

ANSWER project

ANSWER - ANxieties and Social coping strategies Within the last 50 years in the context of Natural EnviRonment: A Comparative Case Study of Poland, the Ukraine, and Hungary.

Summary for general public

Current society is confronted with new types of risks related to threats associated with technological progress and environmental damage. Climate change, weather anomalies, drinking water shortage, a significant drop in agricultural yields, etc., are just a few examples. They all refer to the deteriorating quality of the natural environment. Environmental threats generate various types of anxieties that influence the decision-making process. They affect not only attitudes in social life but also the decisions and actions of public authorities. It should be noted that environmental anxieties are perceived differently in different countries, change over time and sometimes diminish, especially when assessed with other problems.

The ANSWER project investigates environmental anxieties and coping strategies in three Central and Eastern European countries (Poland, Ukraine, Hungary). Environmental anxiety is understood here as a social response uncertain environmental problems.

During the project, we will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What environmental anxieties can be identified and contrasted with other types of anxieties in the perceptions of people residing in Poland, the Ukraine, and Hungary?
2. What coping strategies for environmental anxieties can currently be observed in the societies of Poland, the Ukraine, and Hungary?
3. How can coping strategies for environmental anxieties be employed to manage anxieties and develop helpful routines/procedures?
4. How have the perceptions of environmental anxiety and coping strategies changed over the last 50 years in Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary?

The project combines a variety of research methods that aim to assess the scale of environmental anxieties, their importance and get more detailed information on their nature and change over time. The project will involve representative survey research, biographical interviews, and experimental research using an innovative discussion method (Q-deliberation).

The project results will be transferable to environmental management, such as educating and strengthening resilience to anxieties, focusing on specific research areas, or offering countermeasures that provide a higher level of the collective sense of security. In scientific terms, the project will also validate the tools for assessing environmental anxieties that can be used for research in the future. Moreover, the study will capture the changes over the last 50 years. This perspective is valuable information for understanding the specifics of our current anxieties and how they are rooted in general intergenerational patterns. Finally, the study will organize and consolidate sociological knowledge in the subject area that is currently poorly captured and fragmented.