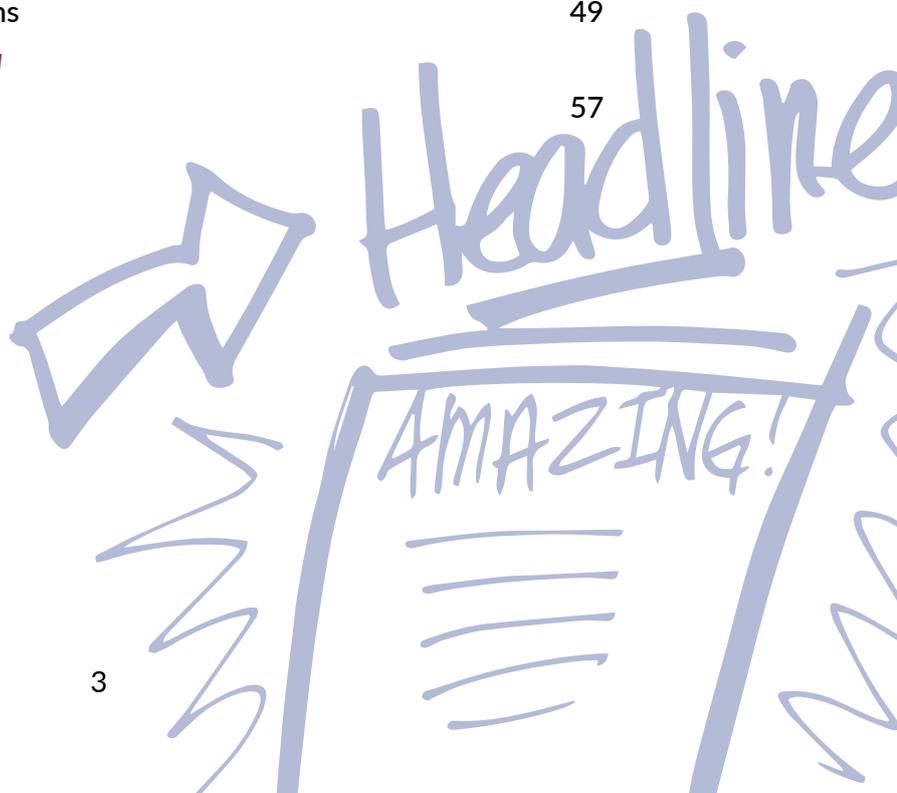
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Part I

What is YRE?



The Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) programme is a global network of passionate young people educating and getting educated for sustainable development through the production of engaging and creative environmental journalism. The programme runs in 30+ countries, under the supervision of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

1. The History of YRE

The birth of global changes

When the depletion of the ozone layer was detected in the Polar Regions, back in 1985, the world understood it as a global environmental threat directly resulting from human activity. By 1991, scientific expeditions to assess the extent of the problem and measure its evolution had been launched – the first of which based in Kiruna, Sweden’s northernmost town, and in Sodankylä and Utsjoki, in Finland.

Youth as special envoys

Struck by these developments, an enthusiastic and idealistic young Frenchman, Philippe Saugier, founded the Ozone Project, which sent three youth missions up north to follow, monitor, and report on the work of scientists. This series of field visits and expert interviews attempted to fully understand the ozone issue, and to report it to the widest possible audience in real time. Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Latvia, Norway, Poland, and Switzerland were the first to send “youth envoys”.

The birth of the Internet

Change was also afoot in the communications industry. Things that are easy today were complex and time-consuming a mere 25 years ago. The Internet and emails already existed, but were unavailable to the wide public, and mostly limited to research centres and universities. In Denmark, the University of Copenhagen quickly became the focal point



for the international communication between the youth envoys and the local teams.

Local teams carried out missions and interviews to probe further into the how the 'ozone issue' was rooted locally, and deeply ingrained in our daily lives.

A FEE programme

When the project was experimentally absorbed by what was then FEEE (the last E stood for "in Europe", and was dropped once it became an international organization), the last step to create what we know today as YRE had finally been taken. In 1994 Luxembourg would become the first country to officially implement the programme. It was no longer an experiment.

2. YRE Today

The global coordination of YRE has since moved from FEE's office in Paris to the FEE International Head Office in Copenhagen.

As of December 2014, 30,000+ students and 7,500+ teachers in 30 countries (and counting) were involved in YRE. Over 5,000 photos and 2,700

articles have so far been submitted to national competitions to date, in three categories – articles, photography, and video. Nine international winners are chosen every year.

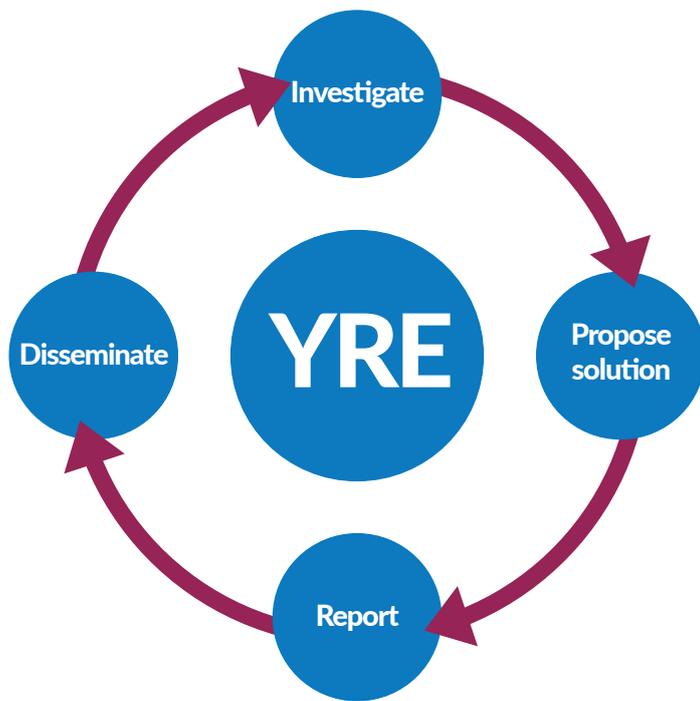
For more information about the origins of YRE, [check out this video](#) featuring Philippe Saugier – the YRE creator – and Pedro Marcelino, one of the earliest YRE students (Mission Antarctica, 1996).

3. The YRE Process: How does it all work?

YRE engages participants aged 11-21 in environment-focused citizen journalism, looking at issues, problems, and solutions, and reporting on them through articles, photos, or videos.

The programme develops participants' skills and knowledge about environmental issues, enhances communication and citizenship skills, individual initiative, teamwork, critical analysis, social responsibility, and leadership abilities.

It uses a tested and tried four-step methodology:

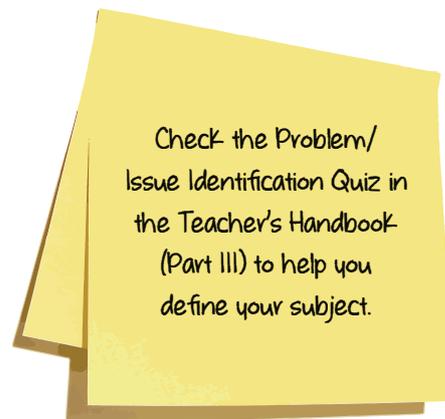


3.1. Investigate

Investigate a local environmental problem or issue:

- ✓ Identify, define and communicate a local environmental problem and/or issue;
- ✓ Investigate (look up, compare, interpret, evaluate) relevant information from primary and secondary sources;
- ✓ Identify key individuals and groups and find out what their different perspectives on the issue are, their approaches to resolving it and their assumptions and goals;
- ✓ Conduct original research, such as surveys and questionnaires, and interview key individuals or groups to obtain first-hand information;

- ✓ Cover relevant historical, economic, social and/or political implications and possible consequences of the problem or issue;
- ✓ Link the local environmental problem and/or issue to the bigger global picture (problem).



3.2. Propose Solutions

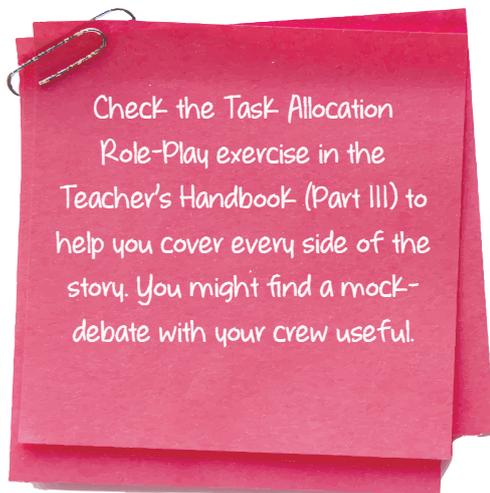
This step aims to provide constructive agency as an extension of the project. Young Reporters are encouraged to go beyond the investigation of an issue, to finding adequate solutions and to foreseeing their local implementation. For FEE and its partners, the YRE programme should aim to create positive action, enabling young people to apply their knowledge and add a constructive, optimistic dimension to their ideas.

As a Young Reporter, you should think of possible solutions for the problem/

issue at hand. This requires creativity, knowledge, fairness and plenty of research. You may want to reach out to local experts or community leaders who can back up your proposed solution. Make sure you fact-check, and remember this: solutions that are not feasible today or in the foreseeable future are unrealistic, and may be more akin to the realm sci-fi or speculative fiction. Stay grounded.

Propose solutions to a local environmental problem or issue:

- ✓ Identify a possible solution to an environmental problem and/or issue and evaluate its likely effectiveness, giving reasons for and against (pros and cons);
- ✓ Develop and propose a solution, then justify it with the help of statements to experts or community leaders.



3.3. Report

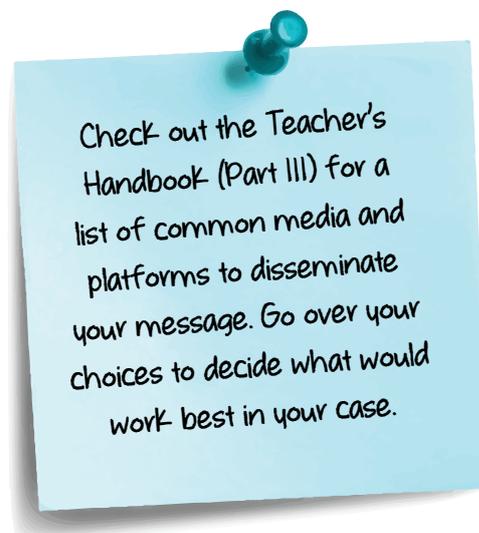
Report on a local environmental issue and its possible solution through a journalistic production targeting a local audience:

- ✓ Identify your target audience and choose the best way to reach and communicate with them, i.e. which media do they read/watch/listen to?
- ✓ Plan how you will report on the problem and/or issue (who need to be informed? how? when?) and use the appropriate journalistic format and style.
- ✓ Create an article, photograph, or video that documents the environmental problem and/or issue; and a possible solution.
- ✓ Take a positive approach to inspiring change and finding a solution.

Creating an excellent article, video, a photograph, or other means of reporting (e.g. audio), has to be based on a few principles. Here are a few essentials:

- ✓ Choosing an angle of approach: determines the perspective you take, and defines your goals;
- ✓ The diversity of points of view: a journalistic report gathers the points of view of agents in every side of an argument, to ensure impartiality and objectivity;
- ✓ Reference to relevant data: Support your journalistic piece, by referring to factual and statistical data, mentioning their respective sources;
- ✓ Taking your audience into account: Bear in mind that your report is intended to be read, seen or listened to by an audience. You need to draw interest. Your report should be concise and precise, in order to keep the public's attention and provide clear information.

relevance and originality of your project, you are encouraged to request a collaboration. This could be in the form of a workshop, proofreading sessions, sharing contacts, story angles, revisions, help with software... Use their knowledge!



3.4. Disseminate

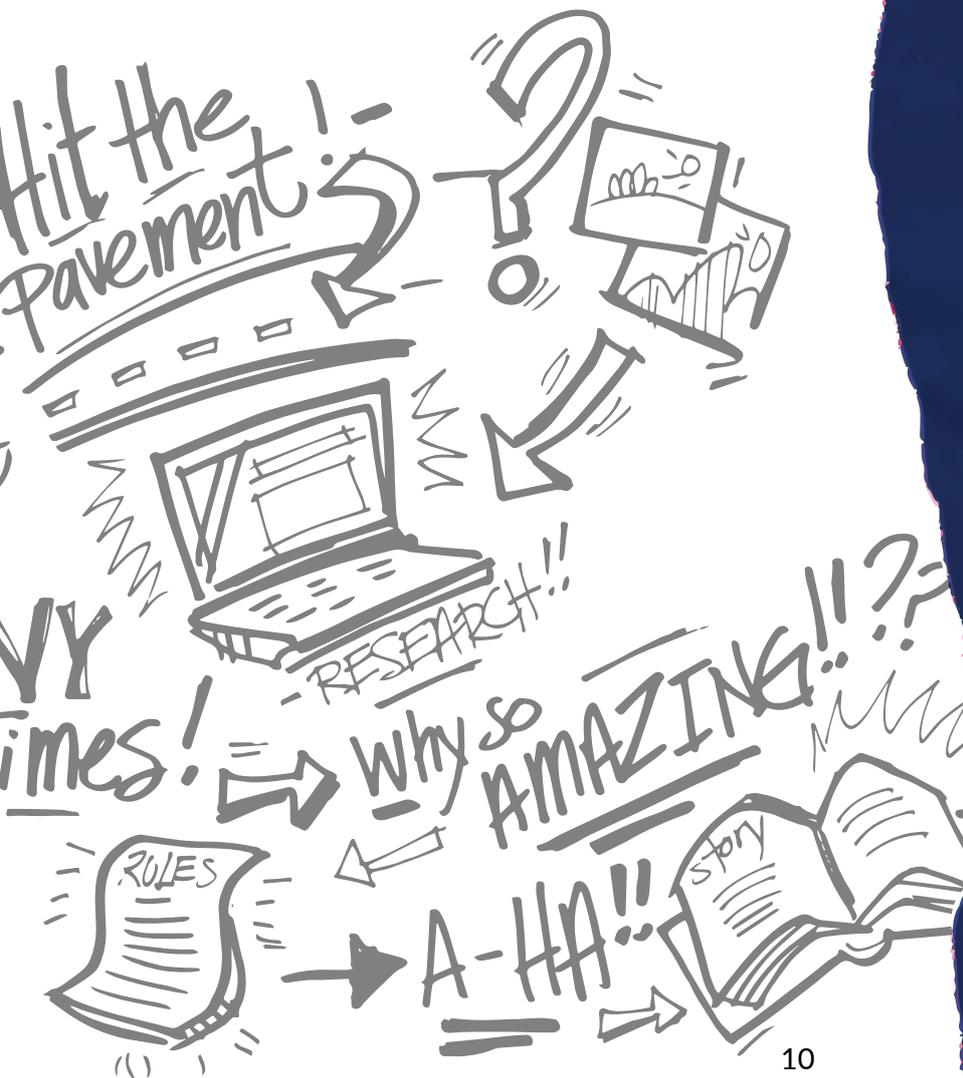
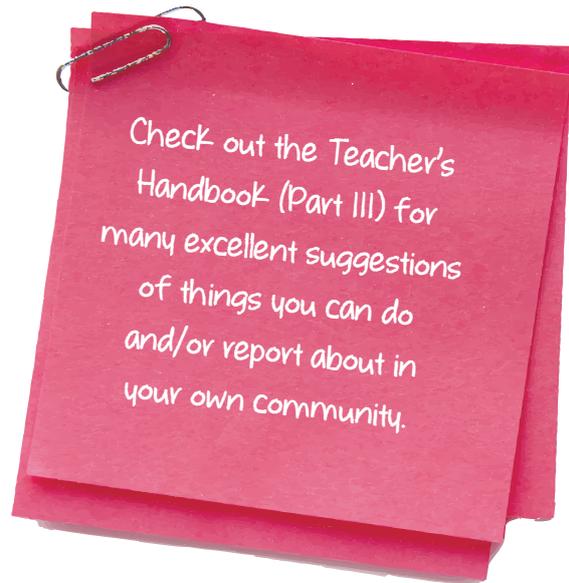
In this stage, it is strongly advised that you contact your local media (newspaper, TV, radio) to access information and get advice from an industry professional. You might need to get help from a teacher or a parent to do this, but you'll find that local journalists are accessible. They know your community well, and are open to ideas about what's going on. Once you secure access, and if the journalist is available, and convinced of the

It is important that YREs make it a point of honour to communicate about their report and actions taken. This last step gives an extra dimension to the project by allowing young reporters to use their work as a source of inspiration for their friends, family, neighbours, and community.

This can be done through various platforms: a photo exhibition, posters, video, conference, debate, school

newspaper, blog, social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, etc.). This will enhance your support network and provide an opportunity to discover the world of journalism.

Inform the local audience: Share your work locally through the media, e.g. newspaper, magazine, radio, television, social media, exhibition, film show, local events, etc.



Boots on the ground

YRE is eminently interdisciplinary, engaging students in a multitude of ways. Its strongest component, however, remains the investigative process. There is simply no replacement for getting YRE students out in the field.

