

Sustainability in Vocational Education

Towards a Holistic approach to
Sustainability VET



Erasmus+



What is already out there?

- National Policies
- Ireland: **The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** provides a framework to support the contribution that the education sector is making and will continue to make towards a more sustainable future at a number of levels: individual, community, local, national and international.
- EU Policies
- EU's ambitious goal of Europe becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050
- **GreenComp** - a new European competence framework on sustainability



What is already out there?

- **GreenComp** is a reference framework for sustainability competences, which:
- Provides a common ground to learners and guidance to educators, advancing a consensual definition of what sustainability as a competence entails.
- Responds to the growing need for people to improve and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live, work and act in a sustainable manner.
- It is written for all learners, irrespective of their age and their education level and in any learning setting – formal, non-formal and informal.
- Is designed to support education and training programmes for lifelong learning.





What is already out there?

- **Green Campus Initiative**
- The Green Campus Programme has been in operation in Ireland since 2007. At present 40 Campuses are formally registered on the Programme, with nineteen awarded the Green Flag including two hospital sites.
- In order for a Campus to qualify for the Green-Campus Award a committee representative of the campus community must be formed.
- This committee must then register its intent to implement the Green-Campus Programme with the Environmental Education Unit at An Taisce.
- The support of the Head of Campus is required for registration.
- Committees must have a sustainable functioning committee and must be registered for a minimum of 1.5 academic years and have successfully implemented all seven steps of the programme with some results before applying for the Award.

What is
already out
there?

The seven steps of the programme are:

- establishing a Green-Campus committee incorporating student and staff representatives,
- undertaking an environmental review,
- implementing an action plan,
- monitoring and evaluating actions carried out,
- linking the programme to curriculum work,
- informing and involving the campus and wider community,
- developing a green charter.



School Sustainability Policy



- Whole-school approaches to sustainability lie at the heart of effective learning for sustainability.
- A whole-school approach to sustainability involves integrating environmental sustainability learning across the institution. – mindsets
- Entrenching sustainability in governance, teaching and learning frameworks, and campus and facilities management, schools can provide learners with consistent opportunities to live what they learn

School Sustainability Policy - Active Student Inclusion



- Developing an **inclusive whole-school plan** by engaging all players – students, staff, partners, and community stakeholders,
- Drafting a future-oriented perspective to increase the impact of your plan and student motivation,
- Shifting from a focus on environmental education to learning for sustainability, as the latter regards learners as active and engaged agents of change.
- As teachers we have the privilege to be able to engage directly with young people who:
 - are passionate about the natural world
 - want to do their best to protect it
 - can influence their wider communities
 - Through students learned and lived experiences from primary through secondary school to further and higher education, we will provide opportunities to develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the importance of nature, sustainability and the causes and impact of climate change and to translate this knowledge into positive action and solutions.

School Sustainability Policy – Green Spaces



- Connection with nature declines in childhood to an overall low in the mid-teens. Creating an environment from an early age where we are able to connect to nature is essential for self-enforcement in protecting and valuing nature’.
- We should increase opportunities for all to:
 - spend time in nature and learn more about it
 - become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment
- We know that regular contact with green spaces can have a beneficial impact on children’s physical and mental health. However, access to green space is not equal and we must do more to ensure that all children have opportunities to benefit from access to green space and build connections with nature.



School Sustainability Policy – Learning Opportunities



- Colleges should **identify the Learning opportunities** inherent in producing a sustainability policy

Climate adaptation and decarbonisation activity in VET colleges and University Buildings can provide powerful learning opportunities. Young people can:

- participate in the implementation of climate adaptation measures
- learn in buildings designed for net zero
- find out more about the impact of energy and water use
- Seeing sustainability brought to life in the buildings around them will young people to gain experiences which will enhance and contextualise their learning.

By developing and delivering evidence-based solutions for decarbonisation and climate resilience we will:

- reduce energy demand
- adapt to climate risks
- drive innovation in construction
- act as a catalyst for green jobs
- deliver savings

We will also drive a wide range of additional benefits that will contribute to a vibrant and resilient education community, including:

- health
- biodiversity
- the environment
- learning and play opportunities

School Sustainability Policy – Green Jobs



- Green jobs will not be niche. It is anticipated that sustainability and climate change will touch every career.
- Colleges through sustainability Initiatives open learners minds to opportunities in the Green Economy
- Sustainability competences a key element of future qualifications
- Need to incorporate sustainability within the vocational curriculum
- Responding to the needs of employers
- Relevant in all sectors but particularly in the VET sector.
- Microcredential in this subject area may also play an important role.

School Sustainability Policy – Conclusion



- There is a strong case for having a sustainability policy in your school/college
- It can take inspiration from existing European, National and local policies and initiatives
- It needs to be holistic and inclusive
- It needs to integrate into other school policies
- It needs to recognise the learning that can be gained through whole school sustainability action
- It can feed into the curriculum and future job market
- It can interact with other initiatives, such as Green Campus
- There should be space for both staff and student initiatives
- It should support greener choices in built environment, equipment and day to day activities.
- It needs a high level of buy in from all

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