84 percent of Poles believe the climate is warming, but we need support to change habits

Contrary to stereotypes, awareness of climate change and care for the environment are not exclusive to the young, but increase with age, and pro-environmental behaviours are just as popular in big cities as in small towns. Startups can help to increase the availability of environmentally friendly products and services, but they also need support, as for investors and consumers economic considerations are more important than the mission – these are the findings of the survey conducted by Ipsos and Startup Academy, cat the request of ING Bank Śląski.

The results of a survey conducted among adult residents of Poland by Ipsos at the request of ING Bank Śląski indicate that the vast majority of respondents (84 per cent) recognize that the climate is warming. Contrary to stereotypes, awareness of climate change increases with age – it is lowest in the 18-34 age group (80 percent) and highest in the 45-65 age group (87 percent).

With age, the popularity of resource-saving or recycling behaviour also increases. Among other things, participants in the survey were asked about the pro-environmental changes they have implemented in their lives. The three most popular changes included reducing unnecessary purchases (57 percent), repairing broken things (53 percent), and taking care of and mending clothing to make it last longer (46 percent). As it turned out, when it comes to declared behaviours, there were no significant differences between people in difficult and good financial situations, nor between residents of different sized localities.

In what areas do people need support?

The Ipsos researchers also asked Poles about the areas in which they would need support to take further pro-environmental actions. The majority of responses indicated areas requiring expertise or experience, such as alternative energy sources (31 per cent), repairing broken things and energy-efficient household appliances (29 per cent each). In comparison, only 14 percent of respondents indicated the need for support in replacing meat or dairy products with plant-based alternatives. According to respondents, the most common barrier preventing people from living more sustainably was a lack of money (53 percent), followed by a lack of knowledge and motivation (by approximately 45 percent of respondents).

Poles believe in their own agency. Almost three quarters of respondents believe that if everyone made small changes, it could have a significant impact on combating climate change. However, they need support from state institutions and businesses as cost and a lack of expertise and motivation remain major barriers, **Anna Maria Stawiska, Senior Project Manager at Ipsos** says.

Innovative as a startup

A comparison of responses to questions about who should work on climate solutions and whom Poles would trust reveals a gap in expectations. This is because, on the one hand, over half of Poles believe that state institutions should work on solutions, but only one in three would trust the solutions of these institutions enough to even consider them. Only slightly higher confidence was enjoyed by well-known global companies. Significantly better results, however, were observed for well-known Polish companies and startups,

where the level of trust is closely aligned with the belief that these entities should be the ones creating solutions for environmental protection. As the strengths of startups, most respondents pointed to innovation, unconventional thinking, and a strong motivation for success.

Startups also need support

In parallel with the above-mentioned survey on the attitudes of Poles, a study was also conducted on startups in the field of sustainable development. It was carried out by the organization Startup Academy, which conducted interviews with representatives of 39 companies in this category.

The founders of these startups are very often united by the belief that their activities contribute to positive social or environmental change. However, their answers varied when asked how much their activities supporting sustainable development goals impact their ability to secure financing for further growth of their companies. As many as 59 percent of respondents stated that the impact is either neutral or even negative. It turns out that even for the funds supporting such businesses, the economic analysis and the speed of startup's value growth are more important than positive impact indicators. Meanwhile, for such startups, market competition is often challenging due to higher operating costs. And, as the Ipsos survey shows, Polish consumers are not willing to pay more than a few to a dozen percent for environmentally friendly products.

To meet the financial needs of sustainable development startups, it may be necessary to increase the importance of impact indicators in allocating financial support and to simplify grant procedures, especially for projects with relatively low initial costs, **Michał Misztal, CEO of Startup Academy** points out.

The Startup Academy study also revealed that the greatest needs of startups in the field of sustainable development include financing, human resources, strategic partnerships, support in sales and marketing, and legal advice. These startups, operating at high risk and in a dynamic environment, need both stable capital and access to expertise and contacts. Meeting these needs could significantly accelerate their growth, increase their ability to scale their operations and improve their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Poles expect business to provide solutions that support sustainable development. In addition to well-known Polish and global companies, they also rate highly startups, valuing their innovation but expressing concerns about their instability. Collaboration between large companies and startups can, therefore, bring benefits to all parties involved. Startups can benefit from the credibility of an established partner, in turn companies can benefit from the innovation and agility of a startup, and consumers can benefit from the greater availability of products and services, **Małgorzata Jarczyk-Zuber, Chief ESG Innovation Officer at ING Bank Śląski** says.

About the surveys and studies

Ipsos survey

Survey conducted on the Ipsos.Digital panel on a nationwide sample of N = 1,000 people. The sample was representative of Poles aged 18-65, with representativeness ensured in terms of gender, age, and region. Deadline for implementation: 25-29 October 2024 Methodology: CAWI.

Startup Academy study

The study was conducted using a qualitative and partially quantitative research methodology, based on in-depth interviews with representatives of startups operating in the field of sustainable development in Poland. The Startup Academy study involved interviews with representatives of 39 startups operating in the field of sustainable development. This group included projects that, in addition to business objectives, also take sustainable development goals into account, contributing to the creation of a fair society, improving human health, or caring for our planet.

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