2026 Compendium of ESD stories – Role of ESD in advancing SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 & 17

Bernard Combes
Independant expert

Introduction

Concept

Building on the example set by the UNECE Regional SDG Report, it was decided to compile a compendium of practical and compelling examples and stories demonstrating how ESD and the four priority strands *[Quality education and ESD; Whole-institution approach / institutions as communities of transformational learning; Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD; and Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD]* of the UNECE ESD Strategy have been successfully implemented to support the SDGs under review in 2026.

The examples and stories collected help demonstrate how the UNECE ESD Strategy supports and accelerates the implementation of the five SDGs under review in 2026 *[SDG 6 on water and sanitation; SDG 7 on energy; SDG 9 on industrialization and innovation; SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 17 on partnership]* at the local, national, regional and international levels. Drawn from a diverse range of UNECE member States and stakeholder groups, they can serve as evidence-based contributions to the 2026 Regional Forum and help promote policy learning, peer exchange, and broader uptake of effective ESD practices across the UNECE region.

Analysis of the findings

A total of 68 submissions were received from 22 UNECE member countries: Albania (2), Armenia, Austria (10), Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina (7), Canada (2), Cyprus, Finland (3), France (2), Georgia, Germany (4), Hungary (5), Ireland (7), Malta, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Portugal (3), Romania (3), Slovenia (2), Türkiye (9), Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

The examples collected provide an overview of how ESD addresses the SDGs under review in 2026. The following tables offer a more detailed presentation of the findings.

1. ENTITIES DEVELOPING PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Entity	Percentage
Educational institutions (including higher education)	29%
Government entities / Ministries	29%
NGOs / Civil society organizations	29%
Local government / municipalities	9%
UN system / EU	5%

2. RELEVANCE TO THE 5 SDGs UNDER REVIEW

SDG	Percentage
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities	75%
SDG 17 - Partnerships	60%
SDG 9 - Industry and innovation	49%
SDG 6 - Water and sanitation	44%
SDG 7 - Clean energy	34%

3. IMPACT ON STAKEHOLDERS

Group	Percentage
Learners	84%
Educators	79%
Community	69%
Country (governmental entities)	19%

4. ALIGNMENT WITH UNECE ESD STRATEGY

Priority strand	Percentage
Quality education and ESD	91%
Whole-institution approach	87%
Digital education and ICT	43%
Entrepreneurship and innovation	40%

5. KEY PLAYERS INVOLVED	
Actor	**Percentage**
Educators/teachers/trainers	74%
Students/learners	69%
Educational institutions	63%
NGOs/Civil society	53%
Government entities	49%
Local community/citizens	44%
Youth/youth organizations	31%
Local government/policy makers	26%
School administration/management	24%
Cities/municipalities	24%
International organizations	19%
Corporate/private sector	16%
Other stakeholders	10%

6. POSITIVE IMPACTS	
Impact type	**Percentage**
Raising awareness	97%
Strengthening competencies	91%
Transforming people's behaviors	88%
Promoting community action	87%
Involving government/private sector	59%
Changing educational policies	37%

7. CROSS-CUTTING DIMENSIONS	
Dimension	**Percentage**
Youth dimension	87%
Gender dimension	74%

Challenges and lessons learnt

An analysis of the examples collected provides an opportunity to reflect on challenges and lessons learnt in implementing ESD projects in the UNECE region.

Challenges to ESD implementation

The challenges that were highlighted may help explain why the UNECE region is lagging behind on achieving some of the SDGs.

- **Resistance to change and institutional inertia** – We like things to stay the way they are and there is a certain inertia within systems, administration and bureaucracy. Certain areas within administration may exhibit scepticism towards new management approaches and participatory decision-making practices.
- **Balancing sustainability with daily operations in institutions** -- Ongoing sustainability efforts often take a back seat to immediate operational needs, making long-term progress difficult to sustain.
- **Legal and regulatory barriers** – inconsistencies in local regulations can hinder the implementation of new practices and procedures.
- **Technical limitations and infrastructure** – the state of local infrastructure often does not allow for the implementation of recommended measures and innovations.
- **Working within a diverse education landscape** -- schools, universities and non-formal organisations face different conditions, priorities and constraints and this means support must be flexible and practical, while still offering a shared direction.

- **Connecting policy objectives with school implementation** – clear policies alone do not always result in high-quality teaching. Often, competing priorities within policies can complicate efforts to achieve lasting transformation at the policy, school, and community levels.
- **Limited connection between formal and non-formal education systems** -- stronger dialogue and bridges between formal and non-formal education need to be in place.
- **Coordination among stakeholders** – everyone understands that a multistakeholder approach is the best way to go, but integrating different sectors requires additional efforts in planning, strong communication and clear responsibilities.

Lessons learnt from ESD implementation

Several key lessons were put forward in the examples received.

- **Importance of a whole-institution approach** – clearly something that people are better understanding and are putting in place. Transforming institutions through collective learning enables long-term and sustainable changes in governance.
- **Importance of linking sustainability messages to everyday actions** -- the messages and key elements from reports on sustainable development issues need to be translated into simple messages so that people can link them to their daily lives and daily actions. Sustainability becomes effective only when it is visible and shared across the whole community.
- **Role of education, training and awareness-raising** – continuous training of educators, government representatives and citizens is key to changing behaviours and ensuring sustainability of results.
- **Participatory and inclusive decision-making processes** – involving citizens and local stakeholders increases transparency, accountability, and the acceptability of decisions.
- **Intersectoral, interdisciplinary and multi stakeholder cooperation** – coordination and working together across different sectors and disciplines improves the efficiency and quality of initiatives and ensures many voices are heard.
- **Structures shape outcomes** — highly bureaucratic and institutionalized environments can make it challenging for people to actively contribute to sustainable processes.
- **Innovation needs strong planning** --- having trained individuals and technical support can move projects successfully from idea to practice.
- **Impact requires ownership, time, continuity and stable support** — meaningful initiatives depend not only on ideas, but on clear responsibility and resources to sustain them.
- **Focus on future generations** – we must give youth more decision-making power, and more opportunities for involvement. Youth-led initiatives prove highly effective in sustaining motivation and impact and in moving past short-term thinking in favour of a generational lens for a long-term vision.

Ways forward

A key objective of Education for Sustainable Development is to support transformative learning processes that influence how people understand and respond to global challenges.

Meaningful change requires the need for action at multiple levels and ensuring that sustainability is embedded across all activities. Both bottom-up motivation and top-down support are essential, as change driven from only one direction is unlikely to lead to lasting transformation.

Engaging staff, students and partners builds commitment, while cooperation with municipalities, organisations and other institutions enhances innovation, reduces costs and increases overall impact.

Continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders will be crucial to equip them to promote sustainability concepts effectively, both inside and outside the classroom.

Strengthening long-term cross-sector partnerships and fostering meaningful community collaboration will require ongoing coordination, commitment and adopting flexible context-sensitive approaches.

Ensuring that curricular objectives align with real-world applications remains a forward-looking challenge, emphasizing the need for sustained engagement from educators, school leadership, government officials, community leaders, and local stakeholders.

Embedding sustainability requires establishing assessment frameworks that capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative transformation. It also requires going beyond just the environmental dimension of sustainability and address economy, social justice, human rights, culture and sustainable lifestyles – all these are interconnected.

We must rethink our educational systems, the way that ESD is conceived and implemented. As Paulo Freire said: *"Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People change the world."* All this will strengthen future initiatives, building the systematic infrastructure necessary for generational change and ensuring that we meet the targets of the SDGs.

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From Curriculum to Action: Sustainability Learning in Albanian Schools

Albania's national curriculum integrates environmental sustainability across pre-university education as part of a competency-based approach to learning. Concepts such as water management, energy efficiency, environmental protection and the responsible use of technology are addressed through different subjects as well as through cross-curricular themes, in line with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. These topics are integrated across several subjects, including science, geography, civic education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), allowing students to explore environmental issues from different perspectives while developing knowledge, skills and responsible attitudes towards the environment.
These curricular priorities are also supported in practice through initiatives such as the "21st Century Schools" programme, which introduced coding and digital problem-solving activities in schools using tools such as micro:bit. Through interdisciplinary and project-based learning activities, students engage with real-world sustainability challenges, including water conservation, energy efficiency and environmental monitoring, while developing digital and collaborative skills. The process of updating the national curriculum undertaken by the Ministry of Education aims to further strengthen the integration of sustainability, digital competencies and real-life problem solving in teaching and learning. It seeks to better reflect current social, technological and environmental developments, while also drawing on experiences gained through initiatives such as the 21st Century Schools programme.

Contacts

Ministry of Education (ME)
Quality Assurance Agency of Pre-University Education (QAAPE)

Photos provided by participating schools and the Ministry of Education with permission for publication.

General Description

The initiative builds on the ongoing reform of the national curriculum in Albania, which integrates sustainable development and 21st century competencies as key elements of teaching and learning. Sustainability is addressed as a cross-curricular theme, helping students understand environmental, social and technological challenges. Programmes such as **"21st Century Schools"** support the practical implementation of these concepts through coding, physical computing and problem-solving activities that help students apply sustainability knowledge to real-life situations.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The **"21st Century Schools" programme**, implemented in cooperation with the British Council, introduces coding and digital problem-solving activities in schools through tools such as **micro:bit**. Through project-based learning, students explore real-world sustainability challenges and develop practical solutions using digital technologies.

SDG 6 – Water: Students design simple digital models and monitoring systems related to water use and conservation. Through coding activities and interdisciplinary projects, they explore ways to promote responsible water consumption and environmental protection.

SDG 7 – Energy: Coding projects allow students to explore concepts related to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Students develop simple automated systems that demonstrate responsible energy use in everyday life.

SDG 9 – Innovation: The programme strengthens digital competencies, coding skills and innovation among students. By creating technological solutions to real-world challenges, learners develop creativity, problem-solving abilities and an innovation mindset.

SDG 11 – Sustainable communities: Students apply coding and digital tools to develop ideas related to safer and more sustainable communities, linking school learning with local environmental and social challenges.

SDG 17 – Partnerships: The programme is implemented through collaboration between national education institutions and the British Council, demonstrating how partnerships support innovation and sustainability in education.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: The programme has strengthened competency-based learning by supporting teachers in integrating coding and problem-solving activities into the learning process. More than 5,500 teachers and school leaders from 1,176 lower secondary schools have been trained to apply coding and computational thinking skills in the classroom. As a result, students engage in project-based learning activities that connect digital skills with real-world sustainability challenges.

Whole-institution approach: The programme has supported systemic implementation across schools through mentoring and professional collaboration. Teachers and school leaders in 1,176 schools have received mentoring support for integrating coding and digital problem-solving into teaching practice. In addition, 545 professional network leaders have been trained to support peer learning and the exchange of good practices about sustainability among schools.

Digital education and ICT: The initiative has expanded access to digital learning tools in schools. Around 23,500 micro:bit devices have been distributed to schools, enabling students to develop coding skills and apply technology to real-life challenges through hands-on activities.

Entrepreneurship and innovation: Through coding projects and digital problem-solving tasks, students develop creativity, innovation skills and the ability to design simple technological solutions related to environmental and community challenges.

Key players involved

The Ministry of Education leads curriculum reform and integration of sustainability competencies. Quality Assurance Agency of Preuniversity Education (QAAPE) ensures alignment with quality standards and supports teacher professional development. The British Council contributes through the "21st Century Schools" programme, strengthening implementation through innovative methodologies and digital tools. Schools and teachers operationalize curriculum changes, while students actively engage in applying sustainability concepts in practice.

Positive impact areas

- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Strengthening competencies: The programme has significantly strengthened digital and problem-solving competencies among teachers and students. More than 6,500 teachers have been trained to integrate coding and computational thinking into the teaching process. As a result, students increasingly engage in coding activities and project-based learning that develop logical thinking, creativity and digital skills.

Raising awareness: Through coding and digital projects, students become more aware of the responsible use of technology and its potential to address real-life challenges. Activities using tools such as micro:bit encourage students to explore solutions related to environmental protection, energy efficiency and community well-being.

Involving government and/or private sector: The programme demonstrates effective collaboration between public institutions and international partners. It is implemented through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, ASCAP and the British Council, strengthening the capacity of schools to adopt innovative digital learning approaches.

Changing educational policies: The experience gained through the programme has contributed to strengthening the integration of coding, digital skills and computational thinking within teaching practices and curriculum development processes in pre-university education.

Youth dimension

Students are the main participants in the programme. Through coding activities and project-based learning using tools such as micro:bit, they develop digital skills and apply them to explore real-life challenges related to their communities and environment. These activities encourage creativity, teamwork and problem-solving, while enabling young people to actively contribute ideas and solutions that promote responsible use of technology and sustainable development.

Gender dimension

Gender inclusion has been an important objective of the programme. One of its targets has been to ensure that at least 50% of the students participating in coding clubs are girls. Through inclusive learning activities and equal access to digital tools such as micro:bit, the programme encourages girls' participation in coding, technology and innovation, helping reduce gender stereotypes and promoting equal opportunities in STEM-related learning.

Challenges or lessons learnt

A key future challenge is advancing the integration of sustainability across the curriculum and the wider school culture. Continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders will be crucial to equip them to promote sustainability concepts effectively, both inside and outside the classroom. Strengthening cross-sector partnerships and fostering meaningful community collaboration will require ongoing coordination and commitment. Ensuring that curricular objectives align with real-world applications remains a forward-looking challenge, emphasizing the need for sustained engagement from educators, leadership, and local stakeholders.

Further resources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFA5y8eMeQA
- https://en.ata.gov.al/2020/10/26/21st-century-schools-program-ambitious-project-that-prepares-young-people-for-labor-market/

SmartLabs: Strengthening Digital Education for Sustainable Development

The SmartLabs initiative is a national programme launched by the Government of Albania in 2022 to strengthen digital infrastructure in pre-university education and to support the development of digital and sustainability-related competencies among students.
The programme started with a pilot phase, where smartlabs were established and the ICT subject was introduced for the first time starting from Grade 1 in the national curriculum. SmartLabs are equipped with laptops, smartboard, digital learning platforms and interactive technologies that support coding, computational thinking and project-based learning. Recently SmartLabs are used not only for ICT classes but also for other subjects such as mathematics, science and languages etc. Teachers use the laboratories to organize digital research activities, collaborative projects and presentations addressing topics such as environmental sustainability, energy consumption, water use etc..
To support the effective use of SmartLabs, teachers participate in training modules offered through the National Programme for Teachers' Professional Development, an initiative of the Ministry of Education that provides free training on the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in teaching and learning.
The programme is currently expanding nationwide, with the objective of establishing over 1000 SmartLabs by 2027, improving equitable access to digital learning environments across Albania.

Contacts

Ministry of Education (ME)
Quality Assurance Agency of Pre-University Education (QAAPE)

Photos provided by participating schools and the Ministry of Education with permission for publication.

General Description

The SmartLabs initiative aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning by equipping schools with digital laboratories and supporting the integration of technology into everyday classroom practice. SmartLabs provide teachers and students with digital tools that can be used across different subjects, not only in ICT classes. Through these laboratories, students work on research and project-based activities related to topics such as water use, energy, infrastructure and sustainable communities. In this way, SmartLabs help students develop digital skills while exploring real-world issues connected to sustainable development.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (*by educating students through curriculum and project-based learning on water consumption and management)*
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (*by educating students through curriculum and project-based learning on using alternative renewable energy)*
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation *(by ensuring access to Smart labs of all categories of students)*
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The SmartLabs initiative contributes primarily to **SDG 9** by improving digital infrastructure in schools and supporting the development of digital competencies among students. Through these laboratories, students learn to use digital tools for research, data analysis and project work, strengthening skills related to innovation, problem solving and technology use.

The initiative also contributes to **SDG 11** by encouraging students to explore issues related to their local communities. In SmartLabs, students work on interdisciplinary projects where they investigate topics such as water use, energy efficiency and environmental protection, using digital tools to collect information, analyze data and present their findings.
SmartLabs also support **SDG 17** through collaboration between different institutions. The initiative is implemented through cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Sports, the National Agency for Information Society (AKSHI), education agencies and local education authorities. This collaboration supports the development of digital education policies and the expansion of SmartLabs across the country.
In relation to **SDG 6 and SDG 7**, SmartLabs provide opportunities for students to explore topics such as water use, water protection, renewable energy and energy efficiency through learning activities in different subjects, including science and geography.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- **Quality education** and ESD
- **Whole-institution approach** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- **Digital education**, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: The initiative started with a pilot phase in 100 schools and is planned to expand to more than 1000 SmartLabs nationwide by 2027. Teachers are supported through training modules offered within the National Programme for Teachers' Professional Development, which focus on integrating digital tools into teaching across different subjects. Through these laboratories, thousands of students participate in digital research and project-based learning activities that explore topics such as water use, energy efficiency and sustainable communities.
Whole-institution approach: SmartLabs are integrated into the everyday teaching practice of schools and are supported through national education policies and regulatory frameworks. According to the Joint Instruction No. 20, dated 13 January 2025, on the organization of the 2025–2026 school year in the pre-university education system, school leaders are responsible for ensuring the effective use of SmartLabs to support the teaching and learning process for all students. As a result, SmartLabs are included in school planning and timetables and are used across different subjects, not only for ICT classes. This approach encourages collaboration among teachers and supports interdisciplinary learning activities, allowing SmartLabs to function as shared learning environments within the school.
Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD: SmartLabs have strengthened the use of digital technologies in everyday teaching and learning across several subjects, including ICT, science and geography. Teachers use the laboratories to organize research activities, data analysis and digital presentations as part of regular classroom practice. Through these activities, large numbers of students develop practical digital competencies such as searching and evaluating information, working with digital data and presenting their findings using digital tools. These learning activities are often linked with sustainability topics, including water use, energy efficiency and environmental protection, helping students understand how digital technologies can be used to investigate real environmental challenges and support responsible decision-making.

Key players involved

The Ministry of Education, together with the National Agency for Information Society, leads the SmartLab rollout and manages infrastructure and digital implementation. QAAPE supports pedagogical integration and quality assurance. Local education authorities coordinate the implementation at regional level. School principals organize the use of SmartLabs in school plans and timetables. Teachers use digital tools in their lessons across different subjects. Students actively participate in research and project-based learning activities.

Positive impact areas

- strengthening competencies
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies

Progress made

The introduction of SmartLabs has contributed to strengthening the digital competencies of both students and teachers in schools. In schools with Smartlabs, around 66,224 students from the first four grades are developing basic skills in digital technologies, coding and logical thinking through learning activities supported by SmartLabs. These laboratories provide a digital environment where students practice problem-solving, digital research and collaborative work using modern technological tools. At the same time, teachers strengthen their professional competencies through training and practical experience in integrating digital technologies into everyday teaching.

Learning activities developed in SmartLabs help students develop greater awareness of the responsible and safe use of digital technologies. Through guided activities and classroom discussions, students learn about safe online behavior, responsible use of digital tools and the broader impact that technology can have on society and the environment. These experiences encourage students to reflect on how digital technologies should be used in a responsible and sustainable way.

Youth dimension

Students are the main participants in SmartLabs learning activities. In these laboratories, they actively engage in digital research, collaborative projects and problem-solving tasks related to real-life challenges in their communities. Through these experiences, young people develop digital and critical thinking skills, learn to use technology responsibly and strengthen their capacity to contribute ideas and solutions related to sustainable development.

Gender dimension

SmartLabs promote equal access to digital infrastructure for girls and boys, supporting inclusive participation in technology-enabled and sustainability-focused learning.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges has been ensuring that SmartLabs are used regularly and effectively in different subjects and by all teachers. Experience has shown that providing digital equipment alone is not enough. Teachers need continuous training and support to feel confident using digital tools in their everyday teaching. Another lesson learned is the importance of good school planning so that SmartLabs are used by many classes and benefit a large number of students.

Further resources

- https://www.kryeministria.al/en/newsroom/laboratoret-inteligjente-shtrijne-harten-e-tyre-digjitale-ne-shkolla-per-nje-edukim-digjital-cilesor-te-femijeve/
- https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1371268654276928

Transforming ESD through UNESCO Chair of Center for Ecological-Noosphere Studies

The UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the Center for Ecological-Noosphere Studies (CENS) of NAS Armenia represents a comprehensive and integrated model for advancing sustainable development through education, research and community engagement.
Through a whole-institution approach the Chair supports the implementation of high-quality academic programs, innovative teaching and learning models, lifelong learning initiatives, teacher professional development, linking higher education, schools, research, policy. The scientific interdisciplinarity of the Center for Ecological-Noosphere Studies enables the Chair to cover a broad spectrum of the SD Goals.
Key activities include the MD program in "Environmental Protection and Nature Management", interdisciplinary modules such as "Urban Ecology"; "Research Logic" ets., project-based teacher trainings, youth scientific seasonal schools and community-based environmental education programs. For example, on 2025 the UNESCO Chair trained 141 teachers and engaged 94 learners in project-based learning and scientific research activities, while 8 teachers received UNESCO-certified training on Ozone layer protection. These initiatives directly contribute SDGs 6, 9, 11, 17 by strengthening ecological literacy, fostering innovation thinking, promoting sustainable urban development and building strong partnerships.
This case demonstrates how UNESCO Chairs can act as transformative hubs, connecting education and science to advance ESD, accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

Contacts

+374(10)57-29-24, Info@cens.am

General Description

The goal of the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development at CENS is to promote systemic educational transformation by integrating sustainability principles into higher education, school education, research, and lifelong learning. The Chair aims to strengthen ecological literacy, scientific thinking, and innovation capacities among students, educators, and communities, while fostering institutional, national, and international partnerships to support sustainable development pathways in Armenia and the wider region.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The activities of the UNESCO Chair directly contribute to addressing multiple sustainability challenges through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). **SDG 11** is supported through academic modules such as Urban Ecology and community-based programs focused on sustainable cities, environmental management and climate resilience. SDG 9 is advanced through research-oriented teaching, innovation-driven learning models, and the development of scientific competencies among students and teachers, fostering problem-solving and research-based decision-making.
SDGs 6 is addressed through environmental education programs focused on water resource protection, energy efficiency, climate change, and ozone layer protection. In 2025, eight teachers received UNESCO-certified training to deliver specialized lessons on ozone protection, amplifying awareness and action across school communities.
SDG 17 is embedded throughout the model via strong partnerships between the National Academy of Sciences, higher education institutions, ISEC, UNESCO Associated Schools, international universities, Erasmus networks, and global initiatives such as GLOBE and UNITWIN. These partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange, mobility, joint research, and capacity building, creating a collaborative ecosystem for sustainable development education and long-term societal impact.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The UNESCO Chair exemplifies a whole-institution approach, embedding ESD across academic programs, teacher training, research, and community engagement. High-quality education is ensured through interdisciplinary curricula, research-based teaching methods, and continuous professional development of educators.

Innovative pedagogical models, including project-based learning, blended learning formats, and digital educational tools, enhance accessibility, flexibility, and learner engagement. The lifelong learning training model for educators strengthens digital competencies and adaptive teaching practices, enabling educators to respond to emerging sustainability challenges.

Entrepreneurship, innovation, and employability are fostered through scientific research projects, youth scientific seasonal schools, and interdisciplinary training programs that equip learners with transferable skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving capacities. These approaches prepare students and teachers to act as change agents within their institutions and communities.

So these priority strands generate transformative impacts by reshaping educational culture, strengthening institutional capacities, promoting sustainability-oriented mindsets, and building resilient learning ecosystems aligned with the goals of sustainable development.

Key players involved

Key players include the Center for Ecological-Noosphere Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO Associated Schools, Schools, local and regional educational authorities and global networks such as UNITWIN, GLOBE and Erasmus+.

CENS provides scientific leadership, research infrastructure, and academic expertise. The UNESCO Chair coordinates educational strategy, curriculum development, teacher training, and international cooperation.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project has significantly strengthened ecological literacy, sustainability competencies, and scientific thinking among teachers, students, and communities. In 2025, 141 teachers participated in training programs, while 94 students engaged in research-based and project-based learning activities, fostering behavioral change and active environmental citizenship. Community outreach initiatives, youth scientific seasonal schools, and public awareness campaigns have enhanced understanding of sustainability challenges, promoting responsible resource use, environmental protection.

The integration of innovative teaching models and interdisciplinary curricula has strengthened institutional capacities, enabling schools and universities to adopt sustainability- oriented pedagogies. Partnerships with international networks and donor programs have expanded institutional reach and enhanced the quality and impact of educational interventions. Overall, these results underscore significant progress in cultivating resilient learning ecosystems, reinforcing environmental responsibility, and enabling long-term sustainable development pathways.

Youth dimension

Youth engagement is a core element of the UNESCO Chair's activities. Through youth scientific seasonal schools, research internships, school visits, and project-based learning programs, students actively participate in environmental research, sustainability projects, and community actions.

Gender dimension

Women are actively involved as researchers, trainers, educators, teachers. But all CENS projects promotes gender equality by ensuring equal access for female and male students, teachers and educators to academic programs, training courses, and leadership opportunities.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Key challenges included limited financial resources, workload pressures, and the complexity of coordinating multi-sectoral partnerships. These were addressed through strategic collaborations and the development of flexible learning models.

Further resources

- https://cens.am/en/

FreshNet: Education & Partnerships for Sustainable Freshwater Management in Eastern Africa

FreshNet is a partnership in higher-education and research dedicated to strengthening the sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems & it's resources in Eastern Africa. The project is implemented by BOKU University (Austria), IHE Delft (The Netherlands), Egerton University (Kenya), Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), Bahir Dar University (Ethiopia), EIAR-NFLARC (Ethiopia), plus more than 20 collaborating institutions.
At the core of FreshNet are international joint degree Master's programmes integrating academic excellence with real-world challenges. Through skills-oriented & student-centred learning and inter- & transdisciplinary courses, FreshNet supports the training of a new generation of professionals equipped to address complex freshwater issues in the context of competing water demands, climate change and biodiversity crisis.
FreshNet educates 74 young professionals (30 women) via the joint Master's programmes in Limnology & Wetland Management (LWM, 50 participants) and Aquatic Ecosystems & Environmental Management (AEEM, 24 participants), delivers at least 75 SDG-relevant contributions, expands the AQUAHUB knowledge & networking platform to > 600 members, and implements 11 collaborative research and capacity development projects.
The project engages a critical mass of Eastern African actors engaged in education, research, innovation and policy to advance sustainable freshwater ecosystem management and to support evidence-based governance towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Contacts

BOKU (Coordinator): Gerold Winkler
Egerton University: Assoc. Prof. Nzula Kitaka
Addis Ababa University: Prof. Tadesse Fetahi
Bahir Dar University: Assoc. Prof. Getachew Beneberu

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General Description

The project aims to strengthen sustainable freshwater ecosystem management and support progress toward the SDGs. It promotes capacity development at individual and institutional levels in Eastern Africa and enhances North-South & South-South networking among HEST institutions that educate professionals, conduct relevant research, develop locally adapted management strategies, inform evidence-based policies, and foster regional and international collaboration.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6: Competency-based, practice-oriented training in water-quality monitoring, wetland management and ecological assessment equips learners with skills directly applied in national & international agencies, universities and communities. Field and laboratory modules delivered in Ethiopia, Kenya and Europe strengthen educators' capacities and improve evidence-based decision-making.
SDG 7: Through eco-hydrological modelling and ecosystem-based analyses, students learn to understand water–energy linkages and hydropower impacts, enabling institutions develop climate-resilient and resource-efficient freshwater strategies and to minimize environmental impacts of hydropower.
SDG 9: Inter- and transdisciplinary, problem-based learning strengthens sustainability research, innovation, and resilient infrastructure. International joint Degree MSc programmes (74 participants) and the AQUAHUB platform (629 members) facilitate knowledge sharing, digital learning and institutional capacity development across Eastern Africa and Europe.
SDG 11: Courses and MSc research on Natural based Solutions towards pollution prevention, urban rivers & wetland management, flood prevention and reservoir management provides data and methods for more resilient and sustainable urban water management in collaboration with local authorities and communities.
SDG 17: North–South and South–South collaboration connects educators, learners, and institutions for co-learning, dissemination, and policy impact. Joint curricula, mobility schemes, multi-stakeholder teaching, and 75 SDG-relevant outputs foster long-term partnerships among universities, ministries, research centres and NGOs, enhancing regional and international cooperation.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education & ESD: FreshNet's joint degree MSc programmes (LWM, AEEM) implemented student centered, competency-based and practice-oriented learning, replacing predominantly teacher controlled traditional instruction. Students gained hands-on skills through laboratory & field modules and action learning components implemented across Austria, the Netherlands, Kenya and Ethiopia, significantly enhancing academic quality and enabling graduates to apply ecological assessment and sustainable water-management directly in their institutions.

Whole-institution approach: Joint Management Committees, harmonised curricula, shared quality-assurance processes and co-teaching across universities created integrated learning communities. This strengthened governance capacities at partner institutions (BOKU, EGU, AAU, BDU, EIAR-NFALRC) and supported institutional reforms, including the development of internationalization strategies, academic quality assurance procedures and accreditation procedures.

Digital education, ICT & ESD: Digital tools such as ecological modelling, GIS/remote sensing and AQUAHUB's online knowledge & networking platform broadened access to high-quality learning materials and facilitated international collaboration among 629 members from 64 countries. This accelerated digital readiness of educators and improved regional knowledge exchange.

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation & ESD: Problem-based, inter-/transdisciplinary teaching and collaborative research projects enhanced employability and innovation capacities. Graduates progressed into leadership roles, generated 75 SDG-relevant outputs and strengthened evidence-based policy processes in ministries, research institutes and NGOs across Eastern Africa.

Key players involved

FreshNet's core consortium comprises BOKU (Austria), IHE Delft (The Netherlands), EGU - Egerton University (Kenya), AAU - Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), BDU - Bahir Dar University (Ethiopia), and EIAR-NFALRC (Ethiopia).
BOKU coordinates the FreshNet project and the Austrian semester of LWM. IHE Delft delivers the Dutch LWM semester and EGU the Kenyan LWM/AEEM semester. AAU coordinates AEEM and Bahir Dar University and EIAR-NFALRC deliver AEEM semesters/modules including policy & advocacy, water quality and aquaculture. Joint Management Committees oversee governance and quality assurance. 20 stakeholder institutions (ministries, water and fisheries agencies, research institutes and NGOs) contribute as lecturers, co-supervisors and hosts for fieldwork and internships. BOKU is coordinating the AQUAHUB platform, connecting 629 students, alumni and practitioners for dissemination and collaboration. The project consortium partners implemented eleven collaborative research- & capacity development projects and in addition 7 project proposals were launched.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming behaviours: 75 graduates apply practical skills in their institutions. Increased individual capacities and institutional capabilities delivered 75 contributions with relevance to the targeted SDG indicators and changes in attitudes and practices in society.

Promoting community action: FreshNet collaborated with >20 stakeholder institutions in Eastern Africa and field courses & MSc research activities (including citizen science) were implemented with communities in Kenya and Ethiopia to co-produce solutions.

Raising awareness: 431 AQUAHUB posts, social media outreach, video channel and 11 collaborative projects strengthened science-policy dialogue.

Involving government/private sector: More than 40 experts from > 20 stakeholder institutions (ministries, agencies, NGOs, private sector, universities) contribute to LWM/AEEM modules and joint projects, strengthening science–policy–practice links.

Changing educational policies: Accredited international joint degree MSc programmes and QA processes-initiated curriculum and QA reforms, development of university-wide internationalization strategies and improved administrative regulations to support North–South & South-South cooperation.

Strengthening competencies: 41 participants in 2024–2025 (49% women); 75 SDG-relevant outputs; excellent evaluation of LWM/AEEM modules; networking of 629 AQUAHUB members from 64 countries.

Youth dimension

FreshNet targeted young professionals through accredited joint MSc programmes (LWM, AEEM) that provide skill-oriented training, mobility, and research experience – hence, widening youth participation, accelerating employability and leadership pathways in the water and environment sectors. The AQUAHUB knowledge & networking platform offered youth access to publications, training, funding, jobs, and events—expanding opportunities to 621 members.

Gender dimension

Gender equality is operationalised through ≥40% women targets, gender-disaggregated data monitoring, proactive women recruitment as resource persons and students, and tailored support (mentoring, flexible arrangements, childcare options). Female FreshNet alumni hold managerial roles and lead research and policy processes.

Challenges or lessons learnt

- The long-term history of FreshNet was essential for building mutual trust, enabling collective learning, collective negotiations, institution building and achieving impact.
- Motivated individuals catalyze transformation processes and individual & institutional capacity development conditions and reinforce each other.
- Advancing societal and policy impact requires curricular units, structured outreach mechanisms, and community feedback loops.
- Conflicting policy priorities affect transformation processes towards the sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems at policy and community levels.
- Gendered barriers: Social expectations and limited institutional support (e.g., childcare, family accompaniment) impede women's academic/professional progression, therefore, targeted support measures are needed to create enabling environments.

Further resources

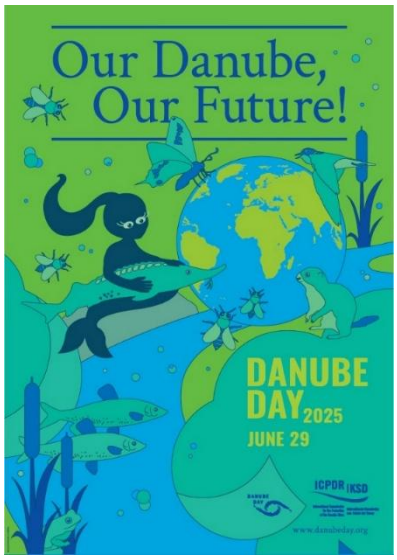
- Video channel: https://www.youtube.com/@ipglinternationaltrainingp8323
- IPGL: https://short.boku.ac.at/IPGL
- LWM: https://short.boku.ac.at/lwm
- AEEM: http://www.study-aeem.info/
- AQUAHUB knowledge & networking platform: https://aquahub.boku.ac.at

Danube Day

Since 2004, Danube Day has been bringing the diversity and uniqueness of the Danube to the public attention. It was proclaimed by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), which is committed to the conservation and sustainable use of the Danube river basin and its resources. Every year, activities are organized in all Danube countries around June 29. In Austria, Danube Day is celebrated with a focus on children and young people. Information is spread online on social media and also through several events. In 2025, the motto was "Our Danube – Our Future". A station-based program for schools took place in Krems on June 4. On June 17, schoolchildren spent an eventful day at the schlossORTH National Park Center. Furthermore, on June 18, a trash collection campaign and boot tour for a school class was held in the Danube-Auen National Park. All these events aim to encourage children and young people to engage in a playful and interactive way with the Danube habitat and learn about its special significance for us all.

Contacts

Susanne Brandstetter, BMLUK -- Susanne.brandstetter@bmluk.gv.at



Picture: © Gillmann; Poster Danube Day: BMLUK/Danube Day

General Description

Danube Day aims to raise awareness about the importance of the Danube River and its tributaries as shared natural resources across national borders. The initiative promotes sustainable water management, biodiversity protection and international cooperation. Through exciting workshops, nature tours, and hands-on stations, students learn about the unique flora and fauna of the Danube region. Educational activities and youth engagement strengthen water literacy, encourage responsible environmental behavior and highlight the value of transboundary partnership for protecting Europe's second-longest river system.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Danube Day addresses **SDG 6** by promoting awareness of sustainable water management and the protection of shared water resources within the Danube River Basin. Through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the initiative highlights the interconnectedness of water quality, biodiversity, climate change and human activities across national borders. Educators are supported with teaching materials and event formats that integrate river stewardship, pollution prevention and water conservation into classroom practice. By participating in clean-up actions, creative campaigns and local events, students translate knowledge into action and strengthen their sense of environmental responsibility. Nationally and regionally, the initiative supports coordinated river basin management efforts and contributes to a culture of cooperation among Danube countries, strengthening sustainable water governance in line with SDG 6.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: Danube Day strengthens sustainability education by linking local learning experiences with broader environmental and transboundary water challenges. Through interactive workshops, school projects and public events, students develop water literacy, systems thinking and an understanding of shared responsibility within the Danube basin. The initiative moves beyond theoretical knowledge by encouraging active participation in river clean-ups, creative campaigns and awareness activities, that fosters long-term commitment to sustainable water management.

Whole-institution approach: Danube Day promotes collaboration between schools, local authorities, water agencies and civil society organization. Entire schools often participate in coordinated activities, embedding river stewardship into school culture. By engaging multiple stakeholders at local and regional levels, the initiative strengthens networks and creates learning communities that extend beyond the classroom. This collective approach fosters shared ownership of water protection and contributes to lasting institutional and behavioral change.

Key players involved

Danube Day is coordinated at international level by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and implemented in cooperation with national ministries responsible for water management and environmental protection in the Danube Basin countries. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Foresty, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria and the youth-water-platform gen blue manage in cooperation with the Donau-Auen National Park several activities in austria. Other players include schools, local authorities, water agencies or environmental NGOs.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: Danube Day has encouraged more responsible environmental behavior. Through clean-up activities, educational campaigns and school projects, individuals adopt more conscious habits regarding waste disposal, plastic reduction and water protection.

Promoting community action: The initiative mobilizes schools, municipalities, NGOs and water authorities across the Danube basin. Joint events and cross-border cooperation strengthen local engagement and foster a sense of shared responsibility for the river as a common resource.

Raising awareness: Danube Day significantly increases public awareness of water quality, biodiversity and sustainable river basin management. Annual celebrations and media outreach highlight the importance of transboundary cooperation and the ecological value of the Danube and its tributaries.

Strengthening competencies: Participants enhance key sustainability competencies, including environmental knowledge and understanding of international water governance. Educators gain access to practical teaching materials, supporting long-term integration of water-related sustainability topics into educational practice.

Youth dimension

Danube Day has defined young people and schools as its main target group and has set itself the goal of reaching them through special events, programs, as well as online and through social media content. The focus is on imparting knowledge and raising awareness in a playful way. Young people are addressed through a child-friendly presentation of the Danube region and the valuable resource of water that goes along with modern graphic branding.

Gender dimension

Danube Day promotes inclusive participation and equal access to environmental education for all genders. Activities and educational materials are designed to encourage equal involvement of girls and boys in water protection initiatives, creative projects and community actions. Danube Day supports equal opportunities in learning and civic engagement, ensuring that environmental action within the Danube basin is inclusive and participatory.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Coordinating stakeholders across multiple countries and sectors requires strong communication and clear responsibilities. A key lesson learned is that partnerships between schools, authorities and civil society significantly enhance impact. Linking local activities to the broader transboundary context of the Danube strengthens highlights the shared responsibility for protecting water resources.

Further resources

- Video from last year: https://www.youtube.com/
- https://www.danubeday.at/
- https://www.bmluk.gv.at/danube-day-2025.html
- https://www.generationblue.at/mitmachen/danubeday.html

"Trinkpass" Drinking Pass Creative Competition

The Drinking Pass is aimed specifically at schoolchildren of all ages and explains in an age-appropriate way why water is one of the most important resources of our time. This year's theme is "We rescue our water! Every drop counts" and stands in the sign of climate change. Because conscious use of water is becoming increasingly important and even small changes in everyday behaviour can make a big difference overall.
The Drinking Pass focuses on actively examining one's own water-drinking-behaviour: for one week, children and young people document their drinking water habits and learn how much water they consume each day. A special highlight is the creative competition. School classes, groups, or individuals are invited to design posters or short videos with messages about water conservation and protection. A jury then selects a winning project from the best entries. As a prize, the students can look forward to a trip to a national park for the entire class.
In commission of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Foresty, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria and the youth water-platform gen blue this competition is held annually.

Contacts

Susanne Brandstetter, BMLUK -- susanne.brandstetter@bmluk.gv.at

Drinking Pass Cover: BMLUK/Trinkpass; Last year's winning project: Rebecca Bauer, HLW Hollabrunn, 2bhl

General Description

The goal of the Drinking Pass is to raise awareness among children and young people about water as a resource. Through self-reflection and creative engagement with water, the aim is to strengthen appreciation and responsible use. In view of advancing climate change, water should be viewed holistically: as a resource, drinking water, habitat, and asset worth protecting, but also as a natural hazard. The focus is on clean, safely accessible, and sufficient drinking water, as well as an intact ecosystem.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The Drinking Pass makes a concrete contribution to the implementation of SDG 6 by raising awareness among children and young people of the value and finite nature of water as a resource. While billions of people worldwide don't have safe access to drinking water and large quantities of untreated wastewater are discharged into the environment, the Drinking Pass conveys in an age-appropriate way why responsible use of drinking water is crucial.
The initiative strengthens sustainable behaviours through active engagement with one's own water consumption, a creative competition as well as practical everyday tips from the youth-water-platform gen blue. In this way, the Drinking Pass contributes to promoting a responsible and efficient use of water as well as appreciation and protecting it in the long term. This is a key prerequisite for ensuring safe and sustainable water supply systems for future generations.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: By integrating water related education into everyday classroom practice, the Drinking Pass strengthens ESD competencies such as critical thinking, systems understanding and responsible decision-making. Students connect global water challenges as well as climate change with their personal habits. This approach fosters long-term behavioural awareness and empowers others to act as multipliers within their families and communities. The initiative transforms knowledge into practical responsibility.

Whole-institution approach: The Drinking Pass encourages participation at class or school level, creating shared learning experiences and collective reflection. Schools become spaces where sustainable water use is discussed, practiced and visibly promoted beyond individual lessons. The creative competition strengthens engagement and collaboration. By embedding sustainability into school, the initiative contributes to institutional change and supports the development of schools as communities committed to sustainable action.

Key players involved

On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Foresty, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria, the Drinking Pass is supported by the youth-water-platform gen blue, which offers additional information, campaigns, and interactive activities related to water. As cooperation partners, the Austrian Association for the Gas and Water Industry (ÖVGW) and numerous regional waterworks – including the Triestingtal and Südbahn municipalities water supply association, Salzburg AG, Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG, and the Amstetten waterworks – are supporting the project, thereby strengthening the Drinking Pass regional roots. The project is being implemented by the AQA agency, which also sends the initiation to Austrian schools.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: The Drinking Pass has led to measurable changes in everyday habits among participating students. Many report increased consumption of tap water instead of bottled water, shorter showers and greater attention to avoiding unnecessary water waste. The one-week self-monitoring activity encourages reflection and often initiates longer-term behavioral adjustments.

Promoting community action: Students act as multipliers by sharing their insights with families, friends and local communities. Creative competition entries are often presented publicly within schools, fostering discussion and collective engagement with water conservation topics beyond the classroom.

Raising awareness: The initiative has significantly increased awareness of climate-related water challenges, including drought, groundwater depletion and water quality risks. By linking global sustainability issues to daily routines, the Drinking Pass makes responsible water use relevant for young people.

Strengthening competencies: Participants develop key competencies such as systems thinking, personal responsibility and problem-solving. They gain practical knowledge about sustainable water management and learn how individual actions contribute to broader environmental protection goals.

Youth dimension

With a focus on schools, children and young people are encouraged to get active. A modern and sophisticated design aims to motivate children to participate. In addition, the winning project will be rewarded with a trip to an Austrian national park.

Gender dimension

The Drinking Pass follows an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach, ensuring equal participation and access for all children and young people regardless of gender. Educational materials are designed to avoid stereotypes and promote shared responsibility for sustainable water use in everyday life. By encouraging all students equally to reflect on their water consumption habits, participate in discussions and engage in creative projects, the initiative supports equal learning opportunities and strengthens sustainability competencies across genders.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One lesson learned is that sustainable behavioural change requires continuity beyond short-term activities. While the one-week monitoring phase effectively raises awareness, long-term impact depends on repeated engagement and integration into regular teaching practice. Another challenge is translating complex climate and water data into age-appropriate, accessible materials. Strong Kooperation with teachers and local water experts has proven essential to ensure relevance and credibility. The experience shows that combining personal reflection, creativity and practical action significantly increases student motivation and strengthens long-term learning effects.

Further resources

- https://www.trinkpass.org/
- https://www.generationblue.at/mitmachen/trinkpass.html
- https://www.bmluk.gv.at/themen/wasser/wasser-oeffentlich/generation-blue/trinkpass-2026.html

Forum Umweltbildung: Austria's Nationwide ESD Initiative

Forum Umweltbildung (Fub) is Austria's nationwide initiative for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), supporting educators, multipliers and institutions in formal and non-formal settings. FUB strengthens the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by linking national award programmes, structured capacity building and training for educators, SDG-based educational resources and multi-stakeholder cooperation.
Key components include the **BNE-Auszeichnung** (ESD Award), which recognizes ESD-related projects implemented across Austria, and the **Sustainability Award** for Austrian universities and higher education institutions, supporting institutional development and peer learning. Capacity building is provided through (online) academies and train-the-trainer formats to strengthen competencies for transformative, learner-centred and participatory ESD.
FUB develops and disseminates a variety of SDG learning resources linked to the curriculum for different age groups and learning settings; **the BOX 2.0**, for example, supports teachers in translating SDG themes into classroom practice for primary and secondary level.
FUB is also a consortium partner of the cross-organisational platform **Bildung2030**, jointly operated with other Austrian educational organisations to provide and curate SDG-related educational offers.
Through this integrated approach, FUB advances partnerships (**SDG 17**), supports innovation in educational practice (**SDG 9**) and learning for sustainable communities (**SDG 11**), while enabling educators to address **water- (SDG 6)** and **energy- (SDG 7)** related topics, through SDG-based resources and training.

Contacts

Walpurga Weiß, Forum Umweltbildung -- walpurga.weiss@umweltbildung.at
Hannah Jennewein, BMLUK -- hannah.jennewein@bmluk.gv.at

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General Description

Forum Umweltbildung (Fub) aims to structurally embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within Austria's education system by strengthening educator competencies, supporting institutional development and fostering cross-sector cooperation. Through national award programmes, structured capacity building and SDG-based educational

resources, FUB enables educators and institutions to translate the Sustainable Development Goals into transformative learning processes and organisational practice across formal and non-formal education settings.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Fub contributes to SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 by helping education actors across Austria work with the SDGs in a practical and competence-oriented way. **SDG 17** is reflected in how Fub operates: it cooperates with public institutions, civil society, schools and higher education and works as a consortium partner in Bildung2030, where several organisations jointly provide access to SDG-related educational offers and support exchange across the sector.

Fub supports **SDG 9** by strengthening educational practice and institutional learning through structured training and peer formats and through national awards (BNE-Auszeichnung; Sustainability Award) that **make good practice visible and help others learn from it**.

Fub advances **SDG 11** by equipping educators to link global sustainability goals with local realities and community challenges using participatory and action-oriented learning.

Regarding **SDG 6** and **SDG 7**, Fub supports educators and multipliers in addressing water- and energy-related sustainability challenges through SDG-based resources and training that build systems thinking, sustainability literacy and critical reflection.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Fub's approach aligns with all four UNECE ESD priority strands. Under **Quality education and ESD**, Fub supports educators and multipliers with training, peer formats and SDG-based resources that can be used in everyday teaching and facilitation. This helps translate ESD into concrete learning settings and strengthens competence-oriented, participatory approaches.

The **whole-institution approach** is reflected especially in the Sustainability Award for universities and higher education institutions. The award process encourages institutions to look beyond single projects and consider how sustainability is anchored across areas such as governance, teaching, campus operations and organisational culture. This creates space for internal cooperation and longer-term development.

For **digital education and ICT**, Fub uses online learning formats and contributes as consortium partner to the Bildung2030 platform. Digital formats make SDG-related offers more easily accessible across regions and support exchange between practitioners.

Regarding **entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD**, Fub's training and methods focus on the skills necessary for addressing complexity and change, such as systems thinking, collaboration, critical reflection and solution-oriented learning.

Key players involved

Fub operates on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management and the Federal Ministry of Education and works in close strategic partnership with both ministries to advance Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Austria. The ministries support overarching priorities and help ensure alignment with national education and sustainability frameworks.

As the coordinating national initiative, Fub develops programme formats, facilitates cooperation and supports quality development across its portfolio. Within the Bildung2030 platform, Fub collaborates with other Austrian educational organisations as a consortium partner, jointly curating and providing SDG-related educational content.
Universities and higher education institutions engage with the Sustainability Award process, using it as a structured opportunity for institutional reflection and development. Schools, NGOs and community-based initiatives participate through the BNE-Auszeichnung.
Educators and multipliers from formal and non-formal education settings participate in structured training and peer learning formats, transferring ESD approaches to their own institutions and networks via a train-the-trainer approach.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Positive impacts can be seen in several areas. In terms of strengthening competencies, Fub's training, train-the-trainer and peer-learning formats support educators and multipliers in working with ESD methods and SDG-related topics in a practical way, including facilitation methods for participatory and competence-oriented learning. This helps participants integrate ESD more consistently into their own teaching and educational work.
Regarding raising awareness, the BNE-Auszeichnung and the Sustainability Award make ESD practice in Austria more visible and provide a structured way to document and share approaches that have worked in different settings. Fub's educational resources and communication activities further support visibility and uptake.
By promoting community action, Fub encourages learning approaches that connect global sustainability goals with local contexts. This supports schools, initiatives and higher education institutions to link learning with real-world issues in their communities and create space for participation.
Involving government is reflected in Fub's mandate and close cooperation with the responsible federal ministries. In addition, cooperation with other educational organisations, including via the Bildung2030 consortium, facilitates coordination and access to SDG-related educational resources.

Youth dimension

Fub includes a youth dimension primarily through support for educators and institutions working with children and young people in schools and non-formal education settings. SDG-based learning materials and participatory methods foster critical thinking, dialogue and active engagement with sustainability challenges. The BNE-Auszeichnung reinforces this youth focus by recognising many projects that are implemented with youth groups. Through competence-oriented and action-focused approaches, young people are supported in understanding global issues, relating them to their own lives and exploring ways to contribute within their communities.

Gender dimension

Fub ensures that its trainings, resources and awards are open to everyone and apply transparent, non-discriminatory criteria. In group-based formats, facilitation methods are used to support balanced participation so that different perspectives can be heard and respected.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Embedding ESD structurally requires long-term commitment and continuous coordination across sectors and institutions. A key challenge is working within a diverse education landscape in which schools, universities and non-formal organisations face different conditions, priorities and constraints. This means support has to be flexible and practical, while still offering a shared direction. Experience shows that peer exchange and recognition formats can support quality development, but lasting impact needs time, continuity and stable support. Looking ahead, one option could be to strengthen a stable nationwide coordination and support function for ESD further, building on existing expertise and partnerships, to help make support offers more consistent across settings.

Further resources

- www.umweltbildung.at
- www.bildung2030.at

Klimaaktiv: Austria's Federal Initiative for Climate Protection Advancing Sustainable Energy Use

klimaaktiv is Austria's flagship federal climate action initiative, launched in 2004 and managed by the Austrian Energy Agency (AEA). Three federal ministries finance the initiative: Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management (BMLUK) and the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure (BMIMI).
The initiative serves as a nationwide transition management instrument that accelerates the uptake of energy-efficient and renewable technologies, strengthening professional and public capacities, fostering cross-sector collaboration across households, businesses, municipalities and public institutions. Through the development of binding quality standards, wide-ranging training programmes, advisory tools and knowledge platforms, klimaaktiv significantly contributes to SDG 7 by enhancing access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. Its building and heating programmes improve energy performance and support the decarbonisation of the building stock, while targeted information services and cooperation formats ensure that climate-friendly solutions reach diverse user groups. The AEA's coordination ensures coherence across programmes, continuous monitoring and adaptive management, making klimaaktiv one of the most comprehensive and impactful sustainability initiatives in the UNECE region contributing. klimaaktiv aims at contributing to the alignment of experts' know-how, public administration and businesses needs to exhilarate the transition process.

Contacts

BMWET: Katharina Kowalski, katharina.kowalski@bmwet.gv.at
AEA: Elisabeth Matt, elisabeth.matt@energyagency.at

General Description

The initiative aims to accelerate Austria's transition to a sustainable, energy-efficient and climate-neutral society by promoting renewable energy, improving building performance and process efficiency in production. Developing quality standards, strengthening skills within the workforce, and supporting stakeholders with information, advisory services and coordinated programme structures directly advance SDG 7.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Klimaaktiv directly advances SDG 7 by promoting the widespread implementation of renewable energy technologies, improving energy efficiency in buildings, and strengthening competencies through training and education for professionals across the energy and construction sectors. Its standards and guidelines ensure that sustainable energy solutions become accessible, affordable and replicable across regions. Advisory services for households, businesses and municipalities help reduce energy consumption and lower energy costs. Through umbrella management by the AEA, the initiative features continuous monitoring, evidence-based adjustment of measures, and strategic coordination across federal and regional actors. This governance model enables systematic integration of sustainable energy solutions in policy implementation, community practice and market development. In doing so, klimaaktiv enhances resilience, supports just transition processes and accelerates the shift towards a modern, low-carbon and socially inclusive energy system aligned with the objectives of SDG 7.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

klimaaktiv generates transformative impact across multiple dimensions. Through extensive training programmes, it strengthens green skills and professional competencies needed for the energy transition, fulfilling the Quality Education strand. Its umbrella management structure enables a whole-institution approach by ensuring coherent governance, shared learning processes, and coordinated programme execution. By fostering innovation, supporting climate friendly markets and promoting green jobs, klimaaktiv aligns with the entrepreneurship and innovation strand. These combined impacts shape institutional cultures, accelerate technological progress, enhance market readiness, and empower practitioners and communities to adopt sustainable energy solutions at scale.

Key players involved

klimaaktiv is the Federal Government's climate action initiative. The Austrian Energy Agency (AEA) manages the whole initiative providing for programme development, monitoring and communication. klimaaktiv has a widespread network of partners (formal and informal partnerships) and therefore cooperations with e.g. regional and local governments, municipal administrations, energy providers, construction and technology companies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. This networking governance model ensures that klimaaktiv measures and services reach diverse user groups and that expertise circulates effectively across institutional boundaries and provides synergies and therefor exhilarates the transition process to sustainable, climate friendly energy systems.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Independent evaluations confirm that klimaaktiv delivers measurable impact across all six UNECE impact areas. The initiative effectively **transforms people's behaviors** by motivating households, companies and municipalities to adopt energy-saving practices and climate-friendly decisions, supported by broad awareness campaigns and practical tools. It also **promotes community action** through a strong, nationwide partner network that enables coordinated local climate initiatives and enhances regional cooperation.

klimaaktiv has a high public visibility and acts as a central information hub, significantly **raising awareness** for energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate-friendly solutions across society. At the same time, the initiative actively **involves government and the private secto**r by integrating ministries, regional administrations, businesses, energy providers and civil society into its programmes and governance structures.

Through the development of quality standards, training formats and learning materials, klimaaktiv contributes to **changing educational policies** and shaping Austria's national landscape of climate and energy education. Finally, extensive training programmes, expert networks and targeted capacity-building measures significantly **strengthen competencies** among professionals, municipalities and households, accelerating Austria's transition to sustainable energy systems.

Youth dimension

klimaaktiv strengthens youth engagement through the platform for climate communication and youth participation. Stakeholders address climate anxiety, limited youth involvement and skill needs. The klimaaktiv Youth Dialogue fosters innovative participation and coordination with youth organisations. Social media usage among Austrian youth is high (WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok), underscoring the relevance of digital outreach, which klimaaktiv actively uses to reach under-25 audiences.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The evaluations show that klimaaktiv benefits strongly from **continuous learning loops**, supported by systematic monitoring, regular reporting and structured feedback processes that enable evidence-based adjustments and strategic refinement. Long-term effectiveness depends on **continuity**, including stable programme management, an established partner network and consistent governance structures that maintain trust and ensure lasting impact. Moreover, the initiative demonstrates a high capacity for **adaptation to current developments**, continually updating priorities, tools and communication formats in response to new climate policies, market changes and technological innovation, ensuring ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

Further resources

- https://www.klimaaktiv.at
- Über klimaaktiv – Energiesparen, Erneuerbare & Mobilität | klimaaktiv

Reading exercise book "Lesen, checken, Klima retten! Mein klimaaktiv Buch"

This unique project combines reading promotion with education on climate protection, energy, and sustainable mobility. This book is a reading book featuring funny stories and puzzle tasks related to the texts. The book must be actively ordered by teachers for classroom use and for the entire class. The target group is pupils aged 8–10 in primary school. The print run of the first book was approximately 100,000 copies, reaching — by Austrian standards — a very large number of people. Interest in the book was so high that it sold out within a short time. The book was a remarkable example of cooperation between experts regarding the standard curricula, authors and storytelling experts, climate communication experts and experts with regard to the respective topics (e.g. energy, circular economy, active mobility, green jobs). As follow-up a second book was published for the target age group 10-12 (here the focus is on the topics of climate adaptation, such as water, sustainable cities, etc.)

Contacts

Julian Schmid, Austrian Energy Agency -- Julian.schmid@energyagency.at

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General Description

The project aimed to reach out to children in a way that could be integrated into their school lives and that would interest them (with good stories, puzzles and life hacks). The project combined two essential competencies: the ability to read analogue books and an understanding of climate change, particularly the relevant mitigation and adaptation solutions, presented in an age-appropriate manner.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG6: Water and sanitation for all: The stories and puzzles in the book address this SDG in the context of climate change. Pupils develop a stronger awareness of water-related challenges and solutions.
SDG 7: Energy: Several stories focus on this topic. There is a strong emphasis on renewable energy, both in the illustrations and in the texts, which raises awareness of this SDG.
SDG 9: Innovation: Many stories convey a sense of opportunities and possibilities for innovation — both technological and social. This fosters awareness of this SDG.
SDG 11: Resilient cities: The stories address climate change adaptation, renaturation, and climate-resilient construction, thereby strengthening awareness of this topic.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality Education: It was important to us that all information reflects the current state of science and practice — not only in terms of content, but also in terms of climate communication with impact. A transformative aspect of the project was the collaboration with experts from key institutions such as federal ministries, the Austrian Energy Agency, the Austrian Book Club, and the Environment Agency Austria. Climate education was not treated lightly in this project; instead, we aimed to take students seriously and provide them with the highest quality knowledge and educational support.

Whole-institution Approach: The project was launched in response to numerous requests from teachers regarding climate education. Central to the concept is the close cooperation with teachers, who work with the book as part of German class - rather than in more expectable subjects like science, biology, or geography. Climate education in this project was conceived as interdisciplinary and cross-curricular from the beginning.

Key players involved

The Austrian Book Club implemented the book project, commissioned the authors, and managed distribution through its broad and well-organized channels directly to schools.
The Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Climate and Environmental Protection funded the project.
klimaaktiv, the Austrian federal climate action initiative, coordinated the project on behalf of the ministry, provided state of the art expertise in climate communication, and offers follow-up opportunities.
The Austrian Energy Agency and the Environment Agency Austria contributed subject-matter and state of the art scientific expertise in key thematic areas and reviewed the texts and puzzles.
In addition, there were several individual sponsors from the private sector and the chamber of commerce to broaden the funding base.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Behaviours: The stories and puzzles focus on very concrete everyday actions.
Community: The stories actively avoid individualizing responsibility and instead present climate protection as a shared task. The book is used collectively in the classroom and serves as a starting point for discussions on the topic.
Awareness: The book increases awareness of climate protection, the energy transition, the circular economy, active mobility, and climate change adaptation.
Government and private sector: The book project was initiated and driven forward by the Austrian Federal Government, and private actors (e.g., Windkraft Simonsfeld) were engaged as sponsors.
Competencies: Two key competencies are strengthened: reading literacy and the ability to engage productively with a socially relevant issue such as climate change — in other words, "climate literacy."

Youth dimension

The target group of the project are pupils aged 8-12.

Gender dimension

Throughout the book, care was taken to actively avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles. In particular, when addressing technology, innovation, and STEM topics, we made sure to give girls and women significant roles.

Challenges or lessons learnt

It would have worked for many more children and classes more – but it's a question of resources.

Further resources

- https://www.klimabuch.at/

Building engineering capacity for sustainable hydraulic infrastructure management in Iraq

Building on previous projects to support the University of Mosul (UoM), this new initiative will continue assisting the University's Engineering College and its faculty of the Department of Dams and Water Resources (DDWR) to improve their knowledge and capacity to educate the next generation of Iraqi engineers who will contribute to the sustainable management of Iraq's hydraulic infrastructure. The UoM was severely impacted by the Islamic State of Iraq during their occupation of the city of Mosul. Since the city's and University's liberation in 2017, UNIDO has built a solid base of cooperation with the UoM.
This project will provide additional didactic equipment including specialized computers for Geographic Information System (GIS) and hydraulic and flow modelling software to the College of Engineering. It will improve the existing curriculum of the DDWR, realize training of trainers, and activities to promote women in engineering. Establishing synergies with the UNIDO project "Institutional support and skills development for a dam safety programme to enable sustainable management of hydraulic infrastructure in Iraq" and strengthening the University's research capacities together with the Austrian University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU), this project will assist the DDWR to build a hydraulic model of the Mosul Dam and procure relevant research instruments.

Contacts

Christa Marchardt, BMEIA christa.marchardt@bmeia.gv.at
Anna Walch, BMEIA anna.walch@bmeia.gv.at

General Description

The objective of the project is to support the University of Mosul and its faculty of the Department of Dams and Water Resources (DDWR) to improve their knowledge and capacity to educate the next generation of Iraqi engineers who will contribute to the sustainable management of Iraq's hydraulic infrastructure.
The proposed project design complies with and contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals: As well as SDG 9, which is the focus of this review, it also contributes to SDGs 4 and 16. The project indirectly contributes to SDGs 5 and 1.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- **SDG 9** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project's overall objective was to contribute to the sustainable management of Iraq's hydraulic infrastructure. The expected outcome was to enhance the quality of higher education in the field of hydraulic engineering at University of Mosul's Department of Dams and Water Resources (DDWR) by building the human and physical capacities of the DDWR's staff as direct beneficiaries. The project is structured around six interrelated activities to enhance the capacities of the DDWR staff:

- Activity 1.1: Assist the DDWR to improve their curriculum by strengthening learning modules for hydraulic engineering, flow modelling and geotechnical engineering;
- Activity 1.2: Supply and install computer labs for GIS and hydraulic & flow modelling software
- Activity 1.3: Assist the DDWR to build a hydraulic model of the Mosul Dam for the purposes of research
- Activity 1.4: Provide training for faculty in partnership with BOKU University
- Activity 1.5: Establish a partnership between BOKU and the University of Mosul for research purposes
- Activity 1.6: Promote women participation in engineering

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- **Quality education** and ESD

Transformative impact results

Outcome: Iraqi students, especially women, having access to quality higher education in the field of hydraulic engineering to support the future demands for the sustainable management of Iraq's hydraulic infrastructure.

Key players involved

UNIDO has extensive experience in implementing technical assistance projects to strengthen technical education and youth employability in numerous conflict and post-conflict affected countries.
BOKU (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna), providing training for faculty at the University of Mosul in-partnership with BOKU University, establish a partnership with the University of Mosul for research purposes, strengthening the research capacities, they will assist the DDWR to build a hydraulic model of the Mosul Dam and procure relevant research instruments.

Positive impact areas

- changing educational policies

Progress made

Decades of conflict have severely impacted the education system, facing humanitarian and development challenges. Decades of war severely weakened Iraq's once-strong education system: half of all schools need rehabilitation. Technical and vocational education (TVET) suffers from weak governance, underfunding, outdated curricula and poor infrastructure, leaving students ill-equipped for employment. This project strengthens technical education through improved infrastructure, equipment and teaching capacity – especially in the College of Engineering's eight departments. It enhances water resource management training at the DDWR and supports digitalization through new computer labs.

Youth dimension

Engineering and teaching capacity of the DDWR faculty are strengthened to educate young engineers especially women on topics related to hydraulic engineering, flow modelling and geotechnical engineering.

Gender dimension

The project gives access to quality higher education in the field of hydraulic engineering for students, especially women to support the future demands for the sustainable management of Iraq's hydraulic infrastructure.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Partnering with a dedicated, technically competent institution like BOKU University/Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and River Research (IWA) proved invaluable and should be considered best practice. Their capacity-building programme and advisory support directly contributed to project results, achieving greater efficiency than individual consultants. BOKU's "third Mission" commitment to societal and economic challenges further enhanced effectiveness. Continued donor support for curricula and infrastructure upgrades has yielded tangible progress and strong potential for growth, accreditation, and funding. Future efforts should ensure trainees have existing capacities, field conditions enable learning, and live sessions maximise practical training. Effective procurement requires local market expertise; challenges with local IT vendors underscored the need to understand supply chains, stock cycles, and delivery timelines to secure best value.

Further resources

- https://uomosul.edu.iq/en/engineering/?s=austria

Cooperation for Youth & ESD

The Youth Representative Programme of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO (ÖUK) was established to promote the participation of young people and strengthen partnerships with the youth sector. Enhancing the capacity of young people to act has long been a central pillar of UNESCO's agenda. In line with SDG 17, which focuses on creating partnerships, the ÖUK has started cooperating with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Climate and Environmental Protection (BMLUK) to strengthen activities around the implementation of the SDGs in the national context and focusing particularly on SDG 4.7. The aim is to reflect on developments in *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* and *Global Citizenship Education (GCE)* from a youth perspective to advice the Ministry on youth- and ESD-related issues, and to support stakeholders in the youth sector and beyond in better integrating this perspective into implementation measures. To this end, the two institutions maintain close contact and collaborate on various strategic issues to strengthen ESD across Austria, as well as sharing expertise and organising events, workshops, etc. to raise awareness.

Contacts

Hannah Jennewein, BMLUK -- hannah.jennewein@bmluk.gv.at
Christine Maaß, ÖUK -- maass@unesco.at

General Description

The cooperation aims to strengthen the role of ESD, to participate and further develop the UNECE ESD Youth Platform, and to advise the Ministry on integrating youth perspectives into ESD-related initiatives. Key activities of the Youth Representatives include participating in the Youth platform's development, advising the Ministry on youth- and ESD-related issues, attending as speakers at ESD events, and serving on juries for relevant events, such as the Austrian Sustainability Award and the ESD-Award ('BNE-Auszeichnung').

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The ÖUK-BMLUK Cooperation for Youth & ESD embodies SDG 17 in several ways: the two institutions collaborate strategically by pooling resources and combining similar interests and goals. Furthermore, it fosters collaboration between the national and international levels by participating in the UNECE ESD Steering Committee and integrating the perspective of UNESCO into the national context. Finally, it promotes the voice and expertise of young people in various ESD-related initiatives. The initiative empowers young people by actively involving them in decision-making processes as representatives, thereby enhancing their skills and rights. Through activities in various national and international forums, the initiative reaches diverse groups in the education sector, governmental processes and communities.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Focusing on the priority strand of Quality Education, the ÖUK-BMLUK Youth Cooperation has generated transformative impacts through the active involvement of youth representatives in educational contexts. By organizing and leading workshops on relevant sustainability and current topics, the youth representatives facilitate meaningful educational experiences that engage young people directly in sustainability discussions. The dialogue initiated by youth representatives not only enhances understanding of ESD principles but also encourages peer-to-peer learning, creating a supportive community where diverse perspectives are valued. This collaborative learning environment promotes critical thinking and empowers young people to become advocates for sustainability within their communities.
With regards to the whole institution approach, the role of the youth representatives as part of expert juries on national sustainability award programmes allows for extensive participation and inclusion of youth perspective and knowledge.

Key players involved

The cooperation is based on a written agreement between the Austrian Commission for UNESCO (ÖUK) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management (BMLUK) stating the aim and efforts put in by both institutions. The Youth Representatives (between 18 and 24 years of age) are appointed for a two-year term, with mandates overlapping by one year.

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector

Progress made

The most apparent aspect is the **government's direct involvement**, given that the Ministry of Climate and Environmental Protection (BMLUK) is one of the two partners in the cooperation. The partnership also provides an opportunity to influence government strategies and initiatives.

By facilitating activities with the Youth Representatives, we can **raise awareness** of various topics related to the UN Agenda and ESD approaches. The cooperation further promotes **community action** by facilitating the active roles of the Youth Representatives in various ESD programmes and awards commissioned by the Ministry, reaching various groups from civil society, education institutions, youth, etc.

Youth dimension

Youth participation is the key aspect of the cooperation.

Gender dimension

The youth representatives are always appointed in pairs, with one female and one male representative. In line with UNESCO's global priority gender equality, gender and equity dimensions are integrated into all ESD activities, including workshops.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The agreement between ÖUK and BMLUK is based on shared objectives and overlapping areas of work. However, achieving a more strategic partnership would require additional resources and a broader scope, which is difficult to attain with limited resources.

Further resources

- Youth Representatives - Österreichische UNESCO-Kommission
- unesco.at - Österreichische UNESCO-Kommission
- Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE)

Training Programme for Social Energy Counselling in Austria

The Training Programme for Social Energy Counselling is a service of **klimaaktiv**, the Austrian federal climate action initiative, **managed by the Austrian Energy Agency (AEA)**. The AEA oversees programme coordination and quality assurance across the whole initiative klimaaktiv. Among other klimaaktiv activities and services the AEA **coordinates the training offer and practitioner networking** for Social Energy Counselling. The programme supports low-income and energy-poor households through capacity building for social workers, multilingual information materials and practical, low-cost measures that reduce energy expenses and improve comfort. Since 2022, more than 380 participants have taken part in the four-module training series (two e-learning modules on energy saving and energy bills; two in-person modules on heating/hot water and electricity/appliances), complemented by **networking meetings** and a materials service.

Contacts

BMWET : Katharina Kowalski -- Katharina.kowalski@bmwet.gv.at
AEA: Barbara Alexander-Bittner -- klimaaktivbildung@energyagency.at

General Description

The programme aims to reduce energy poverty by equipping social workers and vulnerable households with the knowledge and tools needed to use energy efficiently, understand energy bills, and apply simple, low-cost measures that reduce expenses and improve comfort. It strengthens energy literacy as a key competence and ensures that affordable and sustainable energy use becomes accessible to all households.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Social Energy Counselling addresses SDG 7 by improving access to affordable and sustainable energy services for energy-poor households. Through targeted capacity-building formats, the programme enables households to understand their energy consumption, identify avoidable costs, and adopt energy-saving behaviours. These interventions reduce the risk of disconnections and energy debt and strengthen resilience to rising energy prices.
For educators and counsellors, the initiative builds competencies through structured training, evidence-based guidelines, and networking opportunities. For communities, the programme increases awareness of efficient energy use and strengthens the connection between social support systems and the energy sector. On a national level, it contributes to Austria's broader energy transition and supports the implementation of measures anchored in the Energy Efficiency Act.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education & ESD: The training modules provide high-quality, practice-oriented learning for social workers and strengthen key competences in energy literacy.

Whole-institution approach: Social and energy counselling institutions collaborate through networking meetings, shared materials, and coordinated support structures.

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation & ESD: By building new professional skills in social counselling, the initiative fosters innovation in how social services address sustainability challenges.

Key players involved

klimaaktiv is the Federal Government's climate action initiative. Parts are financed by the **Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)**. The **Austrian Energy Agency (AEA)** provides **umbrella management** for klimaaktiv, including programme coordination, monitoring and target-group-specific implementation support. Within this framework, AEA **coordinates the Social Energy Counselling training series and practitioner networking**, ensuring consistent quality and up-to-date content. **Social service organizations** and **regional energy advice centres** deliver counselling on the ground and feed practice insights back into the network.
The **Coordination Office for Combating Energy Poverty (kea)** contributes national alignment and knowledge exchange.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming behaviour: Households apply practical, low-cost energy-saving actions.
Strengthening competencies: Social workers gain structured energy knowledge and practical tools.
Promoting community action: Local actors integrate energy-poverty measures into social support structures.
Involving government and private sector: Utilities and public agencies collaborate via kea structures.

Youth dimension

The programme includes a gender dimension, as **energy poverty disproportionately affects women**. Research shows that women face higher risks due to the gender pay gap, lower pensions, higher rates of single parenthood, and a greater likelihood of living alone at older ages. Women are also more often unable to pay energy bills and more frequently experience inadequate heating. These structural inequalities make female-led households particularly vulnerable to energy poverty.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The main challenge is reaching the most vulnerable households, especially those with limited language skills or complex social situations. Continuous professional support for social counsellors is also essential, as energy markets, support schemes, and technologies change rapidly. Regular updates, multilingual materials, and accessible tools help address these barriers.
Another challenge is the sustainable financing of in-home counselling. Although demand is increasing, household visits rely on dedicated funding. Currently, financing is largely secured through the "Energy Saving and Appliance Replacement" programme of the **Climate and Energy Fund (KLIEN)**, which provides free on-site advice and appliance replacement for low-income households.

Further resources

- https://www.klimaaktiv.at/fachpersonen/weiterbildung/gebaeude-und-energie/soziale-energieberatung
- Soziale Energieberatung für Haushalte | klimaaktiv

Water Master Training Programme

Since 2000, the Austrian Association for the Gas and Water Industry (OVGW) has conducted a comprehensive training programme for individuals aspiring to attain the title of Water Master. With approximately 2,100 municipalities and cities in Austria entrusted with the critical task of supplying drinking water, it is strongly advised that at least one employee in each municipality obtains Water Master certification. The training curriculum encompasses a wide array of topics, including water properties, resources, abstraction, pipe materials, metering, storage, loss prevention, regulatory frameworks, and construction techniques, among others. Applicants are required to provide evidence of vocational training (e.g. plumber) and relevant work experience in water utilities. Upon completion, the certificate remains valid for five years, during which time Water Masters must accumulate a certain number of grading points by attending approved technical seminars and conferences to extend the certificate's validity for another five years. The courses and seminars are constantly updated and adapted to current standards, legal obligations and the latest scientific knowledge.

Contacts

Anna Selitsch, OVGW -- selitsch@ovgw.at

General Description

Up to date education and training of water works personnel is a prerequisite for sustainable and high-quality drinking water services and safe and clean drinking water.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Training materials are regularly updated at OVGW by a drinking water expert committee with members from drinking water utilities, authorities, research and universities. Trainers of Water Master Courses themselves are practitioners themselves. This adds personal professional experience to up to date training materials. Moreover, OVGW is accredited by competent national authorities to offer certificates for trained water work personnel. Quality management systems at OVGW ensure proper handling and quality.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD

Transformative impact results

To date, more than 2,800 water utility employees have received an OVGW Water Master Certificate. Over 10,000 annual nationwide samplings, from the source to the tap, show a compliance rate above 99% with the Austrian drinking water quality requirements, as well as well-maintained water utility assets and low water loss rates throughout Austria, proving the success of the education and training provided by the OVGW Water Master Certification.

Key players involved

OVGW – Austrian Association for Gas and Water
Federal Ministry responsible for Water Management – competent authority
Trainers

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

With proper training and education, water work personnel not only gain insight into every aspect of providing safe and clean drinking water, but they are empowered to become experts of their water utility with the expertise to make proper decisions and take action responsibly. With proper training Water Masters become technical experts and are knowledgeable first points of contact for customer inquiries.

Youth dimension

Water Master Courses address junior and senior experts equally.

Gender dimension

Water Master Courses address all genders equally.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Water Master Courses are a best practice example of first-hand education and training in the drinking water sector. Enabling factors are: OVGW is institutionalized as association representing the interests of drinking water utilities, training materials are regularly updated to state-of-the-art requirements, trainers are practitioners, quality management to ensure highest standards.

Further resources

- www.ovgw.at

Raise your voice for water

In the international project Raise your voice for water, youth across eight countries in Africa, Latin America and Europe became water ambassadors.
Through participatory workshops on SDG 6, they explored water issues in their own surroundings within an international context. Supported by Join For Water and My Equator, they translated their insights into short films: self-created narratives with powerful messages for policymakers.
The participants live in regions where Join For Water protects freshwater ecosystems and strengthens access to water-related ecosystem services. Although youth are strongly affected by climate and water risks, they are often not included in water governance. By combining education for sustainable development (ESD) with creative storytelling, the project empowered them to connect local realities, such as water scarcity, pollution, and climate impacts, to SDGs.
The films were presented to authorities at local and regional symposia, and at international conferences in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and are used by schools and youth organisations to inspire other students. The project demonstrates that young people can be active designers of their future, strengthening partnerships and advancing SDG 6, 17 and beyond. By strengthening young people's agency, the project moves beyond awareness-raising toward developing action competencies and transformative learning.

Contacts

scholen@joinforwater.ngo
sarah.deraedt@joinforwater.ngo

All photos and videos are produced within the project framework by Join for Water, My Equator vzw, and participating youth. Copyright clearance can be provided upon submission.

General Description

To empower young people in vulnerable freshwater regions to better understand water challenges and climate change in relation to water. They explore its causes, consequences, and shared responsibilities while connecting their experiences to SDG 6. Through creative storytelling, the project strengthens their capacity to advocate for effective water-related climate adaptation measures and to promote concrete actions by individuals, businesses, and governments, enabling them to influence policy discussions and become long-term water ambassadors in their communities.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses **SDG 6** by using Education for Sustainable Development to deepen understanding of water challenges, climate impacts, and shared responsibilities. Through participatory workshops and creative storytelling, learners develop global citizenship, action and green competencies, moving from awareness to advocacy. Educators gain innovative tools to connect global water issues to local realities. Communities benefit from youth-led dialogue and increased awareness, while policymakers are engaged through screenings and exchanges, strengthening support for sustainable water management and climate adaptation.
The videos explore diverse aspects of **SDG 6**, from the protection of rivers and water sources to access to safe drinking water and menstrual hygiene and sanitation. These are key areas where Join For Water works at technical and water management levels in the regions where the youth live.

For **SDG 17** the project builds multi-level collaboration between schools, NGOs, youth groups, and policymakers across different countries. International exchange fosters mutual learning and solidarity between regions facing diverse water realities. This partnership-based approach strengthens institutional cooperation, amplifies youth voices in policy spaces, and contributes to long- term, cross-border collaboration for sustainable freshwater governance. The approach can be replicated in other schools or regions, as the methodology and tools are adaptable to different contexts.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

By focusing on **Quality Education and ESD**, the project transformed learning from passive knowledge acquisition into active citizenship. Learners developed systems thinking, critical reflection, action competencies and advocacy skills by linking local water realities to global challenges such as climate change and SDG 6. Educators strengthened their capacity to use participatory, action-oriented methods. The result is empowered youth who see themselves as changemakers capable of influencing water governance.

Through the **Whole-institution approach**, schools and partner organizations evolved into communities of transformational learning. Public screenings and dialogues with policymakers further embedded sustainability beyond classrooms and strengthened long-term partnerships under SDG 17.

This project was the first initiative of Join For Water connecting youth in all operating countries, fostering collaboration across regions which led to a cross-country strategic framework on youth engagement within Join For Water.
Within **Digital education and ICT**, the transformative impact was particularly strong. In several regions in the project, schools lack electricity and many young people do not own smartphones or have prior filming experience. Videos and training materials were downloaded in advance and shown using battery-powered equipment. Youth learned to film and communicate their messages despite infrastructural limitations. This bridged the digital divide.

Key players involved

The key players in the project are youth, teachers, school principals, educational institutions, youth environmental organizations, local water sector stakeholders, policymakers at local, regional and international levels, Join For Water and its partners, and My Equator vzw.
Young people are the central actors: they investigate local water and climate challenges, create short films, and formulate advocacy messages. Teachers, school principals, youth organizations and educational institutions facilitate workshops and embed the project within formal learning environments.
Join For Water and its international partners coordinate the project across countries, provide technical knowledge on water and SDG 6, and link youth voices to policy arenas.
My Equator vzw guides the creative process, offering feedback and training in storytelling, filming, and editing.
Policymakers and other stakeholders in the water sector engage through screenings and dialogues, responding to youth proposals and strengthening partnerships under SDG 17.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: Participants reported increased awareness of their own role in the protection of water resources, leading to more conscious daily choices. Youth gained the confidence to take a stand on water-related issues, express their views publicly, and engage in dialogue with peers and decision-makers.
Policymakers took time to listen to youth perspectives, reflecting on how to integrate their recommendations into policy processes.

Promoting community action: The public screenings of the youth-produced films sparked dialogue within schools and local communities. It led to follow-up activities, such as campaigns, school initiatives, and stronger collaboration between schools and community actors.

Raising awareness: The films significantly expanded outreach, being showcased at local, regional, and international events, amplifying youth perspectives on water. The project made complex sustainability issues accessible and relatable, increasing understanding among students, educators, policymakers, and community members.

Involving government and/or private sector: Local and regional policymakers engaged in dialogues following screenings, responding to youth recommendations. Water sector actors contributed expertise and participated in exchanges, strengthening connections between education and governance.

Strengthening competencies: Youth developed critical thinking, systems analysis, communication, digital storytelling, action competencies and advocacy skills. Educators enhanced their capacity to apply participatory ESD methodologies, ensuring longer-term institutional impact.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension, as young people are not only participants but central actors and decision-shapers. They investigate local water and climate challenges, create and disseminate their own films, and formulate concrete messages to policymakers. Through dialogue at local, regional, and international levels, youth voices are positioned as legitimate contributions to water governance, fostering leadership, civic engagement, and long-term youth ambassador roles within their communities.

Gender dimension

The project integrates a clear gender dimension. In several films, young people highlight gender-related water challenges, such as the impact of limited water access on hygiene and menstrual health. Students also explain how, after school, they often have to fetch water from distant sources, leaving less time for homework—tasks that are mainly carried out by girls.

The films ensured balanced representation, with more or less equal numbers of girls and boys speaking and sharing their perspectives.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The main challenge was facilitating exchange between youth across countries while working in regions where access to water, electricity, and internet was sometimes limited. The online platform required video streaming, while subtitled downloads in multiple languages were needed for classroom use. Many participants had little filming experience, and strong sunlight or background noise affected video quality, requiring retakes and repeated visits to sometimes remote locations for extra support. GDPR regulations also required careful procedures and formal consent for participating minors. In addition, the use of local mother tongues required transcription and translation, adding both complexity and linguistic richness.

Further resources

- Project compilation videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByT81d4pqIE
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgWH1sRH0uU
- Where water ambassadors are born: https://joinforwater.ngo/en/news/where-water-ambassadors-are-born/
- Young people speak out for water: https://joinforwater.ngo/en/news/young-people-speak-out-for-water/
- International exchange package (Dutch): https://joinforwater.ngo/packages/jongeren-verheffen-hun-stem-voor-water-internationale-uitwisseling/
- Young voices, high impact: https://joinforwater.ngo/en/packages/young-voices-high-impact-your-reaction-as-a-changemaker-counts/
- Platform with all the created video (contact us for access): https://myequator.net/en#

"MY First OPPORTUNITY"

An inclusive education initiative aimed at strengthening social inclusion and equal opportunities through a structured, multi- sectoral approach. The project focuses on enhancing institutional capacities, fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, and promoting inclusive practices within the education system in the City of Bijeljina. Aligned with the core principle of the 2030 Agenda — "Leave No One Behind" — the project ensures the active inclusion of children with and without developmental difficulties, enabling their equal participation in education and broader social life.
The project introduces innovative methodologies in inclusive education and contributes to systemic improvements across all primary schools in Bijeljina, with targeted interventions in two pilot schools.

Contacts

Татјана Летић
Одсјек за образовање и науку, омладину и породичну заштиту Одјељење за друштвене дјелатности
Градска управа Града Бијељина
Трг Краља Петра I Карађорђевића 1
76300 Бијељина
Телефон: 055/233-168
e-mail: tatjana.letic@gradbijeljina.org

General Description

Development objective is to foster an inclusive local community in which every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential and actively contribute to society.
Specific objectives are to: Strengthen capacities of teachers, professional staff, and parents for inclusive education delivery; Improve conditions for inclusive teaching and learning environments; Establish sustainable multi-sectoral cooperation mechanisms; Promote social inclusion and reduce stigma, stereotypes, and discrimination

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Strengthened Capacities for Inclusive Education: Teachers, professional associates, and parents enhanced their knowledge and skills in inclusive teaching practices. Awareness of challenges faced by children with developmental difficulties significantly increased, while improved communication among parents contributed to stronger community cohesion and mutual support.
Improved Learning Environment: Targeted investments in infrastructure and equipment resulted in significantly improved conditions for inclusive education. The establishment of an inclusive playground and the provision of modern teaching tools enhanced both teaching methodologies and student engagement, particularly for children with developmental difficulties.
Institutionalized Multi-sectoral Cooperation: A formalized multi-sectoral coordination mechanism was established, including representatives from education, social protection, health, civil society, and local government. A Protocol on Cooperation was signed, ensuring long-term collaboration and coordinated service delivery for children at risk and children with developmental difficulties.
Increased Public Awareness: The project contributed to raising awareness on the importance of inclusive education among the wider community, helping to reduce stigma and promote diversity and equality.

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Sustainability and Scalability

The project ensured long-term sustainability through:

- Formalization of inter-institutional cooperation via a signed protocol
- Development of a practical manual supporting continuous application of inclusive education (including Individual Education Plans – IEPs)
- Capacity building of local stakeholders for continued implementation
- Investment in durable infrastructure and teaching resources

Additionally, the City of Bijeljina has demonstrated commitment to sustaining project outcomes through its Development Strategy 2024–2030.

Youth dimension

The project actively engaged children and youth as direct beneficiaries and agents of change. Through inclusive workshops, peer interaction, and improved school environments, young people developed social skills, empathy, and tolerance, while gaining equal opportunities to participate in educational and community life.

Gender dimension

The project applies a gender-responsive approach by ensuring equal participation and access to resources for both girls and boys.

Gender equality is integrated within the broader framework of inclusion, promoting equal opportunities for all children regardless of gender or developmental status.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Key Challenges

- Limited awareness and understanding of inclusive education among parents and students
- Insufficient institutional capacities for delivering inclusive teaching
- Lack of teaching resources and continuous professional support
- Weak intersectoral coordination mechanisms prior to the project
- Presence of stereotypes and social distance among children and youth

Lessons Learned

- Early intervention is critical for effective inclusion
- Continuous professional development of teachers is essential
- Active parental involvement significantly enhances inclusion outcomes
- Peer support mechanisms are highly effective
- Multi-sectoral cooperation is a prerequisite for sustainable impact
- Investment in inclusive infrastructure enables long-term change

Democratizing Municipal Water Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrates how structured learning systems can transform water governance and service delivery. By combining institutional capacity development, digital tools, and performance-based frameworks, the initiative enables municipalities, utilities, and young professionals to continuously learn, adapt, and improve water and wastewater services.

Through mechanisms such as the Water Services Academy, Young Water Professionals initiative, and data-driven tools like eCitizen and Citizen Satisfaction Surveys, MEG fosters practical, experience- based learning and strengthens competencies across governance levels. This has led to improved decision-making, increased accountability, and more sustainable and inclusive services.

The initiative contributes to SDG 6 and SDG 11 by embedding learning into governance systems, ensuring that reforms are not one-off interventions but sustained processes of institutional transformation. With strong partnerships and policy integration, MEG offers a scalable model for advancing sustainable water management across the UNECE region.

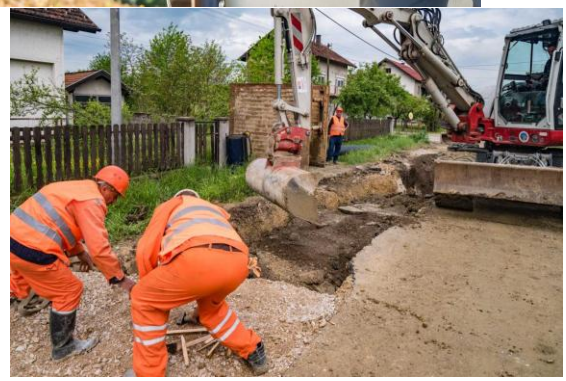
The MEG Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a long-term reform initiative designed to strengthen local governance, improve service delivery, and advance sustainable development. Implemented by UNDP with support from Switzerland, Sweden, EU and the Czech Republic, MEG combines infrastructure investments with institutional reforms to address systemic challenges in water and wastewater management.

Contacts

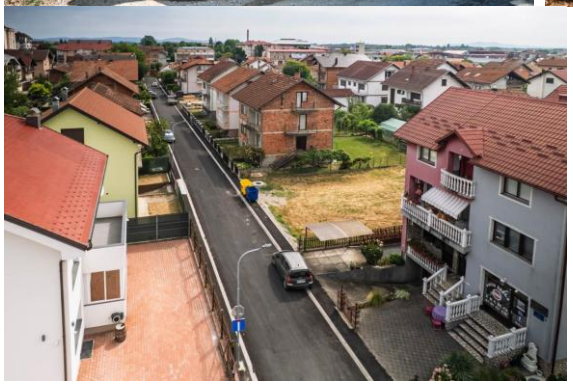
Goran Štefatić, Project Manager -- goran.stefatic@undp.org
Mob: +38761205578









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General description

The overarching goal of the project is to advance the democratization of local governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, fostering more equitable, effective, and efficient public service delivery for citizens, with a particular focus on water supply and wastewater management services. By strengthening policy dialogue, regulatory frameworks, and governance reforms, the Project aims to enhance the sustainability, fairness, and effectiveness of essential local services.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) Project addresses sustainability by directly advancing SDG 6 and SDG 11 through a blend of infrastructure investment, governance reform, and citizen engagement. For educators and learners, MEG provides practical tools, such as Citizen Satisfaction Surveys and the eCitizen platform, that serve as real-world examples of evidence-based governance, enriching curricula and building future sector professionals. Communities benefit from improved water supply, wastewater management, and smart technologies, which resolve decades-long challenges, enhance public health, and empower citizens to engage transparently with local governments.

At the national level, MEG supports systemic reforms, including new Laws on Water Services, tariff methodologies, and benchmarking systems, aligning Bosnia and Herzegovina with EU standards.

By linking citizen feedback to municipal planning and tying infrastructure financing to reform progress, MEG ensures services are financially sustainable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sound.

The result is a legacy of empowered citizens, capable institutions, and resilient municipalities that deliver cleaner water, healthier environments, and more sustainable urban development, contributing directly to the achievement of SDG 6 and SDG 11.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Focusing on a **whole-institution approach** in the development of Laws on Water Services has had a transformative impact by ensuring that reforms are not confined to utilities alone but embedded across municipal governance, regulatory bodies, and citizen engagement mechanisms. This systemic perspective has aligned financial sustainability, service

quality, and accountability, creating a framework where municipalities, regulators, and communities all share responsibility for outcomes. By institutionalizing transparent tariff methodologies, benchmarking, and performance monitoring, the law elevates water services from a technical function to a governance priority. Municipalities now view water and service delivery not as isolated technical tasks but as part of an integrated system that connects planning, budgeting, citizen engagement, and accountability. This institutional shift ensures reforms are resilient and continue beyond project cycles.

Digital education platforms such as eCitizen, and Citizen Satisfaction Surveys, have empowered both officials and citizens to learn and act in real time and use results for future planning. For educators and learners, these tools provide practical case studies in evidence-based governance and sustainable service delivery. For communities, they create direct channels to raise issues, monitor progress, and engage transparently with local governments, which improves daily livelihoods and builds trust.
At higher government levels, this approach has fostered a culture of peer learning and replication, with spillover effects inspiring other municipalities to adopt similar digital solutions.
The result is systemic transformation: institutions that are more accountable, citizens who are more engaged, directly contributing to improved and more sustainable livelihoods.

Key players involved

UNDP's Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) Project serves as the implementing agency, providing technical guidance, coordination, and oversight. Donor governments, primarily Switzerland, Sweden and the Czech Republic, finance the project and ensure accountability, while also promoting alignment with EU standards.
Municipal governments are central actors, co-financing infrastructure, adopting governance reforms, and integrating citizen feedback into planning and budgeting.
Local utilities implement service improvements, such as water supply expansion and smart metering, under performance agreements.
Citizens engage through tools like the eCitizen platform and Citizen Satisfaction Surveys, shaping priorities and holding institutions accountable.
At the national level, ministries and regulatory bodies collaborate on laws, tariff methodologies, and benchmarking systems, embedding MEG's approaches into policy frameworks.
Together, these actors create a systemic impact—delivering cleaner water, stronger institutions, and more sustainable communities across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

By improving water and wastewater services, introducing smart technologies, and embedding citizen feedback mechanisms, MEG has transformed people's behaviors, encouraging households to adopt more responsible water use and engage actively in monitoring service provision quality.
It has promoted community action by empowering citizens to raise issues through the eCitizen platform and participate in decision-making processes, strengthening collective ownership of reforms.
Through visibility campaigns, Citizen Satisfaction Surveys, and transparent reporting, MEG has raised awareness about the importance of sustainable water management and accountable governance.
At the same time, it has involved government at municipal and higher government levels, ensuring that reforms are institutionalized through laws, procedures, tariff methodologies, and benchmarking systems aligned with EU standards.
Finally, MEG has strengthened competencies of local officials, utilities, and young professionals by providing training, digital tools, and performance frameworks, building long-term capacity for sustainable service delivery and resilient communities.

Youth dimension

The Young Water Professionals initiative within the MEG Project has created a dynamic platform for capacity-building and peer learning. Project engaged with early-career experts and connected them with municipalities, utilities, and governance reforms, offering hands-on exposure to sustainable water management and digital tools (GIS, etc).

Another achievement was the establishment of a Water Services Academy, in cooperation with Brno Technical Faculty, as a platform for training and professional development, equipping over 70 participants with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver sustainable, transparent, and EU-aligned water and wastewater services.
This experience not only strengthens technical and leadership skills but also fosters a new generation of professionals committed to ensuring long-term institutional resilience and community impact.

Gender dimension

The MEG project has embedded gender equality and social inclusion into local governance, shifting from checklists to systemic change. 37 municipalities now integrate gender and social inclusion into mid-term plans, service delivery, and citizen satisfaction surveys designed to capture voices of women, youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Moreover, over 2,300 vulnerable citizens, including single mothers and persons with disabilities, now benefit from water subsidies.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The MEG Project has shown that strong local ownership is vital for sustainability, with committed municipalities achieving better reforms and service delivery. Its performance management system introduced measurable criteria that improved governance, transparency, and accountability, while performance-based incentives further motivated progress and strengthened citizen trust. Continuous capacity building, youth engagement, and peer learning accelerated institutional competencies and modernization.
Despite challenges such as corruption and lengthy policy processes, MEG fostered inclusive governance, gender and social participation, and digital transformation. Through collaboration with ministries, professional associations, and the Water Alliance, the project amplified impact, ensured donor coherence, and laid the foundation for systemic sector reforms.

Further resources

- https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/meg-ii-project
- www.ecitizen.ba
- Šamac – 146 households gain access to safe drinking water: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/new-chapter-gajevi-near-samac-146-households-gain-access-safe-drinking-water
- Gradiška – Healthier and safer living for Tekija residents: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/gradiska-healthier-and-safer-living-tekija-residents-thanks-new-sewage-network
- Prnjavor – Residents resolve long-standing wastewater problem: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/residents-prnjavor-resolve-long-standing-wastewater-problem
- Široki Brijeg – Ljubotići residents no longer depend on water trucks: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/ljubotici-residents-siroki-brijeg-no-longer-depend-water-trucks
- Srbac – New infrastructure, safer living conditions: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/new-infrastructure-safer-living-conditions-srbac
- Tešanj – Residents of remote communities to gain access to water: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/residents-remote-communities-tesanj-gain-access-water-after-decades-waiting
- Ilijaš – New specialized vehicle for sewer network maintenance: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/new-specialized-vehicle-sewer-network-maintenance-has-arrived-ilijas
- eCitizen in Rural Communities – Connecting and Solving Problems Remotely: https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/ecitizen-rural-communities-connecting-and-solving-problems-remotely

Improving Corporate Responsibility for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The project “Improving Corporate Responsibility for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Youth Development KULT in partnership with the Association Dajte nam šansu and the Sindikat radnika i trgovine Bosnia and Herzegovina, promotes responsible and sustainable business practices through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), multi-stakeholder dialogue and cross-sectoral partnerships.

Building on the first phase of the project (2019–2022), which resulted in the development of the BiH Framework Guidelines for the Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2022, the current initiative focuses on strengthening the implementation and awareness of these standards within the private sector and local communities. Through participatory learning activities, stakeholder dialogue and the promotion of the Charter on Respect for Human Rights in Business, the project supports companies and institutions in integrating human rights principles into governance structures, workplace practices and decision-making processes.

More than 165 companies, local self-government units, institutions and organizations have signed the Charter, demonstrating their commitment to responsible business conduct. Through workshops, practical tools and community engagement initiatives, the project contributes to the development of competencies related to ethical leadership, social responsibility and sustainable corporate governance.

Contacts

Ajka Rovčanin, Executive Director ajka.rovcanin@mladi.org
Mira Mehmedović, Project Leader mira.mehmedovic@mladi.org

Delivery of charters on respect for human rights (credit by KULT)

Workshop on respect for human rights at Pro Credit bank (credit by KULT)

Cooperation with representatives of the BH authorities (credit by KULT)

Implementation of local initiatives, promotion of the Charter on respect for human rights, with the local self-government unit (credit by KULT)

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General Description

The project aims to strengthen corporate responsibility for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina by promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and supporting the implementation of the national Framework Guidelines on Business and Human Rights. Through training, awareness-raising, partnerships with local governments, and engagement with companies, the initiative empowers stakeholders to integrate human rights principles and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) standards into workplace policies, corporate governance, and local development strategies. By fostering responsible business conduct, ethical leadership and cross-sector cooperation, the project contributes to more inclusive, resilient and sustainable economic development and encourages businesses to align their practices with internationally recognized sustainability and human rights standards.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project contributes to **SDG 9** by supporting responsible and sustainable industrial development through the promotion of ethical business practices, responsible corporate governance and the integration of ESG standards. Through educational workshops, training and dialogue with companies, the initiative strengthens the understanding of the relationship between economic development, labour rights and social responsibility. Participants develop competencies in responsible leadership, ethical decision-making and sustainable work practices.

It also contributes to **SDG 17** by establishing partnerships between civil society organizations, the private sector and public institutions. Cooperation with the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 22 local self-government units supports the implementation of the national Framework Guidelines on Business and Human Rights at the local level.

The project has developed a set of practical tools and mechanisms, including templates, checklists, guides and participatory methods, to help companies and institutions put the Guidelines into practice. The Charter on Respecting Human Rights in Business provides a tangible mechanism for organizations to publicly demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development and human rights. Through dialogue, joint initiatives and workshops on human rights in companies, the project encourages a culture of cooperation, shared responsibility and systemic changes for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The project contributes to **Quality Education and ESD** by creating learning opportunities that enable business representatives, local authorities, and civil society actors to explore the links between human rights, business operations, and sustainable development. Through interactive workshops and dialogue-based learning processes, participants strengthen competencies related to ethical leadership, system thinking, and responsible decision-making.

The initiative also promotes **Entrepreneurship, Employment, Innovation and ESD** by encouraging companies to develop inclusive workplace practices and integrate human rights principles into their management systems. Educational workshops for company management and employees support the development of responsible business practices and help organizations identify practical mechanisms for improving workplace equality and accountability.
Innovative tools such as the Toolkit for the Protection of Human Rights in Business provide companies with practical guidance for developing internal procedures, complaint mechanisms, and policies related to human rights protection.
Through these learning processes and practical commitments, the project supports a gradual transformation toward responsible corporate cultures and sustainable employment practices.

Key players involved

The project is implemented by the Institute for Youth Development KULT, which coordinates activities, facilitates learning, and promotes stakeholder dialogue. All activities are aligned with the UN Convention on Human Rights, ensuring human rights principles guide project design. In collaboration with public authorities, the Institute supports the development of national policies promoting human rights; one policy is currently in the process of adoption.
Private sector companies engage in educational activities, participate in stakeholder discussions, and adopt the Charter on Respect for Human Rights in Business, integrating human rights principles into corporate policies and workplace practices.
Civil society organizations contribute through advocacy, knowledge exchange, and promotion of responsible business practices. Public institutions and local authorities cooperate to strengthen policies and frameworks supporting ethical and sustainable business conduct.
Through this multi-stakeholder approach, supported by a toolkit of practical methods, guides, and participatory mechanisms, the project creates collaborative learning environments that empower stakeholders to address challenges related to human rights, ESG standards, and sustainable development in the business sector.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: Through participatory workshops, trainings, and dialogue sessions, private sector employees, local government representatives, and civil society actors have adopted more responsible practices, integrating human rights principles and ESG standards into daily operations and decision-making.
Promoting community action: Stakeholders have collaborated on joint initiatives, including awareness campaigns, local corporative volunteering projects, and community engagement activities, fostering a culture of shared responsibility for sustainable development and ethical business conduct.
Raising awareness: More than 165 companies, institutions, and local authorities have been engaged in awareness-raising activities, learning about human rights, corporate governance, and sustainable business practices. The project's toolkit—comprising practical guides, checklists, and templates—has supported knowledge transfer and practical application.
Involving government and/or private sector: The project has strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships, including collaboration with 22 local self-government units and national authorities. In cooperation with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, policies promoting human rights are being developed, with one currently under adoption.
Strengthening competencies: Participants have enhanced their skills in responsible leadership, ethical decision-making, and sustainable workplace practices, enabling systemic change and long-term impact across organizations, communities, and governance frameworks.

Youth dimension

The project empowers young people by promoting the values of responsible business that shape future labor markets. The initiative that emerged from this program is to prepare young people for their first job through education on the topic of human rights in business. Through the Institute for Youth Development KULT, young professionals, interns and youth representatives learn about responsible entrepreneurship, human rights and sustainable development. This approach enables the establishment of a new generation of experts dedicated to ethical leadership and socially responsible business practices.

Gender dimension

Gender equality is promoted through the project's focus on non- discrimination, equal opportunities, and inclusive workplace practices. Educational activities encourage companies to develop gender-sensitive policies, promote equal pay, and ensure safe and inclusive working environments. The project also actively includes women and marginalized groups, raising awareness among employers and stakeholders to strengthen equality, social inclusion, and fair employment practices within the business sector.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges was encouraging companies to see that respecting human rights is not only a legal obligation but also a core element of sustainable and responsible business. Many initially lacked knowledge of international standards and practical implementation approaches. The project showed that continuous education showcasing positive examples are essential for fostering long-term commitment. Building trust and maintaining open dialogue among stakeholders proved crucial for promoting broader participation, meaningful change, and embedding human rights principles into corporate policies and practices.

Further resources

- https://mladi.org/en/kategorija/economic-development/the-importance-of-respecting-human-rights-in-business
- https://www.hayat.ba/news/article/predstavljena-povelja-o-postivanju-ljudskih-prava-u-poslovanju/69655a96dcdf122c94b68969
- BHT1 Uživo: Zorana Tovilović Glavaš, Institut za razvoj mladih KULT - https://www.centar.ba/vijesti/21593/unapredjenje-postivanja-ljudskih-prava-u-poslovanju

Inclusion for a Happier Childhood of Children with Developmental Disabilities

The project "Inclusion for a Happier Childhood of Children with Developmental Disabilities" directly contributes to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 17, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships among institutions, organizations, and the community in achieving sustainable development. The implementation of project activities is based precisely on the cooperation of various participants at the local and international levels, enabling the mobilization of financial, Institutional, and professional resources necessary to improve the quality of social services and strengthen the inclusion within the local community.
The project is implemented through a partnership of the Municipality of Jablanica, the PI Center for Social Work, the PHI Health Center Jablanica, educational Institutions, parents of the children with developmental disabilities, and international organizations, including the
including the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF. This partnership approach enables the connection of different sectors-public, International, and civil society with the goal of creating an inclusive and supportive environment for children with developmental disabilities and their families. Through the joint efforts of partners, financial support for the project has been secured, along with professional and technical assistance in planning and implementing project activities. One of the key aspects of contributing to Goal 17 is also reflected in the co- financing of the project. The total value of the project amounts to 156,604.00 BAM excluding VAT, and the funds have been secured through the support of the SDG2 BIH Fund, with the participation of international partners and co-financing by the Municipality of Jablanica. In this way, the project represents an example of a successful model of cooperation between local government and international organizations in the implementation of development initiatives that contribute to social inclusion and equal opportunities for all.

Contacts

Dženan Mulahasanović
Secretary of the Municipal Administrative Authority, Municipality of Jablanica
Address: Pere Bilića 15, 88420 Jablanica
Tel: +387 36 751 306
Mob: +387 61 525 021
E-mail: dz.mulahasanovic@jablanica.ba

General Description

The goal of the project is to contribute to a more prosperous and inclusive social development of the Municipality of Jablanica by improving the social inclusion of children and youth with developmental disabilities and their parents. The project has enabled the creation of an inclusive environment, improved access to professional social and counselling services, and encouraged the active participation of children and their families in social life, thereby contributing to the reduction of social exclusion and the strengthening of equal opportunities within the local community.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project "Inclusion for a Happier Childhood of Children with Developmental Disabilities," through strengthening partnerships between local government, educational institutions, the PI Center for Social Work the PHI Health Center Jablanica, parents, and international organizations, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, addresses the challenge of sustainability through the approach of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which promotes the values of inclusion, equal opportunities, and social responsibility.
Through the project, the competencies of professionals and educators working with children with developmental disabilities have been strengthened, particularly through the engagement of speech therapists and psychologists, as well as through the improvement of knowledge and skills of the professional staff of the Center for Social Work. Children, including those of typical development from schools and kindergartens, through joint activities in an inclusive play environment, develop awareness of diversity, empathy, and social skills.
The project's impact is also reflected at the community level, where cooperation between institutions, parents, and organizations creates an environment that fosters social cohesion and active participation of all members of society. This approach contributes to the long-term sustainability of the project, as it develops knowledge, attitudes, and partnerships that enable the continuous improvement of inclusive social services and life quality in the local community.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project is mostly aligned with the priority of UNESCO's strategy related to equitable and inclusive education for all. According to UNESCO's strategic objectives, one of the fundamental goals is to ensure equal and inclusive education as a basic human right and as a tool for personal and social development- this includes early childhood development, removing learning barriers, and promotes learning without discrimination.
In the context of UNESCO's educational projects and programs, inclusive education specifically refers to: removing learning barriers for children with developmental disabilities, promoting equal access to quality learning and support, strengthening policies and practices that enable every child to reach their full potential.
Therefore, the project "Inclusion for a Happier Childhood of Children with Developmental Disabilities" directly reflects UNESCO's strategic priority of inclusion and equal access to education, which is a key component within the broader framework of educational development advocated by the organization.

Key players involved

1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – responsible for planning, monitoring, and ensuring international and local cooperation.
2. UNICEF - provides technical and financial support, particularly in the area of inclusive education and the protection of children's rights.
3. The Municipality of Jablanica- the local authority that coordinates the entire project, ensures logistics, resources, and space for the implementation of project activities, and coordinates with local partners.
4. The PI Center for Social Work Jablanica – identifies beneficiaries and provides social services and support to families of children with developmental disabilities.
5. The PHI Health Center Jablanica - involves healthcare professionals who carry out assessments, therapeutic and rehabilitation activities for children, provide counselling to parents, and monitor the health status of participants.
6. Most importantly, parents and the local community – actively participate in daily activities, support children, and help integrate inclusive practices, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the project.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people’s behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project has had a significant impact on the local community in several key areas. First, there has been a transformation in people's behavior-parents, teachers, and local participants have developed a greater sense of empathy and patience toward children with developmental disabilities, applying inclusive methods in everyday activities. Second, the project has promoted community engagement, through workshops, public campaigns, and local initiatives, citizens have become more actively Involved in supporting inclusive programs, thereby strengthening social cohesion and shared responsibility. Third, raising awareness about the rights and needs of children with developmental disabilities has resulted in better informed communities and a reduction in stereotypes and stigma. Finally, the project has strengthened the competencies of local professionals-teachers, social workers, and healthcare workers-through training and mentorship, improving the quality of support and therapies provided, while also enabling the application of inclusive practices in educational and healthcare institutions. Overall, these improvements have contributed to the creation of a more accessible, empathetic, and participatory community in which every child can reach their full potential.

Youth dimension

The project incorporates a youth dimension through the active engagement of young people in supporting | children with developmental disabilities, including socializing with them at the playground built in the park. Through this involvement, young people gain practical experience, develop social and communication skills, and become promoters of inclusion within their community. In this way, the project strengthens responsibility, empathy, and active citizenship among youth, while simultaneously contributing to the creation of a supportive and Inclusive social environment.

Gender dimension

The project includes a gender dimension by ensuring equal access to support and activities for both girls and boys with developmental disabilities. Parents of children both genders actively participate in the programs, while training sessions and workshops for professionals emphasize sensitivity to gender- specific needs, promoting equal participation and an inclusive environment. In this way, gender-related barriers in education and social integration are reduced, strengthening equality in access to resources and support.

Challenges or lessons learnt

During the implementation of the project "Inclusion for a Happier Childhood of Children with Developmental Disabilities" we faced several challenges. The most significant included insufficient awareness and understanding of inclusion among parents and the local community, limited resources for providing adequate support to children with developmental disabilities, and the need for additional capacity among professional staff.
Through these challenges, we learned several important lessons: that continuous education and community sensitization are essential, that inclusion requires a team-based approach and coordination among all participants, and that the active Involvement of parents and youth significantly increases the success of the project. Flexibility and adapting activities to local needs proved crucial for the sustainability and long-term impact of the project.

Further resources

- www.jablanica.ba

MEG Project (Municipal Environmental Governance Project)

The goal of the MEG Project (Municipal Environmental Governance Project) is to contribute to the further democratization of local government, together with regulatory improvements in the areas of water supply services and wastewater management, ultimately enabling more efficient, equitable, and sustainable delivery of essential local services. The project focused on raising awareness and strengthening the capacity of local governments to fulfil their legal obligations in providing high-quality water supply and sewerage services to all citizens. In addition, the project also focused on raising awareness among members of the City Assembly about the structure of water supply and sewerage services, as well as the required operational efficiency supported by full cost recovery, which contributes to more responsible decision-making regarding these services.
The project implementation period is 2021–2026. It is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and financed by the Governments of Switzerland, Sweden and the Czech Republic, as well as by the European Union.
Within the framework of the MEG Project, the City of Laktaši secured grant funding in the amount of BAM 510,000 for the implementation of infrastructure projects. In the final evaluation, Laktaši ranked first in five out of six categories used to measure the quality of services provided by local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in terms of efficiency, transparency, and communication with citizens and the business sector.

Contacts

goran.vujakovic@laktasi.net
tamara.josic@laktasi.net



Photographs: Adnan Bubalo
Photographs are used from the official website: https://www.swissinbih.ba/en/article/14/water-connection-solves-key-issues-for-farmer-marko-danjko-and-residents-of-jablan-near-laktasi

General Description

The goal of the project is to strengthen transparent, accountable, and efficient local governance through the improvement of public service delivery, with a particular focus on water supply and wastewater management. Through the introduction of modern management practices, improved data monitoring, and strengthened cooperation between the local administration and public utility providers, the project contributes to more reliable, economical, and environmentally sustainable water services for citizens ensuring inclusive and gender-responsive service delivery in 30 partner municipalities.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6 - The sustainability challenge within SDG 6 is effectively addressed through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which operates at multiple levels—from individuals to the wider community. ESD represents a key tool for addressing sustainability challenges, as it connects knowledge, values, and action, enabling systemic and long-term changes in society.

SDG 11- ESD connects knowledge, values, and active engagement, enabling cities to become safer, more resilient, and better adapted to the needs of all citizens.

SDG 17- (ESD) contributes to strengthening partnerships as a key prerequisite for sustainable development.

ESD helps educators convey the importance of cooperation and joint action, while learners develop teamwork, communication, and active participation skills in society. At the community level, it encourages stronger connections between local authorities, public utility companies, and citizens, which helps build trust and improves the efficient management of resources. At the national level, it contributes to better coordination and more effective implementation of development policies.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Besides the education of individuals; the project also transforms the way institutions function by introducing the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability into everyday governance. This "whole institution approach" represents a key element of the UNECE Strategy, which emphasizes that institutions should function as systems of learning and change.

Its transformative impact is reflected in the fact that institutions become learning communities: they develop a culture of responsibility and sustainability, strengthen the capacities of their employees, systematically integrate sustainability principles into decision-making, and involve citizens in planning processes. In this way, the project contributes to long-term and lasting improvements in the management of local resources and public services.

In addition, the City of Laktaši allocates an annual budget of BAM 20,000.00 to co-finance water consumption for socially vulnerable categories. This measure insures that essential services remain accessible to all citizens, particularly those most in need, and highlights the project's focus on social inclusion with sustainable water management.

Key players involved

Key players in the project included the City Administration of Laktaši, KP Budućnost Laktaši, municipal and utility staff, and UNDP, which supported implementation and provided technical guidance. The City Administration played a coordinating and strategic role, implementing governance reforms, enhancing transparency, and introducing performance monitoring systems. KP Budućnost Laktaši led operational activities, improving water supply and wastewater services, increasing efficiency, and applying modern management practices. Municipal and utility staff participated in trainings and capacity-building activities, strengthening skills for sustainable service management. The project is jointly financed by the Swiss Government, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and the European Union, ensuring international support for participatory decision-making, sustainable development, and knowledge exchange across local governance and utility services.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: The impact on citizens' behaviour is reflected in increased trust in local institutions, greater awareness of the importance of rational water use, and a more active attitude toward environmental protection. The impact on public officials is reflected in strengthened capacities and knowledge for managing water services, as well as more efficient and transparent decision-making, improved planning processes, and a better understanding of the cost structure of public utility services.

Raising awareness: Through educational activities and information campaigns, the understanding of the importance of sustainable water resource management has been improved, as well as the need for rational use and regular maintenance of water supply and sanitation systems. Awareness has also been increased regarding the costs of service provision and the importance of cost recovery, which contributes to more responsible behaviour and informed decision-making. In this way, the project has contributed to the development of a better-informed and more responsible community.

Strengthening competencies: The project had a positive impact on strengthening the competencies of employees in local institutions by improving their knowledge and skills in the management of water supply and sewerage services. Through trainings, exchange of experiences, and practical work, public officials were equipped to carry out more efficient planning, decision-making, and resource management.

Youth dimension

Analysis and collaboration with utility companies revealed a lack of young employees' engagement, especially in UPKP and UVRS, limiting innovation in the water sector. To address this, MEG2 organized young professionals from 30 partner municipalities. Identified talents participated in four workshops covering 20+ water-related topics, forming a network of over 40 professionals. By early 2025, MEG2 supported the creation of subcommittees within entity-level associations in the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska, fostering knowledge exchange, university collaboration, and public engagement.

Gender dimension

MEG 2 includes a gender dimension by promoting gender-responsive local governance, ensuring inclusive decision-making and equitable municipal services, particularly in water management. The project engages municipalities in participatory planning, performance monitoring, and citizen feedback, considering the needs of both women and men. Workshops and professional networks for young employees also adopt gender-sensitive approaches, fostering equal opportunities for participation and professional development.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Challenges:

- Resistance to change and institutional inertia – some parts of the local administration were sceptical of new management methods and principles of participatory decision-making,
- Coordination among stakeholders – integrating different sectors required additional efforts in communication and planning,
- Lack of citizen interest in participating in any discussions,
- Legal and regulatory barriers – inconsistencies in local regulations hindered the implementation of new practices and procedures,
- Technical limitations and infrastructure – the state of local infrastructure often did not allow for the implementation of recommended measures and innovations.

Lessons Learned:

- Importance of a whole-institution approach – transforming institutions through collective learning enables long-term and sustainable changes in governance,
- Role of education and awareness-raising – continuous training of employees, government representatives, and citizens is key to ensuring the sustainability of results,
- Participatory decision-making – involving citizens and local stakeholders increases transparency, accountability, and the acceptability of decisions,
- Intersectoral cooperation – coordination across different sectors improves the efficiency and quality of public services.

Further resources

- https://grad-laktasi.com/laktashi-grad-koji-se-mjeri-rezultatima/
- https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/news/gradiska-and-laktasi-recognized-most-successful-local-governments-prnjavor-and-istocno-novo-sarajevo-achieved-greatest
- https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/stories/young-professionals-driving-change-new-impulse-modernization-utility-companies
- https://www.swissinbih.ba/en/article/14/water-connection-solves-key-issues-for-farmer-marko-danjko-and-residents-of-jablan-near-laktasi

- https://grad-laktasi.com/laktashi-grad-koji-se-mjeri-rezultatima/
- https://www.glaslaktasa.com/laktasi-grad-koji-se-mjeri-rezultatima/
- https://www.radiolaktasi.com/blog/laktasi-prvi-u-bih-pet-najboljih-ocjena-po-kvalitetu-javnih-usluga
- https://ba.ekapija.com/news/5342211/trebinje-laktasi-i-samac-najuspjesnije-lokalne-zajednice-u-okviru-meg-ii-projekta
- https://www.undp.org/bs/bosnia-herzegovina/news/gradiska-i-laktasi-najuspjesnije-lokalne-samouprave-prnjavor-i-istocno-novo-sarajevo-ostvarili-najveci-napredak

«Join In – So We Can Too»

The project “Join In – So We Can Too” (“Uključite se svi da možemo i mi”) promotes social inclusion, equal opportunities and participation of children and youth with disabilities in the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was implemented within the SDG2BiH Programme, financed by the Government of Sweden and implemented by UNDP in partnership with UNICEF and UN Women, under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, with Municipality of Novo Sarajevo participating as a government partner.
The project was implemented with two educational institutions for children and youth with developmental disabilities – the Centre for Education, Rehabilitation and Training “Vladimir Nazor” and the Secondary School for Vocational Education and Training – located at the same address.
The initiative improved conditions through the rehabilitation of a sports playground, the adaptation and equipment of classrooms, and the procurement of specialized machines for vocational training workshops, helping students develop practical skills for employment.
A working group supporting the employment of people with developmental disabilities was established, bringing together authorities, schools and businesses to ensure sustainability of project results.
Inclusive workshops, sports events and community activities promoted cooperation, empathy and awareness while creating friendships with students from a neighbouring mainstream primary school.

Contacts

Erna Kućanin, MUNICIPALITY OF NOVO SARAJEVO
Email: erna.kucanin@novosarajevo.ba
Phone: +38733 492 212

Attached photos are owned by the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo

General Description

The goal of the project was to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities for children and youth with developmental disabilities by improving educational conditions, strengthening practical skills and encouraging their active participation in community life. Through inclusive activities, infrastructure improvements and cooperation between schools, local authorities and businesses, the project aimed to create supportive environments and strengthen pathways towards future employment and long-term social inclusion.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project contributes to **SDG 9** by strengthening inclusive educational infrastructure and supporting the development of practical skills relevant for future employment. Through the rehabilitation of a sports playground, the adaptation of classrooms and the procurement of specialized machines for vocational training workshops, the project created more accessible learning environments for students with developmental disabilities. These improvements enabled educators to introduce more practice- oriented learning approaches and helped learners develop competencies that support their long-term economic participation.

The project also addresses **SDG 11** by promoting inclusive and supportive communities. Inclusive workshops, sports events and joint activities with a neighbouring mainstream primary school created opportunities for interaction between students with and without disabilities. These activities encouraged empathy, cooperation and mutual understanding among learners and educators while raising awareness within the wider community about the importance of inclusion.

In line with **SDG 17**, the project strengthened partnerships between local government, educational institutions, international organizations and the private sector. The establishment of a multi- stakeholder working group supporting the employment of people with developmental disabilities created a platform for long-term cooperation and contributes to sustainable pathways from education to employment.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The project contributes to Quality Education and ESD by strengthening inclusive learning environments and promoting equal access to education for children and youth with developmental disabilities. Improvements to classrooms, the rehabilitation of a sports playground and the procurement of specialized machines for vocational training workshops enabled more practical, skills- oriented learning approaches. These improvements support educators in delivering inclusive education and help learners develop competencies relevant for future employment and social participation.
Through a whole-institution approach, the project connected educational institutions, local authorities, international organizations and community stakeholders. Schools became spaces of transformational learning where students, teachers and community members participated in inclusive workshops, sports activities and awareness initiatives. This approach strengthened cooperation between institutions, promoted inclusive values and encouraged greater community engagement.
The project also supports Entrepreneurship, Employment, Innovation and ESD by creating pathways from education to employment. The establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group supporting the employment of young people with developmental disabilities strengthened cooperation between schools, businesses and public institutions. This collaboration promotes practical skills development and encourages inclusive employment opportunities.

Key players involved

The project was implemented through a strong partnership between local government, educational institutions, international organizations and the private sector.
The Municipality of Novo Sarajevo played a leading role in coordinating the project, facilitating cooperation between stakeholders and ensuring the implementation of activities at the local level.
Key educational partners included the Centre for Education, Rehabilitation and Training “Vladimir Nazor” and the Secondary School for Vocational Education and Training, which hosted project activities and worked directly with students with developmental disabilities through inclusive workshops, practical learning and community events.
International partners, including UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women, provided financial and technical support through the SDG2BiH programme, contributing to the integration of sustainable development principles and inclusive approaches.

Local businesses and community stakeholders were also actively involved, particularly through the multi-stakeholder working group supporting the employment of people with developmental disabilities, helping strengthen cooperation between education systems and the labour market.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project achieved significant progress in promoting inclusion and strengthening community engagement. Inclusive workshops, sports events and joint activities with a neighboring mainstream primary school encouraged interaction between students with and without developmental disabilities, helping reduce stereotypes, foster empathy and promote more inclusive attitudes among students, educators and the wider community.

The project also mobilized community action by bringing together educational institutions, local authorities, international organizations and local businesses. This cooperation strengthened partnerships and encouraged greater stakeholder involvement in supporting the inclusion of young people with developmental disabilities. Awareness of inclusive education and equal opportunities was further raised through community activities and cooperation between schools and local institutions, while students strengthened their competencies through practical learning opportunities, including vocational training workshops.

An important achievement was the establishment of a multi- stakeholder working group supporting the employment of people with developmental disabilities, contributing to more sustainable pathways towards labour market inclusion. This was further demonstrated in March 2026, when, through the active engagement and coordinated efforts of the working group, a student with developmental disabilities from the Secondary School for Vocational Education and Training was successfully employed at a leading retail and distribution company in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Youth dimension

Young people were at the centre of the project as both beneficiaries and active participants. Students with developmental disabilities took part in inclusive workshops, vocational training activities and sports events that supported the development of practical skills, confidence and social interaction. Joint activities with students from a neighbouring mainstream primary school encouraged peer learning and friendship. As a final activity, students organized a bazar where they presented and sold products created during the workshops, strengthening their entrepreneurial skills and confidence.

Gender dimension

The project promoted gender equality by ensuring equal participation of girls and boys with developmental disabilities in all project activities, including workshops, vocational training and sports events. Activities were designed to provide equal opportunities for both genders to develop practical skills, confidence and social interaction. By promoting inclusive and supportive learning environments, the project contributed to reducing gender stereotypes and encouraging equal participation in education and community life.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the key challenges during project implementation was coordinating activities among multiple stakeholders, including educational institutions, local authorities and community partners. Ensuring that activities responded to the specific needs of students with developmental disabilities also required careful planning and flexibility. An important lesson learned was the value of strong cooperation between institutions and the involvement of local businesses and community actors. The establishment of a multi- stakeholder working group proved particularly valuable, strengthening partnerships and creating more sustainable pathways for the employment and social inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. The working group continues to operate actively, supporting further cooperation and long-term impact of the project.

Further resources

- MUNICIPALITY OF NOVO SARAJEVO: https://novosarajevo.ba/
- Video LINK: https://youtu.be/IEFdTamQ9hk
- https://novosarajevo.ba/aktuelno.php?id=3194
- https://novosarajevo.ba/aktuelno.php?id=3704

- https://novosarajevo.ba/aktuelno.php?id=3557
- https://novosarajevo.ba/aktuelno.php?id=3434
- UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/bih/pri%C4%8De/uklju%C4%8Dite-se-svi-da-mo%C5%BEemo-i-mi
- https://www.facebook.com/UNICEFBiH/posts/uklju%C4%8Dite-se-svi-da-mo%C5%BEemo-i-mi-u%C4%8Denice-i-u%C4%8Denici-%C5%A1kole-za-srednje-stru%C4%8Dno-obraz/1113621910811812/
- https://www.facebook.com/UNICEFBiH/photos/uklju%C4%8Dite-se-svi-da-mo%C5%BEemo-i-mi-u%C4%8Denice-i-u%C4%8Denici-%C5%A1kole-za-srednje-stru%C4%8Dno-obraz/1113612844146052/
- ZAMISLI 2030: https://www.facebook.com/zamisli2030/posts/projekat-uklju%C4%8Dite-se-svi-da-mo%C5%BEemo-i-mi-je-podr%C5%BEan-kroz-grant-shemu-niko-ne-smi/983285120570279/

Saving Energy Through Learning and Digital Tools

The Green Economic Development (GED) Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrates how institutional learning and digital systems can drive sustainable energy transformation at scale. By integrating the Energy Management Information System (EMIS) with structured capacity development and awareness-raising, the project enabled public institutions to continuously learn from energy consumption data and improve decision-making.

The initiative implemented energy efficiency measures in over 300 public buildings, achieving energy savings of up to 53% and reducing CO_2 emissions by approximately 18,535 tonnes annually. Through the introduction of EMIS and the training of dedicated energy managers, institutions transitioned from passive energy users to active managers of resources. More than 3,500 green jobs were created, benefiting over 267,000 direct users.

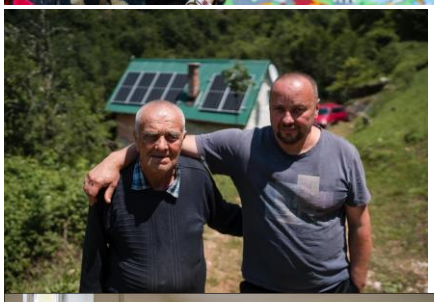
Learning was central to this transformation. Public sector employees developed competencies in energy management through hands-on use of digital tools, while campaigns such as “Like for Smart Energy” engaged over 235,000 citizens, promoting behavioural change and sustainable practices.

By embedding learning into institutional systems and combining infrastructure investments with digital innovation and capacity development, the project contributes to SDG 7, 9, 11, and SDG 17. It offers a scalable model for integrating education, data, and governance to support long-term sustainable development across the UNECE region.

Contacts

arnesa.borcak@undp.org





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General Description

The project aims to create enabling conditions for energy efficiency investments, increase green jobs, and support the development of a sustainable energy efficiency market, while reducing energy consumption and emissions in public buildings through institutional capacity building, EMIS implementation, and awareness-raising activities.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The initiative contributes to **SDG 7** by improving energy efficiency, while embedding learning processes that enable institutions to continuously optimize energy use. Under SDG 9, it introduces innovation through digital tools such as EMIS, which supports knowledge generation and application.

For **SDG 11**, the project enhances the sustainability of public infrastructure while transforming institutions into learning environments that promote responsible resource use. **SDG 17** is addressed through partnerships that facilitate knowledge exchange between UNDP, governments, and local communities. From an ESD perspective, the initiative strengthens institutional learning by enabling public employees to develop competencies in energy management. It promotes behavioral change through direct engagement with energy data, encouraging more sustainable practices. The combination of practical interventions and continuous learning ensures that sustainability becomes embedded in institutional culture.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The project applies a whole-institution approach by embedding sustainability into the daily functioning of public institutions. EMIS acts as a digital learning platform, enabling staff to engage with real-time data, interpret trends, and make informed decisions. Through training and practical application, institutions develop competencies in energy management, fostering a culture of continuous learning. The initiative transforms passive infrastructure users into active participants in sustainability processes.

Digital tools enhance learning by providing accessible, real-time insights, while innovation is promoted through the integration of new technologies and practices. This creates a feedback loop where knowledge informs action, and action reinforces learning, leading to sustained behavioral and institutional change.

Key players involved

The Green Economic Development (GED) Project was implemented by UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with entity, cantonal, and local governments, as well as public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and administrative buildings.

The Government of Sweden provided financial support, while national and local authorities ensured ownership and sustainability.

Public institutions appointed EMIS managers responsible for monitoring and reporting energy consumption. Technical experts and trainers delivered capacity-building programmes, while contractors implemented energy efficiency measures.

Awareness campaigns were conducted in cooperation with relevant institutions to promote sustainable energy use among citizens and public sector employees.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness

- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project strengthened institutional competencies through the training of EMIS managers, provision of equipment, and introduction of structured energy management practices across 164 local government units.
It raised awareness through national campaigns and outreach activities reaching more than 235,000 people, promoting responsible energy use and sustainable practices.
The initiative supported behavioral change by enabling continuous monitoring of energy consumption through EMIS and embedding energy management into institutional decision-making processes. It also contributed to improved public services by upgrading 108 public buildings, enhancing comfort and reducing operational costs, while demonstrating the benefits of sustainable energy solutions to communities.
By combining infrastructure investments with education, awareness campaigns, digital systems, and institutional reform, the project created a sustainable model for long-term impact.

Youth dimension

The project contributes to youth learning by improving educational environments in schools and introducing sustainability concepts through campaigns and institutional practices, fostering long-term behavioural change among younger generations.

Gender dimension

The project contributed to gender equality by addressing structural inequalities in energy use and access. Women, who are disproportionately affected by unpaid household labour and energy- related responsibilities, particularly benefited from energy efficiency measures that reduced time and effort required for heating and household maintenance. This contributed to a reduction in time poverty and improved overall wellbeing. Improved public buildings enhanced working conditions in sectors where women represent a majority, such as education and public services. Over 107,000 women benefited from improved infrastructure and energy services.
Through training of EMIS managers, awareness campaigns, and inclusive participation in energy management, the project also supported women's engagement in decision-making processes and contributed to shifting traditional perceptions of energy as a male- dominated field.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Large-scale energy efficiency programmes require strong alignment between infrastructure investments, institutional capacity, and regulatory frameworks. Key challenges included limited institutional resources, slow legislative and policy development, and fragmented governance structures across different administrative levels. Co-financing proved effective but highlighted financial constraints of municipalities, requiring diversification of funding sources.
Capacity building and on-the-job training were essential for effective energy management, particularly for monitoring systems such as EMIS. The project also demonstrated that stronger coordination, high-level policy engagement, and more targeted communication and advocacy are needed to create an enabling environment for scaling energy efficiency interventions.

Further resources

- https://ged.ba/
- https://www.undp.org/bs/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/ged-projekat
- https://business-magazine.ba/2022/10/20/zeleni-ekonomski-razvoj-projekat-znacajno-utice-energetsku-efikasnost/
- https://ged.exposure.co/

Inclusive governance with Indigenous Communities, Civil Society, and future guardians

At the University of Calgary in Canada (UNECE region), the UCalgary Pluralism Initiative launched an inclusive governance model that strengthens SDG 17 by embedding partnership in decision-making. First Nations Elders and leaders, alongside civil-society organizations co-designed and co-implemented a "parallel paths" approach that honours Indigenous self-determination and validates oral and written traditions side by side. Skilled facilitators convene university leaders, educators, learners, and community partners to set shared priorities, translate them into working-group action (curriculum, policy, research and innovation), and report back transparently. An intergenerational layer is built in through guardians for the planet and future generations that give these relations (by proxy) a seat at the table where decisions are ordinarily made that impact them – but without them. The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) value is practical: community members and university leaders build competencies in dialogue across difference, systems thinking, and relational accountability by doing governance together (with material impacts on both distinct and shared priorities); community partners gain a reliable pathway to shape institutional decisions; and the model produces replicable tools (protocols, facilitation guides, short explainer videos) for adaptation to other contexts.

Contacts

Dr. Aleem Bharwani, MD MPP FRCPC — Founding Director, UCalgary Pluralism Initiative; Associate Professor, Cumming School of Medicine (University of Calgary)
Email: ambharwa@ucalgary.ca
Phone: +1 (403) 210-6641

General Description

To embed community and Indigenous self-determination in university decision-making by creating a structured, facilitator-supported governance model where Indigenous knowledge keepers and civil-society organizations co-set priorities with institutional leadership, translate priorities into action (curriculum, policy, research, innovation), and ensure long-term sustainability through guardians for the planet and future generations.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

This initiative advances SDG 17 by turning "partnership" into shared governance capacity. We move beyond mere advisories or one-off consultations. It builds the competencies and practical infrastructure that make partnerships durable: facilitated dialogue across difference, ethical space and "parallel paths" practices that honour Indigenous self-determination, and relational accountability (clear decision rights, transparent reporting back, and resourcing community participation). Notably, all community voices are given adjunct professor appointments. Indigenous knowledge keepers and civil-society organizations participate as co-designers and co-implementers in ongoing working groups with institutional leadership, so community priorities are translated into curriculum, policy, research, and innovation actions. This means communities don't get stuck at a decanal bottleneck; and don't need to keep repeating themselves – because the facilitator keeps the issue alive and holds leaders accountable. A multigenerational dimension is embedded through guardianship roles (future generations/planet) by ensuring there is a proxy voice for relations that may otherwise seem abstract and less relatable. The ESD impact is concrete: educators and learners develop applied partnership skills by participating in governance-by-doing; community partners gain a reliable pathway to shape institutional decisions; communities tackle their own challenges and they also jointly assess and solve shared challenges (issues like polarization which are everyone's third priority but never their top priority); and the model generates replicable tools (protocols, facilitation practices, templates) to scale partnership practice across contexts.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD*:* The initiative strengthens ESD by moving sustainability learning from "content delivery" to practice. Educators and learners develop applied competencies—dialogue across difference, systems thinking, ethical space, and relational accountability—by participating directly in facilitated governance and working groups. Curriculum

and learning experiences are co-designed with First Nations knowledge holders and civil-society partners, making learning more relevant, place-based, and accountable to community-defined priorities. This builds durable civic and partnership skills that translate beyond the university.

***Whole-institution approach** / institutions as communities of transformational learning:* The core transformation is institutional: ESD becomes embedded in how the institution decides. Shared governance structures and transparent report-back cycles turn the university into a learning community where leadership, faculty, staff, students, and community partners continuously test decisions against long-term, multigenerational impacts. "Parallel paths" practices normalize Indigenous self-determination within institutional processes, shifting culture from transactional consultation to sustained relationship-building and shared responsibility—creating conditions for partnerships that endure and can be replicated across units and institutions.

Key players involved

UCalgary Pluralism Initiative (design and facilitation support); University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine leadership (institutional sponsor and decision authority); Indigenous elders and leaders (Indigenous governance "path," including work informed by the ii' taa'poh'to'p Circle of Elders); umbrella civil-society organizations representing diverse communities plus smaller/less powerful groups (outer ring); skilled facilitators who broker relationships and help working groups navigate university processes; students, staff and faculty who participate in working groups; and appointed guardians for the planet and future generations.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Community action: Annual cycles translate shared priorities into working-groups that move through institutional bottlenecks to implementation.
Concrete examples: 1) to improve access to higher education for rural communities, we collaborated with the Rural Municipalities Association and the Alberta Municipalities (through our reps) to craft successful joint resolutions at their AGMs which now await a meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education; 2) we co-created new outreach models for low-income pathway to medical school (straight from high school) by co-creating community outreach tools that use community networks; 3) we created a new associate dean of community in the graduate school of education to support trainee-community collaborations; 4) we have three active grants that respond to community priorities that didn't have answers in the mainstream literature: a) revitalizing oral wisdom to enshrine consensus-based decision-making in higher education, b) revitalizing Afghan wisdom (e.g. Rumi) to craft early childhood development education for Afghan refugees here, c) learning from Indigenous and global diasporic wisdom to redefine the parenting literature on what "closeness" looks like beyond the Western paradigm.
Behaviors: A shift from transactional consultation to relational accountability, embedded in decision-making.
Awareness: The accompanying Policy Options series and short explainer videos make the model easy to understand and adaptable to other contexts.
Educational policies: Community-informed curriculum and learning experiences are embedded across the Faculty.
Real-Life Learning: Educators and learners develop and observe skills in facilitation, ethical space, systems thinking, and intergenerational decision-making

Youth dimension

Students are explicitly named participants in the model. They raise priorities and partner with communities to drive novel solutions. For example, they are working on a new model of feedback; instead of faculty members getting ripped apart in their end of semester surveys, the plan is to host facilitated dialogues to create a multilateral dialogue to a) identify challenges and successes; b) co-create new ideas forward that tackle problems or scale positive elements; and c) nurture relationships across axes (student-faculty; student-student). Students were central to the after/in-action reviews (see policy papers) – and are keenly enthusiastic on the role of the future generations guardian.

Gender dimension

This initiative is grounded in feminist ethics of care: it treats relational work, often feminized, invisible, and uncompensated - as essential governance infrastructure.

By partnering with women's and gender-diverse organizations and using facilitation that equalizes voice, the model elevates intersectional voices through sustained engagement with intersectional voices within gender and gender diverse communities, but also in how they intersect with the multitude of other identities and communities. In this way, engagement is authentic (wearing the hat they choose), is action-orientated, and reinforces shared commitments to strengthening our collective ability to shift participation from "presence" to shared influence through shared understanding.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Time and trust are the core inputs: moving from consultation to inclusive governance requires sustained relationship-building and skilled facilitation. If one tries to take shortcuts or excessively delegate, the relationships fail and the model collapses. The work of delicate partnerships is personal, earnest, and careful – which often flies against preferential approaches for instantaneous and rapid.

It takes time to build credibility. This work emerges from decades in this community, serving on boards, growing up with people, and supporting each other over time. And in the university, leaders watched with interest (but from a distance) until they started seeing the successes and the entirely new model that previously seemed idealistic – until they saw it realistically implemented and sustained.

Pluralism doesn't have its own "identity group" to buttress its work – so it always risks being secondary to more organized, focused interests. This is the challenge of SDG 17 – and I believe we have begun to demonstrate the value of multilateralism on a micro scale, which will do well to elevate the skills and values of multilateralism at scale, in a time of great global need.

Last, a focus on future generations – is the one thing from our extensive, multi-year, multi-modal study that everyone agreed upon across all axes of difference: we need to move past short-term thinking in favour of a generational lens.

In all this work, we heard a common sentiment: We know we need to govern differently; we just don't know how to do it. We feel our work has shone some light.

Further resources

- Series landing page (Inclusive Governance) which contains 8 policy papers in our series: https://policyoptions.irpp.org/series/inclusive-governance/
- Empowering civil society and Indigenous communities in higher education decision making (includes "Structures" video): https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2025/11/higher-ed-decisions/
- Honouring Indigenous self-determination by applying parallel paths (includes "Parallel Paths" video): https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2025/11/indigenous-parallel-paths/
- Guardianship governance: representing future generations in decision-making (includes "Futures" video): https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2025/12/guardianship-governance/
- UCalgary Pluralism Initiative: https://ucalgary.ca/pluralism/pluralism-home

Embedding the SDGs in Higher Education Classrooms

Universities play a critical role in preparing students to address complex global challenges. The **SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit**, developed at York University, Toronto, Canada, provides a practical framework to help educators integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into teaching and learning. Designed as an open-access resource, the toolkit supports faculty across disciplines in embedding sustainability principles into curriculum design, classroom activities, and student assessment.

Through case studies, curricular resources, and interdisciplinary teaching strategies, the toolkit enables educators to move beyond awareness toward meaningful application of the SDGs in learning environments. The initiative specifically supports the integration of **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**.

The toolkit advances **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** by encouraging problem-based learning, community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty use the toolkit to design learning activities where students analyze real-world sustainability challenges and develop solutions relevant to local and global contexts.

By supporting educators in embedding sustainability into teaching practice, the SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit demonstrates how universities can transform classrooms into spaces where students develop the knowledge, skills, and partnerships necessary to advance sustainable development.

Contacts

Nitima Bhatia (nitima02@yorku.ca) -- SDGs Project Coordinator and Curricular Expert
Tracy Bhoola (tbhoola@yorku.ca) -- SDGs Project Coordinator and Curricular Expert

General Description

The Toolkit supports the integration of sustainability principles and the 5 Pillars of Sustainability across disciplines at York University and beyond, advancing a shared commitment to a just and sustainable future for students, campuses, and communities.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Introduction: From Awareness to Embedded Sustainability in Higher Education

Higher education institutions play a central role in advancing sustainable development by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values required to address global challenges. While many universities acknowledge the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrating them meaningfully into teaching and learning remains a challenge for many educators.

At York University in Toronto, Canada, the **SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit** was developed to support faculty in embedding sustainability into their curriculum in practical and accessible ways. The toolkit provides educators with resources, teaching strategies, case studies, and curricular frameworks that help translate the global ambitions of the SDGs into concrete classroom practices.

Rather than simply referencing the SDGs in lectures, the toolkit encourages faculty to integrate them into **learning outcomes, classroom activities, and student assessments**. Through this approach, sustainability becomes a lens through which students explore disciplinary knowledge and real-world challenges.
The toolkit specifically supports the integration of **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**. These goals are interconnected and reflect the complex social, environmental, and economic systems that shape sustainable development.

A Practical Approach to Education for Sustainable Development
The SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit is grounded in the principles of **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**, which emphasizes transformative learning approaches that empower students to address sustainability challenges. The toolkit aligns with the four ESD priority strands by supporting:

1. **Advancing policy and institutional transformation**
2. **Transforming learning environments**
3. **Building capacities of educators**
4. **Empowering and mobilizing youth**

The toolkit was developed through a collaborative process involving faculty, curriculum specialists, and sustainability leaders across York University. It is freely available online and includes teaching guides, learning activities, and examples of SDG-aligned course design.
One of the central goals of the toolkit is to help educators move through three levels of SDG integration:

- **Exposure** – Students learn about the SDGs through lectures and readings
- **Application** – Students apply SDG frameworks to analyze case studies and problems
- **Embedded** – SDGs shape learning outcomes, assessments, and course design

This progression allows educators to gradually integrate sustainability into their teaching while maintaining alignment with disciplinary learning objectives.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Integrating SDGs into Classroom Learning
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
The toolkit supports classroom activities that encourage students to explore issues related to water access, sanitation systems, and environmental health. Faculty use case studies that examine water security challenges in both urban and rural contexts.
Students may analyze the relationship between water infrastructure, climate change, and public health outcomes. Through collaborative projects, they examine how sustainable water management practices can improve community health and environmental resilience.
These learning activities encourage students to think critically about how water systems are designed, governed, and maintained, and how innovative solutions can improve equitable access to clean water.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
Energy sustainability is integrated into courses through problem-based learning activities that explore renewable energy systems, energy equity, and the transition to low-carbon economies.
Students investigate how energy access influences economic development, health outcomes, and environmental sustainability. Faculty may guide students in evaluating energy policies, exploring renewable energy technologies, or designing community-based energy solutions.
By examining the social and environmental dimensions of energy systems, students gain a deeper understanding of the trade-offs and innovations required to build sustainable energy futures.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The toolkit highlights how innovation and infrastructure play critical roles in achieving sustainable development. Classroom activities encourage students to explore how technological innovation, sustainable engineering, and resilient infrastructure can address global challenges.

Students may analyze transportation systems, digital infrastructure, and health systems to understand how innovation can improve efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability. Interdisciplinary projects allow students to collaborate across fields such as engineering, health sciences, business, and social sciences.

These learning experiences encourage students to develop creative and evidence-based solutions to complex sustainability challenges.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Urban sustainability is a key focus of the toolkit. Many faculty incorporate local case studies that allow students to examine issues such as urban planning, housing, transportation systems, and community resilience.

Students analyze how cities can be designed to promote environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic opportunity. Activities may include mapping exercises, community assessments, or policy analysis related to urban sustainability.

Through these activities, students gain insight into the interconnected systems that shape urban life and the strategies required to build more sustainable and inclusive communities.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Partnerships are central to the success of sustainable development initiatives. The toolkit emphasizes the importance of collaboration across sectors, disciplines, and communities.

Many classroom activities encourage students to work in teams to develop solutions that address sustainability challenges. Faculty also integrate partnerships with community organizations, local governments, and international collaborators to bring real-world perspectives into the classroom.

These partnerships enable students to understand the importance of collective action and shared responsibility in advancing sustainable development.

Key players involved

Tracy Bhoola. BSW, MEd, TESL -- SDGs Project Coordinator and Curricular Expert

Nitima Bhatia. BSc, BEd, MSc, MTech, MES -- SDGs Project Coordinator and Curricular Expert, Diploma in Environmental/Sustainability Education, Doctoral Student, Faculty of Education

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

One of the key strengths of the SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit is its focus on **transformative learning**. By engaging students in real-world sustainability challenges, the toolkit encourages learners to think critically about the systems that shape global development.

Students are not only asked to understand sustainability challenges but also to imagine and design solutions. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, reflective learning, and community engagement, students develop the competencies needed to address complex global problems.

Faculty report that integrating the SDGs into teaching increases student engagement and helps learners connect theoretical knowledge with real-world issues. Students often express a greater sense of purpose in their studies when they see how their disciplinary knowledge can contribute to sustainable development.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit represents a scalable model for integrating sustainability into higher education. By providing practical resources and examples, the initiative empowers educators to incorporate the SDGs into their courses regardless of discipline.

The toolkit continues to evolve as new teaching practices and case studies are added. It also supports broader institutional efforts to embed sustainability across curriculum and research.

As universities worldwide seek to advance sustainable development through education, initiatives like the SDGs in the Classroom Toolkit demonstrate how practical teaching tools can transform classrooms into spaces for innovation, collaboration, and global citizenship.
By equipping educators with accessible resources and fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, the toolkit helps prepare the next generation of leaders to address the urgent challenges reflected in **SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17**.

Further resources

- https://www.yorku.ca/unsdgs/toolkit/

PEDIA: Transforming Schools through Energy Efficiency and ESD

The PEDIA project supports Cyprus' transition towards sustainability by combining energy-efficient school infrastructure with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project is implemented within the 2021–2027 programming period, with preparatory support from EU Horizon 2020 Project Development Assistance and investments aligned with the THALIA 2021–2027 Cohesion Policy Programme. It is realized from the partnership between the Cyprus Energy Agency and the Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development. The project brings energy-efficiency renovations to twenty-five public schools across the Republic of Cyprus. These interventions contribute to the systematic upgrade of school buildings towards Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards.
PEDIA adopts a whole-institution approach, linking physical improvements in school infrastructure with pedagogical activities that promote sustainability awareness, systems thinking and responsible energy use among students and educators. The project complements national initiatives, such as the installation of photovoltaic energy systems in 405 schools and contributes to the implementation of Cyprus' Strategic Framework for Green Transition and ESD 2030.
PEDIA is aligned with the UNECE Strategy for ESD, demonstrating how coordinated infrastructure investment and participatory education can strengthen climate resilience, reduce environmental footprints and foster a sustainability culture extending beyond school boundaries into local communities.

Contacts

info@cea.org.cy, perivallontika@cyearn.pi.ac.cy

General Description

The goal of PEDIA is to transform public school buildings in Cyprus into Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEBs) while embedding ESD into school life through a whole-school approach to sustainability. The programme integrates pedagogical, social, organisational and infrastructural dimensions, linking energy renovation with governance, participation and learning processes. PEDIA aims to reduce energy consumption, enhance climate resilience and cultivate sustainability competencies among students, educators and school communities, in alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy and national climate, energy and education policies.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

PEDIA addresses **SDG 7** (Affordable and Clean Energy) by upgrading public school buildings through energy-efficiency and renewable energy interventions, while embedding ESD into teaching and school operations. Educators and learners engage with real building-level data and technologies, strengthening energy literacy, systems thinking and responsible energy-use behaviours with measurable impact at school and household levels.

In relation to **SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), PEDIA supports the modernisation of public educational infrastructure through integrated renovation practices aligned with Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards.

Schools function as demonstrative environments for innovation, enabling learners and educators to understand sustainable construction, resilience and low-carbon technologies through experiential and interdisciplinary learning.

PEDIA contributes to **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by enhancing the safety, comfort and environmental performance of schools as public assets. Through a whole-school ESD approach, schools operate as local hubs for sustainability awareness, extending positive behavioural and social impacts to families and surrounding communities.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) is advanced through structured collaboration among public authorities, technical experts, educators and local stakeholders. These partnerships support coordinated implementation, capacity building and long- term investment frameworks, positioning ESD as a cross-sectoral mechanism for sustainable development at national level.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD

By integrating ESD into both curriculum-related activities and the daily operation of schools, PEDIA has strengthened the quality and relevance of learning in Cyprus' schools. Educators apply interdisciplinary, experiential methodologies linked to real sustainability challenges, while learners develop systems thinking, critical reflection and responsible citizenship competencies connected to energy, climate and sustainable lifestyles.

WIA/ institutions as communities of transformational learning PEDIA has enabled schools to function as integrated learning communities, where governance, infrastructure, pedagogy and participation are aligned with sustainability objectives. This whole- institution approach has fostered collective ownership among school leadership, teachers, students and parents, embedding sustainability into school culture and extending transformative practices beyond classrooms into local communities.

Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD

The use of digital tools, monitoring systems and data related to school energy performance has enhanced digital literacy and evidence-based learning. Learners and educators engage with real- time information on energy use, supporting data-driven decision- making and reinforcing the link between digital competencies and sustainability outcomes.

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD

Through exposure to green technologies, energy renovation processes and innovation-oriented practices, PEDIA has increased awareness of sustainability-related career pathways. The project promotes innovation, supports green skills development and strengthens links between education, the labour market and local sustainable development in Cyprus.

Key players involved

PEDIA is implemented through the collaboration of key national, local and school-level stakeholders with different roles. The Cyprus Energy Agency acts as program coordinator, providing technical expertise, project management and guidance for energy efficiency and NZEB-related interventions. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, through its Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development, ensures alignment with national education policy and the integration of ESD into school governance and teaching practice. The school community (school leadership, educators, staff and students) are directly involved in implementation at school level, contributing to planning, educational activities and behavioural change processes. Parents' associations, local authorities and community organisations participate through consultation, awareness-raising and dissemination activities, strengthening local ownership and social impact. Technical consultants and contractors support the design and delivery of infrastructure upgrades. This inclusive, multi-level governance model enables coordinated implementation, capacity building and long-term sustainability outcomes across Cyprus' education and energy systems.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

PEDIA has had a transformative impact on people's behaviours by linking energy-efficient school renovations with ESD-based learning and daily practice. Students and educators interact directly with upgraded lighting, heating, insulation and photovoltaic systems, adopting concrete behaviours such as monitoring energy consumption, reducing electricity use and improving classroom ventilation. These behavioural changes are reinforced through hands-on educational activities that connect technical interventions with sustainability concepts.

The project has been effective in raising awareness by using schools as real-life learning environments. Energy performance data, building audits and classroom-based projects enable learners to understand the links between energy use, climate change and everyday decisions.

In parallel, PEDIA has focused on strengthening competencies at both individual and institutional levels by equipping educators and school leadership with practical tools, guidelines and experience in sustainable energy management, supporting informed decision- making and long-term planning. Regarding students, the PEDIA has strengthened competencies regarding critical and systemic thinking since it promotes reflection and change on everyday choices regarding energy consumption and its impact.

PEDIA also promotes community action by actively engaging parents' associations and local communities through awareness events, dissemination activities and school-led initiatives, extending sustainability practices beyond school boundaries into households and neighborhoods.

The project involves government and technical stakeholders, ensuring alignment with national climate, energy and education policies and high-quality implementation through collaboration with experts and contractors.

Finally, by embedding sustainability beyond the pedagogical domain, into the operational and social domains of school functioning (i.e. infrastructures), the project actively integrates the WIA into ESD, which is required through the Revised National Policy for ESD and Green Transition 2030- the official policy framing ESD implementation in Cyprus. Thus, PEDIA contributes to changing educational practice and policy implementation, supporting Cyprus' broader green transition objectives.

Youth dimension

Youth are central to PEDIA's approach. Students actively engage in learning activities linked to energy efficiency renovations, encouraging ownership, participation, and peer-to-peer learning. The project empowers young people as sustainability ambassadors within their schools and communities.

Gender dimension

PEDIA incorporates a gender dimension by promoting equal participation and representation across all project activities. Inclusive, learner-centred ESD approaches ensure that students of all genders engage equally in sustainability and energy-related learning. The programme benefits from youth role models, as young professionals from the Cyprus Energy Office oversee implementation and interact with schools, challenging gender stereotypes. Gender-neutral procurement processes enable equal participation of contractors, while students' exposure to diverse professions involved in school energy upgrades broadens career aspirations and counters traditional gender roles in the energy sector.

Challenges or lessons learnt

A key challenge in implementing PEDIA has been aligning construction and renovation timelines with school schedules, examinations and daily educational activities, requiring careful phasing and coordination to minimise disruption. This highlighted the need for early and continuous collaboration between technical experts, school leadership and educators.

Another lesson that was highlighted is that infrastructure upgrades alone are insufficient without the strong educational component that the program necessitates. The impact of the infrastructure upgrades increases significantly when combined with participatory ESD approaches. Actively involving students, teachers and parents in planning, monitoring energy use and communicating changes strengthened ownership, improved behavioural outcomes and ensured that technical interventions translated into lasting educational and cultural change.

Further resources

- PEDIA – Official Project Page: https://www.cea.org.cy/en/pedia/
- PEDIA – Project Video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhAU9nVgRTw
- Zero Energy School Buildings – Cyprus Energy Agency: https://www.cea.org.cy/en/dimioyrgia-scholeion-midenikis-katan/
- Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development – European Programmes (PEDIA reference): https://mepaa.moec.gov.cy/index.php/el/draseis/europe-research-programs
- Cyprus Pedagogical Institute – PEDIA Circular: https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3552:pedia&lang=el

- THALIA 2021–2027 – School Energy Upgrades: https://thalia.com.cy/en/example-of-projects/large-scale-energy-upgrade-of-school-buildings-en/
- FEDARENE (European network of Regional and Local Energy Agencies and Regions) – PEDIA Project Overview: https://fedarene.org/pedia-project-how-cea-wants-to-promote-energy-efficiency-in-schools/
- EU Green Forum – NZEB School Upgrades Case Study: https://green-forum.ec.europa.eu/green-business/green-public-procurement/good-practice-library/first-ever-nearly-zero-energy-buildings-upgrade-schools-cyprus-within-framework-european-project_en
- UNESCO – Whole-School Sustainability in Cyprus: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/environmental-stewardship-schools-cyprus-whole-school-approach-sustainability
- PEDIA – Introductory Document (PDF): https://sch.cy/mc/990/pedia_eisagogi.pdf
- PEDIA – Official Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/PEDIAeuproject/
- Cyprus Mail – News on Energy Schools: https://cyprus-mail.com/2023/07/29/cyprus-schools-to-generate-electricity/

Peace Circle®: Transforming Urban Green Spaces into Ecosystems of Values-Based Learning for Sustainable Communities

Across the UNECE region, communities face growing polarization, ecological degradation, and declining social cohesion. While Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is widely recognized as essential, initiatives often remain fragmented, separating environmental education, peace education, civic engagement, and innovation.
Peace Circle® was developed in Finland as a pedagogical and community-based response to this fragmentation. It integrates values, knowledge, and action into a visible, place-based educational model rooted in community participation.
The initiative aligns particularly with:

- SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- SDG 17 – Partnerships
- SDG 4 – Quality Education
- SDG 9 – Innovation

The Peace Circle® initiative builds on more than 25 years of international educational collaboration across all continents, primarily through the ENO network, which has engaged over 10,000 schools in 157 countries and supported the planting of approximately 30 million trees.

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Contacts

Mika Vanhanen (mika.vanhanen@peacecircle.world)

General Description

The Peace Circle® model transforms compact urban green spaces into structured educational environments organized around:

- A Central Peace Tree symbolizing unity
- Three ABC Lines for Peace:
  - Heart (hope, compassion, justice)
  - Head (knowledge, science, wisdom)
  - Hands (protection of life, balance, diversity)
- A Circle of Guardians highlighting local and global role models
- A Meadow of Life supporting biodiversity awareness

The model operates across three interconnected dimensions:

1. Physical – Tree-based Peace Circle parks
2. Digital – A pilot 360° Digital Twin (Liperi)
3. Pedagogical – Classroom-based ABC for Peace learning practices

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Digital Innovation (Liperi Pilot)

The Peace Circle® Digital Twin has been developed for the Liperi site in Finland. It provides:

- A 360° immersive seasonal view of the park
- A bilingual (Finnish–English) pedagogical learning environment
- Structured ABC-guided reflection questions
- Self-assessment elements supporting learner agency

The Digital Twin extends the physical site into an inclusive learning environment. It enables participation beyond the physical site and supports teacher-led dialogue before and after park visits.

It serves as a pilot model demonstrating how physical Peace Circles can be complemented by accessible digital learning tools.

Environmental and Educational Contribution

Each Peace Circle®:

- Enhances biodiversity awareness
- Supports urban green space regeneration
- Demonstrates small-scale, place-based climate responsibility
- Integrates circular practices such as composting and local material use

Educationally, the model:

- Makes abstract values visible and experiential
- Connects emotional, cognitive, and practical dimensions of learning
- Encourages intergenerational dialogue
- Links local action with global sustainability goals

Scalability and Transferability

Peace Circle® is:

- Low-cost and modular
- Adaptable to cultural and historical contexts
- Suitable for both urban and rural settings
- Compatible with municipal collaboration
- Extendable through digital tools

The model demonstrates how small-scale, place-based initiatives can support values-based ESD while contributing to sustainable communities in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Key players involved

Peace Circle® connects:

- Municipal authorities
- Schools and educators
- NGOs and environmental associations

- Cultural actors
- International educational partners

The model builds on long-standing international collaboration across all continents through the ENO network and related educational partnerships.

Positive impact areas

- ❖ transforming people's behaviors
- ❖ promoting community action
- ❖ raising awareness
- ❖ strengthening competencies

Progress made

Liperi, Finland (2024)

The first Peace Circle® was established through municipal collaboration. The site is integrated into school activities, community events, and biodiversity awareness practices. It also serves as the pilot site for the Digital Twin.

Jämsä, Finland (2025)

A new Peace Circle® is being developed in cooperation with municipal actors, demonstrating the model's adaptability within local governance structures.

Fuscaldo, Italy (2024)

The Circle of Guardians was adapted in collaboration with schools, integrating art, local biodiversity themes, and community participation.

Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

In Sarajevo, two Peace Circle® sites are being developed:

- One located on a university campus on a former military barracks area
- One connected to a local school

These sites function as educational and ecological spaces shaped by historical context while clearly oriented toward the future.

The university campus location represents a transformation of a former military space into a peace-oriented learning environment. Rather than serving as memorial sites, the Peace Circles operate as forward-looking spaces and reflective mirrors for collective responsibility. They invite students and communities to consider how values such as justice, compassion, balance, and diversity can shape a shared future.

Through symbolic tree planting and place-based learning, the Sarajevo sites function as reflective spaces where communities explore shared responsibility for the future, supporting social cohesion and dialogue-oriented education aligned with SDG 16.

Zambia (opening 27 March 2026), in connection with a local school and wider community engagement.

Further resources

- ❖ https://www.peacecircle.world/
- ❖ https://www.mikavanhanen.com/post/peace-circle-the-open-source-of-peace

Building a sustainable educational institution

The website of the Finnish National Agency for Education on *"Building a sustainable educational institution"* outlines how schools and educational organizations can integrate sustainability into their core activities. It highlights that there is no simple formula for achieving sustainability; instead, meaningful change emerges when ecological concerns are recognized across multiple levels of school life, from individual motivations to institutional strategies. Sustainable development is portrayed as a long-term process requiring commitment, prioritization, and an understanding of how each operational area connects with ecological responsibility. The text emphasizes that while everyday environmentally friendly actions may appear minor, the most significant impact arises from organizational-level practices and coordinated environmental activities. Change may be driven from the bottom up through personal concern and community initiatives or from the top down through administrative requirements and broader policy frameworks.

Contacts

Jukka Tulivuori, jukka.tulivuori@gov.fi
Hannu Vainonen, hannu.vainonen@gov.fi

General Description

The goal of the program is to support educational institutions in integrating sustainability into everyday practices and long-term development. The program aims to help schools recognize the need for ecological change, prioritize sustainability among competing demands, and understand how different areas of activity relate to environmental responsibility. It encourages both bottom-up and top-down drivers of change to create lasting, organization-wide sustainability.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

How the challenge is addressed through ESD: The program strengthens ecological sustainability by helping institutions understand how everyday practices, organizational systems, and long-term strategies contribute to environmental impact. It encourages schools to recognize the urgent need for change, prioritize sustainability amid competing demands, and connect each area of activity with ecological responsibility. Through ESD, the initiative promotes reflection, awareness, and transformation at multiple levels of school operations.
Impact on educators: Educators learn to integrate sustainability into daily routines and broader pedagogical decisions, increasing their ability to guide learners in understanding ecological consequences and responsible behavior.
Impact on learners: Learners engage with sustainability as part of everyday school life, gaining awareness of how small actions and organizational structures influence environmental outcomes. They develop ecological literacy and a sense of agency.
Impact on the community and country: Schools become local drivers of ecological responsibility by aligning institutional practices with wider municipal or national sustainability plans. This strengthens community awareness and contributes to long-term societal transition toward ecological sustainability.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD
Focusing on sustainability strengthens the integration of ecological understanding into everyday schooling. Educators and learners recognize the need for change and link their actions to long-term environmental responsibility. This deepens learning and embeds sustainability into the overall quality of education.

Whole-institution approach / institutions as communities of transformational learning
The program supports transformation by aligning individual behaviors, institutional practices and administrative strategies. Because change can emerge from both bottom-up and top-down, the whole institution becomes a community where sustainability is collectively prioritized and embedded across all activities.

Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD
Although not a central focus, the program encourages schools to consider how all organizational practices, including the use of tools, equipment and digital processes, relate to ecological sustainability. This helps institutions develop more resource-aware and environmentally responsible digital practices.

Key players involved

The key players involved in building a sustainable educational institution include educators, learners, school leadership, and administrative authorities. Educators contribute by integrating ecological perspectives into daily practices and recognizing how their actions connect with larger sustainability goals. Learners play an active role as their everyday behaviors and awareness help shape the institution's environmental impact.
School leadership and management are central in prioritizing sustainability among competing demands, aligning policies and organizational practices with long-term ecological goals, and ensuring that sustainability is recognized across all areas of activity.
Administrative bodies, such as municipal or national authorities, influence the process by requiring or encouraging sustainability-related changes as part of wider plans and strategies. These top-down expectations complement bottom-up initiatives from staff and students, enabling comprehensive, institution-wide transformation.
Together, these groups form a dynamic system in which sustainability emerges through shared recognition, collaboration, and coordinated action at multiple levels of the institution.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The program encourages both educators and learners to recognize the ecological consequences of their daily actions, helping them shift from isolated routines to more environmentally responsible behaviors. This behavioral change is rooted in understanding the urgent need for sustainability across all school activities.

Promoting community action
Sustainability efforts emerge from both bottom-up initiatives driven by individuals concerned about the environment and top-down requirements linked to wider institutional or administrative strategies. This dual approach helps the entire school community engage in collective, coordinated sustainability action.

Raising awareness
The program enhances awareness by making visible how everyday operations connect to broader ecological impacts. It highlights the importance of recognizing the need for change and understanding how different areas of activity relate to sustainability.

Changing educational policies
Administrative bodies may require sustainability-related changes through broader plans and strategies, prompting institutions to revise priorities, allocate resources differently, and integrate sustainability more deeply into operational policies.

Strengthening competencies
Educators and learners develop stronger sustainability competencies by engaging with long-term ecological thinking, organizational-level understanding, and reflective practice on how institutional activities contribute to environmental outcomes.

Youth dimension

The program includes a youth dimension by engaging learners directly in recognizing the need for ecological change and understanding how their everyday actions affect the environment. Learners contribute to bottom-up initiatives that help drive institutional sustainability and become active participants in shaping school-wide practices. This involvement strengthens their competencies, agency, and awareness, positioning young people as key actors in long-term sustainability efforts.

Gender dimension

The program does not explicitly address gender, but its whole-institution approach supports inclusive participation by ensuring that sustainability work involves all members of the school community. Because change is driven through both bottom-up and top-down processes, all learners and staff, regardless of gender, are encouraged to engage in shaping sustainable practices. This promotes equal opportunities to participate in decision-making and developing ecological responsibility.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Implementing the program highlights the challenge of prioritizing sustainability amid many everyday demands in educational institutions. Long-term ecological work often competes with urgent operational needs, making it difficult to maintain continuity. A key lesson is that meaningful change requires recognizing the need for action at multiple levels and ensuring that sustainability is embedded across all activities. Another insight is that both bottom-up motivation and top-down support are essential, as change driven from only one direction is unlikely to lead to lasting transformation.

Further resources

- https://www.oph.fi/en/building-sustainable-educational-institution

Current State of Sustainable Development in Finnish Liberal Adult Education Institutions

Sustainable development is a central element in the mission of Finnish liberal adult education, which aims to support individuals' diverse personal development, their ability to function in communities, and the promotion of democracy, equality, and pluralism. The review, commissioned by the Finnish National Board of Education at the request of the Ministry of Education and Culture, is based on a 2025 survey completed by 263 liberal adult education institutions, representing 91.6% of all institutions in Finland. The survey examined how sustainable development is integrated into institutional practices and teaching, the effects of changes in the operating environment, and key development needs.
The results show that institutions are generally motivated to advance sustainable development especially culturally, yet they express concern about increased workloads associated with systematic implementation. There is a clear need for practical guidelines and effective monitoring and evaluation methods.
Although sustainable development is often viewed as an implicit institutional value, making it more visible can strengthen institutional identity and impact. Economic sustainability is perceived narrowly, but integrating elements such as sustainable consumption, circular economy practices, and innovation could enhance both financial resilience and learners' sustainability skills.
The findings also highlight the need to broaden environmental sustainability efforts, expand collaboration across sectors, and strengthen governmental guidance and funding to support implementation, cooperation, and staff competence development.

Contacts

Rilli Lappalainen, rilli.lappalainen@finnsus.fi

National Board of Education

General Description

The review, commissioned by the Finnish National Board of Education at the request of the Ministry of Education and Culture, is based on a 2025 survey completed by 263 liberal adult education institutions, representing 91.6% of all institutions in Finland. The survey examined how sustainable development is integrated into institutional practices and teaching, the effects of changes in the operating environment, and key development needs.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The study shows that liberal adult education institutions support SDG 9 primarily through resource-efficient practices, digital transformation and strengthened collaboration. Institutions have improved the utilisation and multipurpose use of facilities, shared spaces and materials, and increased repair, reuse and responsible procurement, contributing to more resilient and cost-effective infrastructure. They also moved rapidly to hybrid and online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, creating flexible digital infrastructures that expand access and reduce environmental impacts.
Inclusive and sustainable development is advanced through strong commitments to social cohesion, equality and accessibility.

Institutions work to reduce educational inequality, support diverse learners and promote community wellbeing through affordable, open, and low-threshold learning opportunities. Their teaching integrates sustainable development across subjects, fostering responsible citizenship and sustainable lifestyles.
Innovation is supported through cooperation with municipalities, organisations, companies and other education providers.
Institutions develop new course content, joint projects, and community-based solutions, including activities on circular economy, sustainable consumption and environmental responsibility. Many institutions call for clearer national guidelines and increased funding to accelerate innovation, strengthen staff competence and scale sustainable practices. Overall, the sector's broad reach and community-based approach make it a key actor in promoting resilient, inclusive and innovative sustainability transitions.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The study highlights that liberal adult education institutions increasingly operate as whole-institution communities of transformational learning, where sustainable development is embedded across strategy, teaching, everyday practices and organisational culture. Institutions integrate sustainability into curricula, course design and daily operations, ensuring that learners encounter sustainability principles consistently across subjects and learning environments. Staff and students are widely involved in planning, implementing and reflecting on sustainability actions, which strengthens shared values, engagement and a sense of collective responsibility. This holistic approach also emphasises community-building. Institutions promote inclusion, wellbeing and social cohesion through low-threshold participation, diverse course offerings and targeted support for under-represented groups. Learning is framed as a means to strengthen civic skills, empower communities and enable behavioural change. Practical activities—such as repair workshops, nature-based learning, sustainability weeks and cooperation projects—help learners experience sustainable practices in concrete ways, deepening competence and motivation.
The whole-institution approach is strengthened by partnerships with municipalities, organisations, companies and other educational actors. Through collaboration, institutions generate new learning environments, innovative projects and shared solutions that expand their societal impact. While many institutions have begun systematic sustainability work, the report notes a need for clearer guidelines, resources and evaluation tools to fully realise transformational learning across the sector.

Key players involved

Focal points in the National Board of Education were supervisors of the research, but the key actors were mainly staff responsible for the whole schools (principles) or persons responsible for sustainability.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The study shows that liberal adult education institutions play a key role in transforming people's behaviours by integrating sustainable development into everyday practices, teaching and community activities. They guide learners toward sustainable lifestyles through practical skills such as recycling, energy saving, repairing goods and making responsible consumption choices. Community action is promoted through cooperative projects, sustainability weeks, workshops and low-threshold events that strengthen inclusion, social cohesion and shared responsibility.
Raising awareness is central to the whole-institution approach: sustainability themes are communicated through courses, events, digital materials, visible guidelines, and public engagement.
Institutions also reach diverse population groups, making sustainability education accessible and culturally relevant.
The report highlights active collaboration with municipalities, NGOs, companies and other educational institutions. These partnerships help align sustainability goals, strengthen infrastructure, bring in external expertise, and expand the impact of learning. Institutions also call for stronger governmental support and funding to accelerate sustainable development and enable long-term planning.

Competence strengthening is continuous and involves both staff and students. Institutions invest in staff training, peer networks and collaborative planning while teaching students civic skills, environmental awareness and social responsibility. This holistic approach helps build communities capable of driving long-term, sustainable transformation.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Implementing sustainability initiatives revealed key challenges, including limited human and financial resources, increased workloads and difficulties in measuring impact. Funding cuts and administrative burdens often forced institutions to prioritise daily operations over long-term development. Rapid changes in the operating environment highlighted the need for flexible digital solutions and stronger internal coordination. A major lesson learned was that sustainability becomes effective only when it is visible and shared across the whole community. Engaging staff, students and partners builds commitment, while cooperation with municipalities, organisations and other institutions enhances innovation, reduces costs and increases overall impact. Continuous training and clear guidance remain essential.

Further resources

- English report to be shared in the website: https://www.oph.fi/fi/tilastot-ja-julkaisut/julkaisut/kestavan-kehityksen-nykytila-vapaan-sivistystyon-oppilaitoksissa

Mainstreaming river and ocean sustainability into European education systems

The EU Horizon-funded project BlueLightS supports the **development of Blue (river and ocean sustainability) Education** in Europe via four interconnected mechanisms:

- The facilitation of a **community of practice** to share experiences & good practices, and design recommendations and novel mechanisms for mainstreaming river and ocean sustainability perspectives into education systems;
- Financial support to **educational projects** in schools dedicated to river and ocean sustainability, widening the range of experiences and inspiring practices in each EU countries while supporting the development of the Network of European Blue Schools;
- The **experimentation of (modest) changes in the education system** (e.g. national education strategies, curricula, educational resources, teachers' training…) of selected EU countries (Croatia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden);
- The development of a **framework** for mainstreaming river and ocean sustainability in education systems, identifying areas of attention, opportunities, solutions and enabling conditions for its effective implementation to support the "scaling up" of blue education in a given country.

Contacts

Pierre Strosser, ACTeon – p.strosser@acteon-environment.eu








General Description

By strengthening the attention given to river and ocean sustainability in education systems in Europe, BlueLightS aims at strengthening the knowledge, skills and blue (river and ocean sustainability) literacy of all European children and youth to pave the way to effective and long-term river and ocean resilience and sustainability.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

By experimenting mechanisms that bring river and water sustainability to the attention of education systems' stakeholders at all levels, ***SDG 6*** is central to the ambition of BlueLightS. With water sustainability, nature and nature-based solutions being an essential component of safe, resilient and sustainable urban developments, it also touched upon ***SDG 11***. Finally, by focusing also on ocean sustainability and promoting a source-to-sea perspective, BlueLightS supports the achievement of **SDG 14** – Life below water.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD: BlueLightS has co-developed and tested in different countries with different education cultures resources and training for teachers/educators that support quality educational activities addressing the multiple facets of sustainability and human-nature connections via a blue (river ocean) lense.

Whole-institution approach: By experimenting how best to integrate river and ocean sustainability into the different components of the education system (strategies, curricula, resources, competency development, financing…) , BlueLightS supports a truly whole-education system approach and transition delivering effective ESD.

Key players involved

BlueLightS is implemented by a consortium of 16 European organisations (from Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden) combining academics, environmental institutes, educators, science-to-education centers, education ministries (network), local authorities (network) and training, communication, river & ocean sustainability SMEs.
In addition, the project's implementation benefits from: (1) close collaboration with many education and blue stakeholders (from teachers to education ministry representatives, civil society to private companies, local authorities to university networks); (2) the guidance of its Advisory Panel members supporting blue, SD and citizenship education from the local to the global scale; and (3) collaboration with its two EU-funded sisters' project SHORE and Probleu

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors –via webinars and training, supporting critical thinking that can deliver behaviour chances in the long-term of key players of the education system
Raising awareness – thanks to the webinars, workshops and discussions hosted on the project community of practice platform
Involving government and/or private sector – associating a wide range of public/private/civil society/education/blue stakeholders into the co-design and co-evaluation of experimentation activities
Changing educational policies – by critically analysing current educational policies, and experimenting changing in the education system that help proposing targeted relevant educational policy recommendations
Strengthening competencies – by co-developing training material/modules and resources for teachers and educators

Gender dimension

Although BlueLightS does not implement activities dedicated to gender, it promotes an inclusive (in relation to gender but also vulnerable groups, impairment…) approach to blue education.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Reaching education stakeholders specialised in the education of children from vulnerable groups (with impairments, migrants, from poor urban areas…) is proving challenging as requiring targeted and dedicated approaches that make these challenging to implement with a given's project limited times and resources. A long-term ambition that need wider collective mobilisation by all.

Also, setting long-term sustainable partnerships and interfaces between stakeholders from the education community and the blue (river and ocean) community is challenging as a result of mainly siloed institutional approaches.

Further resources

- https://blue-lights.eu/

Education4allSDGs.org Application

This application, which will be open to the public in April 2026, will allow the assessment of an educational initiative in terms of all the targets of the global Sustainable Development Goals. It will thus enable international, national, and local decision-makers to improve their educational programs or projects:
- if a clear weakness is detected in terms of their necessary balance between economic, social, and environmental content
- and in case of negative impacts on areas beyond the scope of these actions.

Users will not need to be familiar with these global Goals to use it. The application will be free, available in multiple languages, and simple and secure for its users.
It will be accompanied by a proven approach as part of worldwide actions contributing to the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Contacts

Philippe Guettier
Président SDG Champions France
pguettier@sdg-champions.fr
+33 672775412

General Description

Decision-support tool for education and training decision-makers and other actors involved in these areas (funders, local authorities, associations, companies…) at the global level.
Educational tool for teachers and trainers related to education for sustainable development worldwide.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The Education4allSDGs.org application will allow teachers worldwide to assess their educational programs or projects against the targets of the global Sustainable Development Goals, including SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17, as well as the other SDGs. It is a completely innovative tool born from extensive collaboration.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The application has a specific transformative impact that concretely implements the systemic dimension of the global Sustainable Development Goals. Its use by teachers and trainers allows them to identify all interactions between the major sectors of society and integrate them into their educational activities and teaching.[eos] Its use by learners enables them to see concretely what this systemic dimension is and the necessity of taking it into account in their future actions to avoid difficult situations.

Key players involved

This application was developed in partnership with UNESCO, the Japanese Fund for ESD, the French Commission for UNESCO, the French Ministry for the Ecological Transition, and the French College V Van Gogh of Blénod-lès-Ponts in Mousson, along with about thirty education and SDG experts from around the world.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The application will be open to the public in April 2026. It has already been used by a small number of education experts from around the world and will be tested in March and April 2026 by about thirty organizations: teachers, trainers, ministries of national education, schools and training institutions, funders, local authorities, companies… It is therefore too early to report any progress, but the application was designed by multiple experts and organizations skilled in ESD.

Youth dimension

The project will enable students and learners from around the world to evaluate the educational projects conducted by their teachers and trainers, thereby facilitating their contributions to the governance bodies of their institution. The IT component of the project was undertaken by engineering students from the French École Polytechnique.

Gender dimension

The evaluation of an educational activity by the application will incorporate the gender dimension, corresponding to SDG 5. If this activity does not sufficiently incorporate this dimension, its person in charge can then enhance it accordingly.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The challenge faced was significant, as taking into account all potential impacts in relation to the targets of the Global Goals, both in the short and long term, of an educational action is not an easy task. The work of education and ESD experts from around the world required genuine commitment and careful management.

Further resources

- https://education4allSDGs.org

Building Green Future: Environmental and Agricultural Education in Georgia's Schools

The Environmental Information and Education Centre (EIEC) under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, developed the program "Environmental and Agricultural Education in School," which aims to strengthen environmental and agricultural education in primary schools. This program addresses SDGs 6 (water), 7 (energy), 11 (sustainable cities), and 17 (partnerships) and other SDGs through education. Within the framework of the program, eight thematic textbooks were developed for schoolchildren: "Concept of Sustainable Development", "Biodiversity Protection", "Water Resource Protection and Sustainable Use", "Air Protection from Pollution", "Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction", "Waste Management", "Land Management and Combating Desertification", "Agriculture, and Food Safety and Quality". To effectively deliver these topics, EIEC provides a 20-hour training course for primary school teachers.

The materials combine theoretical knowledge with practical activities that promote active learning and student engagement. Upon completion, teachers receive a joint certificate from EIEC and the Teacher Professional Development Centre, ensuring official recognition within Georgia's national teacher development system. The program exemplifies a whole-institution approach, integrating ESD across formal education while building teachers' competencies to foster environmental awareness and sustainable behaviours among students.

Contacts

From the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia: Nino Gokhelashvili, Head of Sustainable Development Division, Strategic Coordination and Analytics Department; NFP of UNECE ESD Strategy
Tamta Devdariani, LEPL Environmental Information and Education Centre, Director

The image is taken from the official website of EIEC

General Description

The goal of the program is to strengthen schoolteachers' knowledge and skills in environmental and agricultural education and to support schoolchildren's learning and empower them to take responsible action toward sustainable development. Through a 20-hour training course and eight thematic textbooks designed for schoolchildren, the program enables teachers to combine theory with practical activities and integrate environmental and agricultural topics into daily teaching practice.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The program contributes to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) through water resource education, SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) by teaching energy conservation through innovative teaching methods that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for green economy and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) via sustainable urban practices while promoting systemic thinking through the textbook on the concept of sustainable development.

SDG 6 is addressed through a dedicated textbook on water resources protection and sustainable management", which equips teachers with knowledge to teach water conservation, pollution prevention, and responsible water use. Educators gain the capacity to integrate water-related sustainability issues across subjects, while learners engage in activities that encourage responsible behaviour. This contributes to increased community awareness and supports national efforts toward sustainable water management.

SDG 7 - the related textbook on climate change includes energy efficiency and renewable energy topics, which helps students understand the connection between energy consumption and the environment, namely learn how energy consumption affects the environment and contributes to climate change.

SDG 11 is supported through textbooks and activities focused on waste management and air pollution. Also, in the context of sustainable cities and communities, textbooks on land management and climate change help learners understand the relationship between human activities and sustainable living environments. Students apply this knowledge through practical tasks that promote environmentally responsible behaviour within their communities.
In addition, the textbook "The Concept of Sustainable Development" provides a unifying framework, enabling educators and learners to connect environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability, while strengthening long-term ESD integration at the national education level.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

The project has created a transformative impact by prioritizing the quality education and ESD strand through structured teacher training and the development of eight comprehensive, age-appropriate textbooks on environment and agriculture. The 20-hour certified training program strengthened schoolteachers' understanding of sustainable development concepts and improved their ability to deliver ESD in an interdisciplinary manner. The materials combine scientific knowledge with practical, hands-on activities that encourage active learning reflecting the quality education and ESD priority strand.
As a result, educators experienced learner-centered approaches that include practical activities and problem-solving tasks. This improved the quality of education on sustainability in early grades and ensured that complex issues such as water conservation, combat against desertification, climate change, waste management, biodiversity protection, and food safety are taught in an accessible way.
While the current program primarily focuses on in-person training, EIEC is exploring ways to integrate digital education tools**,** another UNECE ESD priority strand to enhance accessibility and scalability in future iterations. There are videos created on each thematic area and practical activities for teachers are available/provided online. Furthermore, trainings are available online to ensure easy access for all teachers from different regions of Georgia.
For learners, this focus led to increased environmental literacy, critical thinking, and awareness of their roles and responsibilities in protecting natural resources. Students developed sustainability habits, such as saving water and electricity, reducing waste, and respecting and protecting nature, which extend beyond the classroom into families and communities.
At the system level, the project strengthened the integration of ESD into general education, contributing to higher educational standards and promoting sustainable development in Georgia.

Key players involved

EIEC developed all eight environmental and agricultural textbooks and designed the certified 20-hour training course for primary school teachers. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture provides overarching policy support and promotes the initiative at national events, highlighting its importance for ESD in Georgia.
The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, through the national Teacher Professional Development Centre, is also directly involved. It has a formal cooperation agreement with EIEC and ensures that the teacher training is officially recognized within the national professional development system, strengthening ESD integration in schools.
Finally, primary school teachers are key participants as they complete the training, use the textbooks in their classrooms, and bring environmental and agricultural education into daily learning, helping students build sustainability knowledge and behaviours.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The program "Environmental and Agricultural Education in School" has achieved significant progress in multiple areas. Through the 20-hour training courses and eight thematic textbooks, 7,438 schoolteachers have strengthened their

competencies. This widespread participation has significantly impacted students, who increasingly demonstrate sustainable behaviors such as water conservation, waste sorting, and energy efficiency. Many students share these practices with their families, promoting community action and creating a ripple effect beyond the school environment.
The program contributes to SDG 6, SDG 7 and SDG 11 by fostering collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and communities. While educating young people about these interconnected issues, the programme focuses on green skills and transformative learning.
As a result, students increasingly demonstrate changes in behaviour and adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives while sharing these practices at home, encouraging parents, siblings, and friends to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours, which contributes to promoting community action.
The program has further raised awareness among students on the concept of sustainable development, fostering knowledge, critical thinking, and responsible attitudes. By combining theory with practical activities, the program ensures that learning is interactive and impactful, creating an effect that extends beyond the classroom.
Overall, it strengthens teachers' professional skills while supporting students in becoming environmentally conscious individuals who can influence their families and communities toward sustainable development.

Youth dimension

The program has a strong youth dimension, as it directly targets school students by integrating environmental and agricultural topics into formal education. The developed textbooks and practical activities support students in building environmental awareness, sustainability values, and green skills from an early age. By fostering critical thinking and responsible behaviour, the initiative empowers young people in Georgia to actively contribute to sustainable development in their communities.

Gender dimension

The program demonstrates a strong gender dimension through women's active participation in professional development: out of 7,438 trained teachers, 7,173 are female and 265 are male, reflecting women's leading role in the education sector in Georgia.
At the student level, the developed textbooks and training materials ensure equal access to environmental and agricultural knowledge for both girls and boys, promoting inclusive and gender-responsive education practices.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Coordinating large-scale trainings across country regions required careful planning. Also, new environmental and agricultural topics along with existing curricula demanded additional time and efforts from teachers to confidently apply interactive and student-centered approaches in the classroom. No significant challenges occurred during the implementation of the program.

Further resources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThpKt45xKmA
- www.eiec.gov.ge
- https://www.eiec.gov.ge/En/CertificateCourses/2/
- https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=12619&lang=geo

Vegetable Gardening as a Hands-On Approach of Education for Sustainable Development

Acker is a multi-award-winning* social enterprise that advocates for greater appreciation of nature and food throughout the German-speaking world. Through innovative educational programs such as the GemüseAckerdemie, Acker brings nature-based learning directly to where people live, learn, and work. The vegetable garden becomes a vibrant place of learning and experience for understanding ecological relationships and healthy eating. Nature-based learning environments offer unique opportunities for meaningful teaching and learning within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Since its founding in 2014, over 400,000 children have participated in Acker's educational programs. Today, there are more than 2,000 learning locations—ranging from daycare centers and schools to universities, municipalities, companies, and care facilities. Together with around 200 partners from the business sector, foundations, and the public sector, Acker brings innovative education to life.

** For example, Acker e.V. has been awarded the "National Prize - Education for Sustainable Development" by the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMBFSFJ) and the German Commission for UNESCO in 2023.*

Contacts

Cheba Schiefer (c.schiefer@acker.co)
More about Acker e. V.: Kommunikation@acker.co

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General Description

We envision a society that values nature and food. We want to make it possible for every child to experience the process of growing and producing food with their own hands. And adults, too, should learn how precious our natural world is and how many resources are contained in fresh vegetables—for a society that knows what it's eating!

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11 –*** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The cultivated fields and gardens make communities and cities noticeably greener. They are managed according to ecological principles and create valuable habitats for a wide variety of animals and plants. At the same time, they serve as recreational and social spaces for people of all ages and strengthen social cohesion. Where possible, previously sealed surfaces are unsealed—creating space for more nature, greater biodiversity, and a more vibrant urban environment.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD

The field creates a nature-based learning environment where students can apply their ESD knowledge and skills in a practical way. At the GemüseAckerdemie, they learn with their heads, hearts, and hands, experience ecological interconnections firsthand, and explore topics such as resource scarcity and climate change using digital teaching materials. Teamwork strengthens social skills, and physical activity promotes motor skills. Through the ecological cultivation of various vegetable varieties, children recognize the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability and develop an awareness of a sustainable way of life. Methodologically, the GemüseAckerdemie builds on the "Gestaltungskompetenz" (de Haan).

Whole-institution approach.

Acker e.V. supports learning institutions in expanding their ESD offerings and embedding them holistically and sustainably. This is achieved at the individual level through the training of educators and the participation of school students and preschool children, and at the institutional level through the permanent implementation of the programs. Professional development and consulting empower educators to continue the educational programs on their own in the long term. At the same time, subject-specific and interdisciplinary materials facilitate integration into the curriculum. In addition, Acker provides advice on sustainable financing models and on building local support networks

Entrepreneurship

Acker e.V. and its founder Christoph Schmitz (Christoph Schmitz (Ashoka Fellow, among other titles) embodies social entrepreneurship in practice, as the organization addresses social challenges through innovative and scalable educational programs. At the same time, Acker operates professionally and economically, while remaining clearly focused on the common good. This approach generates measurable environmental and social impacts that demonstrate how education can be designed to be sustainable. Furthermore, Acker drives systemic changes in the education system to embed nature experiences, sustainability, and nutrition education in the long term.

Key players involved

Our most important key players are our direct target groups: the children who actively learn on our "Acker", as well as the teachers and educators who provide pedagogical guidance for our programs and integrate them into everyday life. Equally central are school and kindergarten administrators, as well as the parents who support and contribute to the educational process. Our more than 500 volunteers—our AckerCoaches—also make a crucial contribution by actively supporting the implementation of our educational programs. Furthermore, our partners play an essential role: with their financial support and technical expertise, they enable the steady development and long-term impact of our work.

Positive impact areas

- ❖ transforming people's behaviors
- ❖ raising awareness
- ❖ involving government and/or private sector
- ❖ strengthening competencies

Progress made

Impact is our currency. That is why we regularly measure the impact of our programs. Taking the "GemüseAckerdemie" educational program as an example, the following impacts can be demonstrated:

- 58% of students eat more vegetables
- 59% of students develop a greater appreciation for and interest in vegetables
- 68% of students strengthen their positive attitude toward nature
- 58% of students increase their self-efficacy through vegetable gardening
- 69% of students acquire gardening skills
- 62% of students take responsibility for the garden
- 56% of students improve their relationships with others in the garden through gardening
- 66% of students are enthusiastic about vegetable gardening

Source: Acker Wirkungsbericht 2024

Youth dimension

For us, children are at the heart of the learning process. With the field, we bring a nature-based learning space outside of the usual group structures to our learning locations. Here, children are supported in developing their strengths and can actively participate.

By linking theoretical knowledge with practical experiences, the learning process becomes more engaging and impactful.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Learning: Educational programs can have an even greater long-term impact and bring about holistic change if a team of motivated educators can be assembled and supported by school administrators.

Challenge/ Learning: One challenge is the lack of independent private funding in the German funding landscape that can be specifically allocated to systemic change over the long term. Project grants, with their strictly defined scope, hinder dynamic entrepreneurial development. While structural funding does enable this development, predefined project plans also lack the necessary openness to solutions needed to test and refine new approaches to social change. To address this challenge, we have launched a System Change Alliance. It does not refer to a specific project or a predefined process. Instead, it supports the goal "Every Child" and thus systemic change as such, thereby opening up space for new approaches. We are convinced that with the System Change Alliance, we can not only achieve a far greater leverage for our growth with lower additional investments but also establish a new type of collaboration between social enterprises and funding partners—together, we are shaping the change!

Further resources

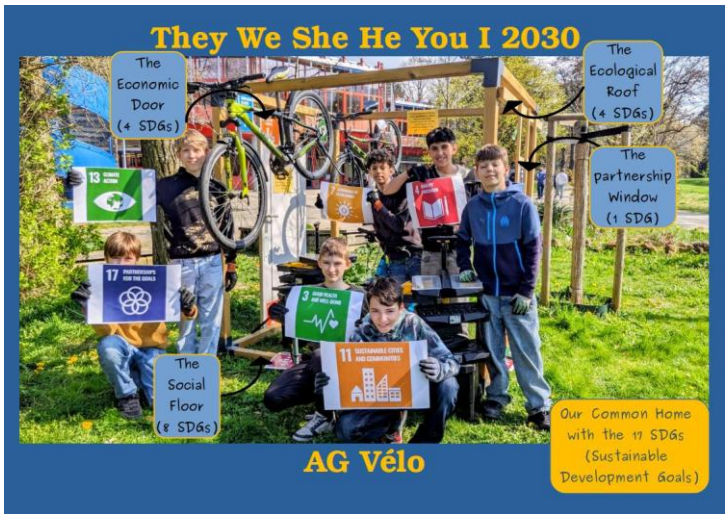
- www.acker.co
- www.gemueseackerdemie.de
- www.ackerracker.de
- www.campusackerdemie.de
- www.acker.co/gemeinschaftsacker
- www.fachschulackerdemie.de

The Bike Workshop

The bike workshop at the Lycée Franco-Allemand (Franco-German High School) is a weekly educational program for students aged 11 to 18. Under the guidance of teachers, students learn how to diagnose, maintain, and repair bicycles. The workshop also collects used bicycles, refurbishes them, and makes them available to students and classes for their school-related trips (educational outings, journeys to the swimming pool, etc.).
This project promotes practical learning, cooperation, and independence, while raising awareness of environmental issues. It encourages biking as a sustainable alternative to motorized transport, thereby helping to reduce the school's carbon footprint.
By fostering a genuine cycling culture, the workshop impacts both individual and collective behaviors while promoting values of solidarity, reuse, and sustainable mobility within the school community.

Contacts

Francis Desigaux desigaux@dfglfa.net Rida Ben-Salah ben-salah@dfglfa.net



General Description

The bike workshop aims to teach students technical skills in bicycle mechanics, while promoting sustainable mobility. It encourages repair, reuse, and the use of bicycles for school travel. The project develops students' autonomy, cooperation, and ecological awareness, while making active mobility accessible to everyone.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 7: by promoting cycling as a non-motorized mode of transport, the project raises students' awareness of reducing energy consumption. Learners become aware of low-impact alternatives, while teachers integrate these issues into their teaching practices.
SDG 9: students develop technical skills in repair and reuse, valuing an innovative approach based on the circular economy. Teachers adopt active methods, and the institution becomes a place for practical experimentation. Some learners have also developed an electric bike equipped with a solar panel on the bike trailer.
SDG 11: by facilitating the use of bicycles for school travel, the project encourages soft, accessible, and inclusive mobility. The school community benefits from a concrete solution that can be reproduced on a larger scale. Examples: trips to the swimming pool, city and historical monument visits by bike, etc.
SDG 17 (partnerships): the workshop promotes collaborations (bicycle donations, local stakeholders), strengthening the links between the school and its community. It engages students, teachers, and partners around a shared sustainability goal.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD: The workshop is a regular educational activity that develops technical, social, and environmental skills within the framework of education for sustainable development.
Whole-institution approach / institutions as communities of transformational learning: The project goes beyond the classroom: it involves the entire school community (students, teachers, classes using bicycles) and transforms the mobility practices of the school.
Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation, and ESD: Students acquire practical skills (repair, diagnostics) related to professions and the circular economy, with an innovative dimension (reuse, collaborative workshop).

Key players involved

Two teachers supervise this activity. The students learn during lunch breaks. The students are also present at the workshop during morning breaks to help repair other people's bicycles.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: students gradually adopt cycling as a daily or school mode of transportation, reducing their dependence on motorized transport and integrating more sustainable habits.
Promoting community action: the workshop is based on a collective dynamic involving students, teachers, and bike donors. It strengthens solidarity through reuse and making bicycles available to everyone.
Raising awareness: participants develop a better understanding of environmental issues related to mobility, consumption, and resources. This awareness extends to the entire school community.
Strengthening skills: students acquire technical know-how (repair, maintenance), as well as transversal skills such as cooperation, autonomy, and problem-solving. Teachers develop active and interdisciplinary teaching practices.
Changing educational policies (at the school level): the project encourages the integration of sustainable mobility into school practices (trips, travel), contributing to the evolution of habits and internal orientations.

Youth dimension

The project is directly based on the active involvement of young people, who are at the heart of the workshop. The students participate in all stages: diagnosis, repair, organization, and making the bikes available. They become actors in their own learning and ambassadors of sustainable mobility among their peers. This responsibility strengthens their autonomy, commitment, and ability to initiate concrete changes within the school community.

Gender dimension

The bike workshop is open to all students, regardless of gender, and particularly encourages the participation of girls in a traditionally male field. By promoting equal access to technical skills and sustainable mobility, the project helps to reduce stereotypes related to technical professions and to promote the autonomy and confidence of both girls and boys in an inclusive and collaborative environment. Watch the video.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The implementation of the workshop revealed several challenges: collecting and refurbishing bikes requires time and technical skills, and it was necessary to encourage balanced participation of girls and boys. Coordinating the schedules of students and teachers also represents a challenge. Among the lessons learned, the value of collaborative and hands-on learning, the importance of raising awareness about sustainable mobility from a young age, and the effectiveness of reuse as an educational and ecological tool proved to be essential.

Further resources

- 1 minute presentation video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8m1vnYaJac

IOU Respect: Building a Culture of Peace

IOU Respect is a multilateral youth exchange program run by the German Youth Hostel Association (DJH) and its international partners that brings together young people from Egypt, Germany, France, Lebanon, Tunisia, and the USA. Launched in response to the events of September 11, 2001, the program has been working for over 20 years to promote intercultural dialogue, reduce prejudices and strengthen a culture of peace. Participants engage intensively with topics such as identity, discrimination, religion, ethics, human rights and active citizenship. The program is complemented by project visits, creative workshops and joint activities that foster a trusting atmosphere and support intercultural learning. As a long-term collaboration between six national youth hostel associations, IOU Respect shows how international cooperation can be structured and the value that continuous exchange offers to young people. By fostering an inclusive, respectful community youth exchanges, the program contributes to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities. IOU Respect demonstrates how stable international networks are built, how global exchange can be effectively organized and how young people are empowered to take on responsibility in an interconnected world. Through sustainable relationships and shared values, the program also supports SDG 17 by strengthening international partnerships and advancing common societal goals.

Contacts

Team International
Deutsches Jugendherbergswerk e.V.
Leonardo-da-Vinci-Weg 1
32760 Detmold
Tel.: 05231 7401-987
E-Mail: international.headquarters@jugendherberge.de

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General Description

The goal of IOU Respect is to empower young people from six countries to break down prejudices, develop empathy and take on responsibility in a globally interconnected society. The program creates spaces for open dialogue on social and personal issues and facilitates genuine encounters that foster mutual understanding. In this way, IOU Respect supports the development of young adults into reflective, peace-oriented citizens who actively advocate for respectful coexistence.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

IOU Respect makes an important contribution to **SDG 11** – Sustainable Cities and Communities – by empowering young people to actively help shape inclusive, respectful, and diverse communities. It addresses key challenges of ESD by creating learning spaces where participants reflect on their own biases, practice social responsibility and actively engage in dialogues on discrimination, social cohesion, and global realities. Through living and learning together and engaging with sensitive social issues, they acquire key competencies such as perspective-taking, empathy, constructive communication and active participation – skills that contribute significantly to the development of peaceful, resilient communities and have an impact both locally and internationally.

At the same time, IOU Respect makes a significant contribution to **SDG 17** – Partnerships for the Goals. The program is based on a long-term, binding cooperation among six national youth hostel associations from three continents, thereby demonstrating how ESD challenges in the area of global cooperation can be concretely addressed. Shared educational approaches, continuous knowledge exchange and creative learning formats make it possible to build sustainable, equitable partnerships. The program's international structure provides a practical illustration of how collaborations are established and strengthened and how transnational learning processes empower young people to tackle societal challenges together and responsibly.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Many participants reported that their experiences in the program have permanently changed their perception of other cultures. This impact arises because IOU Respect functions as a holistic learning environment: exchange, communal living, group processes and facilitated dialogues intertwine to create a learning environment in which every everyday situation – from joint organization to spontaneous conversations – becomes part of a transformative educational process. In this way, the program embodies the approach of an institution as a community of transformative learning.
Through this integrated structure, participants develop a deeper understanding of cultural diversity, become more confident in intercultural exchange and learn to address complex issues responsibly. The mix of intensive dialogue sessions, shared experiences, and continuous reflection strengthens skills such as perspective-taking, empathy, conflict management and cooperative problem-solving.

The learning processes triggered by this have a long-term impact: Many participants return with a greater willingness to challenge prejudice in their own social circles, promote dialogue and actively contribute to respectful coexistence. IOU Respect demonstrates how a collaboratively designed educational space becomes a vibrant learning and dialogue community where openness, respect and peace are not only taught but lived out every day.

Key players involved

IOU Respect is supported by several key players who together form a strong international educational network. The **German Youth Hostel Association (DJH)** coordinates the overall program, develops the educational concept, and closely coordinates its implementation with partner associations. The **national youth hostel organizations** from **Egypt, France, Lebanon, Tunisia** and the **USA** are equal partners: they select the participants, prepare them and accompany them throughout the entire exchange.
Educational specialists and **trainers** lead the dialogue sessions, facilitate discussions on identity, discrimination, human rights and active citizenship and ensure a safe, respectful learning environment.
Local initiatives and **project partners** deepen the content through visits and workshops and provide authentic insights into social issues relevant to the participants.
The **young people** themselves are the central players: through their perspectives, questions, and commitment, they significantly shape the program and, as multipliers, bring their newly gained insights back to their communities. Together, these players form a sustainable network that strengthens international understanding and global partnerships.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: IOU Respect brings lasting changes in how young people think and act. Many participants report that the experience completely changed their view of other cultures and that they now approach strangers with greater openness and confidence. Through dialogue sessions and shared daily life, they learn to examine prejudices, resolve conflicts and practice empathy in direct interaction.

Promoting community action: The program's impact extends far beyond the exchange itself. Participants often become more engaged in local initiatives and youth organizations. Some say they have realized how important it is to step outside one's own bubble and bring this perspective to their communities. In this way, IOU Respect strengthens civic engagement in all participating countries.

Raising awareness: Insights into different realities of life foster a deep awareness of global inequalities, discrimination, and societal challenges. Many participants describe how only through personal interaction they understood how similar people are despite different backgrounds, leading them to perceive their own privileges with greater reflection.

Strengthening competencies: The program strengthens key ESD competencies such as perspective-taking, critical thinking, communication, teamwork and active citizenship. Participants experience how enriching diversity is and develop skills they can apply in their daily life and civil society contexts.

Youth dimension

IOU Respect is explicitly aimed at young adults and strengthens their active role in global dialogue processes. The program offers 18- to 26-year-olds a safe space to reflect on identity, human rights, and social responsibility. Through peer learning, international group work, and creative methods, they are encouraged to contribute their own perspectives, break down prejudices and act as change agents in their communities. In this way, IOU Respect empowers young people to actively help shape a sustainable and peaceful future.

Gender dimension

IOU Respect integrates a clear gender dimension by ensuring that each participating country strives for balanced gender distribution (2 male, 2 female) and that diverse identities are welcomed. Gender roles, equality, and human rights are addressed in the dialogue sessions. The program creates a safe space where young people can contribute different gender perspectives, reflect on them and learn from one another. In this way, IOU Respect contributes to inclusive, equitable education and a more sensitive approach to gender issues.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The implementation of IOU Respect demonstrates that intercultural youth programs require careful preparation and sensitive facilitation. Different political backgrounds, cultural influences and communication styles can be challenging and necessitate clear rules as well as a safe environment. Language barriers and emotional topics demand time, patience, and professional support. A key insight is that trust and openness must be actively fostered and do not arise automatically. At the same time, the program shows that personal encounters and continuous dialogue are crucial for breaking down misunderstandings and building lasting relationships among young people.

Further resources

- https://www.jugendherberge.de/weltweit/internationale-jugendbegegnungen/
- www.jugendherberge.de/weltweit/internationale-jugendbegegnungen/iou-respect/

BNE Vision 2030 (English: ESD Vision 2030)

In 2018, the City Council commissioned the Department for Education and Sports and the Department for Climate and Environmental Protection to develop a concept for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by 2022. The ESD concept of the City of Munich, titled "BNE VISION 2030," was developed in a city-wide, participatory process with other city departments, ESD related stakeholders, and educators. Together, we have succeeded not only in raising awareness of the importance of ESD, but also in creating a practical and sound plan for citywide implementation.
The program of action aims to anchor ESD in all areas of education and to contribute to the achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It includes over 300 concrete measures.

Contacts

Lila Schulz (from the ESD Expert Office in Munich) -- bnevision2030@muenchen.de

BNE VISION 2030

MÜNCHEN LERNT
gemeinsam
nachhaltig
zukunftsfähig

ESD Expert Office in Munich

General Description

ESD VISION 2030 aims to anchor ESD in all areas of education (from daycare to adult education) as well as the city administration. It includes over 300 concrete measures.
Examples include measures in the areas of resource saving (electricity, heating energy, water and waste) specifically in daycare and schools, promotion of networking and cooperation in the districts, and public spaces of learning on sustainability topics such as renewable energies, zero waste etc.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The concept is very comprehensive; the following are examples:

SDG 7:

- FB-M7.3.1.: Extension of the municipal resource-saving program "Fifty-Fifty-Aktiv" to as many municipal facilities as possible.
- FB-M7.3.4.: Expansion of the sustainable energy management concept for all facilities.
- FB-M7.4.3.: Conception and implementation of training courses on climate-neutral and sustainable waste, cleaning and hygiene concept for the entire daycare center staff and, if necessary, for the external cleaners.

SDG 9:

- LV-M2.2.3: Attaching motivating and action-oriented information on the topic of waste and circular economy to the containers on the municipal recycling islands. (not yet started)
- LV-M2.2.5: Establishment of public learning places around the topic of "zero-waste".

SDG 11: Sustainable and resilient cities need citizens with knowledge and skills gained through quality education. This is an aim of the ESD VISION 2030 as a whole.

SDG 17:

- LV-M1.1.1: Implementation of the project "Shaping the Future in the Neighbourhood" for the networking and visibility of ESD as well as for the qualification of multipliers in two districts.
- LV-M.1.1.2: Transfer of the project "Shaping the future in the neighbourhood" to other districts.
- LV-M1.2.2: Implementation of workshops in selected districts in order to initiate interdisciplinary and cross-educational cooperations on the topic of ESD (not yet started)

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: High quality education is a central task of future-oriented local politics. ESD has direct links to many socially relevant topics, including democracy education, participation, gender justice, inclusion and social participation. The ability of individuals to overcome crises, to align individual behavior in the sense of a just world community and to jointly advance the development of a sustainable and future-proof Munich is urgently needed. This is exactly where where our ESD VISION 2030 comes in.

WIA: To encourage and empower learners to engage in sustainable development, the learning environment itself must be transformed. The whole learning environment needs to be aligned with the principles of sustainable development, so that learning content and pedagogy are reinforced by the way institutions are equipped, managed and decided upon. This institutional approach requires learning environments in which authentic sustainability learning is facilitated and transferred to learners' own living and working environments. The holistic transformation of learning and teaching environments, known as the Whole Institution Approach (WIA) is an overarching programme of action of the ESD VISION 2030.

Key players involved

ESD VISION 2030 includes measures in 7 educational areas and 3 overarching areas. The respective action programmes and measures have been developed with and are aimed at different target groups, including:

- Employees of the municipal administration
- Educational / ESD Stakeholders
- Educators and other employees in educational institutions (daycare, schools, vocational schools etc.)
- many more

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Promoting community action: ESD VISION 2030 ist a communal action plan for the structural implementation of ESD in Munich. The different measures are directed towards municipal administration, educational institution, educational / ESD stakeholders as well as citizens.

Raising awareness: ESD VISION 2030 and its measures raise awareness for the importance of ESD regarding resilience, sustainable design competences and responsible decisions. At the same time, we are doing broad public relations work and have created a central ESD platform for Munich: https://bne.muenchen.de/. Every year, we organize a large symposium to provide information on the status of implementation and to provide impetus for content.

Strengthening competencies: A central overarching programme of action (of the ESD VISION 2030) deals with training and further education regarding ESD and WIA.

Youth dimension

Stakeholders from the field of child and youth work / education as well as student representatives were involved in the participatory development process of ESD VISION 2030.

Gender dimension

As a matter of principle, we pay attention to gender-equitable approaches / formats when implementing the measures.

Challenges or lessons learnt

ESD VISION 2030 is a very comprehensive concept with many measures at a wide variety of levels. Therefore, a structured approach and central oversight during the process of implementing measures are just as important as clear responsibilities in the individual areas of education. Many of the envisaged measures would require more personnel resources and, in some cases, material resources.

Further resources

- https://bne.muenchen.de/bne-in-muenchen/bne-vision-2030.html
- Short version in English: https://www.pi-muenchen.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/LHM_ESD-Vision_2030.pdf

Hungarian Eco-School Network

In Hungary, the Green Kindergarten Network and the Eco-School Network with their respective self-assessment and award systems are efficient representatives of the whole-school approach.
The **Eco-Schools Programme** is an initiative that promotes education for sustainability. In this program, teaching, as well as the operation and daily life of educational institutions, are based on the principles of sustainability. In Hungary, the Ministry of Education initiated the launch of the domestic Eco-Schools Programme in 2000. It currently operates with the professional support of the ministry responsible for education (Ministry of Interior, BM) and the Ministry of Energy (EM), which is responsible for environmental protection.
The programme is based on the Eco-School title, which is awarded by the two responsible ministries (BM, EM) on the basis of applications submitted by schools based on self-assessment.
Recent discussions are facilitated by UNESCO Hungary and the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development on coordinating ESD effort in higher education, and as a part of this process, criteria for whole-school approach in higher education was raised as a topic.

Contacts

Government focal point: Enikő Gazdagné Rózsa -- eniko.rozsa.gazdagne@em.gov.hu

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General Description

They provide awareness-raising that generalise and deepen environmentally conscious behaviour for the children in whole institution approach with the parents.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

There are also some good practices to a whole-institution approach in higher education. For example, in the Ludovika Campus of the National University of Public Service, an integrated research intended to examine infrastructure and use of resources, based on which recommendations were formulated, and these approaches were integrated in the operational and educational model of the university.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

In 2017, a conference was organised with the title “Greening the University and the Community it Serves” to foster collaboration within the university as a community and to open to other stakeholder groups and to involve possible collaborators.

Key players involved

The Eco-School network has school members from primary and secondary (including vocational) level: students aged 7-18(19) and their teachers. Through them, parents are also involved in the Green Kindergarten Network's activities.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Every third child is educated in the Green Kindergarten Network and the Eco-School Network institutions and quarter of the overall population of Hungarian teachers and kindergarten teachers are involved into this challenging task. Guidelines are updated every year and available as Awarding Scheme.

Further resources

- https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/policies/hungarian-eco-school-network-0
- https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/students-take-lead-spread-eco-schools-initiative-hungary
- https://media.unesco.org/sites/default/files/webform/ed3002/AT1GP42_Whole-institutional_ESD_school_network.pdf
- https://xn--krnyezetvdelem-jkb3r.hu/kornyezeti-nevelesi-programok-okoiskola
- https://www.oktatas.hu/kozneveles/pedagogiai_szakmai_szolgaltatasok/fenntarthatosagra_neveles/okoiskolak_Magyarorszagon

Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network

The Green Kindergarten programme and the Green Kindergartens of the **Green Kindergarten Network** of Hungary operate on a whole institution approach of sustainability education using national-level qualification framework due to the **National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development**, adopted for 2012-2024. They provide awareness-raising that generalise and deepen environmentally conscious behaviour for the young children before the school education.
The Green Kindergarten program is based on the Green Kindergarten **application**, which was first launched in cooperation of the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Education in 2006. This **qualification system** and pre-school environmental education and environmental awareness raising is a Hungarian specificity. The priority aim of the Ministry of Energy is to maintain and further increase the number of kindergartens with Green Kindergarten title in the future, as well as the continuous development of the Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network.
In 2021, kindergarten teachers began **accredited training** in the form of a 30-hour course with support of departments of environmental protection in the Ministry of Agriculture under the title "Innovative contents in sustainability education for Green and Future-Green Kindergartens", helped the participants to be able to incorporate the **pedagogy of sustainability** into their everyday practice. The in-service training also offered help for the expansion of the institutions' knowledge-sharing activities and dissemination practice. Due to governmental structural changes the task is fulfilled by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology and from the end of 2022 the Ministry of Energy (from the end of 2022). In 2024, the Ministry of Energy provided training for 30 kindergarten teachers.
Another 30-hour accredited training course entitled "**From Boy to Father**" forms the basis of a nationwide environmental education project, that reaches kindergartens participating in the program, children belonging to the kindergarten teacher group and their parents.
Within the framework of the **Green Puppet Association**, they organize experience-centered environmental education programs for young children, build fairy tale trails, write fairy tales and act them out, make toys, and play a lot with the children.

Contacts

Government focal point: Enikő Gazdagné Rózsa -- eniko.rozsa.gazdagne@em.gov.hu

General Description

The aims of the Green Kindergarten programme

- implementation and development of ESD in kindergartens
- foundation and shaping of environmental conscious approach, thinking and behaviour of 3-6-year children through experience-based activities
- enhancing environmental awareness of kindergarten educators, parents and local communities learning values of the environment of the kindergarten, raising awareness of their importance and protection

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The 30-hour accredited teacher training course

With the help of the 6 modules of the in-service training, the participants were able to learn about the most important international and domestic documents on sustainability education, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Green Kindergarten tender and the work of the Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network, the place and role of sustainability education in the teacher promotion system.

"From Boy to Father" accredited training course

The Development Program lasts for one school year, during which participants continue to receive support in the form of mentoring and assistance to ensure the high-quality implementation and dissemination of the program, the steady growth of the children's knowledge, and the widespread adoption of environmentally conscious thinking.

Green Puppet (old name: Europlants) **Association**

The two main characters of the association, Mimó and Csipek and their friends demonstrate the importance of environmental and natural values and the significance of individual action through their everyday activities.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD

Transformative impact results

There are currently 1332 green kindergartens in Hungary, meaning that one in four children spends their early childhood learning about sustainability within a purposefully designed framework.

Teachers in the green kindergarten network receive a variety of further training courses. With the help of the 6 modules of the in-service teacher training, the participants were able to learn about the most important international and domestic documents on sustainability education, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Green Kindergarten tender

and the work of the Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network, the place and role of sustainability education in the teacher promotion system. The in-service training also offered help for the expansion of the institutions' knowledge-sharing activities and dissemination practice.
With the help of puppet characters, children can see what they themselves can do to protect our planet. As a result, over the course of more than a decade, they have become active and successful participants in environmental education in Hungary.

Key players involved

The target group consists of children aged 3-6 (7) who are receiving pre-school education and their teachers. Through them, parents are also involved in the Green Kindergarten Network's activities.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

- 1332 green kindergartens in Hungary
- guidelines are updated every year and available as Awarding Scheme
- training courses and Green Puppet Association: storybooks, puppet shows, puppet eco-story corners
- in 2023, "From Boy to Father" accredited training courses were implemented in four kindergartens in each of five counties

Further resources

- https://zoldovoda.hu/linkajanlo
- https://zoldovoda.hu/
- https://zoldre.hu/
- https://zoldovoda.hu/galeria
- https://zoldovoda.hu/archivum
- https://www.fiurolapara.hu/

PET Cup

The Ministry of Energy gives high priority to the decontamination of the Tisza River and its tributaries, which are mainly polluted by waste from upstream countries, and therefore supports civil initiatives such as the PET Cup to eradicate illegal dumping. The PET Cup is an innovative civil initiative to stop recurring waves of pollution, identify the largest illegal landfills, and clean up floodplains and rivers. It differs from other waste collection activities in that it not only collects waste, but also manages it, coordinates the cleaning and recycling of the collected waste, and creates the conditions for the construction of PET bottle boats.
The key to the success of Plastic Cup is that it is able to transform a difficult and dangerous exercise, like collecting trash, into a fun and inspiring team building exercise, into the adventure of a lifetime.
Plastic Cup is the first initiative in the world that looks to fight pollution by using pollutants.

Contacts

Government focal point: Enikő Gazdagné Rózsa -- eniko.rozsa.gazdagne@em.gov.hu

Ministry of Energy (in Hungary)

General Description

The aim of the PET Cup is to stop recurring waves of pollution, identify the largest illegal landfills, and clean up floodplains and rivers.
This Cup is primarily about collecting waste, and only secondarily about speed and agility. Its main goal is to get participants to contribute to the cleaning of the river as much as possible. Thus, the building of the boats is not the end of our main activities – quite the opposite, in fact. While they are afloat, the crew of the boats are doing their best to collect as much waste from the river as they can, by all possible means.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The first two activities of the Cup are waste collecting and boat building. Both are preceded by an obligatory orientation session. The next stage is the actual boat race, which lasts several days. The winner is the boat that collects the most point (that is, bottle caps) during the race. The prize is the Plastic Cup, which is made exclusively from recycled PET bottles, some of which were collected from the Tisza.
The Cup itself is taken along the race to be handed out to the winner at the end.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The PET Cup exhibition is a hundred-square-meter installation, which uses the methods of modern scientific communication to effectively demonstrate the pollution of the Tisza river and the organizers' efforts to eliminate the problem.
The backdrop of the exhibition is a gigantic graphic display, which introduces the river, its values and contamination, as well as the mission of PET Cup, while introducing the fleets of the past years. Every single object on display was collected from the Tisza floodplains. They include a rubber duck, shoes, plants that grew into waste and even the waste wall of Zsurk. During one of our waste archeology missions, we extracted a several-hundred-kilo cross section of the riverbank near the village of Zsurk, where the waste became part of the bank itself.
The Plastic Innovation Mobile Workshop will also be developed to bring sustainability messages to the less developed villages along the Tisza River where waste awareness is most needed.

Key players involved

The PET Cup has been cleaning up the Tisza River since 2013, removing tons of waste from the river and documenting the adventures of the PET Pirates in film series and online videos, inspiring thousands of people in 6 countries to do something for their environment for groups of students with their teachers, parents, university students, families, participants in corporate events (team builders) regardless of gender.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Over its 12-year existence, the PET Cup has grown into an event of international significance, with activists collecting more than 410 tonnes of waste during the competitions held since 2013, approximately 60% of which was returned to the material cycle.

- Size of the area cleaned from pollution: regarding the area cleaned by the PET Cup, the number of river kilometers (hereinafter: rkm) cleaned in previous competitions can be reported, which is currently 959 rkm (cleaned on both sides, this is 2x959=1918 rkm) in 13 years.
- Number of participants: there were 4.800 participants in the competitions by 2023, and around 6.000 participants by 2025 (after two rounds).
- Number of organized events: a total of 25 PET Cup competitions have been held since the start.
- Number of awareness-raising activities (exhibitions, presentations, publications, etc.): In the first 5-6 years awareness-raising consisted exclusively of presentations. The launch of the Plastic Workshop (MüMü) marked a breakthrough in this activity. Since then, there have been a total of 10.000 participants.

Youth dimension

The waste collected from Tisza, from the floodplain and the nearby settlements is undergoing a spectacular transformation just under a few weeks, before the eyes of the public nonetheless. During the PLASTIC CUP, boats are built from waste from Tisza, which will win the PLASTIC boat title if they meet the rules applied to them. After the PLASTIC boats are built, they have to go through the test of the water-police.
They take the waste aboard and take it to the next stop, where it is handed over to the organisers, and its quantity is officially measured by the PET Master, who hands out points (caps) in exchange. Extra caps are awarded for waste that the crew was able to incorporate into their boat, thus making sure that it reaches its aim propelled by renewable energy. Points are given per boat and not per person, which allows for changes in their crews if need be. Apart from the daily task of waste collecting there are extra tasks every day that make it possible for crews to earn extra points.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Plastic Cup was born from the desperation over what has become a regular event, the Tisza's plastic flooding, aka the plastic bottle tsunami. At times, the pollution reaches levels that make it difficult to trust your own yes.

Further resources

- https://www.petkupa.hu/eng/
- https://www.petkupa.hu/eng/?cikkId=rules-and-regulations
- https://www.petkupa.hu/eng/?link=%2Feng%2Fgaleria.html

Pick It Up! – Volunteer for a Clean Hungary (Te szedd!)

Since 2011, the Hungarian government has been organising the country's largest volunteer movement, Pick It Up! – Volunteer for a Clean Hungary – an action in which the population, regardless of gender, age or place of residence, participates in making our country clean and waste-free. Hungary's largest voluntary waste collection movement is being announced nationwide by every local government.
The main sponsor of 'Pick It Up!' is the Ministry of Energy and it is organized and coordinated by National Energy Agency Ltd. (NEÜ Zrt.).

Contacts

Government focal point: Enikő Gazdagné Rózsa -- eniko.rozsa.gazdagne@em.gov.hu

Ministry of Energy (in Hungary)

General Description

With the involvement and active participation of the community, the campaign will contribute to the common goal of the government and Hungarian waste management professionals: to create a sustainable country based on environmental awareness, where the amount of waste landfilled and its negative impact on the environment and health are successfully minimised in the long term.
The 'Pick It Up!' campaign also aims to raise environmental awareness among the population and consumers, to emphasise the importance of preventing and eliminating illegal waste dumping and to promote volunteer work.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The organizers are also looking forward to local governments, civil organizations, and the corporate sector, primarily to collect household waste. This event also counts as community service for high school students.
During the competition organized for schoolchildren, outstandingly active schools were awarded in 19 counties of Hungary and Budapest (20 institutions in total).

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

In recent years, the 'Pick It Up!' occurred concurrently with the Sustainability Week activities and was highly favored. Schools taking part in the Sustainability Week Programme are recognized for their activities and successes through a competitive event. The aim is to motivate schools participating in the 'TeSzedd!' campaign by offering valuable prizes to encourage more students, teachers and parents to take part.

Key players involved

The key players are the whole of the population regardless of gender, age or place of residence.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies

Progress made

- In 2024 more than 107.000 participants collected ca. 861 tonnes of waste.
- In 2024 educational institutions helped at more than 700 locations and more than one hundred thousand people participated at about 2.300 locations.
- In 2025 more than 115.000 participants collected ca. 1.413 tonnes of waste.
- In 2025, volunteers collected waste at more than 2.403 locations.

Youth dimension

By joining 'TeSzedd!', educational institutions have the chance to coordinate community service initiatives that emphasize environmental issues. The programme offers a communal experience, encouraging family involvement to enhance relationships both within the family unit and with the educational establishment. A clean future is in our common interest!

In addition, schools can make their own programmes and events more colourful and educate their students to be more environmentally aware.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Plastic Cup was born from the desperation over what has become a regular event, the Tisza's plastic flooding, aka the plastic bottle tsunami. At times, the pollution reaches levels that make it difficult to trust your own eyes.

Further resources

- https://www.fenntarthatosagi.temahet.hu/teszedd-2025

Sustainability Thematic Week

The first National Core Curriculum (hereinafter referred to as NCC) proclaimed in 1995, listed the environmental educational responsibilities of general education institutions as one of the common and horizontal requirements for all fields education.
The Sustainability Thematic Week implemented in 2016, attracts an increasing number of schools each year. In the programs related to the Sustainability Thematic Week, students engage in active learning to address certain topics of sustainability.

Contacts

Government focal point: Enikő Gazdagné Rózsa -- eniko.rozsa.gazdagne@em.gov.hu

Ministry of Energy (in Hungary)

General Description

The overarching goal of environmental education is to promote the development of students' environmentally conscious attitude and way of life, so that the growing generation can prevent the deepening of the environmental crisis, promoting the survival of living nature and the sustainability of societies.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

In addition to the extraordinary classes, the program series also includes in-service teacher training, workshops and applications.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

ESD offers challenges for consciousness and awareness raising for all ages and subjects. Several teacher training programs have been developed in this topic over the past five years in Hungary. Some of them support the operation of eco-schools, helping the professional development of school leaders and educators. These trainings, available to all educators, have provided a significant proportion of educators working in eco-schools with the theoretical foundations and practical skills to carry out their work more effectively. In addition, there are several teacher education courses (whether in science education or other disciplines) related to the Education Office's accreditation list preparing educators to motivate their students to take action for sustainability, both through information and methodological experience.

An online survey was conducted during the Sustainability Thematic Week with the voluntary participation of students, in which student attitudes, experiences and competencies related to sustainability were assessed: results are available on website.

Key players involved

The key players are the students. There are student entrepreneurship circles in several public educational institutions that find activities within the framework and goals of sustainable development.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

- For the grade 9-12 the framework curriculum for the subject of sustainability and the related textbooks were also prepared in 2020.
- In the academic year 2022/2023, more than 420.000 students from nearly 1.800 schools took part in the thematic week, which was about a third of all the institutions and students in Hungary.
- The graduation requirement system, which includes the exit requirements, was also modified following the modification of the NCC and the frame curriculum. From 2024, it is also possible to take a final exam in the subject of sustainability.
- The updated textbooks for the new NCC and frame curricula have been prepared and are available in both paper format and digitally.
- The National Public Education Portal is also available to all students and teachers.
- The measures and good practices above support the work of the export group preparing the green comp. framework proposal and provided working examples on ESD indicators and whole-school approach. It takes action along all five priorities areas of the UNESCO's framework of Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030).

Challenges or lessons learnt

Through the work of the multi-stakeholder expert group, ESD competences were integrated into teacher trainings and teachers' assessment processes, while the necessary tools, guidelines and recommendations were developed. Thus, the various professionals working in the public education system (early childhood educators, teachers of different disciplines, developmental educators, special education teachers, psychologists, school leaders, etc.) could be prepared on the basis of 31 different guidelines according to their field of expertise.

In addition, the Educational Authority of Hungary organized briefings on ESD for all school leaders in the country, and in 2019/2020, in the traditional series of professional learning events called Autumn Pedagogical Days, each Pedagogical Education Centre in the country organized professional programs on ESD and early school leaving. The programs had a participatory approach: with the help of workshops, good practice exchanges and open sessions, hundreds of teachers were reached in each region. From 2020, teachers' preparation was also supported by a multi-stage, free online mini-course system developed by the Educational Authority of Hungary.

Training programs strengthening ESD competences contributed to the successful qualification of nearly 30,500 teachers in this competence area till the end of 2023. The system of qualification is under modification, but in the last period, the competence development of a significant part of the teachers has improved in this area.

The following steps helped to integrate ESD into the pre-service teacher training curricula and assessment criteria. The review of the teacher training programs and output requirements began in 2020 with the involvement of every higher education institution involved in teacher education. ESD competences got included in the training curricula and in the output requirements: it is gratifying to experience that there was a consensus among delegates from higher education institutions on the importance of these steps.

With this, Hungary has implemented a forward-looking practice that also serves as a special and exemplary initiative in the European Union. As a result, educator ESD competences became part of the e-portfolios of all school educators, school leaders and teaching staff and appear as an element of the training programme and the output criteria of pre-service teachers.

Further resources

- https://www.fenntarthatosagi.temahet.hu/teszedd-2025
- https://www.avilaglegnagyobbtanoraja.hu

ECO-UNESCO's QQI Accredited Training Programme

ECO-UNESCO's QQI accredited training programmes provide recognised skills in environmental education, sustainability, and youth work. Combining theory with practical learning, courses cover topics such as environmental awareness, project management, leadership, and facilitation. Delivered through workshops, online modules, and hands-on projects, they develop transferable skills like communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Open to young people, educators, and community workers, the programmes empower participants to lead projects, promote sustainable practices, and create meaningful environmental impact in schools and communities.

In-house photography

General Description

The goal of ECO-UNESCO's QQI accredited training programmes is to provide recognised, high-quality learning in sustainable development, environmental education, and youth and community work that supports both personal and professional growth. ECO-UNESCO aims to equip participants with practical knowledge, transferable skills, and recognised qualifications that enable them to take meaningful environmental action while simultaneously enhancing their career prospects and professional development.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

ECO-UNESCO's QQI accredited training programmes contribute to SDGs 9, 11, and 17 by equipping young people with practical skills, knowledge, and experience to take meaningful action in their communities. The courses build critical thinking, problem solving, and project management abilities that support innovative approaches to sustainability challenges, aligning with SDG 9 – particularly the courses in Sustainable Development and Ecology and the Environment. They also foster community engagement and sustainable practices, helping learners improve local environments and strengthen social networks, which connects to SDG 11. Through courses like Peer Education, participants can focus on collaborative learning, developing leadership and communication skills, sharing knowledge, and working with others to create impact, supporting SDG 17. These programmes combine recognised qualifications with hands-on experience, empowering young people to lead, innovate, and collaborate for lasting environmental and social change.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

ECO-UNESCO's QQI accredited training programmes align with the UNECE ESD priority strand Quality education and ESD by providing structured, high-quality learning that combines theoretical knowledge with practical, hands-on experience. Participants engage in project-based learning, workshops, and peer education initiatives that develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills. The courses encourage learners to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts,

reflecting on their actions and outcomes, which ensures learning is meaningful, relevant, and equips young people with the competencies to address sustainability challenges effectively.
At the same time, the programmes align with **Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD** by fostering skills that support initiative, creativity, and employability. Through planning and delivering projects, participants build project management, communication, and teamwork skills while exploring innovative approaches to environmental and community issues. The courses also provide recognised qualifications that enhance career opportunities and prepare young people to take leadership roles in sustainability-focused initiatives. By combining skill development with practical application, the training empowers participants to innovate, lead, and contribute actively to social and environmental change.

Key players involved

The target group for the courses are:

- Young people – aged between 16-25 who are interested in gaining a qualification and further skills
- Educators including teachers, youth workers and community educators

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

ECO-UNESCO's QQI accredited training programmes tackle promoting community action by giving participants the tools and guidance to design and implement real projects that address local environmental and social issues. Learners engage directly with schools, youth groups, and community organisations, creating tangible improvements while experiencing the process of planning, collaborating, and evaluating initiatives.
They support raising awareness through peer education and communication-focused components, enabling participants to share knowledge, facilitate workshops, and engage others in sustainability issues. This peer-to-peer approach ensures that learning and action ripple beyond the individual, inspiring broader participation and behavioural change.
The programmes also focus on strengthening competencies by developing transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, leadership, and project management. Through hands-on learning and reflection, participants gain confidence in applying these skills in real-world contexts, equipping them to take initiative and make meaningful contributions to their communities and future careers.

Youth dimension

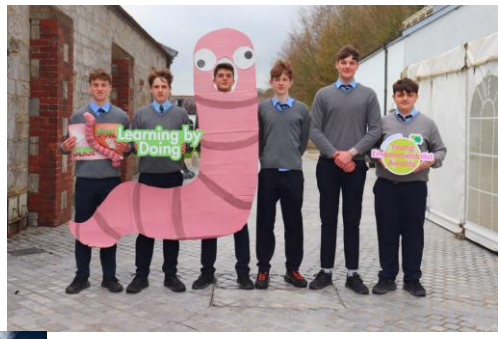
ECO-UNESCO's QQI programmes focus on youth by placing them at the centre of learning and action. Participants lead projects, engage in peer education, and apply sustainability concepts in real-world contexts. The courses develop leadership, communication, and practical skills, while providing recognised qualifications that empower young people to take initiative, build confidence, and make meaningful contributions to their communities and future careers.

Further resources

- QQI Accredited Training - ECO-UNESCO - Environmental Youth Organisation
- Level 3: Community Participation - ECO-UNESCO - Environmental Youth Organisation
- Level 5: Sustainable Development - ECO-UNESCO - Environmental Youth Organisation
- Level 5: Peer Education - ECO-UNESCO - Environmental Youth Organisation
- Level 6: Ecology and the Environment - ECO-UNESCO - Environmental Youth Organisation

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards Programme

The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA) is an all-island programme that empowers young people aged 10 to 18 to research, design, and implement environmental action projects. Delivered through schools and youth groups, the programme uses a structured, project-based learning approach supported by teacher and mentor guidance. Participants investigate real world sustainability issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, water, and energy, and develop practical, solution focused responses. The programme culminates in several regional semi-final events where participants present their action projects to a panel of expert judges, and then a final showcase to announce the winning groups in each category. This process builds communication, critical thinking, and teamwork skills while helping young people deepen their understanding of environmental issues and strengthening their ability to respond to them in meaningful and informed ways.



In-house photography

General Description

The goal of the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards programme is to empower young people to understand environmental issues and take meaningful action through hands on, project-based learning. It aims to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills while encouraging practical solutions to real world challenges. By supporting youth led projects, the programme seeks to build confidence, deepen environmental awareness, and enable young people to make a positive impact in their schools, communities, and beyond.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA) programme contributes directly to SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by empowering young people to design and implement practical sustainability solutions. Through project-based learning, participants identify local environmental issues and develop evidence-based responses. For SDG 6, projects often address water conservation, pollution prevention, and awareness of local water systems. Under SDG 7, students explore renewable energy and energy efficiency, frequently introducing behavioural change campaigns or small-scale technical solutions within schools and communities. The programme strongly aligns with SDG 9 by fostering

innovation, as participants create prototypes, circular economy initiatives, and scalable environmental solutions, building key skills in problem-solving and sustainable design. YEA also advances SDG 11 by supporting community-focused actions such as biodiversity enhancement, waste reduction, and sustainable transport initiatives that improve local environments. By combining education, youth leadership, and real-world application, the YEA programme translates sustainability concepts into tangible outcomes. It equips participants with the knowledge, competencies, and agency required to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development at both local and national levels, demonstrating the critical role of youth-led innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD: YEA provides high quality, learner centred education through a project-based approach that integrates environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability. It supports curriculum linked learning while developing critical thinking, research, and problem-solving skills. Participants engage with real world issues, making learning relevant, applied, and action oriented.

Whole institution approach, institutions as communities of transformational learning: The programme encourages schools and youth organisations to embed sustainability across their activities. Projects often involve collaboration between students, teachers, and the wider community, helping to create a culture of sustainability within the institution. These fosters shared responsibility and supports whole school engagement in environmental action.

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD: YEA promotes innovation by encouraging participants to design creative, solution focused projects, including prototypes, campaigns, and social enterprises. It builds transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, and initiative, while introducing young people to green careers and pathways. This supports future employability and nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset grounded in sustainability.

Key players involved

Young people are the central participants, leading the research, design, and implementation of projects. They identify issues, develop solutions, and communicate their work.

Teachers and youth leaders act as facilitators, providing guidance, structure, and support throughout the project process while enabling independent, student led learning.

ECO-UNESCO staff coordinate the programme, develop resources, deliver training, and organise regional and national events, ensuring quality and consistency.

Judges and mentors contribute expertise by evaluating projects, offering feedback, and supporting learning and development.

Community partners and organisations may collaborate on projects, providing real world context, resources, and opportunities to extend impact beyond the classroom

There are a diverse range of funders and supporters for the programme and include the Irish Department of Environment and Climate, the Irish Department of Education and Youth. Other supporters include the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland among others.

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

YEA encourages projects that transform people's behaviours

Projects are designed to go beyond awareness and influence everyday actions. Participants often create campaigns, systems, or interventions that make sustainable choices easier and more visible, such as reducing single-use plastics, improving recycling habits, or promoting energy saving. This focus on practical change helps shift behaviours at both individual and group levels.

YEA promotes community action

Many projects extend beyond the school setting and engage local communities. Young people work with local organisations, councils, and residents to address environmental issues, creating a sense of shared responsibility and

collective impact. Projects can often reach regional or even national news, with calls to action that engage beyond their local communities as well. This strengthens the relevance and reach of their work.

YEA raises awareness
Peer-to-peer engagement is a core element of the programme. Participants communicate their findings and solutions through presentations, campaigns, and events, making sustainability more relatable and accessible to others their age. Often, groups will call on their peers to help provide data, conduct research, and process feedback. This often leads to wider participation and stronger uptake of sustainable practices. The YEA programme has millions of impressions annually, putting a spotlight on the future generation's creativity, innovation, and commitment to driving positive environmental and social change.

YEA strengthens competencies
Through the project process, participants build a wide range of skills including research, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, presentation, time management, project management, and problem solving. These competencies are developed in a practical context, helping young people apply what they learn and build confidence in taking action both in the environment and their futures.

Youth dimension

The programme is youth centred, with young people leading the entire process from identifying issues to designing and delivering solutions. It prioritises youth voice, choice, and creativity, allowing participants to explore topics relevant to their lives and communities. Through peer-to-peer engagement and public presentation opportunities, young people take on active roles as communicators and changemakers, rather than passive learners, building confidence, ownership, and a strong sense of responsibility for environmental action.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The programme has run successfully since 1999. In that time there have been a number of lessons learnt.
We developed a 6 steps framework on carrying out an action project so that educators would have a clear framework to follow. To support this, we developed the YEA Manual which supports YEA Mentors and young people to take action locally.
In addition, we developed an online e learning course on our ECO Academy https://learn.ecounesco.ie/ where young people can carry out a free YEA 6 Steps to action project course.
We have introduced a number of new project categories over the years including food and marine responding to the needs and interests of young people.
We have developed additional opportunities for young people to engage with decision makers and develop new skills and introduced regional ECO-Dens which are dragons den style events where young people have an opportunity to pitch their project to a panel of experts.
We introduced a large-scale exhibition where young people have an opportunity to showcase their projects to other young people.

Further resources

- www.yea.ie
- Get Involved in the Young Environmentalist Awards - YT video
- Students gather in Cork for semi-final ofEco-Unesco Environmentalist awards
- YEA Report 2025

Engaging 3rd level teaching students on Sustainable Ocean Marine Communities

Education programmes that work directly with the next generation (students under 18 years of age) are often a key element of environmental programmes and initiatives. The hope being that increasing knowledge and awareness will create a cohort of the population that will drive change and positive environmental actions. However, they are often limited by constraints such as staff numbers, budget allocations and geographical location, and the assumption that increased knowledge equals positive behaviours. This story will share examples of marine education initiatives, that worked directly with practitioners in four different 3rd level institutions in Ireland. A series of engagements with pre-service teachers and early year educators were carried out based on marine concepts and content, focused on sustainable marine communities and environments. The goal, to create a dynamo effect, where trained motivated individuals have the potential to reach a much wider audience over the lifecycle of their career than one specialised marine educator or programme, visiting from an external organisation on their own. The collaborative impact of a network of practitioners will also be explored, as we outline how a network of individuals and organisations can work together to promoting a shared vision for the Ocean.

Contacts

Dr. Noirin Burke Galway Atlantaquaria -- noirin@nationalaquarium.ie
Dr. Rita Melia Atlantic Technological University -- Rita.Melia@atu.ie

Students from Marino Institute of Further Education exploring sustainable coastal environments on Bull Island with the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme (Image taken by Dr. Noirin Burke)

Students from Dublin City University exploring the Explorers Education Programme Marine Spatial Planning Platform online (Image taken by Dr. Noirin Burke)

Students from the Atlantic Technological University engaging services and community members during a family beach day in Galway. (Image taken by Dr. Rita Melia)

Students from the Atlantic Technological University visiting local shores to explore sustainable ocean environments (Image taken by Dr. Rita Melia)

The Irish Ocean Literacy Network Education Working Group meet online with Raquel Lorenz Costa about IOC-UNESCO Blue Schools (Image taken by Dr. Noirin Burke)

General Description

To provide training in sustainable marine education including sustainable environments, engaging communities, and managing the use of marine spaces. Engagements delivered to early year educators through the Galway Childcare Committee and the Atlantic Technological University. And to pre-service primary school teachers with the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme, through Dublin City University, Mary Immaculate College Limerick and Marino Institute of Further Education in Dublin. Building a community of practice with the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, through their Education Working Group.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

This story is centred around creating ocean literate practitioners to engage youth and civil society. Sustainable systems, structures and behaviours are at the core of Ocean Literacy, which can be defined as an outcome, a society that understands, values, and cares for the ocean, making decisions and behaving in ways that ensure a healthy ocean, to sustain all life current and future. To face the challenges that impact the ocean and the natural world, we must consider not how to manage the ocean, but how to manage ourselves.

By providing knowledge and training in Ocean Literacy and marine spatial planning, which is linked to formal curricula we work with educators to consider inclusive communities and societies, that are sustainable and resilient for the future, while also embracing innovation and nature-based solutions. By coming together through the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, we can create a community of practice where educators have a shared vision of promoting Ocean Literacy and its principles. The Explorers Education Programme has provided training for over ten years, with the early year's initiatives with ATU, Galway Childcare Committee and Galway Atlantaquaria ongoing for over 5 years. The IOLN has been running for 10 years, since 2016.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education: the activities based in this example are based on quality education and best practice. The Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme ensures the quality of its programme through qualitative and quantitative data, that are highlighted in annual publications and videos. A knowledge questionnaire and pre and post feedback form is used with preservice students in ATU. Peer reviewed publications such as '*Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to Young Citizens (10-16 years) A Focus on Teaching Hope, Respect, Empathy and Advocacy in Schools*' in which Galway Atlantaquaria provided the chapter in SDG 14 and *Ocean Literacy: The Foundation for the Success of the Ocean Decade Volume 3*, in which the Irish Ocean Literacy Network submitted a chapter also help us increase the impact and reach of this work. The sharing of programmes and initiatives through the IOLN Education Working Groups helps to promote best practice and knowledge sharing.

The Explorers Education Programme Marine Spatial Planning Platform, developed with the support of the Department for Climate, Energy and the Environment provides a groundbreaking digital tool for students to engage with online. While the Galway Childcare Committee e-learning platform provides a free and accessible tool for services across Ireland.

Key players involved

Galway Atlantaquaria: Native Species Aquarium contracted to provide the services work for the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme including working with pre-service teachers. Works with the ATU early years students and helped develop the e-learning programme with Galway Childcare Committee. Is a member of the IOLN.

Marine Institute: Is Irelands state agency for Marine Research, Innovation and Technology. It funds and supports the **Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme** a primary school marine education programme. Provided training to pre-service teachers, and content on Marine Spatial Planning.

Atlantic Technological University (ATU): Is a multi-campus technological university. Early childhood students took part in Beach school, an initiative based on Ocean Literacy.

Galway Childcare Committee: Implement National Childcare Policy and Programmes at local level on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability & Equality. Implemented the Ocean Literacy e-learning platform.

Irish Ocean Literacy Network (IOLN): Brings together a diverse community passionately committed to our ocean. Supports the work of the IOLN Education Working Group.

Positive impact areas

- promoting community action
- raising awareness.
- involving government and/or private sector.
- strengthening competencies.

Progress made

Through the IOLN Education Working Group a network of over twenty marine education practitioners across the Island of Ireland has come together. Through wider network campaigns and regional and online meetings the network has helped bring communities together including government and private sectors, individuals, and organisations. Beach school, while working with early years educators primarily, also invited families and communities' members to participate in community events.

The Explorers Education Programme, ATU Beach School and Galway Childcare Committee and Galway Atlantaquaria Ocean Literacy e-learning Programme have all helped raise awareness of Ocean Literacy and sustainable practices for ocean environments. Through peer reviewed publications we have also helped raise awareness and involve government and private sector.

All educational materials used, including the Explorers Education Programme Marine Spatial Planning Platform are based on students developing key competencies including being a digital learner and becoming an active citizen.

This summary includes a number of links between government and private sector organisations including the links between the Marine Institute and Galway Atlantaquaria (private sector), ATU and the Galway Childcare Committee and Galway Atlantaquaria and early year service providers, and between the IOLN education working group members.

Youth dimension

The Explorers Education Programme works with children between the ages of 5-12 years of age, while Beach School, is focused on promoting engagement with children between 3-5 years of age.

Gender dimension

Approximately 97-98% of all childcare staff in Ireland are female. This statistic was also true for the groups we engaged, where over 95% of the participants were female. Within the primary school sector, approximately 90% were female. While data was not collected on the gender specifically, we would be confident to say that over 85% of all those engaged were female. Within the IOLN Education Working Group, the gender split was approximately 2 female members to every 1 male.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Throughout these initiatives we have learnt of the important of collaborating and working together across multi stakeholder groups to ensure many voices are heard. We have witnessed the passion of pre-service educators and practitioners to engage with the topics of sustainability. We would like to acknowledge the vast array of people and organisations who have come together to make these programmes possible through feedback, supporting their students and providing voluntary in-kind work. We would also like to thank the funders of the programmes and initiatives, without which this work would not be sustainable into the future.

Further resources

- www.explorers.ie
- https://www.galwaychildcare.com/childcare/e-learning-programmes.php
- https://ioln.ie/education/
- Main Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme Website
- Galway Childcare Ocean Literacy E-learning Platform
- Press release about Explorers Education Programme training with Dublin City University https://www.marine.ie/site-area/news-events/press-releases/decade-partnership-making-waves-explorers-inspire-future
- Press release on training with Marino Institute of Further Education
- Article on engaging with early year educators with the Atlantic Technological University
- Marine Spatial planning module on the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme

A systems approach to ESD in Higher Education in Ireland

A coordinated, systems approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been established across Ireland's higher education sector, supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and aligned with the ESD to 2030 Strategy. This approach integrates policy alignment, targeted funding, professional development, and structured sector-wide collaboration to support the embedding of ESD across teaching and learning, research, governance, campus operations, and community engagement.

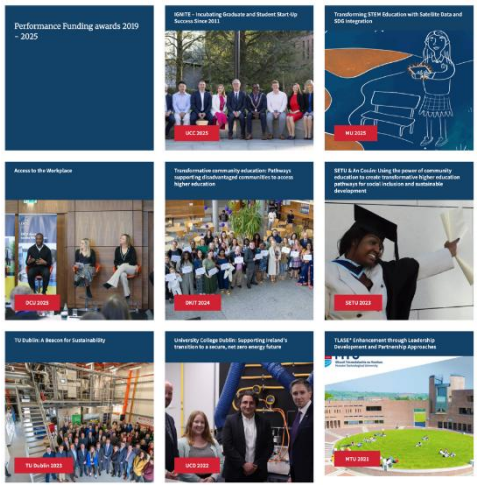
Key elements include the integration of climate and sustainable development within Ireland's national System Performance Framework 2023–2028 for higher education and research and associated Performance Agreements between the HEA and higher education institutions; and targeted investment through Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) funding to support curriculum innovation and institutional capacity-building; and national professional development through open courses on 'Education for Sustainability' and 'Embedding the SDGs across the Curriculum'.

The HEA's appointment of a national Policy Advisor for ESD further strengthened this approach through the establishment of a national ESD Community of Practice and the development of an ESD Framework for Higher Education and resources, including a national ESD Landscape Report mapping activity across the sector, an ESD Webinar Series, a Case Studies Compendium, and an self-evaluation tool to support institutional reflection and enhancement.

This system-level approach is supporting progress across the SDGs by strengthening institutional capacity, fostering partnerships, and embedding sustainability competencies across disciplines.

Contacts

systemperformance@hea.ie and admin@teachingandlearning.ie



HEA Institutional Stories of Impact

HEA ESD Spotlight Series

HEA ESD Case Studies Compendium. HEA ESD Landscape Report


HEA ESD Celebration Event


HEA ESD and Academic Quality Workshop Event

HEA SATLE Impact Award Event

General Description

To support the HEA's statutory role in advancing sustainable development across higher education (HEA Act 2022) by enabling a coordinated, system-level approach to ESD aligned with the national ESD to 2030 strategy. The approach aligns

policy, funding, professional development and sector-wide collaboration to support institutions to embed ESD across curricula, teaching and learning, and wider institutional practice.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 17. Through the HEA-coordinated ESD Framework, institutions are supported to engage collectively rather than in isolation, using shared resources, common reference points and sector-wide engagement structures. Key partnership mechanisms include the HEA ESD Community of Practice, which brings together institutional ESD leads, teaching and learning professionals, sustainability and climate action staff, and students to support peer learning and collaboration. The ESD Spotlight Series and associated case study call further enable cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary exchange by sharing practice through openly accessible case studies and resources. The ESD Landscape Report supports system-level coherence by drawing together publicly available institutional strategies and planning documents, providing a shared evidence base to inform collective understanding and future collaboration. The ESD Self-Evaluation Tool supports HEIs to reflect on their own practice using a shared developmental language, while respecting institutional autonomy and diversity. Mechanisms are strengthening partnerships between institutions, the HEA and wider stakeholders supporting coordinated capacity-building and sustained collaboration.

While the approach does not directly target individual SDGs at system level, it indirectly supports progress across SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11 by enabling ESD-informed teaching & learning, research & innovation, access & participation, and engagement across the sector. SATLE-funded initiatives and curriculum reform support innovation, sustainable industrial practices, digital skills, and applied problem-solving aligned with green and digital transitions. SDG 11 SATLE-funded initiatives support living labs, civic engagement, and place-based learning connect students with local authorities and communities to address urban resilience, mobility, housing, and biodiversity.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD

The approach supports the integration of ESD within teaching and learning by aligning national policy, funding and professional development. Shared resources, open courses and guidance enable institutions to build capabilities and embed ESD in learning outcomes, programme review and staff development in ways that are coherent across the sector while remaining sensitive to disciplinary and institutional context.

Whole-institution approach

The Framework promotes a whole-institution approach by linking ESD to governance, strategic planning, quality enhancement and campus operations through national performance agreements and coordinated sector engagement. This supports institutions to move beyond isolated initiatives towards more integrated and sustained ESD practice across teaching, research, operations and external engagement.

Digital education

Digital platforms and shared resources, including open educational resources, online professional development and national mapping tools, support scalable engagement with ESD across the sector. These digital approaches are supporting access, visibility and shared learning, supporting institutions to integrate ESD more systematically and to learn from practice across the system.

Key players involved

The HEA provides strategic leadership, policy alignment, funding mechanisms, and coordination. This includes convening the ESD Community of Practice, supporting shared resources, and facilitating peer learning and collaboration.

Higher education institutions are the primary actors in embedding ESD within curricula, research, and operations. National policy alignment is supported through the HEA's participation in national ESD working and steering groups, in collaboration with the government departments responsible for the ESD to 2030 strategy, while international frameworks and networks inform coherence with wider ESD and SDGs priorities. Students participate as partners, co-creators and contributors through student–staff initiatives, leadership roles and engagement activities highlighted through the ESD Spotlight Series, as well as through student representatives on the HEA Board, Student Engagement and Teaching and Learning committees, and related recognition and awards panels.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The approach has had positive impacts across multiple areas by strengthening the enabling conditions for ESD at system level. Integration of ESD within national strategic and quality frameworks, including performance agreements and sector guidance, has contributed to changes in educational policy and planning, embedding sustainability as a core consideration across higher education.

National professional development provision and shared resources have strengthened educator and institutional competencies, supporting more consistent and confident engagement with ESD across disciplines. This has, in turn, influenced behaviours and practices, with increased uptake of interdisciplinary, applied and reflective approaches to sustainability in teaching, learning and institutional activity.

The ESD Spotlight Series, Case Studies Compendium and Landscape Report have supported awareness-raising and peer learning across the sector, making practice more visible and transferable. Community action and partnerships have been promoted through SATLE-supported initiatives, including living labs, civic engagement and place-based learning, strengthening links with local authorities, communities and external partners.

At system level, collaboration between higher education institutions, government departments and national steering and working groups has enhanced policy alignment and coherence, contributing to a scalable and sustainable national approach to ESD aligned with national and international priorities.

Youth dimension

Students are partners and active agents of change within ESD. Through SATLE-funded student-as-partners initiatives, sustainability leadership programmes, living labs, volunteering and curriculum co-creation, students are empowered to contribute to ESD practice at institutional level. This is complemented by formal student representatives on the HEA Board, Student Engagement and Teaching and Learning committees, and recognition and awards panels, strengthening student voice, partnership and leadership across the sector.

Gender dimension

Our approach is aligned with the HEA's wider equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, including the work of the HEA Centre of Excellence for EDI. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging is also a transversal area of impact in the System Performance Framework. SATLE funded projects, case studies and shared resources have also demonstrated inclusive and intersectional pedagogies, leadership development and critical engagement with inequality and social justice, aligned with broader national policy including principles of the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Key challenges include ensuring consistency across diverse institutions and balancing ambition with institutional capacity. Variations in institutional mission, capacity and starting points mean that progress is uneven and requires a flexible, developmental approach over standardised measures. There has been the value of sustained engagement, shared language and peer learning in building confidence and capability over time. Aligning policy, funding and professional development has been essential in supporting consistent progress. Ongoing dialogue and peer learning have also been essential in supporting institutions to embed ESD in ways that are meaningful and sustainable.

Further resources

- System Performance Framework | Higher Education Authority
- Performance Agreements | Higher Education Authority
- Institutional Stories of Impact | Higher Education Authority
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Maturity Framework for Higher Education - National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
- HEA ESD Landscape Report (2026)
- Higher Education Authority (HEA) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Spotlight Series 2025: Case Studies Compendium - National Resource Hub

- Launch of ESD Spotlight Series 2025: Case Studies Compendium - National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
- HEA Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Spotlight Series - National Resource Hub

Sphere17 Regional Youth Service – Future Generations Climate Justice Project

The Future Generations: Climate Justice Project is a consortium project led out by the National Youth Council of Ireland, that seeks to explore and highlight the systemic and human rights issues related to the climate crisis with young people. This project brings the unique voices of young people who are frequently missing from the climate discourse, such as young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as rural areas where young people are often at risk of isolation. Their reality is often-times not represented in national and global policies, but this project seeks to amend that.

The project highlights how non-formal education and youth work can play an important role in introducing young people to sustainable development issues and many times against the odds, can support young people's knowledge, skills, confidence, and informed action.

One of the foundational principles of youth work is 'meeting young people where they are at', and this was NYCI's first task of the Future Generations: Climate Justice Project – to assess the initial thoughts, opinions, and actions of the young people from Sphere17 regarding the selected theme for the project year which was 'SDG14: Life Below Water'.

Contacts

eimear@nyci.ie and valerie@nyci.ie








General Description

- Create space for young people to explore the topic of Climate Justice
- Recognise the different layers of discriminations that exist in the climate crisis debate
- Support young people to develop skills they need to advocate on climate justice
- Empower young people to take climate justice action
- Facilitate a global response to climate justice by including global youth voices, particularly those from the Global South
- Facilitate young people to directly engage with policymakers, ensuring their voices are heard at decision-making levels.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Key players involved

- Young People aged 10-24 years
- Youth Workers – supporting youth engagement
- Youth Organisation – Sphere 17
- Future Generations Consortium led by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

1. Introduction to the Future Generations: Climate Justice Project

The Future Generations: Climate Justice Project is a consortium project led out by the National Youth Council of Ireland, that seeks to explore and highlight the systemic and human rights issues related to the climate crisis with young people. This project brings the unique voices of young people who are frequently missing from the climate discourse, such as young people from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as rural areas where young people are often at risk of isolation. Their reality is often-times not represented in national and global policies, but this project seeks to amend that.

The project highlights how non-formal education and youth work can play an important role in introducing young people to sustainable development issues and many times against the odds, can support young people's knowledge, skills, confidence, and informed action.

One of the foundational principles of youth work is 'meeting young people where they are at', and this was NYCI's first task of the Future Generations: Climate Justice Project – to assess the initial thoughts, opinions, and actions of the young people from Sphere17 regarding the selected theme for the project year which was 'SDG14: Life Below Water'.

What follows tells the story of what has been a transformational project for many of the young people involved.

The Future Generations Project addresses this by:

- Creating the space for young people to explore the topic of Climate Justice
- Recognising the different layers of discriminations that exist in the climate crisis debate
- Supporting young people to develop the skills they need to be advocates of climate justice
- Empowering young people to take on a local/regional response to climate justice
- Facilitating a global response to climate justice by including other, global youth voices, particularly those from the Global South
- Facilitating young people to directly engage with policymakers, ensuring their voices are heard at decision-making levels.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), who are the project lead, worked closely with their consortium partners, Sphere17 Regional Youth Service (Sphere17), on a meaningful project that explored issues surrounding Climate Justice, Marine Sustainability, and Education for Sustainable Development in a youth work context.
Sphere17 provides high-quality voluntary youth services to young people between the ages of 10 – 24. They operate several youth groups located in the north Dublin region, all of which are young person centred. Many of the young people who attend Sphere17 come from low socio-economic backgrounds; are disillusioned with the Irish society; have immigration/asylum seeker complications; have family members with alcohol and/or narcotics abuse issues; are at risk of leaving formal education; etc. The youth workers of Sphere17 support youth and the surrounding community by ensuring young people feel respected, included, and that they have a voice on issues that matter to them.

2. Youth Opinions & Experiences

One of the foundational principles of youth work is 'meeting young people where they are at', and this was NYCI's first task of the Future Generations: Climate Justice Project – to assess the initial thoughts, opinions, and actions of the young people from Sphere17 regarding the selected theme for the project year which was 'SDG14: Life Below Water'.
NYCI's Youth & Climate Justice Officer, Eimear Manning, visited Sphere17 for an informal chat over some pizza with the young people. After asking the young people to tell any stories they had about water, an interesting trend emerged amongst the young people in the room. One young boy described how his mother 'doesn't trust the government' and says 'they are putting chemicals in our water' that can cause harm to humans. While this young boy expressed a personal disenfranchisement to the Government of Ireland, he likened his mother's opinions to a 'conspiracy' and showed annoyance that his mother continued to buy bottled water, even though he had expressed not wanting to drink from plastic bottles all the time due to ingesting microplastics. Other young people in the room, feeling a sense of solidarity with this story, began to speak up about their parents' opinions on tap water differing from their own.
This conversation ultimately gave rise to Sphere17's project for the year – water testing!

3. Getting Stuck In

The young people were excited to 'prove their parent's wrong'! NYCI purchased a high-quality water testing kit so that the young people could assess water in all the areas around them – home, school, their youth work centre, friend's houses, etc. After a few weeks of testing, it soon became clear that the water from their taps was not harmful to their health under any parameter tested. While, initially, the young people took great joy in gloating about their discovery with lots of 'I told you so's, the experience soon gave rise to a deeper conversation when one young person asked 'okay so our tap water is safe, but what about our bathing water'? Another discussion unfolded, and it was clear that the young people in the room were hesitant to swim off Dublin's shores because they believed their coastline's water to be 'dirty'. This gave rise to phase 2 of the project – a saltwater test kit and a chartered vessel to take the group off the coast of Howth.
The young people tested the water in six different locations around Howth peninsula, and the results were very similar to that of the tap water tests. The water was perfectly clean and safe for human bathing. However, while all other chemical markers came up 'green' (denoting acceptable levels of that chemical), one came up 'red' (extremely high or low levels). This chemical was KH, or 'carbonate hardness', and it was reading as 'extremely low' on all of the young people's tests.
Upon returning to the youth work centre, they were invested in learning what low KH means for both the human and non-human beings that utilised this water. In short, the young people discovered that, while low KH in bathing water has a negligible effect on humans, it can have a significant effect on fish, particularly marine invertebrates. KH helps to stabilise pH levels (acidity). Shifting pH levels can lead to stress or even death for aquatic life. In the case of shellfish and/or other creatures where their bone is on the outside, for example, cold-water corals, clams, crabs, etc., they rely on calcium carbonate to build their skeletons or shells. Stable KH levels help to maintain the calcium levels necessary to appropriately grow and develop.
They discovered that cold-water corals provided important habitats and feeding grounds for juvenile fish and were considered 'nurseries' to allow small and young fish to grow. With regards shellfish, they particularly gained an interest in oysters – as a new oyster habitat was proposed to be created along the Dublin coastline. They learned that over time oysters create a reef which acts as a natural barrier against storm surge and dramatically helps to reduce coastal erosion. As well as that, oysters and other filter-feeding shellfish drastically improve water quality by filtering out suspended waste particles in the water. At first, the young people of Sphere17 weren't particularly invested in marine invertebrates, but after doing more research on why corals and shellfish are important, their opinions changed and they became impassioned.

4. Voices Heard

Sphere17's 18-year anniversary celebrations were coming up, and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth at the time, Roderic O'Gorman TD, had accepted his invite to attend. The young people saw this as a prime opportunity to have their say.

The Sphere17 staff facilitated the young people to have a private room to meet Minister O'Gorman and his team. They showcased their project to the Minister, showing him how to complete a water test using water from their local pond, and then discussed their findings off the coast of Howth harbour. The Minister listened to them attentively and asked his team to take notes based on what they were saying so he could revisit the information later. Before leaving, the Minister thanked and congratulated the young people on being passionate about a project that will benefit both nature and people and encouraged them to continue questioning and researching.

Upon leaving, the young people expressed their surprise at how they were taken seriously, and how they were nervous to speak with anyone political before but now felt reassured that their voices and opinions did, in fact, matter. This was hugely significant to their democratic and educational development. It showcased to the group that educational success doesn't merely happen in schools but can happen anywhere you place your passion. This was a major milestone for a group that previously did not want to be involved in anything seen as 'political' or to do with politics.

Just as ESD strives to equip its learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to act as agents of change, this example showcases how a single, meaningful project (that took young people's experiences seriously and catered to their interests) has gone a long way to supporting their recognition of the importance of collective action, solidarity, and using your voice for those more vulnerable than oneself.

Further resources

- https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/climate-justice/

Take 1 Programme – Embedding ESD in Learning & Teaching

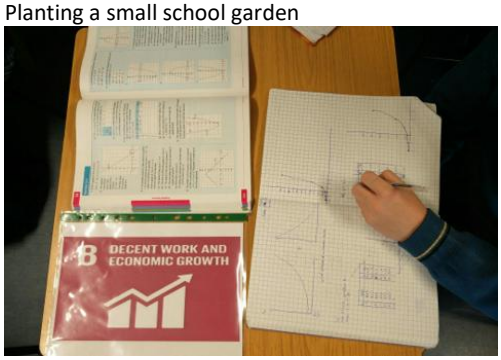
The *Take 1 Programme* is a professional learning programme, endorsed by the Centre for School Leadership, for teacher, middle and senior leaders aimed at embedding teaching and learning about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across and through the curriculum. It has been informed by the developing Irish post primary education context, with reference to developments in research, evaluation, and direct experience within national and international ESD and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) environments.

The Take 1 Programme uses an approach which supports schools to engage with ESD by mapping the UN Sustainable Development Goals to the prescribed learning outcomes of every subject syllabus in the lower second level curriculum. This built-in approach ensures that schools can consider ESD as an existing element of learning and teaching rather than additional content to be considered. The *Take 1 Programme* reflects and supports the *'Statements of Effective Practice'* in the Learning & Teaching, and Leadership & Management dimension of Looking at Our School 2022. It offers opportunities and examples to engage with ESD as part of Whole School Planning, School Self-Evaluation planning, and can be applied in a flexible and responsive manner. The training programme approach, highlights how *every* student in *every* class through *every* subject, can experience the interconnected nature and impact of ESD.

Contacts

Valerie Lewis – Take 1 Programme Director

Planting a small school garden



Using Mathematics to learn about living wage and minimum wage and SDG 8

Using recycled materials to make prototypes in a Design and Technology class

Culture and Heritage. Using recycled materials to create artwork and tell stories

Preparing to plant orchard trees

Using the SDGs to learn about 'needs' – Maslow's Pyramid

An example of a school embracing the 'Metre of Meadow' Challenge

Schools 'Metre of Meadow' Challenge. Challenging schools to engage with nature and track changes
Images referenced/included taken from social media with school permission and/or offered by schools.

General Description

The Take 1 Programme aims to support schools to communicate, raise awareness of, and embed Education for Sustainable Development as part of a whole-school curriculum, using the UN Sustainable Development as a framework. It achieves this aim by providing professional learning opportunities for school leaders and teachers to engage with and understand sustainable development. It explores linking formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities to the achievement of the global goals and supports the inclusion of ESD as part of school policy and wellbeing programmes.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The Take 1 Programme uses a systems approach to engagement underpinned by linking engagement to the National Strategy on ESD – ESD to 2030 while reflecting national education policy and strategy requirements. This approach ensures a common objective purpose that is reproduced in classroom practice, mirroring the language and terminology of operational and practice requirements. A priority is to ensure that educators and learners are supported to understand and engage with ESD and the SDGs as part of natural learning processes and as an integral part of their current professional engagement. The 'built in' approach of mapping participation to prescribed learning outcomes highlights how ESD and the SDGs are a contemporary element of the curriculum, and not an additional or separate task to be included. This approach supports inclusion through engagement with 'every student, in every subject and every classroom'. Classroom practice is reflective of school priorities, which are guided by national education policy. National education policy operates in collaboration with the National ESD strategy, which itself is reflective of the language and priorities of UNESCO's ESD for 2030, demonstrating the interconnected nature of policy to practice.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

Quality Education*:* The Take 1 Programme reflects quality education and ESD in both its design and direction at practice level. The inclusion of all student learners demonstrates the 'equitable and inclusive' language used in the long definition of SDG 4 and interprets ESD through the language of SDG 4.7. The Take 1 Programme uses a broad definition for ESD which goes beyond environmental concerns and supports the acquisition of knowledge and skills aligned with extensive global citizenship perspectives. This approach supports education as the mechanism for enacting sustainable development.

Whole-institution approach*:* The foundation of the Take 1 Programme lies in its attention to a whole-school approach. Using the definition of ESD as presented by SDG 4.7 the Programme emphasises "all learners" through its 'every student, every subject' approach. It also recognises that learning and engagement occurs across and through the school environment and supports transformative action which takes place in both the formal and non-formal curriculum. Additionally, the inclusive approach acknowledges context and diversity and offers a space for learners of all abilities to put ESD learning into practice both in classrooms and the wider school community.

Key players involved

The key players involved in this project are the Department of Education in Ireland who support the activities of the Take 1 Programme as part of the National Strategy on ESD. The work of the Programme is aligned with *Priority 2: Transforming Learning Environments,* specifically supporting school leaders to engage with leadership and management for ESD. In turn the positive influence of school leadership on student learning (Leithwood et al, 2008) is acknowledged by the Take 1 Programme format by supporting school leaders specifically. It aligns training activities with the current policy requirements of school development and school self-evaluation. This leadership support has a direct and positive impact on teacher and student engagement with ESD.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviours*:* The Take 1 Programme supports broad engagement across the whole-school environment. Providing resources and provision for all curriculum subjects has supported teachers and students to work towards connecting everyday learning with sustainable development ambitions. Engaging with ESD has encouraged critical thinking and reflection and supported learners to consider 'why' their actions are so important.

Promoting community action*:* Schools are supported to extend their learning and engagement beyond the formal curriculum. As a result, learners have an opportunity to experience a lived experience of ESD which often extends into their wider community. Schools reach out to draw on local expertise as part of their ESD learning, not only making practical connections but also experiencing the impact of sustainable actions in day-to-day living.

Raising awareness*:* A primary goal of the Take 1 Programme is to highlight the broad nature of Sustainable Development. This approach supports wider engagement with ESD and the SDGs by leaning into a range of the key interests of participants and demonstrating that ESD is present in many ways throughout their daily lives. It also aims to move away from the narrow perception that ESD reflects only environmental or climate issues, particularly where learners and educators may feel overwhelmed by their potential lack of capacity to impact change.

Youth dimension

The Take 1 Programme primarily focuses on the formal school environment support principal, middle, and teacher leaders to engage with ESD through their teaching, learning and leadership activities. This audience engages specifically with young people through formal, non-formal and informal curriculum activities.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The Take 1 Programme aims to ensure that its training approach remains conscious of the busy and complex experiences of those operating in formal school environments. It ensures that it keeps up to date with policy requirements and recommendations in broader national education policy so that Programme design and updates can recognise and support the day-to-day activities of the broader school environment.

Further resources

- www.take1programme.com
- Gallery - Take 1 Programme
- Irelands Education Yearbook - From Policy to Practice: ESD through the lens of Irish School Policy
- Included as an example of innovative actions on teaching Climate Education with the OECD, UNESCO and Education International (Here)
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals – Conference Presentation (Review)
- Paper presented at the Pre-Summit of the Future Event, hosted by SDSN, New York (September 2024). UN International Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD) Summit of the Future Presentation *Theme - Children, Youth and the Future of the SDGs*
- Embedding ESD in Learning and Teaching – The Academic Practice Series . Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (Technical University of the Shannon)

Links to some examples of student engagement

- St. Kevin's Community College – Sustainability Project – Link
- St Oliver Post Primary School Oldcastle – ESD - Throwback Thursday Student Video

Water- The Foundation of Sustainability and wise teacher of ESD

WiseWater Academy delivers a six-week water and wellbeing primary school programme funded through the Department of Education's ESD initiative. The WiseWater Programme integrates Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across SESE, SPHE, Art, English, Maths and P.E.,using water as a medium to advance SDG 6, 14 whilst linking with all other SDGs.

Over the past two years, the programme has been delivered in more than 20 schools in Ireland. Through multi-sensory hands-on activities, creative expression, critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving and reflective practice, students explore the interrelationship between water conservation, personal wellbeing and global citizenship.

The carefully designed six-week programme blends curricular subjects in multi-sensory ways to engage every learner. This models ESD for teachers to engage with sustainability in creative ways within the classroom. Through peer to peer learning the programme fosters whole-school engagement, encouraging innovation and systems thinking, and empowering students to become active citizens. The WiseWater programme demonstrates how water can connect us to ourselves each other and the living world and serves as a tangible way to progress across multiple SDGs at local level.

WiseWater Academy

General Description

The WiseWater programme aims to support a lifelong relationship with water that encourages, water conservation, environmental awareness, wellbeing and global citizenship.

By helping students understand that in order to have a sustainable future we need to value water. The programme activates hope, stewardship and collaborative responsibility.

It empowers young people to recognise that every action for protecting water can contribute to making waves of change for a sustainable future.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- **SDG 17** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6- WiseWater focusses primarily on the importance of clean water and sanitation (and SDG 14, life below water), however we also address how clean water is not only a necessity for human wellbeing and biological life but essential to achieve all other of the SDG goals.

As only 1% of the planet's water is accessible freshwater, the resource offers a tangible entry point for exploring sustainability in everyday life. Students quickly grasp that water underpins all sustainable development goals and is vital for health, production, energy systems, infrastructure and ecosystems. Furthermore, considering waters role in climate change as a change in weather and water distribution can support resilience and innovative solutions.

SDG 17 is core to achieving clean water, the WiseWater approach focuses on 'one well' for the planet, promoting global citizenship. Students learn that it is only through collaborative efforts that we can achieve sustainability and clean water for all and for future generations.

Through considering waters many roles in our life, the WiseWater programme supports an awakening realisation of the importance of SDG 6 to students and teachers alike. This awareness ripples out through homes and communities supporting behaviour change, active citizenship and innovative solutions.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD

Transformative impact results

Teachers report how the methodology of teaching supported their own understanding of ESD. The ability to address social and environmental problems in tangible ways through the curriculum subjects has been reported as 'inspiring' with teachers communicating they have learnt a lot from the programme delivery.
An example of some reports from teachers:
'The programme displayed an excellent example of cross curricular activities while also displaying facts and figures that I also was not aware of'
"There were many facts that were new to me and made me more aware of the necessity of water and how essential it is for almost everything. Approaching teaching about water from different angles, properties, uses, shortages, wastage, promoting conservation, wellbeing, water cycle, case studies on pollution, developing global citizenship with a view to protecting our water will all guide my teaching "
'The environmental awareness and change strand of Science was to the fore as well as natural environments in Geography. I felt citizenship and our responsibility towards promoting change was a large part of the programme and this is SPHE. I also felt art and music were part of this programme as well as self-assessment opportunities which asked the children to reflect on understanding and insights in written form which integrated English'

Key players involved

WiseWater Academy designs and delivers the programme to primary schools currently in Cork Ireland. These programmes are supported through the Department of Education ESD grant.
Key players include:

- WiseWater facilitators, who model ESD and deliver interactive workshops
- Classroom teachers, who integrate learning into ongoing curriculum practice.
- Students are key players as they are empowered to be active global citizens and sustainability ambassadors.
- Parents and community members who are invited to the final workshop of the programme.

To date, over 20 schools have completed the full six-week programme, building a growing network of institutions embedding water conservation and wellbeing into school culture and community.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviors: Over six weeks, students calculate their personal water consumption, reflect on daily habits, and commit to practical conservation actions. Teachers observed more awareness and thoughtful behaviours, with students demonstrating water conservation action and discussions, greater understanding and stronger critical thinking. Students gained knowledge about water systems, global inequality, and environmental responsibility and teachers reported behaviour changes from students based on their learning.
Promoting community action: The final workshop celebrates water and the sharing of knowledge learned. Students share their learning with other students and school community encouraging collective responsibility beyond the classroom. The school is awarded a water drop 'flag' made from up-cycled sail which hangs from a bracket forged from an old gate. This highlights upcycling and conveys how sustainability is possible. This flag stays as a visible commitment to sustainability across the whole school community.
Raising awareness: Teachers report gaining knowledge themselves about valuing water and its conservation, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), both in their personal lives and in their professional teaching practice. Impact reports indicate that students develop a heightened awareness of the practical actions they can take to protect the environment, as well as a deeper understanding of their collective role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, the WiseWater programme strengthens environmental awareness and responsibility across students, teachers, schools, and the wider community.

Youth dimension

The WiseWater programme is carefully designed for 10 to 12-year-olds. Students are empowered as sustainability ambassadors. Throughout the 6 workshops, students develop a knowledge and voice within actions towards a sustainable future.

Concepts such as the “One Well” show young people how we are all interconnected global citizens whose individual actions contribute to collective impact. The final workshop is completely youth-led when they get an opportunity to become the ‘teacher’ and share their learning with the wider school community.

Gender dimension

The programme promotes inclusive participation and equal leadership opportunities. Discussions of global water access raise awareness of how water scarcity disproportionately impacts women and girls globally. The focus on wellbeing, resilience and citizenship supports all students equally in developing critical thinking, confidence, empathy and responsibility.

Challenges or lessons learnt

A key lesson is that a continued programme (as opposed to once off workshop) is essential for meaningful behavioural change.
Teachers report an already overloaded school day and really value seeing ESD modelled in practice across subjects rather than as an isolated topic.
Impact reports and testimonials from the programme confirms that water provides an accessible, powerful entry point for advancing multiple SDGs simultaneously.
It will depend on sustained funding and expanded teacher capacity-building to embed approaches independently.

Further resources

- www.wisewater.ie
- https://www.echolive.ie/corknews/arid-41509556.html
- https://www.southernstar.ie/business/wisewater-academy-helps-foster-curiosity-4310251
- https://www.timoleaguens.com/news/wisewater-celebration-/#:~:text=The%20WiseWater%20Wellness%20Programme%20has,a%20holistic%20approach%20to%20wellness

Għajn National Water Conservation Awareness Centre

The Għajn National Water Conservation and Awareness Centre, which opened in April 2017, plays an important role in raising awareness about the environmental challenges facing the Maltese Islands. Located in the community-friendly neighbourhood of Nigret, Rabat, Malta. The Centre supports national educational initiatives focused on water management, conservation, and sustainability.

The Centre addresses key issues such as water scarcity, responsible consumption, and the long-term protection of Malta's limited freshwater resources. In addition, it highlights the close connection between water and energy, emphasising how energy is required for processes such as desalination, pumping, and wastewater treatment. By understanding this water-energy relationship, visitors are encouraged to reflect on how saving water also contributes to reducing energy use and lowering carbon emissions.

Through innovative tools including audio-visual presentations and interactive wall-screen games, visitors explore how everyday choices can positively impact sustainable resource use. All activities are designed to be engaging and aligned with the National Curriculum, making the Centre a valuable resource for schools.

Educators can use this non-formal learning environment to reinforce classroom lessons while promoting the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). By encouraging critical thinking, responsible behaviour, and environmental stewardship, the Għajn Centre empowers visitors to contribute towards a more sustainable and resilient future for Malta

Contacts

Ing. Sandro Lauri (sandro.lauri@gov.mt)
Amanda Zahra (amanda.b.zahra@gov.mt)

General Description

The Għajn National Water Conservation and Awareness Centre aims to raise awareness about the challenges facing Malta's water sector and the need for sustainable water resources management. Due to the islands' semi-arid climate, limited rainfall, and high population density, Malta experiences significant water scarcity and high demand. The Centre serves as a national information point, helping visitors understand how their daily actions can support water conservation and improve resilience to environmental and climate change impacts.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

The Għajn Centre addresses Malta's water scarcity through ESD by helping educators and learners understand sustainable water use, efficiency, and ecosystem dependence on groundwater. Interactive learning activities encourage students to reflect on their personal water consumption and promote responsible behaviour. The Centre also supports the wider community by raising awareness about climate change impacts on freshwater resources and the importance of sustainable withdrawals across all sectors.

SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy

Through its sustainable building design, photovoltaic panels, and rainwater harvesting systems, the Centre demonstrates renewable energy solutions in practice. Educators can use the site as a real-life learning space to connect energy efficiency with sustainability concepts. Learners gain awareness of how clean energy reduces environmental impact, while the community benefits from increased renewable energy contribution and improved understanding of sustainable infrastructure.

SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities

The Centre contributes to inclusive and sustainable communities by integrating cultural heritage and ensuring accessibility for all visitors. Through ESD, learners and educators explore the link between environmental conservation, heritage protection, and community wellbeing. The Centre strengthens local identity, encourages shared responsibility for sustainable spaces, and provides opportunities for the community to engage with Malta's natural and cultural resources.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education: The Għajn Centre enhances quality education by providing a dynamic, real-life learning environment that complements formal schooling. Educators are supported through curriculum-linked resources and activities that allow sustainability concepts such as water conservation, energy efficiency, and climate resilience to be taught in an engaging and meaningful way. Learners move beyond theoretical understanding by exploring Malta's environmental challenges firsthand and reflecting on how their daily choices affect natural resources. This focus transforms education into action, encouraging responsible behaviour, critical thinking, and long-term commitment to sustainable living. The Centre also benefits the wider community by fostering greater awareness and shared responsibility for Malta's limited water resources.

Digital Education: The Centre promotes digital education by augmented reality, interactive wall-screen games, and multimedia presentations. These innovative tools make learning more immersive and accessible, helping educators communicate complex sustainability issues in an enjoyable way. Learners develop digital competence alongside environmental awareness, strengthening both engagement and understanding. This digital focus transforms sustainability education into an interactive experience that improves knowledge retention and motivates behavioural change, while also making sustainability messages appealing and relevant to diverse audiences within the community.

Key players involved

The key players involved in the Għajn National Water Conservation and Awareness Centre include a wide range of stakeholders from the education, environmental, and community sectors. Government entities and national water management authorities play a central role in supporting and promoting the Centre, ensuring it contributes to Malta's national sustainability goals and water conservation strategies.

Educators and schools are major contributors, as teachers bring students to participate in curriculum-linked visits and use the Centre as a non-formal learning space to strengthen classroom teaching on sustainability, climate awareness, and responsible resource use.
Learners and young visitors are key participants, engaging directly with interactive games, augmented reality experiences, and educational exhibitions that increase understanding and encourage behavioural change.
The local community and public are also important stakeholders, as the Centre provides an accessible environment where residents can learn about Malta's water scarcity challenges and how everyday actions can support sustainable living. Through collaboration between these groups, the Centre achieves long-term educational and societal impact.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- raising awareness

Progress made

Transforming People's Behaviours

Since opening in 2017, the Għajn Centre has made important progress in encouraging more responsible behaviour towards water and energy use in Malta. Through interactive learning experiences, visitors are guided to reflect on how daily actions, such as reducing water waste, improving household efficiency, and supporting sustainable consumption which can contribute to long-term resource protection. School visits in particular help students develop environmentally responsible habits from an early age, strengthening their role as active citizens. By linking personal choices to national challenges such as water scarcity and climate change, the Centre supports lasting behavioral change across generations.

Raising Awareness

The Centre has also achieved significant impact in raising awareness about Malta's precious freshwater resources and the need for sustainable management. Since its opening, it has welcomed over 20,000 visitors, demonstrating its growing role as a national hub in ESD. Visitors gain a clearer understanding of Malta's dependence on groundwater, desalination, and efficient resource use. Educators benefit from curriculum-aligned content that enhances teaching, while the wider community develops a stronger sense of shared responsibility for Malta's sustainable future.

Youth dimension

The Għajn Centre includes a strong youth dimension through its focus on school visits and interactive learning designed specifically for young audiences. Activities such as digital games and
curriculum-linked exhibitions engage students in a fun, non-formal way while promoting sustainable behaviours. By encouraging children and young people to understand Malta's water and energy challenges, the Centre empowers youth to become active agents of change within their families and within their respective communities.

Gender dimension

The Għajn Centre promotes an inclusive approach by ensuring that its educational activities and resources are equally accessible and relevant to all genders. School programmes encourage all genders to engage in sustainability learning, digital interaction, and environmental education. By providing equal opportunities for participation in discussions on water conservation, energy efficiency, and climate action, the Centre supports gender equality in education and empowers all young people to contribute to sustainable development.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One key challenge in implementing the Għajn Centre has been communicating complex issues such as water scarcity, groundwater dependence, and climate change in an engaging and accessible way for diverse audiences. Another ongoing challenge is meeting the growing demand from schools, as the Centre continues to attract increasing interest from educators wishing to bring more students for visits. While this reflects the Centre's strong educational value, limited staffing resources can at times restrict the number of groups that can be accommodated. A valuable lesson learned is the importance of linking sustainability messages to everyday actions, while strengthening capacity to expand outreach and impact.

Further resources

- https://ghajn.gov.mt/
- https://www.facebook.com/ghajn
- https://www.watermuseums.net/network/ghajn-national-water-conservation-awareness-center/

Circular Economy in Eco-Schools of Montenegro

The E-SPACE project represents a significant example of the systematic introduction of education for sustainable development and circular economy into the educational system of Montenegro. The project was implemented by the Bureau for Education Services in cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), the German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Montenegro.

Contacts

Nevena Cabrilo, Head of the Department for International Cooperation, Bureau for Education Services of Montenegro
Email: nevena.cabrilo@zzs.gov.me

The E-SPACE project was implemented and coordinated by the Bureau for Education Services of Montenegro as a national public institution. All photographs and visual materials were produced within the framework of official project activities and school implementation processes.
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General Description

The programme was aimed at the development of E-STEM competencies, practical application of knowledge and active involvement of students in solving waste and environmental protection problems. Students learned through research, practical work, interdisciplinary activities and cooperation with the local community.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 by integrating circular economy principles into formal education through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach. Sustainability challenges related to waste management, resource efficiency and responsible consumption were addressed through interdisciplinary learning, practical experimentation and community engagement.

In relation to **SDG 6** and **SDG 7**, students explored water protection, energy efficiency and responsible resource use through hands-on activities, including recycling processes and the use of digital fabrication tools. Regarding **SDG 9**, the project promoted innovation and technological literacy by introducing PET recyclers and 3D printers into schools, fostering creativity, problem-solving and STEM competencies.

Through **SDG 11**, schools collaborated with local communities to create public mosaics from recycled materials, strengthening local awareness and participatory action for sustainable cities. **SDG 17** was reflected in strong partnerships between the Bureau for Education Services, international partners, local authorities and schools, ensuring multi-level cooperation.

The initiative strengthened teachers' capacities, enhanced students' environmental responsibility and critical thinking, and contributed to embedding circular economy as a cross-curricular theme within the national curriculum, ensuring systemic and long-term impact.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ES
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Strengthening the capacity of teachers: A significant segment of the project was related to the professional development of teachers and school teams. Numerous seminars, workshops and online courses were organized at the regional level, which included a large number of teachers from all over the country.

The workshops included hands-on training in the use of the equipment, development of teaching scenarios and integration of the circular economy as a cross-curricular theme through the WSA.

Student participation and hands-on learning: Students actively participated in numerous activities — from composting and waste sorting to product design, model making and public presentations. Through these activities, they developed critical thinking, teamwork, environmental responsibility, technical skills and interest in STEM fields. Students demonstrated the work of PETKO recyclers and 3D printers at science days and entrepreneurship fairs, where they presented products made from recycled plastic.

The practical experience of working with modern equipment allowed the students to understand the entire cycle of waste management — from the generation of waste to its reuse through new products.

Key players involved

Preschool institutions, primary schools and secondary schools (gymnasiums and vocational schools) participated in joint activities, which ensured the continuity of education for sustainable development through all stages of growing up. In cooperation with local communities, schools realized the creation and installation of public mosaics made of recycled 3D plastic. Mosaics were made from material obtained by recycling plastic bottles and additional plastic elements and represented local natural and cultural motifs. The activities were organized as joint actions of students, teachers, representatives of educational institutions and citizens, and the results were presented at the local and regional level, which significantly raised awareness of the circular economy and sustainable waste management.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Impact on regional cooperation of educational institutions and the local community*:* One of the most visible and successful results of the project was the cooperation of educational institutions of different levels on a regional basis.

Impact on sustainability of the project and further development*:* The project demonstrated a high level of sustainability and systemic impact. After its implementation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation provided additional equipment for educational institutions throughout Montenegro — 3D printers and PET recyclers within EdTech

laboratories. This created the conditions for activities related to digital technologies, STEM education and the circular economy to be continued and developed in the regular educational process.

***Impact on the development of teaching materials and availability of resources**:* As part of the project, an extensive set of teaching and educational materials on the topic of the circular economy was developed. All materials were translated into the Montenegrin language, distributed to schools and published on a special page of the website of the Bureau for Education Services, which was created precisely for the needs of the project, thus ensuring their permanent availability and the possibility of further application.

Translated materials include circular economy framework, teaching scenarios, posters, GAIA 20:30 course, questionnaires for teachers, instructions for using the PETKO recycler and 3D printer and quizzes for students of different ages. This approach enabled wide availability of materials, transparency and long-term sustainability of project results.

Youth dimension

In the implementation of the project in Montenegro, 14 schools of different levels of education participated and a total of 8,351 students were included in the activities. The programme included educational institutions from different regions of the country, which ensured territorial uniformity and inclusiveness.

Gender dimension

The project ensured equal participation of girls and boys in all activities. Notably, girls showed strong interest in technical components of the project, including the production of plastic filaments and 3D modelling processes. In several activities, particularly those involving design and creative problem-solving, girls demonstrated high levels of creativity, collaboration and leadership. Their active engagement challenged traditional gender stereotypes in STEM-related fields and contributed to promoting gender equality within sustainable innovation and circular economy education.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges was ensuring that circular economy principles were not perceived as a short-term project activity, but as an integral part of the education system. Continuous teacher training, institutional support and strong cooperation between schools and local communities proved essential for sustainable implementation. A key lesson learned is that cross-school collaboration and partnerships with local stakeholders significantly enhance both educational impact and community engagement. Today, all schools with more than 200 students are equipped with EdTech laboratories and actively engage in plastic recycling and product development, demonstrating that circular economy has moved from pilot practice to regular educational application.

Further resources

- All developed materials can be viewed here https://www.gov.me/zzs/eko-skole/projekat-e-space
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL9VR3JBw4k

Developing Europe's water leaders through transformative ESD in practice by EJWP

The European Junior Water Programme (EJWP) is a two-year capacity-building and leadership programme that equips emerging water professionals with the competencies needed to address Europe's evolving water challenges. Rooted in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), EJWP combines intercultural learning, applied missions, and multi-stakeholder collaboration with municipalities, utilities, NGOs, and research institutions across Europe. The programme directly advances SDGs 6, 9, 11, and 17 by fostering systems thinking, innovation capacity, behavioural awareness, and cross-sector partnerships within the water sector.

EJWP's ESD-based methodology is validated through real-world collaboration with EU projects such as iMERMAID, which addresses chemical pollution in Mediterranean waters. EJWP participants contributed to the iMERMAID Schooling Programme, community engagement activities, and behavioural-change campaigns aimed at making scientific knowledge accessible to schools, youth, and coastal communities. Through this collaboration, EJWP-trained professionals demonstrated their ability to act as facilitators between science, policy, and society.

The integration of EJWP's structured learning framework with the practical experience gained in iMERMAID illustrates how empowering young water professionals accelerates sustainable water management, innovation, and community resilience across the UNECE region.

Contacts

Naomi Timmer – Director EJWP & H2O People -- ntimmer@h2o-people.eu
+31683674808

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General Description

EJWP aims to build a resilient and innovative water workforce by equipping young professionals with leadership, intercultural, and sustainability competencies aligned with ESD. Through experiential learning, missions with partner organisations, and collaboration across Europe, EJWP strengthens participants' ability to address water quality, climate

adaptation, pollution challenges, and social dimensions of water management. The programme prepares emerging professionals to drive sustainable solutions and long-term capacity development in their organisations and communities.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6: EJWP builds water-sector capacity through projects addressing water quality, pollution prevention, climate adaptation, and basin-level management. Participants collaborate from within divers stakeholders such as municipalities and utilities on real challenges such as groundwater protection, wastewater reuse, and nature-based solutions. Integration of EJWP in iMERMAID validation: EJWP professionals supported the iMERMAID Schooling Programme, translating complex scientific insights on chemical pollution into accessible learning for high school students and communities, strengthening local understanding of water quality risks.
SDG 9 EJWP embeds innovation through design thinking, problem-based learning, digital collaboration, and applied research. Participants co-create prototypes, organisational innovations, and community interventions. iMERMAID validation: EJWP participants linked pollution monitoring tools with behavioural-change activities, demonstrating their ability to merge technological and social innovation.
SDG 11: EJWP missions frequently support urban resilience, focusing on stormwater, blue–green infrastructure, and community preparedness. iMERMAID validation: EJWP contributed to coastal community workshops and school programmes, helping residents understand pollution pathways and co-create solutions.
SDG 17: EJWP is built on partnerships—uniting organisations and young professionals from over 20 countries. iMERMAID validation: EJWP participation connected researchers, youth, schools, municipalities, and NGOs, demonstrating a strong science–society–policy partnership.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

EJWP aligns with all four UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands, each contributing to a distinct transformative impact within the water sector and the wider community.
Quality education and ESD: EJWP delivers experiential, interdisciplinary, and learner-centred education that develops leadership, systems thinking, intercultural collaboration, and problem-solving skills. This results in young professionals who can translate complex water challenges into accessible, actionable knowledge for diverse audiences. The iMERMAID Schooling Programme confirmed this impact by demonstrating EJWP participants' ability to bring scientific insights on pollution into youth-friendly educational formats.
Whole-institution approach: Organisations hosting EJWP participants experience behavioural and cultural shifts, as participants introduce new methods for collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability integration. Through missions and reflection cycles, EJWP helps institutions become communities of transformational learning. The cross-organisational collaboration with iMERMAID further strengthened institutional learning ecosystems.
Digital education and ICT: EJWP uses virtual collaboration tools, digital water data, and online facilitation methods to build digital literacy and support transnational teamwork. In iMERMAID, EJWP participants applied these skills in online behavioural-change campaigns and digital youth engagement.
Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD: Innovation skills—design thinking, co-creation, behavioural insights—are central to EJWP. Participants apply them in real missions, including iMERMAID, where they co-designed community interventions linking scientific research with social innovation.

Key players involved

EJWP participants: young / early career professionals from all different regions (and even beyond) Europe of utilities, governments, universities, NGOs; EJWP partner organisations: utilities, governments, universities, NGOs, foundations, consultancies from different regions (and even beyond) Europe that create time, space and practice ground for the

participants to learn, host the training weeks and co-create the local cases that are used for the practice based learnings as well provide masterclasses and field trips by adding the local and specialized knowledge to the programme;
In the example of iMERMAID integration of EJWP, EJWP provided the ESD framework, while iMERMAID offered real-world engagement settings.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Transforming people's behaviours: EJWP participants show increased confidence, collaborative mindsets, and proactive leadership in their organisations. Their involvement in iMERMAID further strengthened their ability to influence public attitudes toward pollution prevention and responsible water behaviour.
Promoting community action: Through EJWP missions and the iMERMAID Schooling Programme, participants facilitated community workshops, student activities, and local dialogues that mobilised young people, schools, and coastal communities to identify pollution sources and co-create responses.
Raising awareness: EJWP significantly expanded public understanding of water challenges, including through the Water News Europe interview series. EJWP missions include communication and engagement components, while iMERMAID's behavioural-change campaigns reached youth and non-technical audiences with accessible explanations of chemical pollution.
Involving government and/or private sector: Municipalities, water utilities, NGOs, and research institutes are active EJWP partners. iMERMAID added multilevel governance cooperation with schools, local authorities, and European research bodies. EJWP also contributed to the Water Resilience Forum, the European Ocean Forum, and the design of the European Water Academy.
Changing educational policies: The Schooling Programme demonstrated the value of integrating pollution and behavioural science into secondary education. EJWP's ESD approach inspired organisational training reforms and is advancing education and Lifelong Learning in ERASMUS+ projects (SKILLS4EII, SKILLS4WATER).
Strengthening competencies: Participants gained advanced sustainability, leadership, innovation, and communication skills—demonstrated in real settings through iMERMAID youth and community engagements.

Youth dimension

EJWP targets emerging professionals aged 25–35 and expanded its youth impact through (high) school activities (10-15 years) in iMERMAID.

Gender dimension

EJWP maintains gender-balanced cohorts and teaches inclusive facilitation teams in all engagements, including iMERMAID activities. Specific projects to support this WATNEX – Croation/ Norwegian bilateral project to support women empowerment in STEM – integrated in EJWP group 3 & 4, SKILLS4Water also focus on women empowerment in STEM in HEIs and soft skills in EJWP group 7.

Challenges or lessons learnt

EJWP highlights the importance of intercultural collaboration, clear communication, and embedding ESD in sector-wide professional development. The iMERMAID collaboration showed that pairing scientific research with ESD-trained facilitators enhances community engagement and behavioural impact.
Real intrinsic motivation of the participant and of the host organization is essential to create impact and further uptake on local level.

Further resources

- www.juniorwaterprogramme.eu
- https://www.waternewseurope.com/category/ejwp/
- https://www.h2o-people.eu
- https://www.imermaid.eu

Aqua Lab on the Road

Aqua Lab on the Road is a educational project developed by Camilo Castelo Branco Secondary School in Vila Real, Portugal. Located in an inland rural region where sustainable water management is closely linked to agricultural practices, the project aims to promote Ocean and Water Literacy through the creation of a mobile water analysis laboratory.
Students aged 12–17 will actively engage in fieldwork, collecting water samples from local rivers and analyzing key physical, chemical, and microbiological indicators using a portable water quality kit and microscopes. The project combines hands-on scientific investigation with interdisciplinary learning, integrating science, digital literacy, communication, and art.
In collaboration with the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro and local environmental entities, students will participate in authentic citizen science experiences, contributing to local water monitoring efforts. Project outputs will include scientific reports, posters, an interactive website, and an eBook of best practices in water conservation.
By fostering critical thinking, environmental responsibility, and community engagement, Aqua Lab on the Road empowers students to become active citizens committed to sustainable water management and climate resilience.

Contacts

margarida.seixas.depinf@esccbvr.pt
+351968441252





General Description

The goal of *Aqua Lab on the Road* is to promote Water and Ocean Literacy by engaging students in hands-on water quality monitoring and microbiological analysis. Through a mobile laboratory approach, the project aims to develop scientific skills, environmental responsibility, and active citizenship. It seeks to empower students to understand local water challenges, contribute to citizen science initiatives, and promote sustainable water management within the school and the wider community.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation: Students monitor local water bodies, analyze physical, chemical, and microbiological indicators, and interpret data to understand water quality challenges. This hands-on approach strengthens learners' scientific literacy and environmental responsibility. Educators integrate water sustainability across subjects, while the community benefits from increased awareness and shared results that promote responsible water use.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: The creation of a mobile water laboratory fosters innovation in education. Students develop research, digital, and problem-solving skills, preparing them for STEM pathways. Teachers adopt inquiry-based methodologies, enhancing pedagogical innovation within the school.
SDG 11 – Sustainable Communities: By investigating local rivers and sharing findings publicly, students contribute to more informed and resilient communities. The project encourages dialogue between school, families, and local authorities about sustainable resource management.
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals: Collaboration with the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro and environmental entities strengthens knowledge exchange, reinforces community ties, and promotes a shared commitment to sustainable development at local and national levels.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: The project shifts learning from theoretical to experiential. Students engage in real-world water analysis, strengthening critical thinking, scientific literacy, and environmental ethics. Educators adopt inquiry-based and interdisciplinary methodologies, embedding sustainability into everyday teaching practices.
Whole-Institution Approach: The initiative mobilizes multiple departments, the Science Club, school media (Camilo on Air), and leadership structures. Sustainability becomes a shared responsibility rather than a single-subject topic, fostering a culture of collaboration and long-term environmental commitment within the institution.
Digital Education and ICT: Students use digital tools to record, analyze, and disseminate data through a website, eBook, and media content. This enhances digital literacy, responsible communication, and data interpretation skills, empowering learners to engage critically with scientific information.
Entrepreneurship, Employment, and Innovation: By creating a mobile water laboratory and producing tangible outputs, students develop initiative, problem-solving, teamwork, and project management skills. Exposure to partnerships with the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro and environmental entities broadens career aspirations in STEM and sustainability-related fields.

Key players involved

The key players in Aqua Lab on the Road include students, teachers, school leadership, local partners, and the wider community.
Students aged 12–17 are the main actors, conducting water sampling, laboratory analysis, data interpretation, and producing communication outputs such as reports, posters, the website, and the eBook. Teachers from science, arts, geography, and languages guide the activities, ensuring interdisciplinary integration and applying inquiry-based methodologies.
The school leadership supports coordination, resource management, and institutional engagement, promoting a whole-school approach. The Science Club strengthens peer learning and motivates younger students.
External partners, including the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro and local environmental authorities, provide scientific expertise, technical guidance, and validation of results. Media partners support dissemination.
Parents and the local community participate through awareness events and public presentations, extending the project's impact beyond the classroom and reinforcing shared responsibility for sustainable water management.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project has generated measurable progress across several impact areas.
Transforming people's behaviors: Students adopted more responsible water-use habits and became proactive in monitoring local water quality. Families reported increased awareness of daily water consumption and pollution prevention practices.

Promoting community action: The project strengthened collaboration between the school, local environmental authorities, and the university. Community members participated in awareness events and engaged with project findings through public presentations and media outreach.
Raising awareness: Through the website, eBook, posters, and school media broadcasts, the initiative significantly increased understanding of water sustainability, local ecosystem challenges, and the importance of citizen science.
Involving government and private sector: Partnerships with local authorities, environmental agencies, and academic institutions enhanced scientific credibility and ensured that collected data contributed to broader regional monitoring efforts.
Strengthening competencies: Students developed practical laboratory and fieldwork skills, improved data analysis and reporting abilities, and enhanced critical thinking, collaboration, and digital communication skills. Teachers also expanded their capacity to integrate Water Literacy into interdisciplinary curricula.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension, as students are not only participants but active leaders in designing and implementing activities. They conduct fieldwork, analyze data, create communication materials, and present findings to the community. By engaging in citizen science and decision-making processes related to local water sustainability, young people develop leadership, critical thinking, and advocacy skills, positioning them as informed environmental ambassadors within their school and community.

Gender dimension

The project integrates a gender dimension by ensuring equal participation of all students in fieldwork, laboratory activities, leadership roles, and public presentations. It actively encourages girls' engagement in STEM-related tasks such as water analysis and microbiology, helping to challenge gender stereotypes in science. Inclusive group work and equal visibility in communication activities promote gender equity, participation, and confidence-building across all project phases.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Implementing the project revealed logistical challenges, particularly coordinating fieldwork schedules, ensuring equipment availability, and aligning activities across different subjects. Weather conditions occasionally affected sampling plans, requiring flexibility and contingency planning. Another lesson learned was the importance of clear role distribution among students to maximize engagement and efficiency. Strong communication with partners proved essential for smooth collaboration. Overall, adaptability, structured planning, and interdisciplinary coordination were key factors in overcoming obstacles and ensuring successful implementation.

Solar Desalination for Education and Sustainable Communities

This project presents a student-led Solar Sustainable Desalinator developed through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach, integrating renewable energy, water security, and innovation. Designed and prototyped within a school context, the initiative addresses water scarcity through a low-cost, solar-powered desalination system capable of converting saline or contaminated water into potable water.

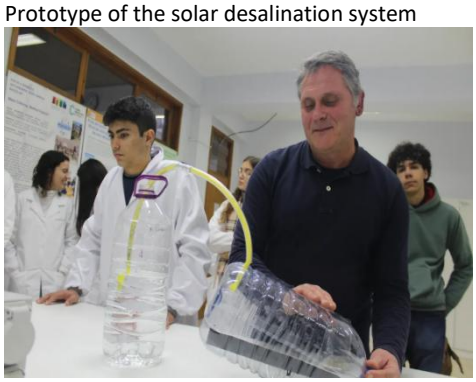
The project serves as a practical example of how quality education, digital learning tools, entrepreneurship, and whole-institution engagement can accelerate progress toward SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17. Students led the research, design, testing, and impact evaluation phases, supported by teachers, local stakeholders, and technical partners.

Beyond technological innovation, the project transformed the school into a living laboratory for sustainability, fostering systems thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative leadership. The initiative demonstrates how ESD can move from theory to practice, empowering young people as solution-creators while strengthening community resilience and promoting sustainable resource management.

Contacts

Hamilton Ribeiro Correia
Agrupamento de Escolas Gândara Mar, Tocha
Email: hamiltoncorreia@aegandaramar.com
Portugal

Prototype of the solar desalination system



Project presentation to the regional press

Students assembling and testing the device

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General Description

The project aimed to design, build, and test a low-cost solar desalination system while integrating sustainability principles into real-world learning. It sought to address water scarcity challenges through renewable energy solutions and to empower students with practical competencies in innovation, environmental responsibility, and collaborative problem-solving aligned with the SDGs.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 6: Students explored water scarcity as a global and local challenge, studying desalination methods and water purification principles. Through hands-on experimentation, they developed scientific literacy and environmental responsibility while understanding equitable water access.
SDG 7: The desalination system operates entirely on solar energy, reinforcing knowledge about renewable energy systems and energy efficiency. Students connected theory to application, learning how clean energy technologies reduce environmental impact.
SDG 9: The project fostered innovation through design thinking, prototyping, testing, and iterative improvement. Students applied engineering concepts and digital modelling tools, strengthening technological competencies and entrepreneurial thinking.
SDG 11: By addressing water resilience solutions suitable for vulnerable or coastal communities, the project contributes to sustainable urban and community planning awareness.
SDG 17: Collaboration with teachers, local experts, and external partners strengthened interdisciplinary learning and reinforced the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainability goals.
The ESD framework ensured that knowledge acquisition translated into action, innovation, and measurable community engagement.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: The curriculum integrated sustainability challenges into STEM learning, promoting systems thinking, critical reflection, and real-world application.
Whole-Institution Approach: The school functioned as a sustainability ecosystem. Teachers from different disciplines collaborated, aligning science, technology, and citizenship education around the project.
Digital Education and ICT: Students used digital simulation tools, data analysis software, and collaborative platforms to design and evaluate the prototype, strengthening digital competencies.
Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Students developed cost-analysis models, scalability strategies, and community implementation scenarios, cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets and solution-oriented leadership.
This integration transformed learning from passive knowledge acquisition into active sustainability leadership.

Key players involved

The project was student-led, with learners responsible for research, design, testing, and evaluation. Teachers provided interdisciplinary guidance in physics, environmental science, and technology. School leadership supported institutional integration. Local technical advisors and community stakeholders contributed expertise in renewable energy and water systems. Families and community members participated in dissemination events.
The collaborative structure ensured shared ownership, practical learning, and real-world relevance.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Students demonstrated measurable growth in sustainability literacy, engineering competencies, and collaborative leadership skills. Awareness campaigns within the school community increased understanding of water scarcity and renewable energy.

The prototype demonstrated functional desalination capability using solar energy, validating technical feasibility. The initiative stimulated interest from local stakeholders and fostered dialogue on sustainable water solutions.

The project also enhanced transversal competencies including critical thinking, digital literacy, communication, and entrepreneurship. It contributed to behavioral change by encouraging responsible water consumption practices within the school community.

Youth dimension

Young people were the central drivers of the initiative. Students identified the problem, developed the solution, and communicated results. The project positioned youth not as beneficiaries of sustainability policies, but as innovators and decision-makers capable of designing scalable environmental solutions.

Gender dimension

The project promoted inclusive participation across genders, ensuring equal representation in technical leadership, research, and presentation roles. It actively challenged stereotypes related to STEM fields and encouraged female participation in engineering and renewable energy innovation.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Initial technical limitations and material constraints required multiple prototype revisions. Balancing curriculum time with experimental development was challenging. However, iterative design strengthened resilience, teamwork, and problem-solving capacities. The key lesson learned is that sustainability education is most effective when experiential, interdisciplinary, and community connected.

Further resources

- Permanent residency application approved: Candidatura Permanência - Escola Azul
- Short video: https://youtu.be/5Olr-kCV5hA
- News article: Rotor de alumínio que gira com luz solar dá lugar a artigo científico
- Blue school member: Blue school members | Maritime Forum
- Project information: Sustainable Solar Desalination Unit - Maritime Forum - European Commission
- School website : Agrupamento de Escolas Gândara Mar |
  Project presentation video: https://youtu.be/5Olr-kCV5hA
- Local media coverage: https://youtu.be/5Olr-kCV5hA
- Maritime Forum European Commission: Sustainable Solar Desalination Unit - Maritime Forum - European Commission
- Scientific poster: Scientific-poster_Solar Desalination_System.pptx
- Short video operational prototype: Operational_solar_desalination_system_under_solar-radiation.mp4

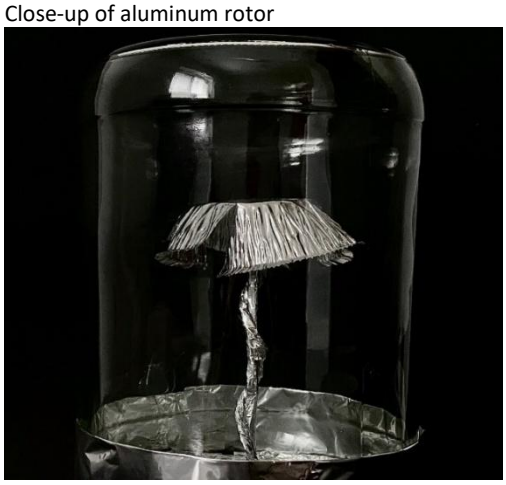
Solar Energy in Motion: Transformative Learning Model

"Solar Energy in Motion" is a transformative Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiative implemented in basic education that bridges scientific research, renewable energy literacy and pedagogical innovation. At its core is a low-cost aluminum rotor prototype powered exclusively by solar radiation, demonstrating real-time conversion of solar energy into mechanical rotation and highlighting its scalable potential for small-scale electrical energy generation.
Developed through inquiry-based learning and constructed from recyclable materials, the device enables students to directly observe energy transformation processes, fostering systems thinking, sustainability competencies and scientific agency. The project integrates Natural Sciences and Physics-Chemistry curricula while embedding renewable energy education into formal schooling structures.
Its scientific robustness and educational relevance were validated through publication in the *European Journal of Physics*, positioning the initiative within international research discourse on physics education.
By operationalizing renewable energy concepts through hands-on experimentation, the initiative contributes directly to SDGs 7 and 9, while advancing institutional transformation aligned with the four priority strands of the UNECE ESD Strategy. The model is low-cost, replicable and adaptable across diverse educational contexts.

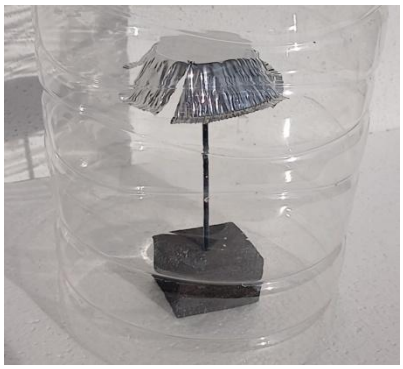
Contacts

Hamilton Ribeiro Correia
Agrupamento de Escolas Gândara Mar, Tocha
Email : hamiltoncorreia@aegandaramar.com
Portugal

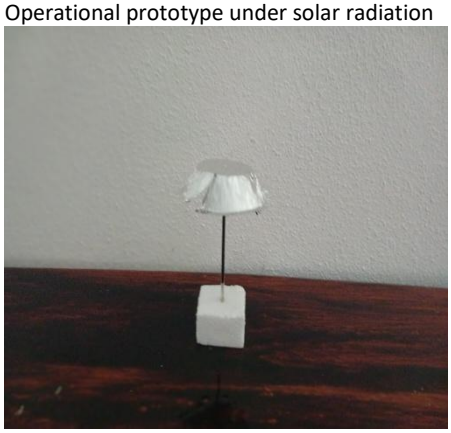
Close-up of aluminum rotor



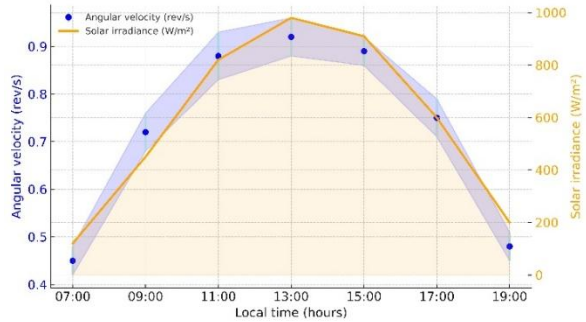
Experimental setup inside an inverted 2-liter glass jar



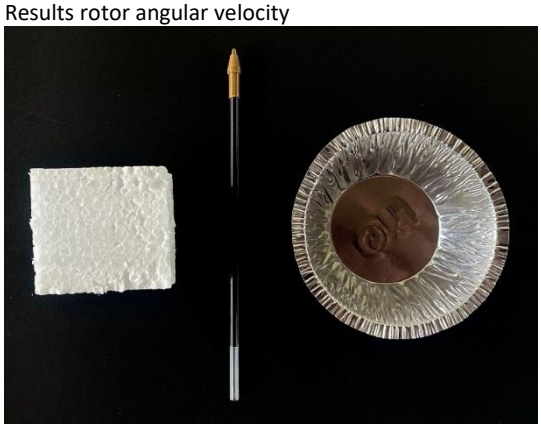
Operational prototype under solar radiation



Prototype



Results rotor angular velocity



The three primary components of the apparatus

Students assembling and testing the device

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General Description

The project aims to transform renewable energy education in basic schooling by embedding experimental, research-based learning into the formal curriculum through a solar-powered aluminium rotor prototype. It seeks to strengthen energy literacy, scientific reasoning and sustainability competencies while demonstrating the real-world potential of solar energy conversion, including its application in small-scale electrical generation systems that can inspire decentralized clean energy solutions.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The initiative operationalizes **SDG 7** by enabling students to directly observe the conversion of solar radiation into mechanical motion and to explore its potential transformation into electrical energy through generator coupling. This bridges conceptual energy literacy with technological application, strengthening understanding of decentralized renewable systems.

Under **SDG 9**, the project exemplifies school-based innovation, demonstrating how low-cost experimental design can contribute to technological understanding and research dissemination. Its peer-reviewed publication in the *European Journal of Physics* confirms scientific credibility and extends impact beyond the local context into international academic networks.

For **SDG 11**, the project raises awareness of micro-scale renewable solutions that can contribute to resilient and energy-conscious communities.

Aligned with **SDG 17**, the initiative strengthens global knowledge exchange by linking formal education with international scientific publishing, reinforcing cross-sector dialogue between schools and research communities.
Through ESD, learners transition from theoretical recipients to active investigators of sustainable energy systems.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality Education and ESD: The initiative redefines energy education through experiential inquiry. Students engage in hypothesis formation, experimental observation, data interpretation and critical reflection, strengthening competencies essential for sustainable decision-making.

Whole-Institution Approach: The project is embedded within formal curricular structures, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and positioning the school as a sustainability-oriented learning community.

Digital Education and ICT: Learners collect and analyze experimental data, integrating digital literacy with scientific reasoning and reinforcing evidence-based sustainability education.

Entrepreneurship, Innovation and ESD: By demonstrating the potential for small-scale electrical energy generation through solar-induced motion, the project stimulates innovation thinking and entrepreneurial imagination regarding accessible renewable technologies. It models how low-resource educational settings can generate scalable sustainability solutions.

Key players involved

The initiative was developed and implemented within a basic education institution by science educators specializing in Natural Sciences and Physics-Chemistry. Students acted as co-investigators, actively participating in experimental testing, data recording and analytical discussion.
Educators ensured alignment with curricular standards while embedding inquiry-based methodology. The project's validation through publication in the *European Journal of Physics* reflects engagement with the international scientific community, elevating the school's role from knowledge consumer to knowledge contributor.
The initiative demonstrates effective collaboration between educators, learners and the broader academic ecosystem, reinforcing institutional capacity for sustainability-oriented innovation.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project significantly increased student engagement in science education, with measurable improvement in conceptual understanding of energy conversion processes. Learners developed stronger competencies in observation, argumentation, collaboration and systems thinking.
Awareness of renewable energy technologies expanded within the school community, prompting broader discussions on energy efficiency and sustainable living practices.
Students demonstrated heightened interest in STEM pathways, particularly in renewable energy fields.
The peer-reviewed publication marked a milestone achievement, validating the initiative's scientific rigor and amplifying its international visibility. The prototype's low-cost, recyclable design ensures environmental sustainability and high replicability, enabling adaptation in diverse socio-economic contexts.
The project illustrates how formal education can serve as a catalyst for technological literacy and sustainability-oriented innovation.

Youth dimension

Youth are central agents in this initiative. Students engage as investigators, not passive learners, constructing knowledge through experimentation and critical reflection. By directly interacting with renewable energy systems and exploring their potential for electrical generation, young learners develop agency, environmental responsibility and confidence to contribute to sustainable technological transitions.

Gender dimension

The project ensures inclusive participation in experimental science activities, actively promoting equal engagement across genders. By providing hands-on renewable energy experimentation in early education, the initiative contributes to reducing structural barriers in STEM participation and supports equitable access to sustainability-oriented scientific competencies.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Translating advanced physical principles into age-appropriate experimental experiences required careful pedagogical design to maintain scientific integrity while ensuring accessibility. Ensuring stable experimental performance using recycled materials also posed technical challenges.

A key lesson learned is that transformative sustainability education requires tangible, observable phenomena. When learners directly experience renewable energy conversion processes, conceptual understanding deepens and motivation increases. Embedding research-informed experimentation within formal curricula strengthens both educational quality and institutional innovation capacity.

Further resources

- Scientific article: A solar-driven aluminum rotor operating at natural atmospheric pressure: a low-cost tool for physics education - IOPscience
- News article: Rotor de alumínio que gira com luz solar dá lugar a artigo científico
- News article: Alunos da Tocha constroem hélice que gira só com o Sol
- Short video: Video solar rotor
- Scientific poster: Scientific_poster_solar_rotor.pptx
- School website : Agrupamento de Escolas Gândara Mar |

Programme on ``*Education and public awareness regarding environmental protection*``

Between 2024-2025, the Romanian Program "Education and Public Awareness Regarding Environmental Protection" provided non-reimbursable financial support from the Environmental Fund for more than 200 environmental education projects dedicated to children and youth aged 6-18.
NGOs were invited to develop such environmental education projects in partnership with the local public authorities, and/or with state educational units and institutions.
Projects addressed a large variety of environmental issues such as air and water pollution, illegal logging, waste management, climate change, biodiversity protection, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, circular economy, sustainable consumption, resilient cities and citizen environmental rights.
The projects implementation period was a maximum of 18 months from the date of conclusion of the financing contract.

Contacts

Environmental Fund Administration (public institution under the Romanian Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests)
Splaiul Independenței no. 294, building A, district 6, Bucharest, Romania;
Phone: 00 4021.317.02.87

General Description

The program aimed to build environmental consciousness among Romania's young generation through education and awareness green initiatives and to strengthen partnerships with environmental NGOs.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Educators: In projects that involved educators to facilitate seminars on environmental topics (including the above-selected SDGs), those projects build environmental teaching capacity. Teachers developed competencies in participatory learning methods, enabling them to guide youth-led environmental projects and integrate sustainability across curricula.
Learners: The projects engaged thousands of youths in experiential learning, including about SDG6, SDG7, and SDG11. Students gained critical thinking skills to analyze environmental challenges, developed agency through designing protection projects, and acquired practical competencies, transforming them into informed environmental citizens.
Community and country: Projects created ripple effects beyond classrooms, social-media, public campaigns, involving families, neighborhoods, villages and cities. Educational camps and awareness campaigns mobilized communities around local environmental issues, fostering collective action. NGO-school-municipality partnerships strengthened civic engagement infrastructure, creating sustainable networks for ongoing environmental stewardship and demonstrating how education catalyzes broader societal, country-level transformation toward sustainability.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education and ESD: The program elevated environmental education beyond theoretical knowledge to action-oriented learning. Students engaged with real-world sustainability challenges — water pollution, renewable energy, and sustainable urbanization. This competency-based approach developed critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic responsibility, transforming learners from passive recipients to active environmental agents capable of designing and implementing protection initiatives.
Whole-institution approach: Schools evolved into living laboratories for sustainability, supported by a multi-stakeholder ecosystem. The Environmental Fund Administration's financial backing enabled NGOs and schools to transform environmental education from theory into practice, while local public authorities providing enabling support, institutions modeled sustainable practices. This whole-institution approach, strengthened by government funding mechanisms and

municipal partnerships, created communities committed to ongoing environmental transformation with the infrastructure and resources necessary for sustained impact.

Digital education and ICT: Technology enhanced accessibility and reach of environmental education, enabling interactive learning materials, online awareness campaigns, and digital documentation of student projects. Digital platforms amplified youth voices, allowing students to communicate environmental messages beyond their immediate communities, multiplying program impact and fostering tech-enabled environmental advocacy skills.

Key players involved

NGOs: Served as primary implementers and project managers, and received the Environmental Fund grants to design and execute educational initiatives. They provided expertise in environmental education, developed curriculum materials, organized seminars and camps, and coordinated partnerships. NGOs acted as bridges between funding sources, schools, and communities, ensuring project quality and sustainability impact.
Schools: Function as implementation venues and beneficiary institutions. School administrators facilitate access to students, provide physical spaces for seminars and activities, and support teacher involvement.
Local authorities: Played supporting and enabling roles by providing logistical support, granting permissions for outdoor activities, and, in some cases, contributing resources. Their involvement legitimized projects and helped scale successful interventions beyond individual schools into broader community policy and infrastructure.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Many projects were financed, therefore the common achievements of the diverse range of projects can be summarized as following:
Transforming people's behaviors: Youth participants adopted sustainable practices like selective waste collection, composting, reduced water and plastic use, and choosing low-emission transport. Changed daily habits demonstrate internalized environmental values cultivated through hands-on activities.
Promoting community action: Educational camps and seminars mobilized students to initiate local environmental projects—potentially organizing cleanup campaigns, establishing recycling stations at schools, or creating awareness initiatives that engaged families and neighbors in collective environmental stewardship.
Raising awareness: Information seminars covering topics from water pollution to renewable energy reached hundreds of students, increasing knowledge about environmental challenges. Participants gained understanding of human impact on the environment and climate, and their role in environmental conservation.
Involving government/private sector: Projects likely fostered partnerships between schools, NGOs, local authorities, and businesses—potentially securing support for better water consumption, waste management infrastructure, (more) greener spaces, or sustainable electricity and transport solutions that extended beyond classroom education.
Strengthening competencies: Students developed environmental literacy, critical thinking about ecological issues, project planning skills, and civic engagement capacity through designing and implementing their own environmental protection initiatives during educational camps.

Youth dimension

The program explicitly centered on youth as its primary beneficiaries, requiring at least 70% of each project's target group to be young people aged 6-18. This youth-focused approach ensures environmental education reaches children and adolescents during formative developmental years, building environmental consciousness from an early age. By investing in youth environmental literacy, the program cultivates the next generation of environmentally responsible citizens who will shape Romania's ecological future. The age range spans primary through secondary education, maximizing long-term impact on attitudes and behaviors.

Gender dimension

The program was specifically addressed to youth, irrespective of their gender.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Implementing the program revealed significant structural challenges: long bureaucratic processes, regional disparities affected project quality and reach. Without robust disaggregated data systems, quantifying long-term environmental impact beyond immediate outputs remains complex.

However, the program demonstrates tremendous opportunity—investing in youth environmental education plants seeds for enduring ecological culture. Long-term success depends on: fostering strong local partnerships that outlast individual projects; leveraging digitalization for efficient evaluation and monitoring, knowledge-sharing, and scaling best practices; and establishing assessment frameworks that capture both quantitative metrics and qualitative transformation. These lessons will strengthen future initiatives, building the systematic infrastructure necessary for generational change.

Further resources

- **Program website:** https://www.afm.ro/educatie_protectia_mediului.php; (RO only)
- Website: https://www.afm.ro/
- **Examples of projects/campaigns financed by the Program:**

1) „Eco-civic Brâncuși" Project (Bucharest): https://fdes.ro/proiectul-eco-civic-brancusi/; (Themes discussed during seminars: renewable energy; water pollution; exploitation of natural resources; low-emission transport)
2) "UP2U Project" (Bucharest): https://afm-bucuresti.green-report.ro/ (Themes discussed during activities/on tutorials: renewable energy; climate change; exploitation of natural resources; waste; water and air pollution; intensive agriculture)
3) "Ecointeractiv" (Bucharest) Project: https://www.viitorplus.ro/ecointeractiv/#1753390936058-1ed860eb-ca18 (Under two main themes climate change and circular economy, there were activities regarding energy efficiency of buildings, renewable energy, water pollution and access to clean water)
4) "EcoEducation Hour" Project (Bârlad, Vaslui County): https://ecoeducatie.eu/; (Interactive sessions on essential topics such as: recycling, renewable energy, water, air and soil pollution, protection of settlements, biodiversity)
5) "Recycling comes first" Project (Bucharest): https://www.ipp.ro/comunicat-ipp-tudor-vladimirescu-afm/ (Five interactive workshops on water and air pollution, climate change, waste and recycling, biodiversity and environmental rights and obligations)
6) "Partnership for Education and Awareness on Environmental Protection" Project (Sebeș, Alba County): https://educatie-mediu.ro/; (Interactive sessions on topics such as air and water pollution, illegal deforestation, recycling, green energy, climate change, biodiversity protection, sustainable transport, energy efficiency)
7) "Environmental education and sustainable schools" Project (Reghin, Mureș County): https://scoalaverde.cleanwood.org/proiectul-educatia-pentru-mediu-si-scoli-sustenabile-articol-de-prezentare/; (Activities and workshops treated renewable energy utilization; climate change; biodiversity conservation; water, soil and air pollution; waste)
8) "Eco Education Țibănești" Project (Târgu Frumos, Iași County): https://asociatiaombun.info/parteneriate/; (Activities and workshops treated impact of water pollution on biodiversity and human settlements; waste and circular economy; renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions; climate change; environmental rights and obligations)
9) "A helping hand for Nereju" Project (Nereju, Vrancea County): https://omanadeajutor.eu/portfolio/nereju/; (13 environmental issues identified and discussed during activities, including water resilience and circular economy)
10) "Environmental protection actions together with students" (Dumbrava, Timiș County): https://www.tarafagetului.ro/finantare-afm (Activities treated waste and circular economy; climate change and water; environmental rights and obligations)

Green Generation Club: Learning Sustainability Through Action

The Green Generation Club was established as a student-centered educational initiative to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through practical, action-based learning. Developed within a Romanian secondary school of 430 students, the project was designed according to the Whole Institution Approach (WIA), with a specific focus on strengthening the component student services, previously identified as the least developed one in our school.
Using action research, the club evolved into a catalyst for institutional transformation. Students actively participated as planners, facilitators, and promoters of activities such as sustainable mobility campaigns, battery recycling, school gardening, school clean-up events, eco-celebrations of national days and environmental festivals.
The project strengthened cooperation among teachers, school leadership, parents, and local partners, connecting classroom learning with real community action. This collaboration included the Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark and the Retezat Tourism Association, providing authentic learning contexts and local engagement.
As a result, the initiative increased student engagement, strengthened sustainability competencies, and contributed to embedding responsibility and active citizenship into everyday school life. The Green Generation Club demonstrates how a small, student-driven structure guided by ESD principles can achieve meaningful, scalable and lasting institutional impact.

Contacts

Institution: "Ion Constantin Brătianu" Theoretical High School, Hațeg/ "Aron Densușianu" Secondary School (school structure)
Phone: +4 (0) 254777070/+4 (0) 254770020
Mail: scarondenusianu@gmail.com
liceubratianu@yahoo.com
Project Coordinator: Mihaela Groza – +40723388518
Teacher: Nădășan Anca – +407664444899
Batizan Adriana - +40740340066







All images included were taken during school activities and are owned by the school. Consent was obtained from participants and, where applicable, from parents/guardians for the use of images featuring students.

General Description

The project aimed to strengthen Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by applying the Whole Institution Approach (WIA). Following an international project, we established the Green Generation Club as a student-centered service. Volunteers meet weekly (Friday, 14:00–15:30) to propose activities such as sustainable mobility, recycling, school gardening, eco-themed celebrations, Clean-Up Day and a thematic festival. Topics are also addressed using a transdisciplinary approach in lessons, and for complex themes, local partners support activities, helping students better understand sustainability issues.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities: Through the Green Generation Club, students engage in activities promoting sustainable living and shared responsibility within their community. Initiatives such as walk-to-school campaigns, school gardening, recycling, and clean-up events encourage learners to develop environmentally friendly habits and to care for common spaces. Educators integrate these experiences into lessons, transforming the school into a living lab for sustainability. The project strengthens civic participation, collaboration among students, teachers, and families, and fosters a culture of respect for the environment—contributing directly to more inclusive, safe, and resilient local communities.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals: Building strong partnerships has been essential for the success of the Green Generation Club. The school collaborates with Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark, Retezat Tourism Association, Grădiștea Muncelului–Cioclovina Natural Park, ZahaFarm, Hațeg City Hall and local community actors to co-design educational and environmental activities. These partnerships bring expertise, resources, and visibility to the project, creating opportunities for joint learning and action. Educators benefit from professional exchange, while students experience real cooperation between institutions and communities. The initiative models multistakeholder collaboration, enhancing ESD implementation and demonstrating how local alliances support global sustainability goals.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project contributed to Quality Education and ESD by transforming learning into a participatory and action-based process. Through the Green Generation Club, students engaged in real-life sustainability activities, developing competences such as critical thinking, responsibility, and collaboration. Educators shifted from traditional teaching to facilitation and mentoring, creating meaningful, experiential learning experiences. This shift from content-based to competency-based education increased student motivation and fostered a deeper understanding of sustainability concepts, strengthening key ESD competencies for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

In terms of the Whole-Institution Approach, the project generated a transformative impact by extending ESD beyond isolated activities to the entire school community. The initiative activated multiple components of the WIA—leadership support, teacher collaboration, student engagement, and partnerships with local institutions. Coordinated planning and communication fostered a culture of shared responsibility, where sustainability became part of everyday school life. The project demonstrated that a student-centered structure can catalyze systemic change at the institutional level, turning the school into a true community of transformational learning.

Key players involved

The project involved multiple key actors working collaboratively within the Whole Institution Approach. Students were the central actors, actively proposing, planning and implementing activities within the Green Generation Club. Teachers acted as facilitators and mentors, supporting students in organizing and reflecting on their initiatives. School leadership provided strategic and administrative support, enabling the implementation of the project at institutional level.

Local partners, including the Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark, Retezat Tourism Association, Grădiștea Muncelului–Cioclovina Natural Park, ZahaFarm and Hațeg City Hall, contributed by offering expertise, resources and real-life learning contexts. Parents were also involved by supporting student participation and reinforcing sustainability values. Together, these actors formed a collaborative network that strengthened the integration of ESD within the school and the wider community.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

It contributed to transforming people's behavior by encouraging students, teachers, and families to adopt sustainable habits such as recycling, green mobility, and environmental care. After the "Battery-Recycling" campaign, a permanent battery recycling corner was created at school, where students now regularly bring used batteries instead of throwing

them away. Following the "Walk to School Day" campaign, many students continue to walk daily, and parents often join them. One of the most inspiring outcomes is that parents and students visit together the raised garden beds established during the "Seeds for the Future", proudly monitoring plant growth. After Clean-Up Day, students started organizing regular tidy-up actions and are more careful about maintaining order and cleanliness. By promoting community action, the Green Generation Club created partnerships between the school, local institutions, and families. Collaborative activities mobilized the wider community and fostered collective responsibility for the environment.
The initiative raised awareness of sustainability issues among students and citizens, showing how individual actions contribute to global goals.
By involving local government and private partners, the project strengthened cross-sector cooperation.
It enhanced sustainability competencies—critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, and civic engagement—among students and educators, making ESD a transformative experience within and beyond the school.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension, as students are at the center of all activities. Initially, 23 students joined the Green Generation Club as volunteers, proposing, organizing and managing activities for their peers. The number of members has since doubled, with new students joining after each activity. Participation has expanded to nearly the entire school population. Young teachers have also joined as mentors, supporting student initiatives and strengthening leadership, collaboration and active engagement.

Gender dimension

The project promotes gender equality by ensuring equal participation and opportunities for all students, regardless of gender. Initially, more girls joined the Green Generation Club, but over time the number of boys also increased, leading to a more balanced representation among volunteers. Both girls and boys are actively involved in planning, decision-making and implementation of activities. Participation at school level includes both genders equally, fostering inclusivity, collaboration and a supportive environment where all voices are valued.

Challenges or lessons learnt

At the beginning, few teachers joined the initiative, citing a lack of time. However, seeing the strong enthusiasm of student volunteers and the interest shown by the whole school community, teacher participation quickly increased. Another challenge was managing the many creative ideas proposed by students – these required discussion, adaptation, and redesign to make activities both feasible and engaging for all learners. Teachers also had to integrate ESD topics into weekly subjects, as many concepts were initially unfamiliar to students. Strong support from partners proved essential – they participated in thematic sessions and helped clarify complex sustainability topics for students.

Further resources

Transforming Futures: Enhancing Practice for ESD for 2030 through Action Research – Romania

- https://www.cnr-unesco.ro/ro/activitate/transforming-futures-enhancing-practice-for-esd-for-2030-through-action-research--romania
- https://www.cnr-unesco.ro/ro/activitate/transforming-futures-enhancing-practice-for-esd-for-2030-through-action-research--romania

Partners:

- Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark: https://www.unesco.org/en/iggp/hateg-country-unesco-global-geopark
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1B9a8eYJAQMMNyqZogYo8uAh0wh5-qE5E
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1B9a8eYJAQMMNyqZogYo8uAh0wh5-qE5E
- Retezat Tourism Association: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1B9a8eYJAQMMNyqZogYo8uAh0wh5-qE5E

Promotional video of activities:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HaoBGHITAhNlAbfEKndRPMYAaWTHXwxG
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17wWCCtxiFlyqL0t6ymG8EU_s6G-6RPkB
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15yKMkaHlOFCF976m5t_E6YOV1JVmitSu

Feedback video:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qkumegqEtqIcZRcBCnneUnTx0z7qvfjl
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gea8Ne4SywPzJssWkph8fCairwZiKk7E
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gea8Ne4SywPzJssWkph8fCairwZiKk7E

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gea8Ne4SywPzJssWkph8fCairwZiKk7E
- School Magazine, pages 16-17
  https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jvClbvXFrgdg0ByBOzYfLLJbIjtAP36N/view?usp=sharing

- https://www.instagram.com/club_scolar_generatia_verde?igsh=bWV5dTh2eTVndHV1
- https://www.facebook.com/share/v/15g1kZEoDC5/
- https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid029Gw3zUss9Kz1r9jpd3GFHGyihoEaJMLNvcJFasgVryJ4Rud8NAyc1N4t4ivd1HPFl&id=100064519911055
- https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17CoFmcKv8/
- https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02V5w3uz5pMiTpa8ny6yGb2hQyzoSUgTJngFiQYMdHM2dZUpfQruj6APA8anoUuEW1l&id=100064519911055

The interdisciplinary approach in support of sustainable development

Curriculum Component aims to contribute to the education of informed citizens, collectively involved in the intentional building of sustainable societies and who, individually, align their lives with the general concept of sustainability. It is also about the development of skills such as critical thinking, growth mindset, design thinking, and intercultural competence.
Teaching and Learning concerns how the principles of sustainable development are integrated into:

- existing subjects (e.g., Physics, Biology, Geography, Civic Education, etc.)
- transdisciplinary activities or thematic projects

In a **Whole-Institution Approach**, content such as climate change, poverty, and sustainable consumption is integrated into the curriculum, and the pedagogical approach should be holistic, inspirational, and capable of influencing and transforming learners' behavior.
To achieve this balance of learning outcomes, **ESD pedagogy** can support the inclusion of more self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-oriented learning, interdisciplinarity, and the connection between formal and informal learning.

Contacts

Zamfirescu Georgeta Raluca, Voievodul Mircea HighSchool, Targoviste, Dambovita, Romania,
zamfirescu_ralu@yahoo.ro





General Description

The project aims to integrate sustainable development principles across the curriculum through a whole-institution approach. By embedding sustainability into existing subjects and interdisciplinary projects, it promotes meaningful, real-world learning. The project develops key competencies such as critical thinking, growth mindset, design thinking, and

intercultural competence, empowering students to become responsible, active citizens who contribute thoughtfully and creatively to a sustainable future.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project adopts an **interdisciplinary approach** to address sustainability challenges across multiple SDGs. For **SDG 4 (Quality Education)**, educators integrate science, social studies, and ethics to develop learners' systems thinking, problem-solving, and sustainability literacy. Teachers gain capacity to design cross-curricular lessons that link global issues with local contexts.

In support of **SDG 13 (Climate Action)** and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**, learners apply knowledge from environmental science, economics, and civic studies to create community projects on renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and waste reduction. This hands-on learning fosters environmental stewardship and critical thinking.

Addressing **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, students collaborate with local stakeholders, combining insights from urban planning, sociology, and technology to propose sustainable solutions, enhancing community resilience.

Through ESD, the project transforms education into a platform for active engagement: educators become facilitators of transformative learning, learners become informed change agents, and communities benefit from practical interventions and heightened sustainability awareness. By linking disciplines, the initiative creates integrated solutions, promoting national and local sustainability outcomes while nurturing a generation capable of addressing complex, interconnected global challenges.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

The project focuses on several priority strands, each producing transformative impact. In the **Curriculum and Pedagogy** strand, educators adopt learner-centered, sustainability-focused teaching methods. This shift enhances critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, enabling students to actively apply knowledge to real-world challenges.

The **Capacity Building and Professional Development** strand strengthens educators' knowledge and confidence in ESD. Teachers become change agents, designing interdisciplinary lessons and fostering collaborative learning environments that empower students to engage with sustainability issues meaningfully.

Through the **Community Engagement** strand, learners extend classroom learning into local contexts, collaborating with stakeholders to address environmental and social challenges. Communities benefit directly from projects such as waste management initiatives, tree planting campaigns, and awareness programs, creating tangible local impact and fostering civic responsibility.

Finally, the **Policy and Systems Change** strand ensures that lessons learned inform institutional and national practices. By integrating sustainability priorities into school and community policies, the project supports scalable, long-term solutions.

Overall, focusing on these strands transforms the education ecosystem: educators are empowered, learners are active change agents, communities experience practical benefits, and national approaches to sustainable development are reinforced.

Key players involved

The project involves multiple key players working collaboratively to achieve its sustainability goals. **Educators** lead classroom and community-based ESD activities, designing interdisciplinary lessons and mentoring learners in practical sustainability projects. **Learners** actively participate in hands-on initiatives, applying knowledge to local challenges and developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills.

Community stakeholders, including local authorities, NGOs, and civic organizations, partner with schools to provide resources, guidance, and platforms for students to implement projects that benefit the wider community. **Policymakers and education authorities** contribute by integrating successful practices into curricula, guidelines, and institutional policies, ensuring scalability and long-term impact.

Additionally, **experts and mentors** from environmental, social, and technological fields provide technical knowledge, capacity-building, and support for innovative solutions.
Together, these players create a dynamic ecosystem where knowledge, skills, and action converge, fostering sustainable development while empowering educators, learners, and communities alike.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Educators: Through professional development and interdisciplinary training, teachers have enhanced their capacity to deliver ESD-focused lessons. They now integrate sustainability concepts across subjects, employ learner-centered methods, and mentor students in community projects, reflecting a shift toward transformative pedagogy.
Learners: Students have developed critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills by engaging in hands-on sustainability initiatives. Achievements include organizing local clean-up campaigns, implementing school-based recycling programs, and creating awareness campaigns on climate action and biodiversity conservation. Participation has strengthened their sense of civic responsibility and empowerment to drive change.
Community: Collaboration with learners and schools has led to tangible local benefits, such as improved waste management, tree-planting initiatives, and the adoption of energy-efficient practices. Communities report greater environmental awareness and increased participation in sustainability activities, creating a ripple effect beyond the project sites.
Institutional/National: The project has informed curriculum improvements, policy recommendations, and integration of sustainability principles into educational frameworks. Best practices have been shared across schools, influencing broader adoption of ESD approaches and fostering systemic change.
Overall, the project has generated measurable progress in education, community engagement, and policy, building capacity for sustainable development at multiple levels.

Youth dimension

The project actively engages youth as key participants and change agents. Learners design and implement sustainability initiatives, from recycling programs to community awareness campaigns, applying classroom knowledge to real-world challenges. Through leadership roles, peer mentoring, and collaboration with educators and community stakeholders, youth develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic responsibility. This hands-on involvement empowers them to contribute meaningfully to local and national sustainable development goals while fostering a culture of active youth participation.

Gender dimension

The project integrates a gender dimension by promoting equal participation of all genders in learning and sustainability activities. Female and male learners are encouraged to take leadership roles, engage in decision-making, and contribute to community projects. Educators apply inclusive teaching practices, ensuring that both girls and boys access opportunities in STEM, environmental initiatives, and civic engagement. This approach fosters gender equality, empowers underrepresented groups, and cultivates a more equitable culture of sustainable development.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Implementing the project revealed challenges such as limited resources, varying levels of educator readiness, and initial community engagement barriers. Lessons learned include the importance of continuous capacity-building for teachers, fostering strong partnerships with local stakeholders, and adopting flexible, context-sensitive approaches. Encouraging learner-led initiatives proved highly effective in sustaining motivation and impact. Overall, the experience highlighted that interdisciplinary collaboration, inclusive participation, and adaptive planning are essential for overcoming obstacles and achieving meaningful, lasting outcomes in sustainability education.

Further resources

- https://damboviteanul.com/2026/01/29/liceul-voievodul-mircea-din-targoviste-scoala-pilot-pentru-implementarea-proiectului-international-transforming-futures-enhancing-practice-for-esd-for-2030-through-action-research/

ASEF Tutoring: Localizing Global Expertise for Sustainable Interdisciplinary Innovation

The American Slovenian Education Foundation (ASEF) facilitates a transformative educational ecosystem through its Tutoring Program and annual Scientific Compendium. By connecting talented students with a network of ASEF Tutors, distinguished Slovenian professors and researchers at leading Slovenian universities, ASEF bridges the gap between academic theory and the practical implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This initiative directly advances SDG 17 (Partnerships) by leveraging expertise to solve local and regional challenges. Through Digital Education and ICT, ASEF provides high-quality mentorship that fosters critical thinking in fields vital to SDG 7 (Energy), SDG 9 (Innovation), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities). The program adopts a whole-institution approach, treating its global network as a community of transformational learning. Each year, the Scientific Compendium showcases student-led research that translates Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) principles into actionable solutions. This dual approach: mentorship and formal publication equips the next generation of leaders with the competencies to drive the green transition and promote resilient infrastructure across the UNECE region.

Contacts

info@asef.net

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General Description

The goal is to ensure long-term knowledge transfer by engaging talented ASEF Fellows in a structured Tutoring Program upon their return from research visits abroad. Under the mentorship of the ASEF Tutoring Network—comprising distinguished professors at Slovenian universities and renowned research institutions—fellows translate their international experience into high-quality research. This process culminates in the Scientific Compendium, creating a community of transformational learning that aligns global expertise with local sustainable development goals.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

ASEF addresses the "knowledge gap" in sustainable development by facilitating transboundary knowledge transfer via its returning fellows. For **SDG 17**, we revitalize partnerships by connecting ASEF fellows with expert tutors primarily at Slovenian universities and research institutions, ensuring international best practices are localized. Regarding **SDG 9** and **SDG 11**, the program tackles resilient infrastructure and sustainable urban growth. Fellows' research explores AI-driven urban planning and material science for green construction. For SDG 7, tutors guide fellows in analyzing renewable energy transitions.

A core strength is the interdisciplinary approach, encouraging fellows to integrate STEM, social sciences, and humanities to solve complex challenges. A prime example is our forthcoming publication (May 2026) of 2026 Compendium, "Interdisciplinary Innovations: A Bridge to the Sustainable Society of the Future," where fellows collaborate on industrial challenges. This includes optimizing production for Incom Leone, a leading Slovenian company, to reduce resource waste in ice cream manufacturing. The impact is multi-layered: educators at Slovenian institutions mentor globally exposed talent, while fellows gain cross-disciplinary competencies. The community benefits from a workforce capable of implementing high-tech, integrated solutions essential for the industrial and urban challenges of the 21st century, bridging the gap between global research and national application.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Focusing on these strands has transformed ASEF into a community of transformational learning. The **Whole-institution approach** allows the foundation to act as a bridge between international research and national application. Through **Digital education and ICT**, we maintain high-quality, continuous mentorship across borders, reducing the carbon footprint of knowledge exchange.

The **Entrepreneurship and innovation** strand is realized by connecting academic research with private sector needs, such as the Incom Leone case, where scientific inquiry directly leads to industrial optimization. This prepares fellows for employment in the green economy by equipping them with practical, interdisciplinary problem-solving skills. Finally, Quality education is ensured through the rigorous peer-review process of the Scientific Compendium, which provides evidence-based contributions to the regional sustainability goals. This synergy transforms learners from passive recipients into active innovators driving the green transition.

Key players involved

The primary players are the ASEF fellows (talented Slovenian students) and the ASEF tutors— distinguished professors and scientists at Slovenian universities and leading research institutions. The ASEF Academic Advisory Board ensures the scientific quality of the forthcoming Scientific Compendium. Private sector partners, such as Incom Leone, play a crucial role by providing real- world challenges for interdisciplinary research. Tutors provide structured mentorship to returning fellows, ensuring that international insights are contextualized and applied to local sustainability challenges.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

ASEF has transformed behaviors by fostering a long-term commitment to sustainability among fellows, moving beyond theoretical knowledge to practical application. By strengthening competencies through interdisciplinary mentorship, we equip talented students with the digital and analytical skills necessary for the green transition.

Our progress in involving the private sector is highlighted by the partnership with Incom Leone, where research directly optimizes industrial resource efficiency (SDG 9). This collaboration raises awareness of how scientific innovation solves real-world corporate sustainability challenges. Community action is promoted through our durable network of tutors and fellows who localize international best practices at Slovenian universities and research institutions.

Furthermore, the forthcoming Scientific Compendium, "Interdisciplinary Innovations: A Bridge to the Sustainable Society of the Future," contributes to changing educational policies by providing a peer-reviewed model for cross-sectoral ESD integration. By formalizing the transition from international fellowships to national tutoring, ASEF ensures that "brain circulation" results in measurable achievements across SDGs 7, 9, and 11, creating a scalable blueprint for regional sustainable development.

Youth dimension

ASEF is inherently youth-centric, as our fellows are talented students and early-career researchers. The program empowers youth by giving them a leading voice in scientific research focused on the 2030 Agenda. By facilitating high-level mentorship, we ensure that young innovators transition from academic learners to active contributors who solve real-world sustainability challenges. This involvement directly strengthens their professional competencies and leadership potential within the global green economy.

Gender dimension

ASEF promotes gender equality by ensuring balanced representation and equal opportunities within its fellowship cohorts. We actively support and encourage female researchers in STEM and social sciences to lead interdisciplinary projects. By providing a platform for young women to present their research in the Scientific Compendium, we empower them to become future leaders in sustainable innovation. This inclusive approach ensures diverse perspectives are integrated into solving complex challenges, such as sustainable infrastructure and clean energy.

Challenges or lessons learnt

After six years, we learned fellows most value our interdisciplinary approach, a framework not yet established at Slovenian universities. ASEF fills this institutional gap, providing practical experience vital for transitioning into academia and industry. This year, we expanded activities by solving private sector challenges (Incom Leone d.o.o.). This shift provides fellows with additional motivation through tangible solutions. This hybrid, cross-sectoral model ensures that international insights are effectively localized, empowering youth to drive national sustainability goals with measurable impact.

Further resources

- https://asef.net/event/the-first-interdisciplinary-asef-tutoring-session/
- https://asef.net/event/sustainable-food-systems-an-interdisciplinary-perspective-on-challenges- and-possible-solutions-2/
- https://asef.net/event/publication-of-sustainable-development-goals- between-utopia-and-reality/
- https://asef.net/
- https://asef.net/news-events-categories/events/asef-only/asef-tutorial/

Travel Different for Future Empowering Youth for Sustainable Tourism

Travel Different for Future (TDFF) is an international education program designed to empower young people to understand and reduce the environmental and social impacts of travel. Through workshops, campaigns, digital resources, and youth engagement, the program promotes sustainable tourism and critical reflection on mobility, climate change, and responsible travel.

The program was initiated in 2022 by Hostelling International Slovenia and JANUN Hannover e.V. (Germany). Initially developed as a smaller project with a defined timeframe (2022–2024), the initiative gradually evolved into a broader and continuous educational program. Today, TDFF includes activities focused on sustainable tourism education and innovative approaches that strengthen Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in both non-formal youth work and formal education. In a later phase, two additional partners joined: REAJ – Spanish Youth Hostel Association and Movy (Portugal).

The program combines non-formal education, digital learning tools, and peer-to-peer learning while building bridges between youth work and formal education. Through workshops, participants explore topics such as travel-related carbon footprints, climate-friendly transport, responsible tourism, and the role of travellers in supporting local communities. By linking environmental awareness with everyday decisions, the program helps young people translate sustainability values into action.

The initiative contributes to Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11, SDG 9, and SDG 17. Through international cooperation and youth participation, TDFF demonstrates how Education for Sustainable Development can inspire more responsible travel behaviours.

Contacts

Anja Žepič: anja.zepic@youth-hostel.si
Achim Riemann: buero@janun-hannover.de

Photo taken during a TDFF seminar. Copyright owned by the project partners.

General Description

The goal of the *Travel Different for Future* program is to raise awareness among young people about the environmental and social impacts of tourism and to promote more sustainable travel behaviours. Through workshops, campaigns, digital learning tools, youth engagement activities, and international cooperation, the program helps participants understand the connections between travel, climate change, and global sustainability challenges. At the same time, it empowers them to make responsible decisions as future travellers and encourages them to actively contribute to more sustainable tourism practices.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The *Travel Different for Future* program addresses sustainability challenges related to tourism and mobility through education. Using participatory workshops and interactive learning methods, the program encourages young people to critically examine how travel choices influence climate change, local economies, and cultural environments.

Participants learn about the carbon footprint of different transport modes, sustainable tourism practices, and the importance of supporting local communities. These learning experiences help young people understand their role in contributing to more sustainable cities and communities (**SDG 11**), while also supporting the integration of sustainability topics into the formal education system and strengthening links with non-formal youth education initiatives.

The program also promotes innovation in educational approaches (**SDG 9**) by combining non-formal education methods with formal education, digital tools, storytelling approaches, volunteering, and peer-to-peer learning to engage young audiences. Through international cooperation between youth NGOs, the education sector, and volunteers, TDFF strengthens partnerships that support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDG 17**).

By connecting environmental awareness with practical travel decisions, the program contributes to long-term behavioural change and encourages young people to become ambassadors of responsible tourism and active changemakers.

To date, the programme has developed six educational workshops and delivered more than 120 workshops in schools and youth settings, reaching over 3,000 young people aged 13–18. The initiative has also organised five youth exchanges and currently involves more than 80 volunteers. Regular online coordination meetings with volunteers are held every month, with the 40th meeting planned for March 2026, supporting the continuous development of the programme.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

The *Travel Different for Future* program contributes to the development of quality education for sustainable development by integrating sustainability topics from non-formal learning into the education sector. Through participatory workshops in schools, young people are encouraged to reflect on the environmental and social consequences of tourism and to develop critical thinking about travel choices and mobility.

Digital education plays a central role in the program. The TDFF website functions as an online learning platform available in multiple languages, offering educational resources, storytelling articles, downloadable workshop materials, and campaign tools such as the Climate-Friendly School Trips initiative. Through digital resources, newsletters, and social media platforms, the program reaches wider audiences and engages young people through formats they use in their daily lives.

Innovation is reflected in the program's peer-to-peer learning approach. Young volunteers aged 18–30 teach younger participants aged 13–18, creating a learning environment where young people learn from each other. This model helps build bridges between formal education in schools and non-formal youth learning environments. An important element of the program is also youth volunteering, which provides young volunteers with opportunities for lifelong learning, practical experience, and the development of key competencies related to sustainability, communication, leadership, and future employment.

By combining education, digital communication, volunteering, and international cooperation, the program aims to strengthen transformative learning environments and support the long-term integration of sustainability education within school systems.

Key players involved

The *Travel Different for Future* program is implemented through the cooperation of four partner organisations, including Hostelling International Slovenia, JANUN Hannover e.V. (Germany), REAJ – Spanish Youth Hostel Association, and Movy from Portugal. These partners collaborate in developing educational content, coordinating activities, and expanding the program within their networks.

Young volunteers aged 18–30 play an important role in developing educational content, delivering workshops, and contributing to communication activities such as blogs, social media campaigns, and youth discussions on sustainable travel.

Schools and youth organisations participate by hosting workshops and engaging young people in discussions about responsible tourism and climate-friendly travel practices.

This multi-stakeholder collaboration creates a network of educators, youth workers, and young volunteers working together to promote sustainability education and responsible travel behaviours.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The program has helped raise awareness among young people about the environmental and social impacts of tourism. Through workshops and educational activities, participants gain practical knowledge about sustainable travel practices and climate-friendly mobility.

Many participants report that they had never previously considered how their travel choices influence the environment. After participating in the program, young people often express a stronger willingness to choose more sustainable transport options and to support responsible tourism practices. As with many educational initiatives focused on behavioural change, the results are not always immediately visible. Instead, the program contributes to a gradual shift in attitudes and habits, supporting long-term changes in how young people think about travel, mobility, and environmental responsibility.

The program strengthens competencies such as critical thinking, global awareness, and responsible decision-making. By connecting sustainability topics with everyday travel decisions, the workshops make complex global challenges more understandable and relevant to young people.

An important impact is also visible among young volunteers aged 18–30 who contribute to the program. By participating in the design and delivery of workshops, volunteers develop valuable competencies in communication, facilitation, and sustainability education. Teaching younger participants requires the ability to translate complex sustainability topics into clear and engaging messages, helping volunteers develop the skills needed to become effective ambassadors and changemakers.

In addition, the program contributes to community engagement by encouraging discussions about sustainable travel within schools, youth groups, and volunteer networks.

Youth dimension

Youth participation is at the core of the *Travel Different for Future* program. Young volunteers aged 18–30 contribute to the development of educational materials, communication campaigns, and the delivery of workshops. Through a peer-to-peer learning approach, young volunteers engage younger participants aged 13–18, sharing knowledge and experiences about sustainable travel. This approach has proven particularly effective, as young people often learn best from their peers. Participants frequently transfer this knowledge into their families and communities, encouraging more sustainable travel choices beyond the classroom.

Gender dimension

The program promotes gender balance among young volunteers and encourages participation regardless of gender or identity. Workshops create inclusive learning environments where participants feel respected and safe to share perspectives.

The program also highlights the importance of inclusive and accessible travel, addressing challenges faced by LGBTQ+ travellers and other underrepresented groups. It promotes the idea that travel should be welcoming for everyone. More in the TDFF blog article: https://www.traveldifferent.org/en/blog/challenges-lgbtq-travellers-and-others-face-in-tourism

Challenges or lessons learnt

One key challenge has been addressing the tension young people often experience between mobility and sustainability. Young people are encouraged to travel, explore the world, and participate in international mobility as part of lifelong learning, while at the same time being expected to reduce their environmental impact. The program has therefore learned that balanced and practical education is essential to help young people understand how to travel more responsibly rather than discouraging mobility.

Another challenge is the limited connection between formal education systems and non-formal youth learning. Integrating sustainability topics into school programs often requires strong cooperation with schools, which can be difficult. These experiences highlight the importance of building stronger bridges between formal and non-formal education.

Further resources

- Presentation of the project: https://tinyurl.com/ycb7yx5d
- Travel Different for Future Website: https://www.traveldifferent.org/en
- TDFF Blog: https://www.traveldifferent.org/en/blog

- TDFF Workshops Material: https://www.traveldifferent.org/en/workshops
- Climate-Friendly School Trips campaign: https://www.traveldifferent.org/en/programme-travel-different-for-future/climate-friendly-school-trips-campaign
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/travel_different_for_future
- TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@traveldifferentforfuture
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TravelDifferentForFuture

Children Explore Insects' Hidden World Through Municipality-University-NGO Partnership

The activity was carried out for Eco-Committee students involved in the Eco-Schools Programme at Atatürk Agricultural Research Farm, affiliated with Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, through the collaboration of the Department of Rural Services of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, the Faculty of Agriculture of Ankara University, and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV).
Through direct interaction with nature, students and teachers explored the roles of insects within ecosystems, learned about the importance of biodiversity during the Insect Festival School led by Prof. Dr. Cem Özkan, and experienced the joy of production by planting their own saplings in the children's greenhouse.
The activity holistically integrates two priority strands of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy: quality education and a whole-institution approach.
It also supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through cooperation among local government (Ankara Metropolitan Municipality), academia (Ankara University), and civil society (the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye).
Through this multi-stakeholder collaboration, the project contributed to fostering a culture of sustainability, increasing children's environmental awareness, and presenting a replicable example of an ESD practice in both formal and non-formal learning contexts.

Contacts

almila@turcev.org.tr
ekookullar@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr














BÖCEK ŞENLİK










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General Description

The goal of this activity is to strengthen students' environmental awareness and sustainability competencies through hands-on learning about insects and biodiversity. Implemented through collaboration among the municipality, university, and civil society, it promotes experiential learning, ecological responsibility, and active citizenship. It also supports student-led advocacy, community engagement, and the development of a long-term culture of environmental sustainability.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- **SDG 11-** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- **SDG 17-** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach.

Under **SDG 11**, students gain hands-on learning experience in urban agriculture and green spaces such as Atatürk Agricultural Research Farm, where they develop awareness of biodiversity, ecosystem balance, and nature-based solutions. Learning about the ecological role of insects and participating in sapling planting activities helps make the concept of sustainable cities tangible and relevant to their daily lives. Educators strengthen environmental education by integrating outdoor and experiential learning methods into the curriculum. This approach fosters long-term environmental responsibility among learners and supports a local culture of sustainability.

Under **SDG 17**, the activity creates a multi-stakeholder learning environment through collaboration among the municipality, university, and civil society. It strengthens knowledge-sharing among schools, teachers, and students, while also encouraging the involvement of families and the wider local community. Student-led advocacy and participation promote active citizenship and help generate broader social impact on sustainability. At the community level, the project demonstrates how partnership-based environmental education can contribute to more resilient, inclusive, and sustainability-oriented local development.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project primarily focused on the priority strands of Quality Education and a Whole-Institution Approach to ESD.

Under **Quality Education**, students experienced hands-on, experiential learning by observing the role of insects in ecosystems and taking part in activities such as sapling planting. This approach helped transform environmental issues from abstract concepts into real-life experiences, fostering lasting awareness of environmental responsibility, critical thinking, and sustainable behaviour. Educators also strengthened environmental education by integrating outdoor and experiential learning methods into their pedagogical practices.

Under the **Whole-Institution Approach**, collaboration among the municipality, university, and civil society created a multi-stakeholder learning ecosystem. By involving school leadership, teachers, students, and families in the process, sustainability became part of the school culture rather than remaining a one-time activity. This structure increased knowledge-sharing across institutions and strengthened collective capacity for sustainability-oriented action.

As a result, the project generated not only individual awareness among learners, but also broader transformative potential at the institutional and community levels by embedding sustainability into educational practice, partnership structures, and local engagement.

Key players involved

The key partners of the project are the Department of Rural Services of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, the Faculty of Agriculture of Ankara University, and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality provided the implementation setting by opening Atatürk Agricultural Research Farm for the activity and took on organizational coordination. Academics and experts from Ankara University's Faculty of Agriculture contributed scientific content and guidance on the ecological role of insects, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture. The Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye organized school participation through the Eco-Schools Programme, supported the pedagogical framework, and coordinated the sustainability-based learning process.

Teachers integrated the experience into both classroom and outdoor learning, while Eco-Committee students took on active roles as participants and practitioners. Families and the local community were also involved as supportive stakeholders. This multi-stakeholder structure created a collaborative and participatory learning environment.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviours
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- İnvolving government and/or private sector
- Changing educational policies
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

The activity has generated positive impacts by raising awareness, transforming behaviours, promoting community action, involving public institutions, strengthening competencies, and contributing to changes in educational practice.

Through direct engagement with nature, Eco-Committee students developed a deeper understanding of the ecological importance of insects and biodiversity, which strengthened their sense of environmental responsibility and encouraged more sustainable habits. Activities such as ecosystem observation and sapling planting helped turn knowledge into practice, reinforcing lasting behavioural change.

The project also encouraged collaboration among students, teachers, families, and the wider local community, fostering shared environmental action and strengthening a local culture of sustainability. Awareness was significantly increased as participants experienced the role of insects and biodiversity through concrete, hands-on examples.

The active involvement of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality demonstrated an effective model of public sector engagement in environmental education, while cooperation with Ankara University and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye strengthened the project's institutional dimension. In addition, students improved their observation, inquiry, critical thinking, and teamwork skills, while teachers gained practical experience in integrating experiential and outdoor learning into educational processes, contributing to more sustainability-oriented educational approaches.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension by directly engaging Eco-Committee students in the learning process. Students took part in insect observations, sapling planting, and student-led environmental advocacy activities. This participation strengthened their knowledge, skills, and sense of responsibility regarding nature and sustainability, while also encouraging them to play an active role in their communities and promote sustainable behaviours among their peers and wider society.

Gender dimension

The activity incorporates a gender dimension by encouraging the equal participation throughout the process. All students were equally involved in insect observations, sapling planting, and environmental advocacy activities. This approach enables young people, regardless of gender, to develop environmental awareness and sustainability skills, while offering balanced opportunities for leadership and participation and promoting equality, inclusion, and shared responsibility.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges in implementing the project was coordinating students from different schools and ensuring effective collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Weather conditions and the logistics of outdoor activities also affected the planning process. A key lesson learned was that advance preparation, clear division of responsibilities, and continuous communication among partners are essential for the success of similar hands-on environmental education projects. These factors significantly strengthen both implementation quality and the overall learning experience.

Further resources

- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJlhKZnNtdj/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJtsvzDt5ml/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DJt7lVotRbm/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
  https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJtsvzDt5ml/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- http://www.boceksenlikokulu.com/

Eco-Schools Children's Council Workshop on Disaster Awareness and Partnerships

The 16th term, 2nd workshop of the Eskişehir Eco-Schools Environmental Children's Council was carried out in cooperation with the Climate Change and Zero Waste Directorate of Tepebaşı Municipality and its Search and Rescue Team (TAK). The main theme of the workshop was to raise children's awareness of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. Participants were informed about disasters such as fires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides, and were provided with earthquake whistles and personal emergency information cards.
The activity is aligned with the priority strands of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), particularly quality education and a whole-institution approach. By drawing their ideal disaster-free cities, children strengthened both disaster awareness and emotional expression skills; by examining search and rescue equipment, they also gained practical insights into safe behaviour and crisis management.
Under SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), the workshop helped children develop awareness of safe and resilient communities. Under SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), it created a multi-stakeholder learning experience through cooperation between municipal units and the Eco-Schools network.
The activity represents a concrete ESD practice that strengthens children's disaster preparedness skills and supports sustainable awareness within the community.

Contacts

almila@turcev.org.tr
ekookullar@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr

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General Description

The aim of this workshop is to raise children's awareness of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change while strengthening safe behaviour skills. The activity helps children gain knowledge about disaster preparedness, become familiar with crisis management tools, and develop awareness of disaster prevention. Through collaboration among municipal units, the Eco-Schools network, and children, it creates a multi-stakeholder learning experience that strengthens children's sense of community and responsibility.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The activity contributes to **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)** and **SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)** through an **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** approach.

Under **SDG 11**, children developed awareness of safe and resilient cities by learning about natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. Practical learning took place through information sessions on fires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides, supported by disaster-related tools such as personal emergency information cards and rescue equipment. By drawing their ideal disaster-free cities, children were also able to express their emotions and strengthen their understanding of preparedness, prevention, and safe behaviour. This process additionally enabled teachers and educators to apply disaster awareness and crisis management methods in educational practice.

Under **SDG 17**, the activity established a multi-stakeholder partnership among Tepebaşı Municipality units, the Eco-Schools network, and children. This cooperation strengthened shared learning and solidarity within the community while increasing students' sense of leadership and responsibility. The involvement of families and the wider local community further supported the local dissemination of a sustainability culture.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The activity primarily focused on the priority strands of Quality Education and a Whole-Institution Approach to ESD.

Under **Quality Education**, children explored natural disasters and the impacts of climate change through experiential learning. Simulations related to fires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides, together with the use of earthquake whistles and personal emergency information cards, helped strengthen disaster awareness and safe behaviour skills. This process also enhanced children's critical thinking, problem-solving, and crisis management competencies, while giving teachers and educators the opportunity to apply practical and effective methods for environmental and sustainability education.

Under the **Whole-Institution Approach**, cooperation among Tepebaşı Municipality units, the Eco-Schools network, and children created a multi-stakeholder learning community. The involvement of school leadership, teachers, students, and local stakeholders helped build awareness of safe and resilient communities at the local level. This structure supported the wider dissemination of a sustainability culture, strengthened institutional cooperation, and encouraged children to take an active role in their communities.

Key players involved

The key partners of the project are the Climate Change and Zero Waste Directorate of Tepebaşı Municipality, the Tepebaşı Municipality Search and Rescue Team (TAK), and the students of the Eco-Schools Environmental Children's Council. The municipal units were responsible for the organization and logistics of the workshop, including the venue and necessary equipment. The TAK team provided hands-on learning about disasters, emergency measures, and search and rescue processes. Eco-Schools students were the active participants, engaging in disaster awareness activities, simulations, and drawing exercises on their ideal disaster-free cities. Teachers and facilitators supported the learning process by reinforcing children's knowledge and skills and coordinating their safe and effective participation. This multi-stakeholder approach created a learning environment that promoted cooperation, responsibility, and a stronger sense of community.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviours
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Involving government sector
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

The workshop generated significant progress in transforming behaviours, promoting community action, raising awareness, involving the government sector, and strengthening competencies. Through practical activities, children gained knowledge about natural disasters and the impacts of climate change while developing safe behaviour skills. The use of earthquake whistles and personal emergency information cards helped foster habits of preparedness and encouraged students to respond more responsibly in emergency situations. The workshop also strengthened cooperation and solidarity among students, families, schools, and municipal units, reinforcing a shared culture of awareness and collective action within the community.

Activities such as drawing their "disaster-free cities" encouraged children to imagine safer environments and contributed to a common sense of responsibility. Awareness was further increased through informative sessions and hands-on learning on fires, earthquakes, floods, and landslides, which made disaster preparedness more concrete and understandable. The active involvement of Tepebaşı Municipality provided a strong example of local government engagement by offering both the setting and expert support for the activity. In addition, students improved their crisis management, observation, and problem-solving skills, while teachers and facilitators strengthened their capacity to apply experiential learning methods in sustainability and disaster education.

Youth dimension

The activity has a strong youth dimension by directly engaging students of the Eco-Schools Environmental Children's Council in the process. Through disaster awareness training, simulations, and drawing activities on their ideal disaster-free cities, children gained active learning experience. This participation strengthened their knowledge and skills in crisis management, safe behaviour, and community awareness, while also enhancing their sense of leadership, responsibility, and active participation.

Gender dimension

The activity includes a gender dimension by encouraging the equal participation throughout the process. All children were given equal opportunities to take part in disaster awareness training, simulations, and creative activities. This approach not only supports gender equality and inclusion but also enables equally to develop skills and leadership capacities in crisis management, safe behaviour, and community awareness.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Key lessons learned included that multi-stakeholder cooperation requires effective communication and flexible organization, that active student participation increases motivation, and that disaster awareness education is more effective when delivered through experiential methods. The project also showed that advance preparation, clear division of responsibilities, and continuous communication among stakeholders are critical factors for the success of similar initiatives. These elements not only improve implementation quality, but also strengthen participation, coordination, and the overall educational impact of the activity.

Further resources

- https://www.tepebasi.bel.tr/hd.asp?hid=14474
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DU5sZOvDIsJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- https://eskisehirdurum.com/eskisehir-gundem/tepebasi-belediye-meclisinde-eko-okullar-ve-cevre-cocuk-meclisi-tanitildi/94592 (Eskişehir Durum)
- https://www.2eylul.com.tr/eskisehirde-meclis-kursusunde-cocuklar-var-o-calistay-icin-sandiga-gittiler/ (2eylul.com.tr)
- https://muallazeyrekilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/ekookullaricevrecocukmeclisi16donem1calistayinakatildik_16976273.html (muallazeyrekilkokulu.meb.k12.tr)
- https://eskisehirdurum.com/eko-okullarda-2025-2026-egitim-yilinin-ilk-toplantisi-yapildi/89745 (Eskişehir Durum)
- https://www.sondakika.com/guncel/haber-eko-okullar-cevre-cocuk-meclisi-nin-calistayi-gerceklestirildi-19371184/ (Son Dakika)

Hitting the Breaks on Fossil Fuels

The award-winning Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) Programme Twinning category article is a student collaboration among Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain that examines how road transportation contributes to climate change and how young people perceive sustainable travel choices. Using surveys, interviews, and local investigations, the students explored transport habits, barriers to greener mobility, and possible solutions in their respective countries. Their survey, which included 50 students from each country, showed that gasoline and diesel-powered cars remain the dominant mode of transport, while students identified public transport, cycling, and walking as key ways to reduce emissions. However, they also highlighted major barriers, including high costs, limited public transport options, and unsafe cycling infrastructure.
The article further connects these findings to local and national examples, such as public transport improvements, cycling infrastructure, and low-emission mobility plans. Beyond reporting, the project also led to action through a Car-Free Day Challenge launched in the students' schools to encourage walking, cycling, and the use of public transport. Overall, the project combined youth research, international cooperation, environmental journalism, and practical school-based action to promote more sustainable transport habits and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Contacts

cevreningencsozculeri@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr

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General Description

The project aimed to examine how road transportation contributes to climate change, understand young people's views on sustainable travel, and identify barriers and solutions in Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain. Through student-led research, interviews, and surveys, it also sought to raise awareness and promote action by encouraging greener mobility choices such as walking, cycling, and public transport, including through a Car-Free Day Challenge in schools.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the project addressed **SDG 9** by helping students investigate sustainable mobility infrastructure and innovation in their own countries. The article examined practical solutions such as expanded public transport routes, electric buses, cycle paths, low-emission zones, rail renewal, and low-cost travel cards. By researching these examples through interviews, workshops, and local investigations, students learned how innovation and infrastructure can support lower-emission transport systems.

It addressed **SDG 11** by focusing on how cities can become more sustainable through cleaner and more accessible mobility. Students identified walking, cycling, and public transport as the main ways to reduce emissions, while also highlighting barriers such as high costs, limited transit options, and unsafe cycling infrastructure. The project moved beyond research into school-based action through the Car-Free Day Challenge, encouraging students and teachers to choose greener travel options in daily life.
It addressed **SDG 17** through direct international cooperation among students from Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain. This collaboration combined shared research, comparative learning, and dissemination across schools and media platforms, showing how partnerships can strengthen environmental education and collective action on transport and climate issues.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD

Transformative impact results

Focusing on Quality education and ESD transformed the project into a real-world learning process rather than a classroom exercise. Students from Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain investigated transport and climate change through surveys, interviews, workshops, and local research, then turned their findings into a joint YRE article. This strengthened their ability to analyse environmental problems, compare country contexts, communicate evidence clearly, and connect daily mobility choices with climate responsibility. The project also moved from learning to action through the Car-Free Day Challenge, encouraging students and teachers to apply sustainable travel choices in school life.

Key players involved

The key players were the student team from Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain, who designed and carried out the project through surveys, interviews, local investigations, and joint article writing on transport and climate change. During their Erasmus mobility in February 2025, they also took part in workshops led by Pablo Muñoz Nieto from Ecologistas en Acción and journalist Jorge Martín, whose sessions helped them understand the environmental impacts of transport and strengthen their reporting approach. For the Madrid field research, the students interviewed Fernando Sanz and Sara Luis, who contributed information on the city's public transport system and affordability measures. The students' schools were also important actors, as the project moved beyond reporting into action through a Car-Free Day Challenge encouraging students and teachers to choose walking, cycling, or public transport instead of cars.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviors
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

In transforming people's behaviors, the clearest achievement was the launch of the Car-Free Day Challenge in the participating schools. This encouraged students and teachers to choose walking, cycling, or public transport instead of cars and framed sustainable travel as a habit that can be practiced in everyday life rather than a one-time message.
In promoting community action, the project moved beyond research into collective school-based engagement. The challenge involved the school community and was designed for wider expansion to more schools, showing progress from awareness to shared action. The article was also disseminated through local media, school websites, and social media, extending its reach beyond the student team itself.
In raising awareness, students produced a comparative international article based on surveys, interviews, workshops, and local investigations in four countries. This made the links between transport, fossil fuels, emissions, and greener alternatives visible to a broader audience.
In strengthening competencies, students developed concrete skills in research, interviewing, data gathering, comparative analysis, and environmental journalism. By working across countries and turning evidence into a joint article, they strengthened both their sustainability understanding and their communication capacity.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension because it was designed, researched, and written by students from Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, and Spain. They explored transport and climate change through surveys, interviews, workshops, and local investigations, then turned their findings into a joint YRE article. The project also included youth-led action through a Car-Free Day Challenge in their schools, encouraging students and teachers to adopt greener habits.

Challenges or lessons learnt

A key lesson was that promoting sustainable mobility is difficult because daily transport habits are deeply rooted. The students found common barriers across countries, including the continued dominance of gasoline and diesel cars, high costs, limited public transport options, and unsafe cycling infrastructure. The project also showed that awareness alone is not enough. Education works better when paired with practical action. Through the Car-Free Day Challenge, the students learned that small, repeated actions can help turn sustainable travel from a one-time choice into a long-term habit.

Further resources

- https://yrecompetition.exposure.co/turkiye-slovenianbspgermany-spain
- https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1062414512572570&id=100064120924437&rdid=3VAw0pDgAfgesXVY#
- https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=122124758702795658&id=61573869743997&rdid=mzXjUKjieqxKN03v#
- https://www.facebook.com/100054376426259/posts/1151419210013949/?rdid=aJKRhHoOR87TfOWg#

Implementing the European Environment Agency's Marine Litter Watch Programme in Türkiye

Marine Litter Watch (MLW) is a citizen science initiative developed by the European Environment Agency to combat marine pollution. Marine litter results from human-generated waste being directly discarded into the sea or transported by rivers, wind, and storms. Because these materials negatively affect marine ecosystems, human health, and recreational activities, monitoring them is of great importance. The programme aims to raise awareness and support solutions to marine pollution by engaging participants in data collection processes. In Türkiye, it is implemented within the Blue Flag Programme by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV), in cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

Since October 2020, activities have been carried out on 25 beaches across the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Marmara regions with the participation of 2,715 volunteers and experts. Monitoring and clean-up activities are conducted four times a year, representing all four seasons, in areas without regular cleaning services. Collected marine litter is classified into more than 200 categories, and its weight is recorded whenever possible. The data are then submitted to the European Environment Agency system under the name "Blue Flag Türkiye."

These efforts support evidence-based decision-making in coastal management, generate reliable information on marine pollution, strengthen stakeholder cooperation, and transform beach clean-ups into scientific, data-producing actions.

Contacts

mavibayrak@turcev.org.tr
mavibayrakasistan@turcev.org.tr

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General Description

The aim of this project is to raise awareness of marine litter, enhance the quality of coastal clean-up campaigns, and encourage citizens and stakeholders to participate in data collection processes. By generating reliable and comparable data on marine litter along Türkiye's coasts, the programme supports informed decision-making, increases awareness of the sources of marine pollution, and contributes to the improvement of coastal areas in line with Blue Flag criteria.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses SDG 11 and SDG 17 through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach that combines awareness-raising, citizen participation, and evidence-based action.
Under **SDG 11**, monitoring and clean-up activities carried out in coastal areas without regular cleaning services contribute to cleaner, safer, and more sustainable coastal environments. Repeated monitoring at the same locations makes it possible to analyse the scale and types of human-generated marine litter transported by the sea. This provides reliable, comparable data on the extent, sources, and changes in marine pollution, supporting the reduction of environmental risks and the development of more sustainable coastal management strategies. At the same time, participants gain practical knowledge and stronger environmental awareness through direct involvement.

Under **SDG 17**, the programme creates a strong cooperation model through the active involvement of municipalities, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, experts, and volunteers. The transfer of collected data to the European Environment Agency system allows local actions in Türkiye to be evaluated at the international level and strengthens knowledge-sharing. This multi-stakeholder, data-driven approach supports educators, learners, communities, and institutions in working together more effectively toward sustainable development goals.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project creates transformative impact through a whole-institution approach by bringing together different stakeholders in a shared learning and implementation process. It is carried out with the active participation of municipalities, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, experts, and volunteers, thereby strengthening cooperation across institutions.

Marine litter monitoring goes beyond being a simple clean-up activity and enables institutions to learn together while improving evidence-based decision-making processes. By integrating scientific data production into coastal clean-up campaigns, the programme makes these efforts more systematic, meaningful, and sustainable.
The project also increases awareness of marine pollution, contributes to environmental management processes, and supports the wider implementation of Blue Flag criteria. Through this holistic approach, institutions are better equipped to develop coordinated, effective, and long-term responses to environmental challenges.

Key players involved

The programme is coordinated by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV) in cooperation with the European Environment Agency and the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Municipalities play a key role in implementation by organizing and carrying out monitoring and clean-up activities in the field. A total of 16 municipalities is involved across Türkiye's three main coastal regions: 6 in the Mediterranean, 6 in the Aegean, and 4 in the Marmara. Through their participation in marine litter monitoring and beach clean-up activities, local authorities contribute to environmental awareness and evidence-based decision-making.

In addition, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, tourism enterprises, experts, and volunteers actively support the programme. While municipalities and local institutions provide coordination on the ground, participants contribute to data collection and awareness-raising activities. The Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye is responsible for the application of the methodology, data management, and reporting. The collected data are transferred to the European Environment Agency system and assessed at the international level, strengthening cooperation and knowledge-sharing among all stakeholders.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviors
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Involving government and/or private sector

Progress made

The Marine Litter Watch Programme has generated positive impacts by transforming behaviours, promoting community action, raising awareness, and involving government and private sector actors. Through its activities, the programme has encouraged participants to adopt more environmentally responsible behaviours by increasing awareness of marine pollution and its sources. Since October 2020, a total of 2,715 volunteers and experts have taken part in monitoring and clean-up activities on 25 beaches, demonstrating strong and sustained engagement. Regular monitoring and clean-up actions have also promoted community participation and strengthened local environmental initiatives by improving the quality of coastal campaigns and aligning them with Blue Flag criteria. In addition, the programme has produced reliable, data-based information on the state of marine litter along Türkiye's coasts, helping municipalities, campaign organizers, and other stakeholders better understand the scale and sources of the problem. The active involvement of municipalities, civil society organizations, and private sector representatives in data collection and coastal management processes has further strengthened multi-stakeholder cooperation. This collaborative structure supports the preparation of non-awarded areas for improved beach management and contributes to the development of more effective and sustainable solutions in coastal areas.

Youth dimension

The programme includes a youth dimension by offering children and young people meaningful opportunities to participate in environmental action. Before coastal clean-up activities, young volunteers and students receive training on waste classification, recycling methods, and hygiene. As a result, they not only take part in clean-up efforts, but also develop informed behaviours in combating marine pollution and adopt sustainability awareness from an early age.

Gender dimension

While the programme does not include a specific gender-focused component, it promotes inclusive participation by encouraging equal involvement in monitoring, clean-up, and awareness-raising activities. This approach supports equal access to environmental learning, civic engagement, and community action, while encouraging shared responsibility for marine protection and sustainable coastal management.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges in implementing the programme was ensuring continuity in areas without regular cleaning services and maintaining coordination among stakeholders over time. Another key challenge was the consistent application of the standard methodology during field data collection. At the same time, these experiences highlighted the importance of inter-institutional cooperation and contributed to the further development of evidence-based environmental management approaches. The programme showed that long-term coordination, methodological consistency, and shared responsibility are essential for effective and sustainable marine litter monitoring.

Further resources

- Blue Flag Türkiye website: https://www.mavibayrak.org.tr/turkiye/anasayfa.aspx
- European Environment Agency Marine Litter Watch Programme web links:
  - https://marinelitterwatch.discomap.eea.europa.eu/
  - https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/europes-seas-and-coasts/assessments/marine-litterwatch/data-and-results/marine-litterwatch-data-viewer
- Reporting Guidance for Marine Litter Watch Programme: https://marinelitterwatch.discomap.eea.europa.eu/documents/Reporting_guidance_for_MLW_Reportnet3_v.1.0.pdf
- Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality:
  - https://www.instagram.com/reel/DSkRuG3DZcc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
  - https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRwoBvtja5G/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
  - https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNiWL1fNhrz/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==

- Ayvalık Municipality: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVf2EVHCIlp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- Kaytazdere Municipality: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQbqAdhARO0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
- Bodrum Municipality: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GW9oZITot8
- Didim Municipality: https://www.instagram.com/p/C3ampiUIlBv/?img_index=8&igsh=MTNodWRvbnkwc2d6OA==
- Şile Municipality: https://www.instagram.com/p/C1UMJnxob8K/?img_index=9&igsh=MTlkY2FjZHhuY21jYw==
- İzmir Metropolitan Municipality: https://www.instagram.com/p/CzLPnjgIvNf/?img_index=5&igsh=MTBkcjlxZm1iYTMydw%3D%3D

LEAF Expands Its Impact Across Türkiye with Regional Festivals

Coordinated in Türkiye by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye, the Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) Programme concluded the 2024-2025 academic year with a series of regional festivals held in Bursa, Mersin, Antalya, Samsun, Adıyaman, and Denizli. Designed to strengthen students' connection with nature, promote ecosystem awareness, and support sustainable life skills, these events celebrated a year of nature-based and experiential environmental learning.

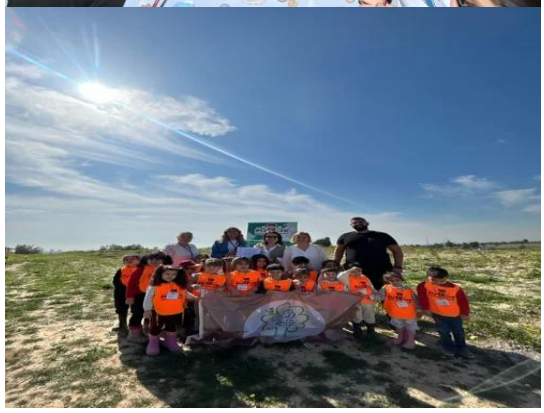
To improve the quality and reach of implementation, a Provincial Coordination System was introduced in provinces with high participation. This structure strengthened collaboration among teachers and enabled the organization of large-scale festivals in several regions for the first time, significantly increasing the programme's visibility and outreach.

The festivals brought together 343 teachers and 2,250 students from 100 schools through joyful, participatory activities such as orienteering, composting, recycling workshops, tree planting, biodiversity games, and forest-themed learning experiences. The initiative demonstrated the value of inter-institutional cooperation and community-based environmental education, while offering a scalable model for expanding the impact of LEAF and fostering stronger environmental awareness among younger generations.

Contacts

okullardaorman@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr



All required copyright permissions related to the activity have been obtained by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye.

General Description

The goal of the project is to strengthen students' connection with nature, build ecosystem awareness, and support the development of sustainable life skills through nature-based and experiential learning. Through regional festivals and a Provincial Coordination System, the programme also aims to improve collaboration among teachers, expand the quality and reach of implementation, and increase the visibility and long-term impact of the LEAF Programme across Türkiye.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses SDG 11 and SDG 17 through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach grounded in nature-based, experiential, and community-connected learning.

Under **SDG 11**, the regional festivals helped children strengthen their connection with nature, develop ecosystem awareness, and build sustainable life skills through hands-on activities such as orienteering, composting, recycling workshops, tree identification, sapling planting, and biodiversity games. By taking place in public learning environments such as parks, forests, and outdoor academies, the programme supported children's understanding of sustainable and ecologically sensitive communities. It also helped educators enrich environmental learning through joyful, participatory methods that linked schools with local environments and institutions.

Under **SDG 17**, the programme created a strong partnership model by bringing together provincial coordinators, teachers, schools, municipalities, provincial education authorities, university academics, and other local partners. The newly introduced Provincial Coordination System strengthened collaboration among teachers and expanded the quality, visibility, and reach of implementation at school and provincial levels. Across Bursa, Mersin, Antalya, Samsun, Adıyaman, and Denizli, the festivals engaged 343 teachers, 2,250 students, and 100 schools, demonstrating how multi-stakeholder cooperation can widen educational impact and foster stronger environmental consciousness among younger generations and their communities.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project generated transformative impact under both Quality Education and ESD and the Whole-Institution Approach. Under **Quality Education and ESD**, the regional festivals moved environmental learning beyond the classroom and strengthened nature-based, experiential education through activities such as orienteering, composting, recycling workshops, seed ball making, biodiversity games, tree identification, cooking classes, and sapling planting. These experiences helped students build ecosystem awareness, sustainable life skills, and a stronger emotional connection with nature, while giving teachers practical methods for joyful, participatory environmental learning.

Under the **Whole-Institution Approach**, the introduction of the Provincial Coordination System created stronger collaboration among teachers and improved implementation at both school and provincial levels. The festivals also brought together schools, provincial education authorities, municipalities, university academics, and other local partners, showing how institutions can function as shared communities of transformational learning. Across six provinces, the programme engaged 343 teachers, 2,250 students, and 100 schools, expanding LEAF's visibility, reach, and long-term impact.

Key players involved

The key players involved in the project are the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV), provincial coordinators, teachers, schools, municipalities, provincial public authorities, university academics, and students. TÜRÇEV coordinated the Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) Programme in Türkiye and supported the broader implementation of the regional festivals. The Provincial Coordination System helped strengthen collaboration among teachers and improve implementation at school and provincial levels. Teachers and participating schools played a central role in carrying out workshops and festival activities, while students took part in nature-based, experiential learning activities across the events. Municipalities and provincial authorities supported the organization of festivals in several provinces, including Bursa, Antalya, Denizli, and Adıyaman. In Samsun, academics from Ondokuz Mayıs University contributed academic support, and in some provinces additional public institutions also supported the activities. Together, these enabled large-scale, participatory environmental learning across multiple regions of Türkiye.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviors
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Involving government and/or private sector
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project achieved visible progress in transforming behaviours, promoting community action, raising awareness, involving public institutions, and strengthening competencies. Through nature-based and participatory activities such as orienteering, composting, recycling workshops, seed ball making, tree identification, cooking classes, biodiversity games, and sapling planting, students developed more environmentally responsible attitudes and sustainable life skills while strengthening their connection with nature. Educators also gained practical experience in delivering joyful, experiential environmental learning.

At the community level, the regional festivals created broad participation by bringing together 343 teachers, 2,250 students, and 100 schools across Bursa, Mersin, Antalya, Samsun, Adıyaman, and Denizli, significantly expanding the programme's outreach and visibility. The Provincial Coordination System further strengthened collaboration among teachers and improved implementation at both school and provincial levels.

The project also raised environmental awareness through large-scale public events supported by municipalities, provincial education authorities, university academics, and other local partners. Examples include academic support from Ondokuz Mayıs University in Samsun, municipal support in Denizli and Bursa, and inter-institutional cooperation in Antalya. Together, these achievements show stronger local ownership, wider institutional engagement, and increased environmental consciousness among children and their communities.

Youth dimension

The project has a strong youth dimension because it is centred on children's and students' active participation in nature-based learning. Across six provinces, the regional festivals engaged 2,250 students from 100 schools in hands-on activities such as orienteering, composting, recycling workshops, biodiversity games, tree identification, cooking classes, and sapling planting. These experiences strengthened younger generations' environmental awareness, sustainable life skills, and connection with nature through joyful and participatory learning.

Gender dimension

The regional festivals are presented as inclusive, participatory activities involving students from different schools and age groups, but the project does not specify any gender-targeted measures, objectives, or outcomes.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Scaling the programme across multiple provinces required stronger coordination and collaboration mechanisms. A key lesson learned was the value of the newly introduced Provincial Coordination System, which helped foster collaboration among teachers and improve implementation quality and reach at both school and provincial levels. The regional festivals also showed that large-scale, participatory events supported by municipalities, public authorities, academics, and schools can significantly expand the programme's visibility, outreach, and educational impact.

Further resources

- https://www.leaf.global/news-stories/2025/7/29/the-learning-about-ecosystems-and-forests-programme-expands-its-impact-across-trkiye-with-regional-festivals
- https://www.okullardaorman.org.tr/haberDetay.aspx?haber_id=174&utm
- https://www.okullardaorman.org.tr/haberDetay.aspx?haber_id=176&utm
- https://www.okullardaorman.org.tr/haberDetay.aspx?haber_id=175&utm
- https://www.leaf.global/our-programme
- https://www.okullardaorman.org.tr/
- https://turcev.org.tr/V2/icerikDetay.aspx?icerik_id=19

Outdoor Nature Learning with the Olive Branch Classroom

The Olive Branch Outdoor Classroom is an innovative educational model developed by Alanya Hamit Özçelik Primary School, an Eco-School in Alanya participating in the Eco-Schools Programme coordinated nationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye. The project aims to ensure students' active participation in nature-based, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning processes. The outdoor classroom consists of eight thematic learning stations: theatre, mathematics, science and STEM, gastronomy, art, traditional games, an open library, and an agricultural area. This structure holistically supports students' cognitive, social-emotional, and psychomotor development.
The activity was implemented through a multi-stakeholder approach involving school management, teachers, students, parents, and Alanya Municipality. Through this model, students gained environmental literacy, biodiversity awareness, healthy lifestyle habits, energy efficiency awareness, and global citizenship skills through direct experience. By transforming sustainability awareness from theory into practice, the project enables students to become active problem-solvers.
The Olive Branch Outdoor Classroom is a scalable example of good practice that transforms the school's physical learning environment and strengthens an institutional culture of sustainability. It embodies an integrated, participatory, and community-oriented approach to education in harmony with nature.

Contacts

almila@turcev.org.tr
ekookullar@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr

General Description

The Olive Branch Outdoor Classroom project aims to ensure students' active participation in nature-based, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning. Its goals include helping students develop knowledge and skills in environmental literacy, biodiversity awareness, healthy living, and energy efficiency; encouraging them to apply sustainability in daily life; and creating a participatory, collaboration-based learning ecosystem connecting the school with the local community.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The Olive Branch Outdoor Classroom project supports SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 17- Partnerships for the Goals through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach.

Under **SDG 11**, the outdoor classroom transforms the school's physical spaces into an inclusive and safe learning environment where students engage in nature-based, experiential learning. Through hands-on activities in agriculture, biodiversity, STEM, art, and healthy living, learners gain environmental awareness while strengthening responsibility, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. By connecting the school with the municipality and the local community, the project also helps foster a stronger culture of sustainable and resilient community life.

Under **SDG 17**, the project is implemented through multi-stakeholder cooperation among school leadership, teachers, students, parents, and Alanya Municipality. This partnership expands sustainability awareness through ESD and supports students in becoming active problem-solvers and community-oriented individuals. In addition, collaboration within local, national, and international Eco-Schools networks encourages knowledge-sharing and the replication of good practices. In this way, the project offers a strong partnership model for sustainable development while generating positive impact on learners, educators, and the wider community.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project primarily addresses the priority strands of Quality Education and ESD, and the Whole-Institution Approach / institutions as communities of transformational learning.
Under **Quality Education and ESD**, the outdoor classroom moved learning beyond the traditional classroom and provided students with nature-based, practical, and interdisciplinary education. Students integrated academic knowledge with environmental literacy, biodiversity awareness, energy efficiency, and healthy living skills. This approach increased the relevance and retention of learning while strengthening problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and responsibility.

Under the **Whole-Institution Approach**, the project transformed the school culture through multi-stakeholder cooperation involving school leadership, teachers, students, parents, and Alanya Municipality. The outdoor classroom enabled not only students, but also teachers and parents, to embrace sustainability as a shared value. In this way, the school developed into a learning community centred on environmental and social responsibility.
By focusing on these two priority strands, the project strengthened students' environmental awareness and active citizenship skills, built sustainable partnerships between the school and the local community, and demonstrated the practical value of an innovative, experience-based model in education.

Key players involved

The main stakeholders of the Olive Branch Outdoor Classroom project are Hamit Özçelik Primary School management and teachers, students, parents and families, Alanya Municipality, and Eco-Schools Programme, coordinated nationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV). School management and teachers led the design of the outdoor classroom, planned the thematic stations, and implemented the educational activities. Students actively participated in experiential learning processes, strengthening their observation, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Parents and families supported the activities, reinforced children's learning experiences, and helped strengthen the connection between school and community. Alanya Municipality contributed to the implementation by supporting the use of outdoor spaces and providing logistical assistance, ensuring the continuity of multi-stakeholder cooperation. Eco-Schools Programme provided guidance for sustainability education and, through its national action plan, made the establishment of an outdoor classroom a required action for every Eco-School. Together, these stakeholders helped transform the school into a community-based learning centre.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviours
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Involving government and/or private sector
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project has generated meaningful progress in transforming behaviours, promoting community action, raising awareness, involving the government sector, and strengthening competencies. Through activities on agriculture, biodiversity, and energy efficiency in the outdoor classroom, students learned sustainable living habits in a practical way and began to carry environmental responsibility and conscious consumption behaviours into daily life. The project also promoted community action through cooperation among the school, parents, and Alanya Municipality, creating a community-based learning process in which children, teachers, and families worked together and strengthened local sustainability awareness. At the same time, nature-based experiences helped students and other participants develop a deeper understanding of biodiversity, climate change, and the protection of natural resources, reinforcing awareness and supporting the translation of knowledge into action. The involvement of Alanya Municipality, through logistical and space-related support, made the implementation of the project possible and demonstrated the importance of local government engagement in sustainability education. In addition, students strengthened their problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and practical learning skills, while teachers enhanced their capacity in experiential learning and multi-stakeholder educational management.

Youth dimension

The project includes a strong youth dimension by centring students' active participation and enabling them to take part in leadership and decision-making processes. Through experiential learning at thematic stations, students develop skills in problem-solving, collaboration, and responsibility while exploring solutions to environmental challenges. This approach helps young people embrace sustainability awareness from an early age and supports them in becoming active contributors who can make a positive difference in their communities.

Gender dimension

The project includes a gender dimension by encouraging the equal participation of all students. Activities in the outdoor classroom provide with the same opportunities to learn, collaborate, and take on leadership roles. In this way, the project supports gender equality in environmental awareness, sustainability skills, and shared responsibility, while fostering an inclusive educational environment where every student can actively contribute and benefit equally.

Challenges or lessons learnt

The main challenges in implementing the project were the physical arrangement of outdoor spaces and the safe establishment of the thematic learning stations. In addition, coordination and communication within a multi-stakeholder cooperation process were initially time-consuming. The most important lesson learned was that experiential and participatory approaches can create lasting environmental awareness and behavioural change among students while also transforming institutional culture. These findings show that well-designed outdoor learning environments can serve as powerful tools for sustainability education and whole-school transformation.

Further resources

- https://hamitozcelikilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/acik-hava-sinifimiz-acildi_16388302.html
- https://hamitozcelikilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/tema/index.php
- https://www.alanyapostasi.com.tr/alanyada-cevre-icin-eko-okullardan-zeytin-etkinligi
- https://www.sonalanya.com/haber-alanyada-egitimde-bir-ilk-acik-hava-sinifi-acildi-43820.html
- https://www.gazetealanya.com/alanyada-egitimde-bir-ilk-minikler-senlikte-bulustu
- https://hamitozcelikilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/listele_acik-hava-sinifi.html

UNESCO-Recognized SDG Entrepreneurship Workshop: Scaling Local Actions through ESD

The 'Entrepreneurship Workshop for Sustainable Development Goals' is a transformative pedagogical model implemented at Murat Kantarcı Science and Art Center (BİLSEM) and recognized as a 'Good Practice' by the UNESCO SDG 4 Knowledge Hub. This project addresses the critical gap between global sustainability policies and local classroom enactment by empowering gifted students to become 'climate literates' and proactive change-makers.
Utilizing a structured **Think–Feel–Act** model, the workshop moves beyond passive information delivery. Students engage in deep systems thinking (**Think**), cultivate ethical sensitivity and empathy (**Feel**), and transition into evidence-based professional agency by prototyping sustainable ventures (**Act**). By integrating Socratic questioning and Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routines, the program encourages learners to interrogate the values and hidden trade-offs within SDGs 6, 7, 9, and 11.
The workshop serves as a 'translation mechanism,' scaling global commitments into tangible community-led solutions, such as smart irrigation and renewable energy prototypes. This model provides a scalable and transferable blueprint for greening teacher education and fostering global citizenship, demonstrating how local educational initiatives can serve as powerful catalysts for systemic transformation across the UNECE region, ensuring no one is left behind in the green transition.

Contacts

Primary Contact / Project Lead: Çelebi KALKAN
Title/Position: Expert Teacher & UNESCO GEP Member
Organization: Murat Kantarcı Science and Arts Center
Address: GÜLTEPE MAH. TALAS BUL. NO 1/2 MELİKGAZİ / KAYSERİ, Türkiye
Email: celebikalkan@gmail.com
Phone: +905543040555
Institutional Contact (Optional): Ümit SÖĞÜT



General Description

The goal is to cultivate "climate literates" by transforming global sustainability goals into local entrepreneurial actions. Utilizing a structured **Think–Feel–Act** model, the workshop empowers students to design evidence-based solutions for 21st-century challenges. It aims to bridge the gap between policy and practice by fostering ethical reasoning, systems thinking, and professional agency. Ultimately, the program prepares learners to become responsible global citizens who can lead the green transition through innovative, community-led prototypes.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project addresses sustainability challenges by transforming learners from passive observers into proactive "problem-solvers". Through ESD, we tackle **SDG 6** (Water) and **SDG 7** (Energy) by tasking students to develop smart irrigation and renewable energy prototypes, directly impacting local resource management. These initiatives foster **SDG 9** (Innovation) by embedding entrepreneurial mindsets within the green transition.

For educators, the program provides a structured "translation mechanism" to align classroom practice with global policy. Learners develop systemic thinking and ethical agency, moving beyond awareness to professional accountability. The community benefits as these student-led innovations contribute to **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities), creating resilient, inclusive urban settlements.

Finally, the project strengthens **SDG 17** (Partnerships) by revitalizing the link between our institution, universities, and UNESCO networks to scale local impact to a national level. This holistic approach ensures that ESD acts as a driver for systemic transformation, raising awareness and changing educational behaviors across the country to ensure no one is left behind.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Focusing on these priority strands has turned our institution into a "community of transformational learning". By integrating Quality Education, we moved beyond content delivery to fostering "sustainable mindsets" and "green skills". The transformative impact is most evident in our students' ability to apply systemic thinking to real-world problems.

The **Whole-institution approach** catalyzed a cultural shift; sustainability is no longer an isolated subject but a core institutional strategy. This has empowered educators to act as pedagogical mediators, aligning school governance with the 2030 Agenda.

Through the **Entrepreneurship and Innovation** strand, we bridged the gap between "climate awareness" and "professional agency". Students have transitioned from passive learners to active "problem-solvers," designing prototypes that address local environmental and economic challenges. This strand specifically accelerated the "implementation of the SDGs" by fostering innovative mindsets capable of scaling local solutions to global impact. Ultimately, this focus has strengthened competencies and transformed behaviors, creating a scalable model that demonstrates how ESD serves as a powerful driver for systemic transformation across the UNECE region.

Key players involved

The project thrives on a multi-stakeholder collaboration that integrates formal education with professional teacher training. Expert teachers act as pedagogical mediators, designing the "Think-Feel-Act" framework and facilitating Socratic inquiry. Gifted students are the central innovators, moving from learners to "problem-solvers" who design and prototype sustainable ventures for SDGs 6 and 7.

The School Management provides strategic leadership by adopting a whole-institution approach, aligning institutional governance with UNESCO standards. A key strategic partnership (SDG 17) is with Erciyes University, Faculty of Education. Prospective teachers enrolled in the "Sustainable Development and Education" course participate in applied observation within our workshop. This allows them to witness how theoretical ESD models are operationalized in a classroom setting, bridging the gap between academic theory and pedagogical practice. This collaboration ensures the project serves as a scalable model for future educators across the country.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people’s behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project has achieved significant progress in transforming behaviors and strengthening competencies by moving students from "climate anxiety" to "proactive agency." Learners now apply systems thinking to design tangible prototypes for SDGs 6 and 7. The UNESCO "Good Practice" recognition serves as a global benchmark for these achievements.

In raising awareness and promoting community action, students' socially responsible ventures have initiated local dialogues on resource conservation. A major milestone in changing educational policies and involving the government/academic sector is our partnership with Erciyes University. By providing applied observation opportunities for prospective teachers in the "Sustainable Development and Education" course, we are directly influencing the next generation of educators. This bridges the gap between academic theory and classroom practice, fostering a "whole-institution" culture of transformational learning.
Furthermore, these collaborations have strengthened the "pedagogical translation mechanism," ensuring that global SDGs are scaled into effective local curricula. These achievements demonstrate that ESD is not just a subject but a systemic driver for behavior change and policy innovation across the UNECE region.

Youth dimension

The project centers on youth leadership by positioning students as "active problem-solvers" rather than passive learners. Utilizing Socratic inquiry, students take full ownership of the entrepreneurial process—from identifying local sustainability challenges to prototyping tangible solutions for SDGs 6, 7, and 11. This youth-led approach fosters "professional agency," empowering the next generation to lead the green transition. By designing socially responsible ventures, young innovators demonstrate how their voices can drive systemic change.

Gender dimension

The project ensures gender equality by providing equal access and leadership opportunities for all students in STEM and entrepreneurship. We actively challenge gender stereotypes by encouraging female students to lead technical prototyping and strategic decision-making roles for SDGs 6, 7, and 9. This inclusive environment fosters diverse perspectives, ensuring that sustainable solutions are designed through a lens of equity. By empowering all genders as innovative "problem-solvers," the workshop promotes a balanced and representative leadership in the green transition.

Challenges or lessons learnt

A primary challenge was bridging the gap between abstract policy goals and classroom-level enactment. We learned that policy clarity does not guarantee pedagogical quality; structured mediation tools like Thinking Routines are essential for deep inquiry. Another lesson was the importance of "applied observation" for prospective teachers to demystify complex ESD frameworks. We realized that fostering "professional agency" in students requires moving beyond climate anxiety toward solution-oriented prototyping. These lessons emphasize that successful ESD implementation depends on systemic collaboration, ethical reasoning, and a whole-institution commitment to transformational learning.

Further resources

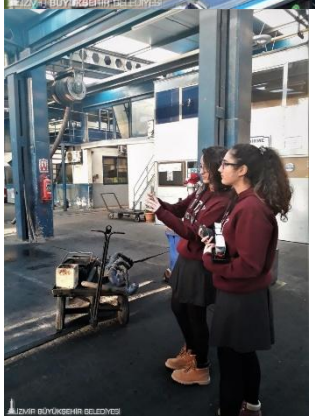
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/unescodanmerkezimizekureselbasariprojemiziyiuygulamaornegisecildi_17161098.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/scientixorganisersaward2025muratkantarcibilsem_16386731.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/muratkantarcibilsem2025yaraticibecerilerhaftasindaturkiyeyitemsilediyor_16494558.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/surdurulebilirkalkinmaamaclariicingirisimcilikatolyesi_16482603.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/unescodanmerkezimizekureselbasariprojemiziyiuygulamaornegisecildi_17161098.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/scientixorganisersaward2025muratkantarcibilsem_16386731.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/muratkantarcibilsem2025yaraticibecerilerhaftasindaturkiyeyitemsilediyor_16494558.html
- https://muratkantarcibilsem.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/surdurulebilirkalkinmaamaclariicingirisimcilikatolyesi_16482603.html
- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_YW7j7ZctKz-z1vsxrnUw3DVb8wGGaN3/view?usp=sharing

Transportation with Zero Emission

Transportation with Zero Emission presents how students in Türkiye explored sustainable urban transport through the Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) Programme. In this example, students examined İzmir's electric bus initiative and reported on how the system combines renewable energy, innovation and public benefit. Their investigation showed that ESHOT developed the project after a long preparation process, launched 20 fully electric buses in June 2017, and supplied their energy through solar panels installed on ESHOT buildings. The students' article highlighted that the buses reduce dependence on diesel, lower air, noise and vibration pollution, and generate major financial savings compared with conventional buses. The project also showed how environmental journalism can help young people research a local sustainability issue, understand its broader significance, and communicate evidence-based findings to the public. Through this work, learners connected climate-conscious transport, sustainable energy use and municipal innovation, while also encouraging wider awareness of environmentally friendly public transportation solutions that can inspire other cities.

Contacts

cevreningencsozculeri@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr



All required copyright permissions related to the activity have been obtained by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye.

General Description

The project aimed to help students investigate and communicate a local sustainability solution through environmental journalism. By focusing on İzmir's electric buses, it sought to raise awareness of renewable energy-based public transport, show its environmental and economic benefits, and encourage wider support for cleaner urban mobility. In line with YRE Programme, it also aimed to strengthen young people's research, reporting and public communication skills on environmental issues.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 7*** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

Through Education for Sustainable Development, the project addressed SDG 7, 9 and 11 by turning a local transport initiative into a student-led environmental learning process. Within the YRE framework, learners investigated İzmir's electric buses, interviewed officials, and reported their findings for a wider audience. This addressed SDG 7 by showing how public transport can use solar energy instead of diesel. It addressed SDG 9 by examining sustainable infrastructure and innovation, including domestically produced electric buses, charging points, special training for drivers, and energy recovery systems. It addressed SDG 11 by highlighting how cleaner public transport can reduce air, noise and vibration pollution while improving urban life.

The impact was visible mainly on learners, community and country level. Students strengthened their research, interview and environmental reporting skills while gaining a concrete understanding of sustainable mobility. The community benefited from increased public awareness. At country level, the work contributed to the national YRE process and presented a practical example that could inspire similar environmentally friendly transport solutions in other cities.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD

Transformative impact results

Focusing on Quality education and ESD transformed the project from a simple transport topic into an active learning experience. Students investigated a real local sustainability solution, interviewed ESHOT officials, and turned their findings into a public-facing environmental report. This strengthened their research, critical thinking and communication skills while helping them understand how cleaner mobility can contribute to sustainable urban life.

Key players involved

İzmir Private Turkish College students Tuna Kısaağa and Bengisu Aksoy prepared the article on İzmir's electric buses within the Young Reporters for the Environment Programme framework, investigating the issue and turning it into an environmental report for public awareness. ESHOT was the main institutional actor: it developed and implemented the electric bus project, supplied the buses' energy through its solar system, and shared the project's background and outcomes.

Positive impact areas

- Raising awareness
- Involving government and/or private sector
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

In raising awareness, the project turned İzmir's electric buses into a visible environmental learning story. Through the YRE process, students researched the issue, prepared an article, and helped communicate why cleaner public transport matters for air quality, climate-conscious urban transport, and public budgets. The municipal news coverage also amplified this message and presented the project as an example for other cities.

The project brought together student reporters with ESHOT/İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and a domestic manufacturer. Concrete achievements included the launch of 20 electric buses, solar-based energy supply, charging points, special driver training, and technical support from engineers and technicians.

In strengthening competencies, students developed practical skills in investigation, interviewing, evidence-based writing, and environmental reporting. By examining a real local sustainability solution and presenting its purpose, implementation process, and results, they strengthened both their environmental understanding and their communication capacity.

Youth dimension

The project has a clear youth dimension because it was carried out by student reporters within the Young Reporters for the Environment Programme. Young people investigated a local sustainability issue, interviewed ESHOT officials, documented the project, and turned their findings into an environmental article for a wider audience. In this way, youth were not passive learners but active researchers and communicators of sustainable transport solutions.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Sustainable transport solutions must be adapted to local conditions; İzmir's climate and geography shaped the technical specifications and led to the choice of solar energy. The project also showed that innovation needs strong planning, trained drivers, and expert technical staff to move successfully from idea to practice.

Further resources

- https://www.izmir.bel.tr/tr/Haberler/35-ulkede-yarisacaklar/35505/156
- https://www.yre.global/
- https://www.cevreningencsozculeri.org.tr/

What's Your Name, Tree?

The project began when a student at Mehmet Manisalı Kindergarten in Acıpayam, Denizli, wondered whether two trees he had seen in Cumhuriyet Park were really the same species. Although his teacher initially thought they were, the child carefully examined the leaves and noticed important differences. This small discovery became the starting point of a broader learning journey led by school principal Raziye İkbal Aksakallı, teachers, and 40 students, in cooperation with local stakeholders.

Implemented within the Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) Programme, coordinated in Türkiye by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Türkiye (TÜRÇEV), the project encouraged children to identify tree species in their local environment, observe nature closely, and carry out simple research. With support from the Forest Directorate, local authorities, parents, and the wider community, the tree species in the park were identified, documented, and labelled with QR-coded signs.

Cumhuriyet Park was transformed into a learning space and took an important step toward becoming a botanical park, strengthening both children's nature-based learning and public awareness of the protection and improvement of urban green spaces.

Contacts

ikbalaksakall@hotmail.com
748931@meb.k12.tr
okullardaorman@turcev.org.tr
egitimasistan@turcev.org.tr
Mobile: +90 505 7787277

All photographs and visuals used within the project were produced by the project team, and the copyright belongs to the project implementers. All materials were prepared for educational and promotional purposes.

General Description

The goal of the project is to draw attention to the tree and plant diversity in Cumhuriyet Park, help children recognize and understand the natural elements in their local environment, and raise public awareness of the protection of urban green spaces. It also aims to strengthen children's connection with nature through observation-based learning and to promote greater community sensitivity toward biodiversity in the city.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The project is particularly linked to **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Through an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach, children were encouraged to explore, observe, and research the trees and plant species in Cumhuriyet Park, helping them better understand urban ecosystems and develop a stronger sense of environmental responsibility. Nature walks and observation-based learning enabled young learners to recognize the value of urban green spaces and the importance of protecting them, contributing to more sustainable and environmentally conscious communities.

The project also addressed **SDG 17** by building strong cooperation among the school, local authorities, the Forest Directorate, parents, and the wider community. Through this partnership, the park was transformed into a learning environment and became a nature education space that can also be visited by other schools in the city. Educators benefited from a collaborative, place-based learning model, while the wider community gained greater awareness of biodiversity, urban nature, and the shared responsibility of protecting green areas.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning

Transformative impact results

The project aligns with the priority strands of Quality Education, ESD and the Whole-Institution Approach. Under Quality Education and ESD, children learned through nature-based activities, observation, and direct engagement with their local environment. This experiential approach helped them build a stronger connection with nature, improve their awareness of biodiversity, and develop a deeper understanding of sustainable living. Learning became more meaningful because it was rooted in real places and real questions emerging from children's own curiosity.

Under the Whole-Institution Approach, the project extended beyond student learning and brought together teachers, parents, school management, local authorities, and the Forest Directorate in a shared learning process. This collaboration transformed Cumhuriyet Park into an educational space and strengthened the school's role as a community-based centre for sustainability learning. It also contributed to the development of a school culture that values participation, cooperation, and environmental responsibility.

Key players involved

The key players involved in the project were children, teachers, school management, parents, and local institutions. Children were at the centre of the process, actively participating in observation, research, and discovery-based activities. Teachers acted as guides, planning and facilitating the learning process while encouraging children's engagement with nature. School management supported the overall coordination of the project and helped ensure that the necessary resources were available. The Regional Directorate of Forestry and relevant experts contributed technical knowledge, particularly in identifying the tree species found in the park area. Parents and the wider local community also played a supportive role throughout the process. With the support of local authorities and community stakeholders, the park area was improved and organized as a space suitable for nature-based learning and environmental education.

Positive impact areas

- Transforming people's behaviours
- Promoting community action
- Raising awareness
- Involving government and/or private sector
- Strengthening competencies

Progress made

The project led to significant progress in several areas. First, children's nature observation skills and environmental awareness improved considerably. By examining the trees and plant species in the park, they gained knowledge about biodiversity and developed a stronger habit of observing nature carefully and consciously.

Second, the project transformed Cumhuriyet Park into a more visible and meaningful learning environment. The diversity of trees and plants in the park was identified and highlighted, and over time the area evolved into an educational space with the qualities of a botanical park. As a result, the park became not only a learning area for the project school, but also a valuable resource that can be used by other schools in the district for nature education activities.

Third, the collaboration established between the municipality, the Forestry Directorate, and educational institutions helped extend the project beyond the school itself. This cooperation strengthened local ownership of the initiative and contributed to raising environmental awareness across the wider community. In this way, the project created both educational and social impact at the local level.

Youth dimension

The project includes a strong youth dimension by enabling children to engage directly with nature and develop their skills in exploration, inquiry, and research. Through observation activities, they became more familiar with biodiversity and gained a stronger sense of responsibility for protecting nature. By learning through hands-on experience, children were placed at the centre of the process as active participants rather than passive learners.

Gender dimension

The project includes a gender dimension by ensuring equal participation in all activities. Nature observation, research, and exploration tasks were carried out with the active involvement of all children, without gender-based discrimination. The project encouraged every child to express their ideas and take responsibility in the activities, helping to create an inclusive and equal learning environment while reinforcing that care for nature is a shared responsibility for everyone.

Challenges or lessons learnt

One of the main challenges during the project was accurately identifying and presenting the tree species found in the park. Seasonal changes made it difficult to distinguish some species at certain times. To address this, cooperation was established with the Forestry Directorate and relevant experts, which helped ensure access to accurate information. This experience highlighted the importance of inter-institutional collaboration in nature-based projects and showed that expert support can significantly strengthen both the implementation process and the educational value of the project.

Further resources

- https://www.instagram.com/p/DIRFRs9qnWL/?igsh=NGNjMW9vZmN4dGRv
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DIOTSg_tnE0/?igsh=cDBxOTkwOTg2aWVk
- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIRItjfMVG9/?igsh=N2FydW1nZmUzeTR0
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DIQk2TvMy91/?igsh=MXV3YnJqd3BheDc4dw==
- https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIRItjfMVG9/?igsh=N2FydW1nZmUzeTR0
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DIiePM0sInU/?igsh=MWYydWNjanNueW1rcg==
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DILXqxeMQSf/?igsh=MWp0NjE0czBtd29xbw==
- https://www.instagram.com/p/DU6RDtPiL26/?img_index=3&igsh=bmhrbWJwbmx2c3Nv

Hygiene 360°: Transforming WASH Education in Ukraine

NGO “Women and Children of Ukraine is Our Future”, in partnership with UNICEF, implements the Program “Comprehensive WASH Response in Urban and Suburban Areas of Ukraine.” The initiative ensures sustainable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in conflict-affected regions, while embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into formal and non-formal learning systems.

The program includes a strong educational component. Two innovative training packages were developed – *Hygiene 360°: Body, Mind, Food, Environment* and *Menstrual Hygiene: Health and Comfort*. Almost 6,000 training packages were distributed across over 350 institutions, alongside 118 life-skills training sessions reaching more than 3,800 participants.

By integrating gender equality, inclusion, digital innovation, whole-institution approaches, and participatory methodologies, the program contributes directly to SDG 6 and supports broader sustainable development goals. It demonstrates how ESD can accelerate systemic transformation – empowering educators, adolescents, caregivers, and local authorities to adopt sustainable practices, reinforce inclusive policies, and sustain community-based WASH systems in crisis context.

Contacts

E-mail: women.and.children.ua@gmail.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/WCOUOF


Women Children Ukraine
HARVARD
Children Ukraine
Ukraine
unicef
СТАРТ
Women Children Ukraine

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General Description

The program aims to ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation, and strengthened hygiene practices for vulnerable populations in conflict-affected regions of Ukraine. It integrates long-term infrastructure support with education, life-skills development, and institutional capacity-building, prioritizing children, adolescents, educators, caregivers, and internally displaced families while embedding gender-sensitive, inclusive and resilience-based approaches.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 6*** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

The program addresses SDG 6 and several cross-cutting SDGs by combining infrastructure rehabilitation with transformative learning. It includes such core activities as improvement of WASH services and facilities in social institutions, as well as promotion of good hygiene practices and menstrual health. More than 280,000 people gained improved access to decentralized water supply systems, while over 350 learning facilities integrated WASH education into curricula and informal learning activities.

Education plays a central role in program sustainability:

- Over 1,000 educational service providers strengthened competencies in hygiene, and menstrual hygiene and health (MHH);
- Over 3,800 participants engaged in life-skills trainings;
- Over 250,000 individuals accessed structured MHH education.

The *Hygiene 360°* and *Health and Comfort* training packages promote critical thinking, behavioral reflection, and problem-solving through participatory methods, scenario-based exercises, and gamified learning. Impact extends beyond knowledge acquisition. Adolescents develop protective behaviors and resilience skills; educators gain methodological tools aligned with international standards; communities adopt safer hygiene routines; and local authorities strengthen management capacities for water systems. By integrating psychosocial support, gender-sensitive design, and inclusive access, the program strengthens dignity, public health, and long-term sustainability at local and regional levels.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD

Transformative impact results

***Quality Education and ESD**:* Focusing on quality education transformed hygiene promotion into competency-based learning. Structured modules, interactive games, and reflection-based methodologies shifted teaching from information delivery to life-skills development. Adolescents now demonstrate improved decision-making, critical thinking, and self-care competencies. Educators apply evidence-based, gender-sensitive approaches aligned with UNICEF and WHO frameworks, ensuring sustainability and institutional uptake of ESD principles.

***Whole-Institution Approach**:* The whole-institution approach integrated WASH best practices into school governance, infrastructure, teacher training, and community engagement. Over 350 institutions embedded hygiene education across curricula and extracurricular activities. Upgraded, gender-sensitive facilities reinforced learning outcomes through safe environments. Collaboration among educators, healthcare workers, social workers, and local authorities strengthened institutional resilience and continuity of essential services, especially in IDP-hosting communities.

***Digital Education and ICT**:* Digital innovation enhanced accessibility and engagement. QR-coded materials, short educational videos, and an interactive hygiene game expanded outreach beyond classrooms. Participation in global WASH webinars strengthened professional exchange. Digital tools enabled continuity of learning in conflict settings, supported blended delivery, and increased youth motivation through gamification, reinforcing sustainable behavior change.

Key players involved

NGO "Women and Children of Ukraine is Our Future" is an implementing partner on the basis of Partnership Agreement with UNICEF Ukraine. UNICEF provides financial, technical, and strategic support aligned with global WASH and child protection standards and policies. Local authorities, educational, healthcare and other social institutions are the partners and beneficiaries of the program who participate in WASH facilities modernization and management, as well as participate in WASH governance trainings. Children, their parents and guardians, educators, healthcare and social workers, community leaders are the core beneficiaries of the program. They actively participate in training sessions, consultations, and awareness campaigns, reinforcing community ownership. While, the WASH Network Ukraine platform supports peer learning and dissemination of best practices, fostering national coordination and long-term sustainability.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

***Transforming behaviors**:* Participatory life-skills trainings improved hygiene routines, reduced stigma around menstruation, and strengthened stress management skills among adolescents. The results of trainings showed significant positive changes. In particular, 92 % of adolescents noted that after the training they were ready to openly discuss the topic of menstruation with peers, teachers, and medical professionals.

***Promoting community action**:* Community mobilization campaigns and WASH Network Ukraine fostered collective responsibility and local ownership of water systems and hygiene practices. 97 % of *Hygiene 360°* participants noted that after the training they felt more responsible for maintaining hygiene at home, at school, and in the community.

***Raising awareness**:* Nearly 880,000 individuals were informed about protection mechanisms, hygiene practices, and gender-based violence (GBV) risk reduction.

***Changing educational policies**:* Over 350 institutions formally integrated WASH modules; capacity-building strengthened institutional standards for inclusive and gender-sensitive facilities.

***Strengthening competencies**:* Over 1,000 educators and 600 local authority representatives enhanced technical and pedagogical skills, reinforcing sustainable WASH management and ESD integration. About 98 % of participants of the trainings plan to use the materials in working with students, as well as during trainings for colleagues and parents.

Youth dimension

Adolescents are central beneficiaries and active participants of the program. Over 3,200 young people engaged in life-skills trainings using participatory and gamified methods. Youth-friendly materials, consultations, and safe spaces promote leadership, peer learning, and resilience-building, ensuring that young people shape and sustain hygiene practices within their communities.

Gender dimension

Gender equality is embedded throughout the program. MHH education, 10,000 distributed MHH kits, confidential consultations, and gender-sensitive facility upgrades promote dignity and inclusion. Prevention of gender-based violence and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) awareness strengthen safety and empowerment for girls and women in crisis-affected communities.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Operating in conflict-affected regions requires flexible delivery models and strong local partnerships. Infrastructure improvements alone proved insufficient without sustained educational engagement. Integrating psychosocial support and gender-sensitive approaches significantly enhanced behavioral outcomes. Taking into consideration that the program is aimed at supporting conflict-affected and vulnerable population, all learning material also include methods and practices for crisis circumstances, and train to maintain sanitation and hygiene in critical environment.
The key lesson: sustainable WASH systems depend equally on resilient infrastructure and empowered, informed communities.

Further resources

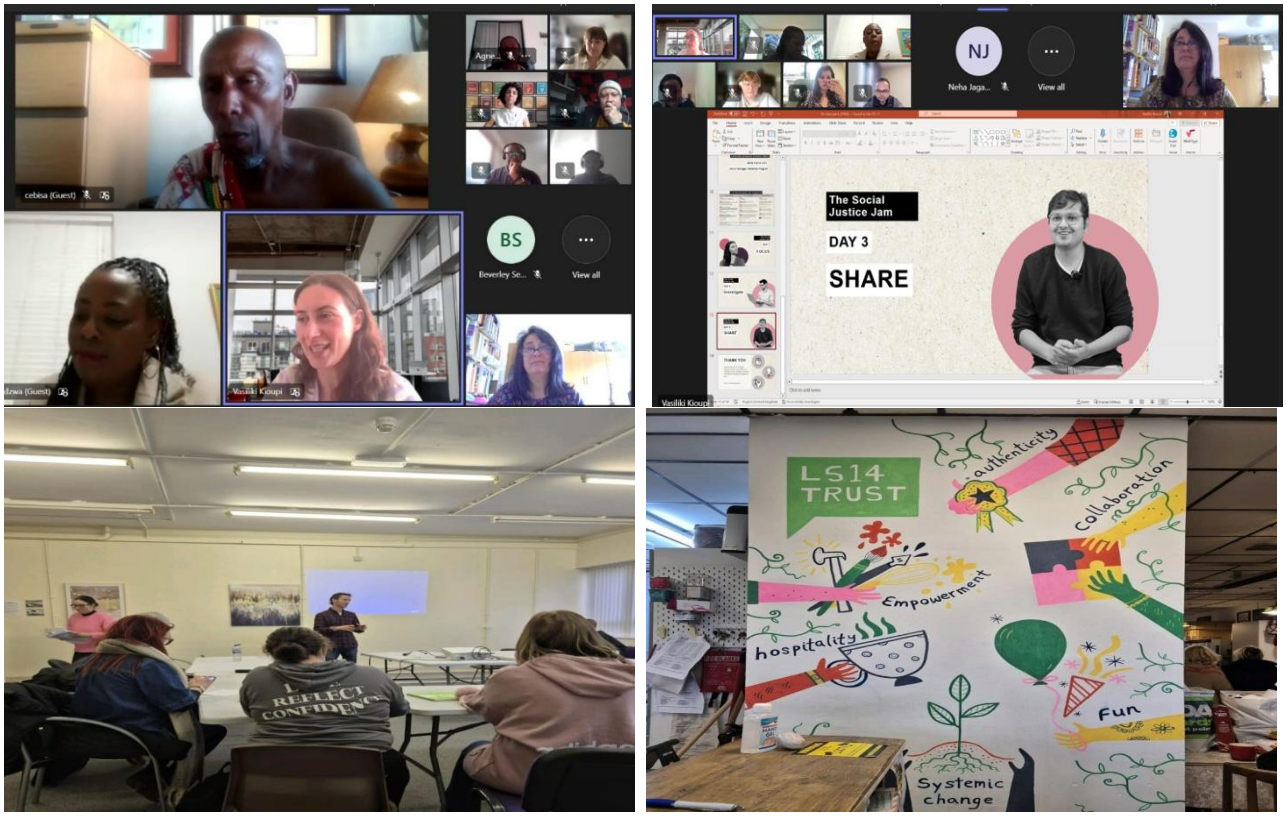
- https://wcu.org.ua/unicef-partnership-en/
- https://wcu.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Unisef_web-2.pdf
- https://wcu.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Training-PackageGame_MHM.pdf
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfIfldIrfPY&t=21s
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eSbhuHgUBM
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWett08jqbA

Jamming for Social Justice and Sustainable Communities

The Social Justice Jam (SJJ) 2024 was a three-day, fully online, cross-cultural and transdisciplinary programme co-designed by the University of Leeds, the University of Pretoria, and two community partners—LS14 Trust (Seacroft, UK) and Mothong African Heritage (Mamelodi,SA). Framed by Education for Sustainable Development and challenge-based learning/design thinking, the Jam convened ~80 community members, students, and staff in non-hierarchical teams to co-create solutions for equitable access, use, and stewardship of community spaces (e.g., parks, buildings, shared facilities)—a lever for inclusive, resilient cities and partnerships for implementation. Participants used story-led prompts, the FiSH model (focus–investigate–share), and creative media (music, drawing) to foster agency, empathy, and problem-solving. Evaluation combined a FailSpace success/failure reflection with thematic analysis of interviews/focus groups, revealing four core outcomes: community connection, creativity for action, social-justice orientation, and reciprocal knowledge sharing. Post-Jam actions include: a youth-led social-media campaign, a community-engaged photovoice project and a community-based research hub in Seacroft to connect resident evidence with policy, which is funded by the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership. The SJJ demonstrates how whole-institution, digital, and entrepreneurship/innovation strands of the UNECE ESD Strategy can democratise knowledge, elevate community expertise, and build coalitions for local sustainability transitions aligned with SDG 11 and SDG 17, with contributions to SDG 9.

Contacts

Dr Vasiliki Kioupi, Associate Professor in Sustainable Curriculum, Sustainability Research Institute, University of Leeds, UK, v.kioupi@leeds.ac.uk



Author's own photos (from laptop, mobile phone)

General Description

To co-create socially just solutions for community-identified challenges in access, use and management of public/community spaces, using ESD-aligned, participatory, and creative pedagogies (design thinking, storytelling, arts, FiSH), in non-hierarchical teams that mix residents, students, and staff.

The Jam aimed to build competencies and confidence, surface local/indigenous knowledge, and seed ongoing collaborations that convert ideas into resident-led action and policy engagement.

The Social Justice Jam: Spaces for Change was led by the Discovery Delivery Group of the strategic Curriculum Redefined Programme and funded by the Horizons Institute at the University of Leeds in the UK. Further information about the Jam, including sponsors, leads, collaborators, outputs and dissemination activities, can be found in the Jam Blueprint.

Relevance to the 5 SDGs under review

- ***SDG 9*** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
- ***SDG 11*** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- ***SDG 17*** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Impact on educators, learners, community and/or country

SDG 11: Unequal access to safe, welcoming and well-managed community spaces, undermines belonging, wellbeing and civic participation. The SJJ addressed this challenge through participatory, solutions-focused learning that enabled diverse residents, students and staff to empathise, ideate, prototype and plan actions for more just, shared spaces. Key outcomes included community photo-storytelling that reframed neighbourhood identity and highlighted spatial inequities; coalition-building plans; and "learning journeys" that mapped local skills and knowledge holders whose practices can animate community spaces. Participants reported strengthened agency, cross-cultural understanding and practical problem-solving competencies, while institutions gained locally grounded insights to inform curricula and engagement strategies. A community research hub in Seacroft connects resident-generated evidence to policymakers, supporting longer-term impact.

SDG 17: Community–university collaborations often face power asymmetries, tokenism and short timeframes. The Jam's non-hierarchical design, shared facilitation with community organisations, and co-authored evaluation built trusting, reciprocal partnerships. Use of FailSpace enabled psychologically safe reflection on successes and failures. After the Jam, partners pursued joint funding, co-developed open educational resources and sustained student-community collaborations.

SDG 9: The Jam operationalised design thinking to democratise social innovation, centre local knowledge and broaden participation through accessible online delivery. Participants developed creativity, reflexivity and iterative testing skills, while institutions gained insights to strengthen engagement infrastructures.

Alignment with the UNECE ESD Strategy priority strands

- ***Quality education*** and ESD
- ***Whole-institution approach*** / institutions as communities of transformational learning
- ***Digital education***, information and communications technology and ESD
- ***Entrepreneurship***, employment, innovation and ESD

Transformative impact results

Quality education & ESD: The Jam integrates challenge-based learning, critical reflection, and intercultural dialogue to build ESD competencies (systems thinking, futures, values thinking, collaboration, and self-efficacy). Creative modalities (story, music, arts, visual making) support affective engagement and agency, countering eco-anxiety with solutions orientation. Co-analysis of experiences in interviews/focus groups embeds learner voice in evaluation.

Whole-institution approach: The initiative bridges teaching, research, engagement, and professional services, and involves community partners as co-educators. Insights from the Jam, fed curriculum review and institutional community-engagement strategies, illustrating how a learning community model can shift policies and practices towards transformative learning and social justice. Community hub was built to enable research capacities locally.

Digital education, ICT & ESD: A fully online Jam created access across geographies (UK–SA), using collaborative platforms, breakout design studios, and asynchronous boards to widen participation and sustain networks. Digital storytelling (youth photo campaign) extended learning into community-owned media spaces, amplifying local narratives and enabling glocal exchange.

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation & ESD: By democratising design thinking, the Jam nurtured social-entrepreneurial mindsets (initiative, teamwork, prototyping, iterative improvement). The community-based research hub is an early innovation infrastructure outcome, enabling residents to evidence needs, co-design proposals, and engage funders/policymakers—converting ideas into viable projects.

Key players involved

Community partners: LS14 Trust (Leeds), Mothong African Heritage (Mamelodi)—co-led agenda-setting, recruitment, contextual framing, cultural protocols; co-hosted the Jam, co-created workshops, evaluation and open educational resources, post-Jam custodians of actions.

Universities: Leeds staff (coordination, funding management, design support, digital infrastructure, evaluation); Pretoria staff (community-engagement leadership; transdisciplinary research lens, evaluation).

Participants: ~80 residents, students, staff, youth. Roles: co-hosts, co-facilitators and co-designers; researchers, creative problem-solvers and storytellers.

Professional services: visual identity; communications, recruitment, support with digital infrastructure, support with the production of the OER and dissemination of outputs and outcomes.

Positive impact areas

- transforming people's behaviors
- promoting community action
- raising awareness
- involving government and/or private sector
- changing educational policies
- strengthening competencies

Progress made

Behaviour & competencies. Participants reported increased confidence, empathy, and problem-solving; many continued collaborations post-Jam.
Community action & awareness. Youth-led photo storytelling reframed neighbourhood identity and surfaced space justice issues publicly.
Institutional change. Findings fed into a university-wide curriculum review and into community-engagement strategies; OERs support wider replication.
Policy interfaces. The resident-run research hub in Seacroft is designed to channel community evidence to policymakers; partners are jointly pursuing next-stage funding, including feasibility work in Pretoria.

Youth dimension

Young people participated as storytellers, content creators, and co-researchers (e.g., photo campaign), building civic voice, digital/media skills, and global citizenship through exchange between Leeds and Mamelodi. Plans include youth meet-ups/learning journeys that pair skills sharing (arts, repair, gardening) with space stewardship and micro-enterprise concepts.

Gender dimension

The Jam's non-hierarchical design and creative modalities helped lower participation barriers for women and girls, encouraging identity expression and leadership in discussions on safety, belonging, and access to public spaces. Future cycles aim for targeted outreach, childcare consideration for on-site activities, and gender-sensitive monitoring of outcomes.

Challenges or lessons learnt

Time-bounded Jams risk short-termism; sustaining action requires post-event infrastructure (trust, partnerships, networks, hubs, grants). Power asymmetries surfaced (funding and initial decision-making skewed to the Global North university); using FailSpace helped surface and address them. Digital access and language created participation barriers for some; we adapted tools and facilitation but will budget for data packages, translation, and hybrid formats. Finally, policy impact needs dedicated brokering roles and resident compensation to avoid extractive dynamics.

Further resources

- https://medium.com/leeds-educators/breaking-barriers-how-the-social-justice-jam-connected-global-communities-d3a26a1df075
- https://medium.com/horizons-institute/guest-blog-reflections-on-social-justice-jam-e239f6eac1cd
- https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603108.2024.2444517?src=exp-la
- https://leeds.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/collectionDiscovery?vid=44LEE_INST:VU1&collectionId=81348055860005181&lang=en
- https://mymedia.leeds.ac.uk/Mediasite/Play/027873e62f214e1f94158d5a60ee8a951d
- https://mymedia.leeds.ac.uk/Mediasite/Play/d282d6ae63634fddbcce536035390aaf1d