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GRECO

CAREER GUIDANCE

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Collaborative Report

Findings from Local Youth-Led Projects on Green Economy Careers

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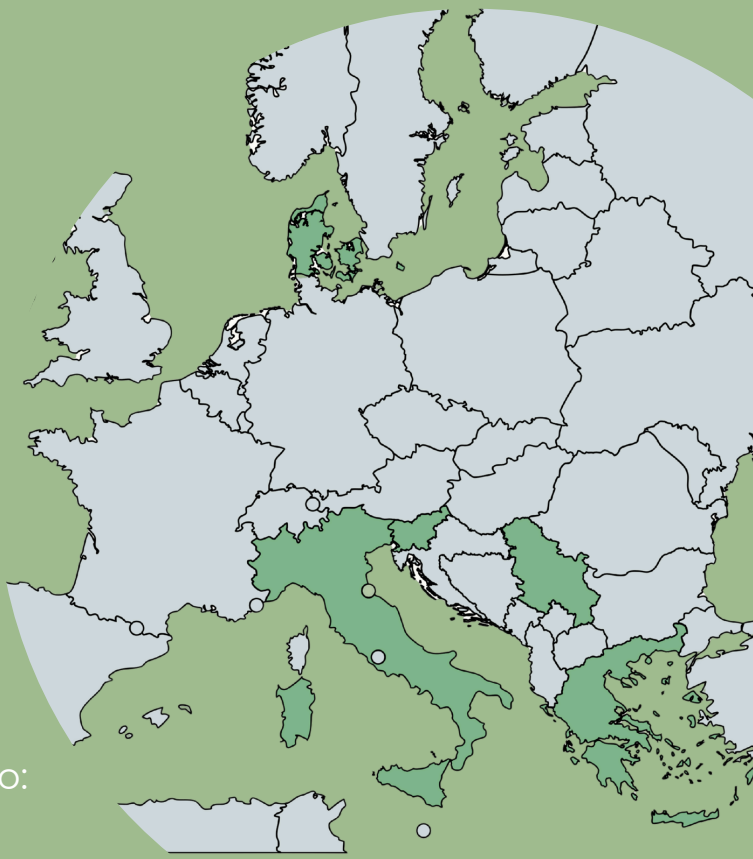
GRECO: GREEN ECONOMY CAREER ORIENTATION

Introduction

The **GRECO – Green Economy Career Orientation** project has one clear goal: to equip youth workers with the knowledge and tools to guide young people into **green careers**. It seeks to raise awareness about the potential of the green economy for employability and job creation, while also addressing the barriers young people face when entering this fast-changing sector.

The project brings together six partner organisations from **Denmark, Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Slovenia**.

In each country, youth workers carried out local projects, applying the Green Workforce Adaptation methodology. This included desk analyses of policies and natural resources as well as interviews with green job providers and employees. These activities generated valuable insights into **national green sectors, workforce needs**, and the **challenges** young people face in pursuing green careers.



The results, summarised in this report, offer valuable insights into:

- **Key sectors driving the green economy**
- **Policies supporting sustainability transitions**
- **Skills required for emerging green jobs**
- **Barriers and opportunities for youth employment**

Together, these findings highlight both the common trends and the unique contexts across the five partner countries.

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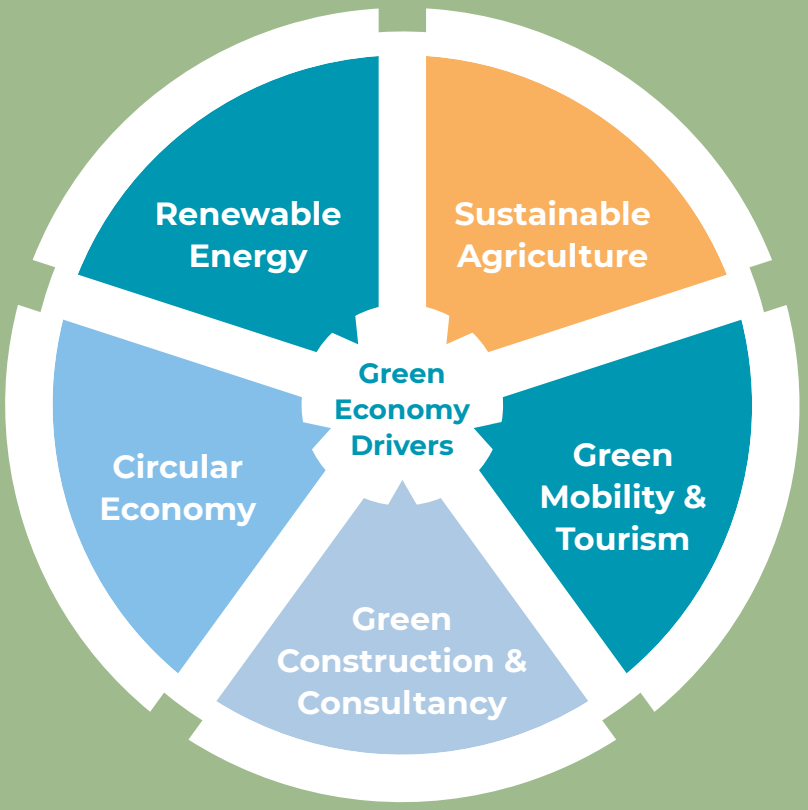
Key Sectors Driving the Green Economy

The green economy in all partner countries is built around **five main drivers**: **renewable energy**, **sustainable agriculture**, the **circular economy**, **green mobility & tourism**, and **green construction & consultancy**.

- **Denmark** leads in offshore wind, urban farming, and green consultancy.
- **Greece** focuses on solar, wind, eco-tourism, and maritime decarbonisation.
- **Serbia** shows potential in solar, recycling, and ecotourism.
- **Slovenia** highlights eco-tourism and circular projects like reuse centres.
- **Italy (Sicily)** combines agroecology, agro-photovoltaics, and eco-tourism.



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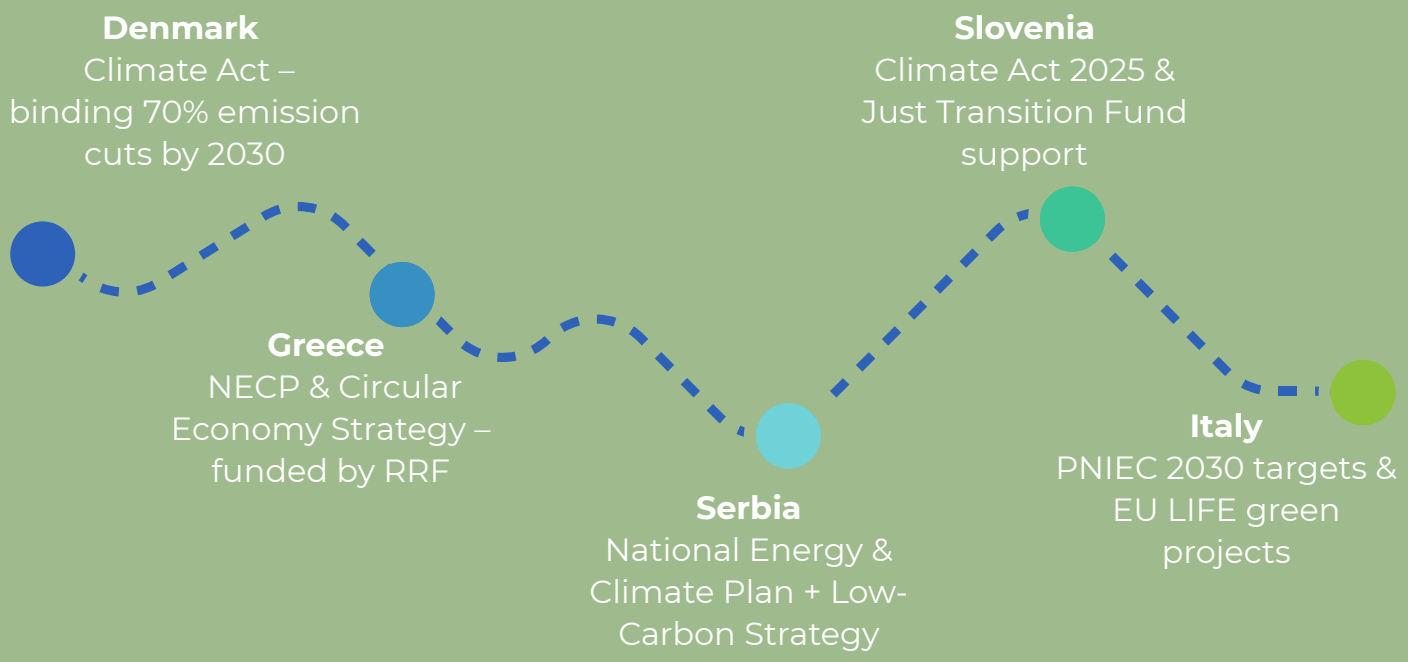
Policies Supporting Green Jobs

All partner countries are guided by national climate strategies aligned with EU goals, but each context has its own focus.

- In **Denmark**, the **Climate Act** sets binding emission targets that push investment in renewables.
- **Greece** advances with its **NECP, Circular Economy Strategy, and RRF funding**.
- **Serbia** follows a N**ational Energy & Climate Plan** and **low-carbon strategy**.
- **Slovenia** enforces the **Climate Act 2025** and uses the **Just Transition Fund**.
- **Italy** works through **PNIEC 2030** and **EU LIFE projects**.



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Skills required for emerging green jobs

Across all partner countries, green jobs demand a balanced mix of technical expertise, soft skills, and digital competencies, complemented by policy and financial knowledge. The research shows that **technical skills remain fundamental**, particularly in renewable energy systems, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and circular economy practices. However, **soft skills** such as adaptability, teamwork, problem-solving, project management, and effective communication are **consistently highlighted** by employers as equally decisive for long-term employability.

At the same time, **digital skills**—including **data analysis, GIS mapping, monitoring tools, and ESG reporting**—are becoming increasingly essential, especially in countries like **Denmark and Italy**, where innovation ecosystems are stronger. Finally, knowledge of **EU regulations, funding instruments, and sustainability reporting mechanisms** enhances career readiness and is particularly valuable in **Greece, Slovenia, and Serbia**, where policy frameworks play a central role in shaping opportunities.

Taken together, these findings underscore that emerging green jobs are inherently interdisciplinary. They require young people not only to master practical technical skills, but also to combine them with strong interpersonal abilities, digital literacy, and policy awareness.

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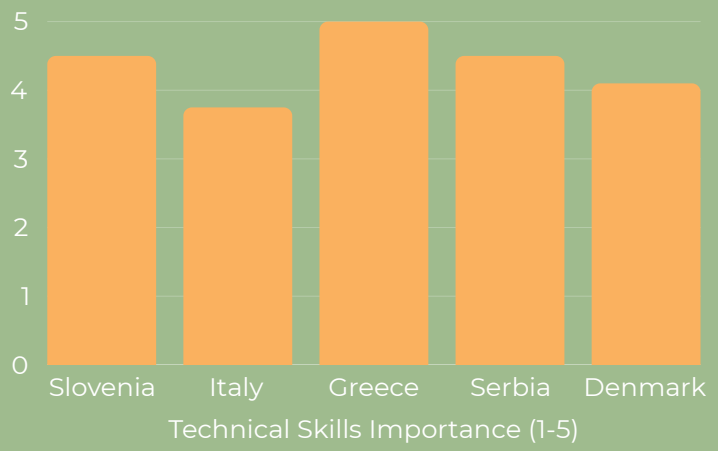
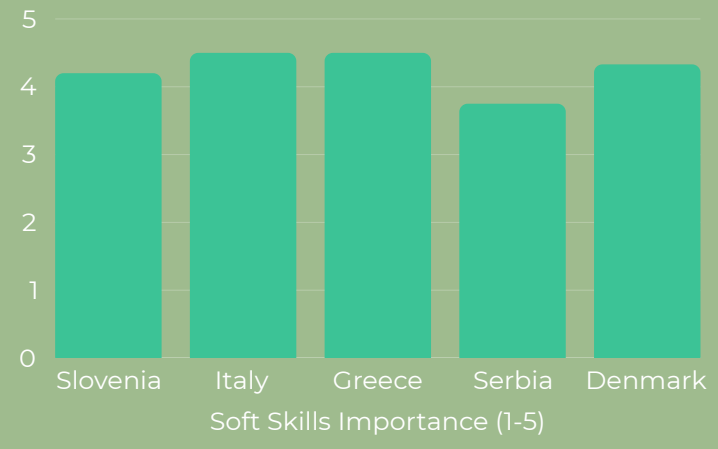
Skills required for emerging green jobs

To better illustrate these findings, the following infographics provide a comparative view across the five partner countries. They highlight how technical skills and soft skills are prioritised differently, reflecting national contexts and workforce needs.



Technical Skills Importance (1-5)



Soft Skills Importance (1-5)

The first chart shows the relative importance of technical skills in green jobs across the five partner countries. **In almost all countries technical skills importance is high, reflecting strong emphasis on sector-specific expertise**, while **Italy shows slightly lower levels**. The second chart highlights the importance of **soft skills, which are consistently valued across all countries**, emphasizing teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving as key competencies for youth entering green sectors. Together, these graphics illustrate that both technical and soft skills are critical, though their relative emphasis varies by national context, guiding targeted training and career support initiatives.

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Barriers and opportunities for youth employment

Across all partner countries, young people face several common barriers when entering green careers. **Limited practical training, few structured apprenticeships, and weak links between education and the labor market hinder employability**. Financial insecurity, low entry-level wages, and rural-urban disparities further restrict access, making it challenging for youth to pursue sustainable career pathways consistently across regions.

Country-specific differences influence how these barriers manifest. In **Serbia and Slovenia, administrative hurdles and geographic constraints slow entry into green sectors**, while **Greece and Italy contend with skills mismatches, brain drain, and limited hands-on learning opportunities**. In **Denmark, competition, language requirements, and reliance on higher education create selective access, particularly in consultancy and urban farming roles.** These variations highlight the need for targeted, context-specific interventions.

Despite these challenges, opportunities are growing across Europe. **EU-funded programs, local cooperatives, social enterprises, internships, mentoring schemes, and innovation hubs** provide youth with pathways into green sectors. Expanding hands-on learning, inclusive mentoring, and modular training programs can strengthen employability, gradually improving both the visibility and accessibility of green careers. Combined with sector growth and digital skill development, these initiatives offer promising avenues for a more inclusive, skilled green workforce across partner countries.

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Barriers and opportunities for youth employment

Growth Expectation

The green economy is expected to grow across Europe, but at varying rates. **Greece, Slovenia, and Italy** show the **highest growth expectations**, signaling strong potential for new jobs and youth engagement. **Denmark** follows, reflecting **solid opportunities** but more competition. **Serbia** has a **lower growth expectation**, indicating slower sector expansion and fewer accessible roles for young people. These differences highlight how local context shapes youth career prospects.

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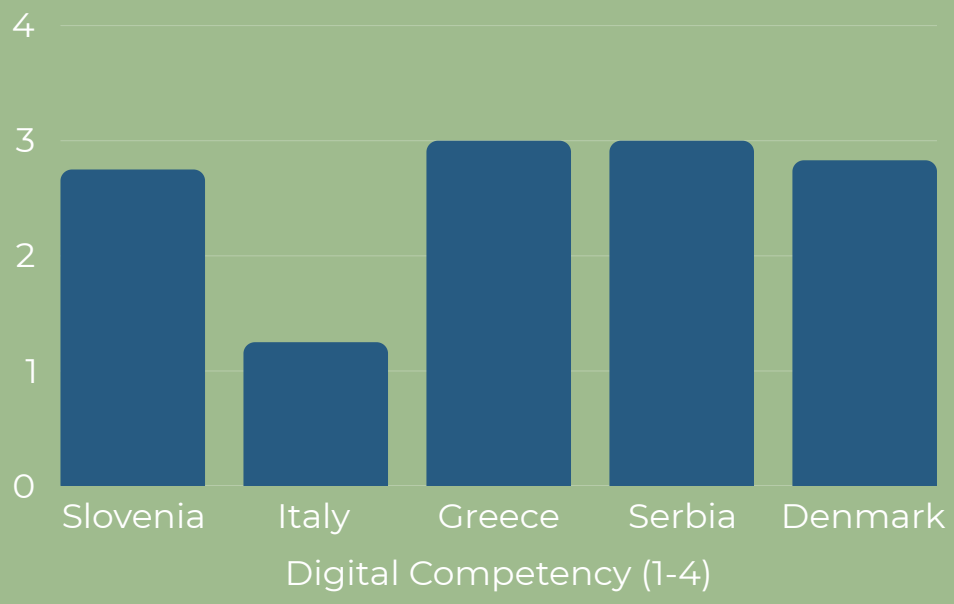
Barriers and opportunities for youth employment

Digital Competency



Digital skills among youth vary across partner countries. **Denmark, Slovenia, Greece, and Serbia show moderate readiness for technology-driven green jobs**, enabling youth to engage with tools such as GIS mapping, data analysis, and sustainability reporting. In contrast, **Italy demonstrates lower digital competency**, limiting youth access to tech-intensive roles. Strengthening digital skills through targeted training and practical experience is essential to improve employability and ensure that young people can fully participate in the evolving green economy.

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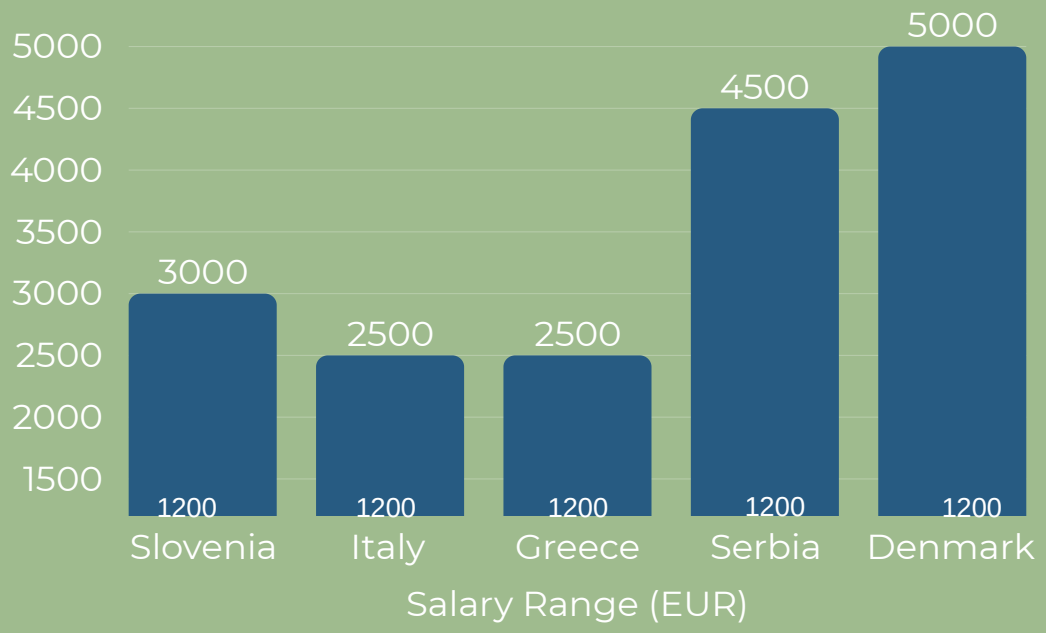
Barriers and opportunities for youth employment

Salary Range



Note: These are maximum gross salaries (including taxes and benefits), and these numbers come from only four interviews per country.

Entry-level salaries in green careers vary across partner countries, influencing youth access and employability. Greece, Italy, and Serbia offer the lowest salaries, which can limit opportunities for young people entering the sector. Slovenia provides somewhat higher earnings, offering better incentives compared to these countries. Denmark has the highest salaries, making green careers more financially attractive, though competition for positions remains strong. These differences highlight how local economic conditions and labor market structures affect the accessibility of green jobs for youth across Europe. These figures refer to maximum gross salaries (including taxes and benefits), based on only four interviews per country.

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Barriers and opportunities for youth employment

Training and Mentoring Opportunities for Youth

Across partner countries, training and mentoring play a key role in supporting youth entry into green careers, though availability and structure vary. In **Denmark and Italy, structured programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring schemes** provide practical skill development in sectors like renewable energy, consultancy, and urban farming. **Greece and Slovenia** rely on **social enterprises, workshops, and EU-funded projects** to offer hands-on experience. In **Serbia**, f**ormal training and mentoring opportunities are more limited**. Expanding and strengthening these programs across all countries is essential to improve youth skills, employability, and access to sustainable green careers.

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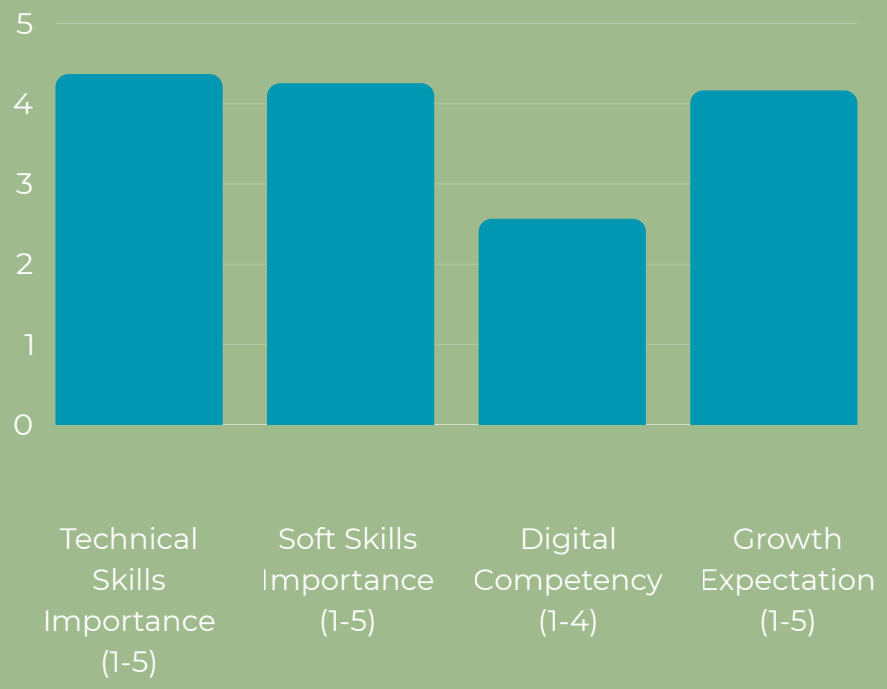
Final Considerations and Future Outlook

Across **Denmark, Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Slovenia,** young people seeking careers in the green economy face a combination of shared challenges and country-specific differences. Common barriers include **limited access to practical training**, **few structured apprenticeships**, **gaps** between **formal education and labor market needs**, and **financial constraints**, often compounded by rural-urban disparities. **Soft skills, technical skills, and growth expectations** are all **highly valued** across the five countries, while **digital competency remains moderate**, highlighting the need for targeted training to prepare youth for technology-driven roles.



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Final Considerations and Future Outlook

Positive sector growth, combined with strong skill development, offers promising opportunities supported by internships, mentoring, EU-funded initiatives, social enterprises, and innovation hubs. Sustained investment in hands-on training, inclusive mentoring, and clear career pathways will ensure young people in Denmark, Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Slovenia are well-prepared to meet the evolving demands of the green economy.

The **future of the green economy** holds **immense promise**, driven by innovation, sustainable practices, and the growing demand for environmentally conscious solutions. As countries continue to invest in renewable energy, circular economy initiatives, and eco-friendly industries, young people will play a pivotal role in shaping this transition. By **strengthening skills**, **expanding training** and **mentoring opportunities**, and fostering inclusive pathways, Europe can ensure that its next generation is ready to lead in a resilient, sustainable, and prosperous green economy. The time to act is now, for both people and the planet.

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