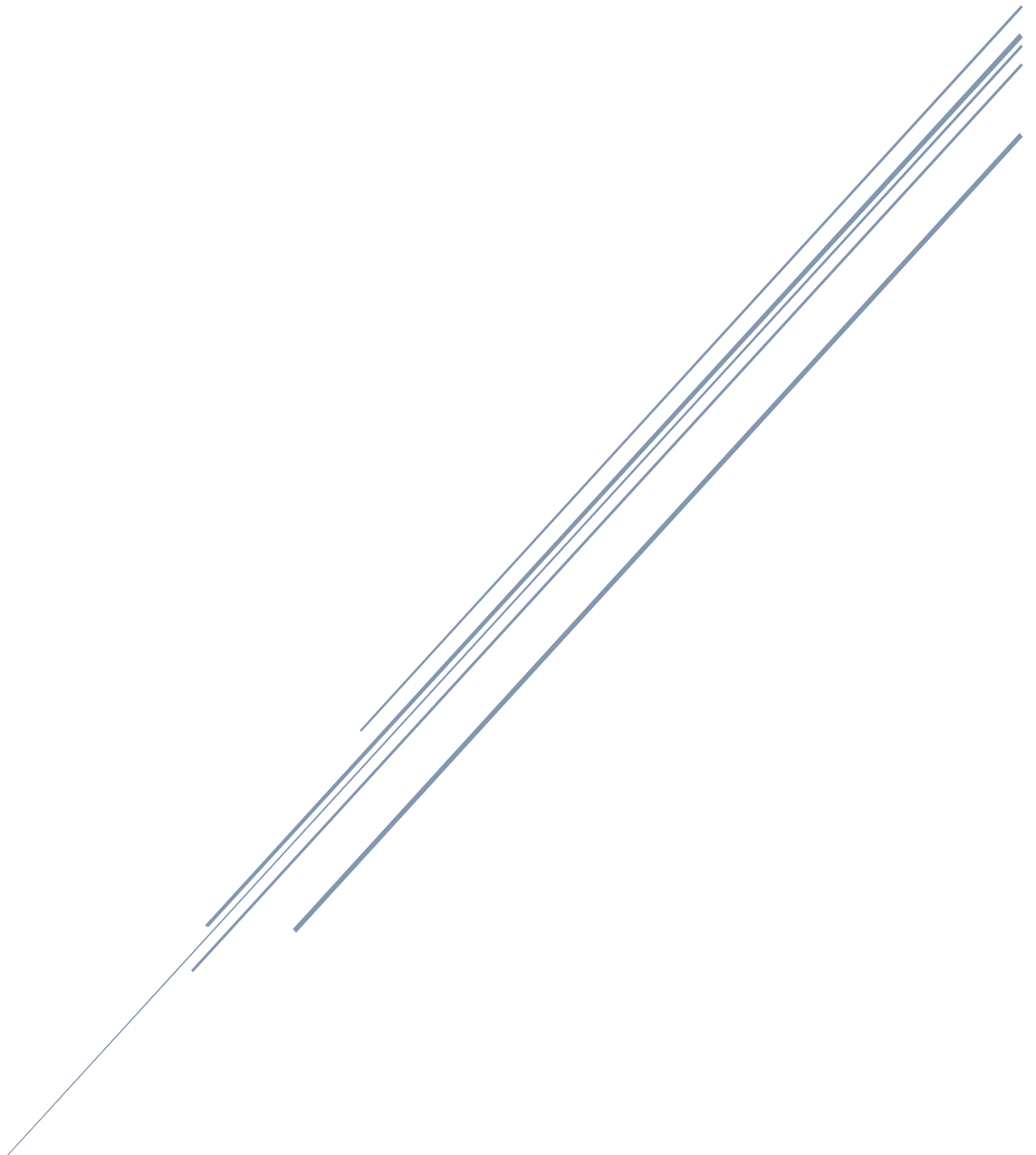


# POLICY RECOMMENDATION GUIDE



**Erasmus+**  
Enriching lives, opening minds.

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**Project partner consortium:**

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## Learning for the Future: Re-orienting School Education towards Sustainable Development

**Learning for the Future** requires us all to learn to live and work in more sustainable ways. This requires schools where everyone cares; about themselves, each other, and about the planet; now and in the future. Schools where caring touches everything they do – what and how students engage with learning and act as agents of change; how schools manage their physical environment and resources; how staff and students relate to each other; how they work with their local community – and how they reach out to the wider world.

These are schools where there is leadership at all levels for sustainable development to be addressed as an integral part of the quality of the education provided, and embedded into all aspects of school life as part of a whole school approach.

### Summary

- In 2020 -23 Erasmus+ partners from schools and universities across Europe (Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Scotland) collaborated on the project. The project's focus was on how to equip learners for the local and global challenges of the 21st Century, addressing UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education through **education for sustainable development (ESD)**.
- Schools involved in the project found that taking a **whole school approach to ESD** (including school visions and values, curriculum, governance, learning opportunities, infrastructure and partnerships) provided unique opportunities for competence development of students and teachers and contributed in many ways to the quality of the education provided.
- The project identified **Key competences** for students and educators to engage constructively and responsibly with today's world, and a means of assessing them. These sustainability competences **enhance all dimensions of learning** (socio-emotional and behavioural as well as cognitive,) and relate to both LifeComp <sup>1</sup>and the European Sustainability Competence Framework <sup>2</sup>
- Learning for the Future is for all students at all levels in all schools. Schools engaged with the project indicated that **student engagement** with ESD contributes to: more positive attitudes to learning; informed decision making and action; enhanced personal and civic competences, improved wellbeing and enhanced levels of achievement and attainment.
- Many teachers do not feel ready to teach sustainability. Key elements of **successful teacher training** and ongoing professional learning that results in teachers and school leaders that are confident, motivated and skilled to address ESD were identified as: ESD fundamentals - learning for transformation; Systems thinking – learning for the future; Learning and teaching approaches; Contributing to a whole school approach; Learning and assessment; Networking schools on ESD.
- Partners concluded that school engagement with ESD in all partner countries is not yet as widespread or mainstream as it should be. **A step change is needed** to ensure this happens across all schools and the wider community as part of a whole school approach to equip young people for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> EC (2020) LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence. doi:10.2760/302967, JRC120911

<sup>2</sup> EC (2022). Green Comp: The European sustainability competence framework. doi:10.2760/13286, JRC128040. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128040>

The ESD SuperVision 4.0 project 2020-23 has shown that re-orientating school education towards sustainable development through a whole school and community approach requires:

**Learners that are:**

- healthy, happy and equipped with the transformative competences they require for the future they face;
- supported to lead learning and meaningfully contribute, as 'agents of change', to the life of the school and wider community

**Teachers and teacher trainers that are:**

- equipped with the transformative competences they require for the future they face
- confident in their own knowledge and understanding of relevant sustainable development issues
- skilled in the use of the action-oriented pedagogies shown to support effective education for sustainable development
- equipped with strategic methods and tools for embedding sustainable development themes in all their teaching activities
- supported to facilitate engagement with sustainable development issues related to real life contexts.

**School leaders that are**

- confident and competent in the key skills needed to build and implement a strong sustainable development ethos in their school
- equipped with the tools for embedding this ethos in the culture, curricula and operations of the school and its relationship with its community
- fully engaged in supporting the development of strategic plans and associated actions that will bring about transformational change

**Local and national leaders that are committed to:**

- embedding education for sustainable development in strategic plans for education, meeting core educational priorities and aligning with other policy agendas as part of a 'whole of local/national government' approach
- requiring and providing support for leaders in change management processes to implement a whole institution approach to education for sustainable development
- establishing expectations and pathways including professional learning, for educators to develop competences in ESD throughout their careers, as part of what it means to be an effective educator
- facilitating connections between schools, and between schools and their wider communities.

## Learning for the Future: Recommendations for Curriculum Development and Practice

School engagement with education for sustainability as a curriculum priority in all partner countries is not yet as widespread or mainstream as it should be.

The ESD SuperVision 4.0 Erasmus+ Project developed a **Curriculum Development roadmap**, with recommendations derived from work on the curriculum development of participating schools, the research and experiences of partner organisations and evaluation of the project.

### 1. Towards a whole school approach to ESD

Taking a whole school and community approach is crucial to reorienting curricula towards sustainability, and is an essential part of educational quality. Enabling the changes required to develop a whole school approach means school development of targeted policies which recognise the role of all students, teachers, school managers and staff as well as partners in the wider community. To initiate the change process leadership is required.

Key dimensions of a whole school approach are:

#### **CULTURE**

Co-creation of a **clear and coherent vision and values**

**Leadership and management**, embedding education for sustainable development in the quality criteria of the school

**Professional learning**

#### **CURRICULUM**

**Teaching and learning** opportunities and approaches

**Assessment** for improvement

#### **CAMPUS**

**School infrastructure and operations**

#### **COMMUNITY**

**Partnerships and networking**



**Recommendations for making progress towards a whole school approach are:**

- School leaders are equipped with the tools for change management, to support them in embedding a strong sustainable development ethos in the culture, curricula and operations of their school and its relationship with the wider community
- 'ESD Teachers' or 'ESD Supervisors' are identified to support the initiation, co-creation and co-development of a change process for the implementation of ESD in schools
- Self-assessment tools are used as an ongoing component in the process of developing a whole school approach

### 2. Key competences for students and educators

A whole school approach requires that sustainability themes are embedded throughout the curriculum, providing unique opportunities for competence development of students and teachers and contributing to the quality of the education provided by meeting core educational priorities. This should be addressed through action-oriented teaching and learning approaches appropriate for the specific learners and their local contexts and relevant to current policy frameworks

**Recommendations for curriculum design supporting a whole school approach to ESD are:**

- The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals provide a good starting point for introducing sustainability across the school curriculum. They concentrate teaching and learning on real-world themes, involving all relevant disciplines.
- Although themes can be introduced in separate subjects, interdisciplinary learning is most appropriate, addressing complexity and making the learning more meaningful for students
- A learner-centred competency-based curriculum is adopted, emphasising learning outcomes and supporting students to engage constructively and responsibly with today’s world.
- Curriculum design addresses the following sustainability competences, enhancing all dimensions of learning (socio-emotional and behavioural as well as cognitive.). This supports current EU frameworks: LifeComp and the European Sustainability Competence Frameworks.  
When adapted to local school contexts this framework has an impact on practice, as an integral aspect of a whole school approach

<b>Competences for sustainable development</b>	
Dimensions of learning	Key abilities
<b>HEAD</b> Cognitive (Learning to know)	Critical thinking; Systems thinking; Creative thinking
<b>HEART</b> Social and emotional (personal) <b>(Learning to be and to live together)</b>	Communication; Collaboration; Solidarity
	Reflexivity; Value-orientation; Responsibility
<b>HAND</b> Behavioural (Learning to do)	Exploring alternative futures; Innovative decision; Transformative action

- SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes) taxonomy is recommended as the basis for describing learning outcomes and assessment of the competences, describing progressively levels of student achievements.

**3. Teacher training and ongoing professional learning opportunities**

Many teachers do not feel ready to teach sustainability, and professional learning opportunities are required to enable all school staff at every level to fully engage with a whole school approach. Mainstreaming ESD into existing professional learning programmes for student teachers and existing teachers supports transformational change in schools.

Individual schools should carry out ongoing rigorous self-evaluation of professional learning needs to enable full engagement with a whole school approach.

**Recommendations for professional learning that supports a whole school approach to ESD are:**

- Undertake professional learning with **groups of staff over an extended period of time**. This supports the development of teacher competences and deeper learning, rather than one-off sessions for individual teachers
- Support **collaboration and peer learning** to activate a culture change in schools
- Start from a **self-assessment and reflection** on the actions already implemented to bring out strengths, weaknesses and opportunities
- Provide opportunities for critical **reflection and self-evaluation**, to increase awareness of professional skills
- Offer **opportunities for cooperative learning and mentoring** to strengthen the ability to work in teams
- Support development of both **theoretical and methodological pedagogical skills** shown to support effective education for sustainable development
- Use **innovative and alternative methodologies** to let participants experience non-traditional ways of managing teaching and learning processes
- be strongly connected and **responsive to the specific needs of the different school contexts** different levels and areas of needs

- support networking learning by **fostering cooperation between educational institutions other stakeholders**
- **evaluate the impact** of the professional learning and resources offered

**Key elements of successful teacher training and ongoing professional learning** that results in teachers and school leaders that are confident, motivated and skilled to address ESD were identified as: ESD fundamentals - learning for transformation; Systems thinking – learning for the future; Learning and teaching approaches; Contributing to a whole school approach; Learning and assessment; Networking schools on ESD.

**Professional learning needs**, identified through this project, are in supporting teachers and school staff to:

- Design and implement **interdisciplinary activities** that will transform the traditional school curriculum.
- Build **experiential learning environments** that engage students in real world problems.
- Support **development of pedagogical skills and techniques** for conducting effective ESD activities, including the use of inclusive and differentiated teaching strategies and materials
- Engage with innovative approaches for **assessment of learning outcomes**
- **Engage with students** to develop their sustainability awareness and sense of responsibility as decision makers and agents of change. Promote the development of students' awareness and agency regarding financial management and decision-making processes of the educational institution.
- Build **pathways to micro-entrepreneurship**
- **Participate in ESD opportunities** already offered by the school.
- **Collaborate** with other educational institutions and stakeholders related to sustainability issues
- **Promote dialogue with local governments** to develop consistent and integrated practices between educational institutions and communities
- Extend their **knowledge on certain topics** such as the circular economy or the possibility of starting fund-raising activities.

**For more information about the resources developed in the ESD SuperVision 4.0 Erasmus+ project please contact the Project Lead: University of Vechta, Germany.**