# Transforming futures: Enhancing Practice for ESD for 2030 through Action Research

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OGSEP ESD Competencies for Societal Transformation: a TASUED Staff Professional Development Workshop, 3. 7. 2025

#ESDfor2030

Content

- Introduction to the ESD for 2030

- Introduction to the UNESCO Chair on Teacher Education for Sustainable Development

- Introduction to the project Transforming Futures

- First Lessons Learned: The Case of Slovenia

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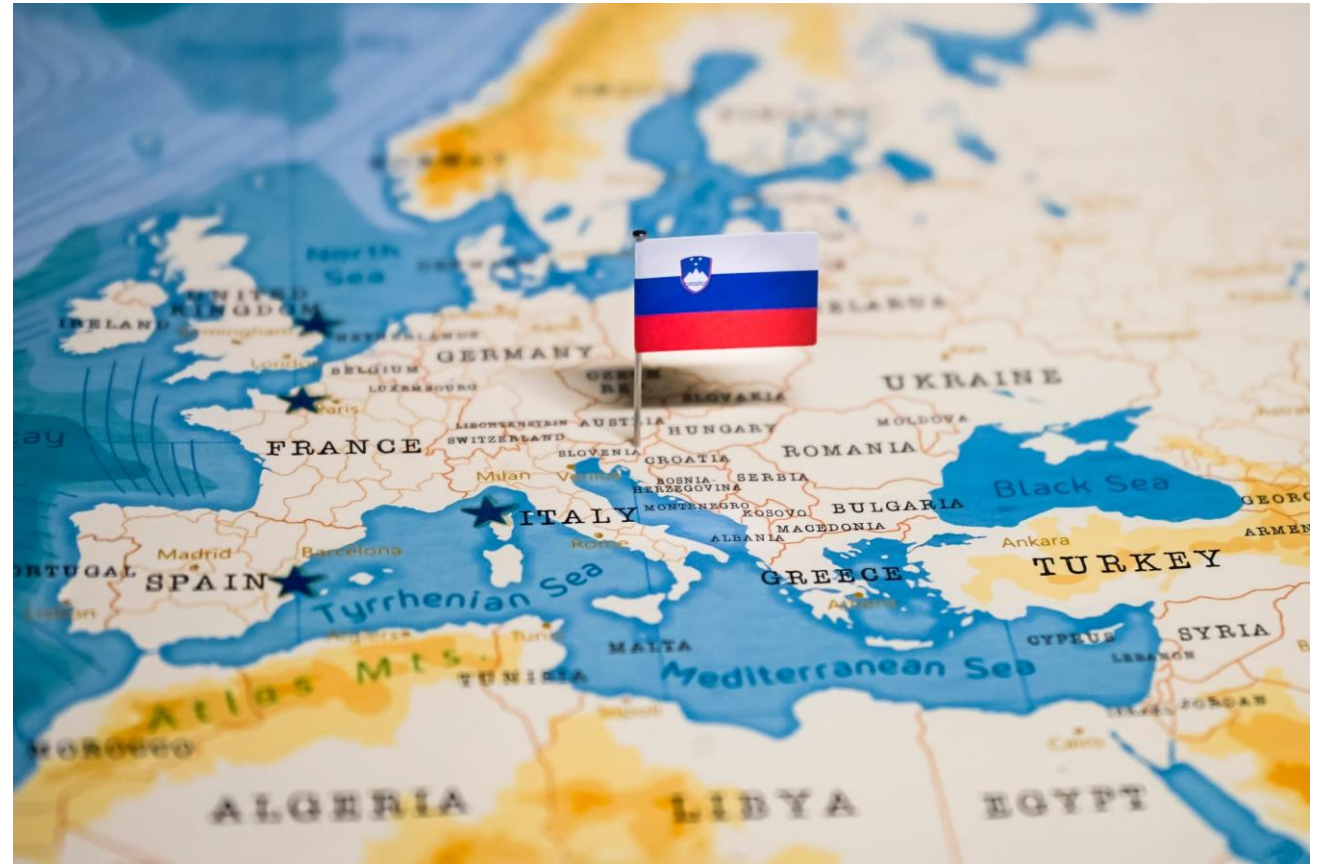
Introduction to the ESD for 2030
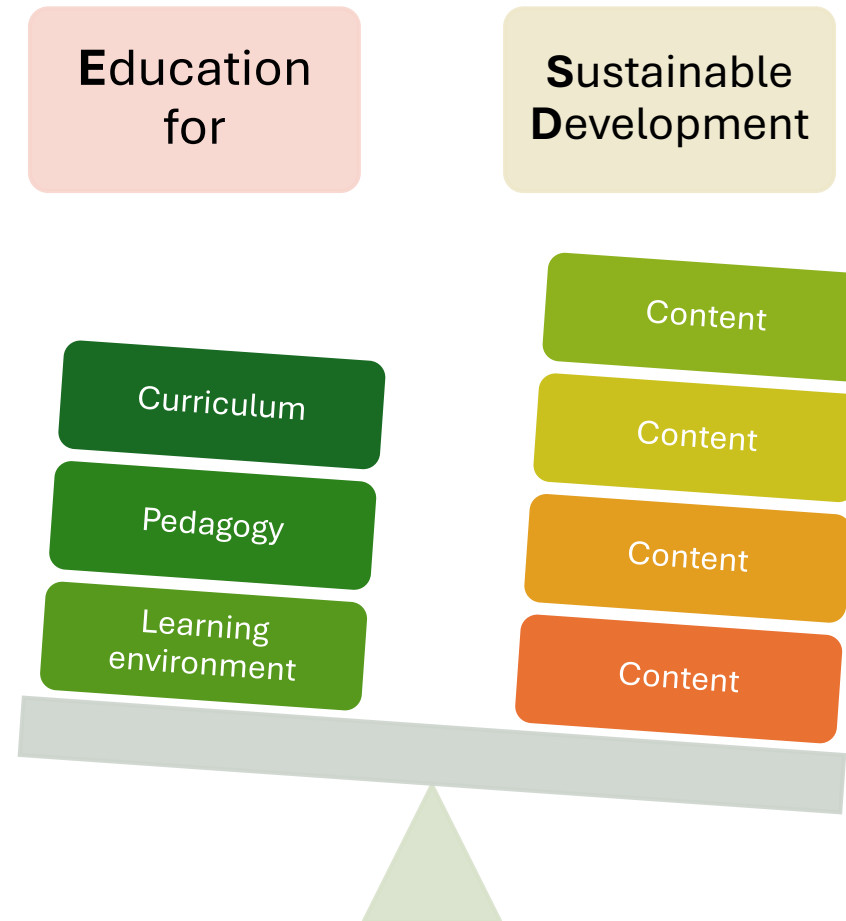
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Goal

- *ESD for 2030* aims to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs
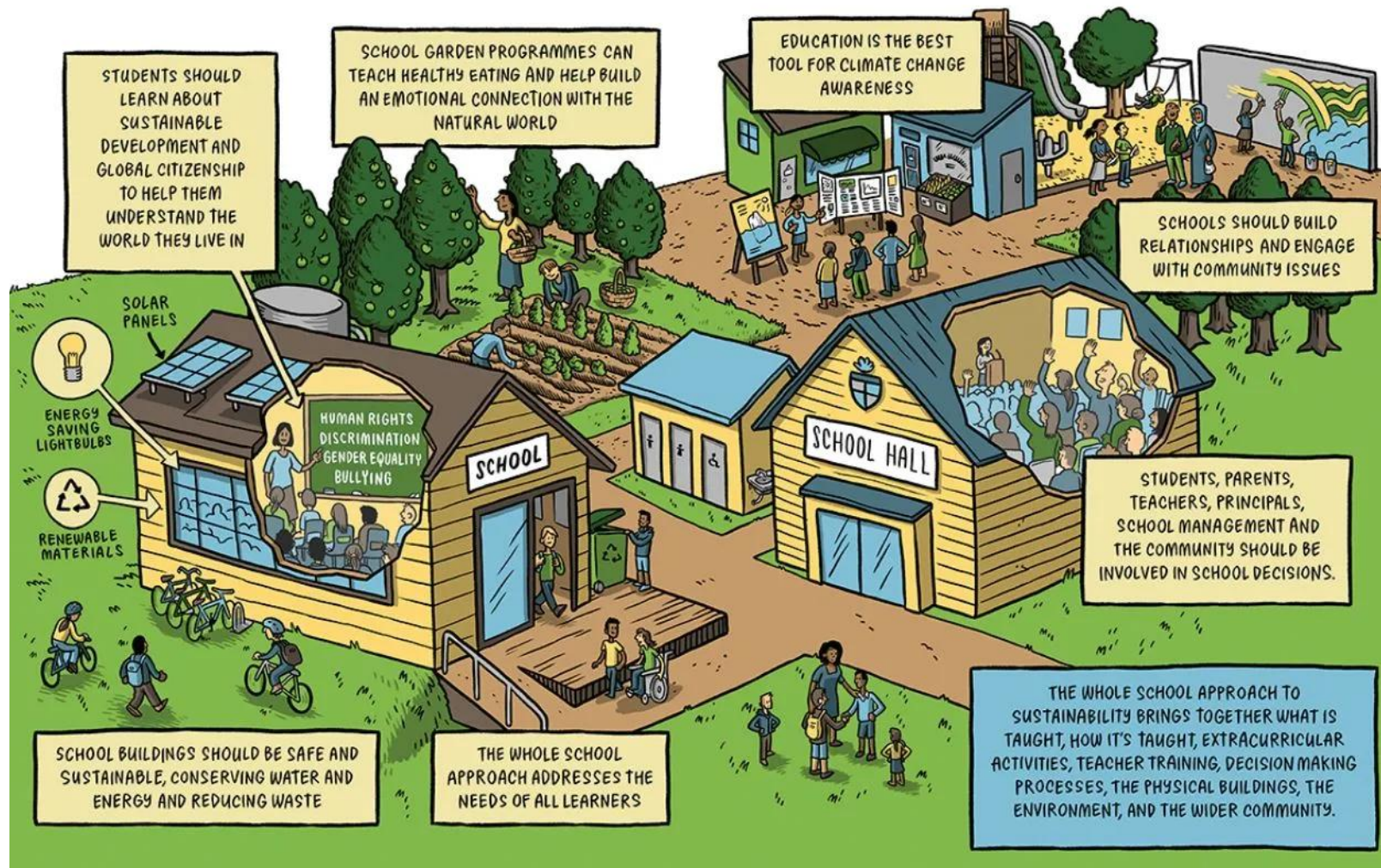
Objective

- To fully integrate ESD and the 17 SDGs into policies, learning environments, capacity-building of educators, the empowerment and mobilization of young people, and local level action.

Education for Sustainable Development — A roadmap

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Introduction to the ESD for 2030

(UNESCO, https://world-education-blog.org, 2016)

Introduction to the UNESCO Chair on Teacher Education for Sustainable Development

- **Target group:** teachers, educators

  - **The Chair** aims to promote an integrated system of research, teaching, training, community engagement, and communication.

  - **It facilitates** collaboration between high-level, internationally recognized researchers and teaching staff from the University of Ljubljana and other institutions in Slovenia, the region, and beyond.

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Introduction to the UNESCO Chair on Teacher Education for Sustainable Development
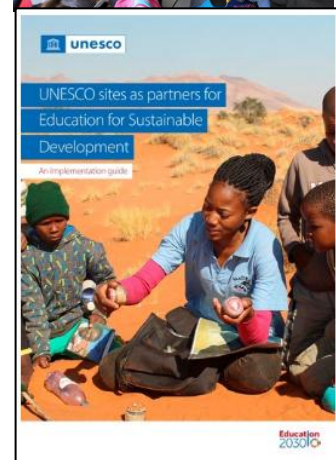
Objectives:

I.   Its objectives include **promoting a systemic, whole-institution approach** to Education for Sustainable Development by strengthening networks with various stakeholders of **formal, informal and non-formal education** —universities, faculties, research institutions, educational authorities, UNESCO Associated Schools, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, outdoor education centres, museums, and more.

II. To develop **educational strategies for teachers, educators, and students to** facilitate the transition to a sustainable future for all; to generate research activities focused on educating and raising awareness of sustainability issues with all relevant stakeholder groups in education.

III. To **promote sustainability initiatives and projects**, through international conferences, workshops, new study programmes and courses, as well as generate high-quality publications, etc.; and to **cooperate** closely with UNESCO, other UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks on relevant programmes and activities.

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Organizational Development and Activities (since September 2024)

- We focused on laying a solid foundation for the Chair, which included establishing internal structures and ensuring a strong start. Key steps involved the development of our **web presence**, formation of the **International Advisory Board (IAB)** and **National Advisory Board (NAB)**, and preparation of core **governing documents** such as public calls and procedural guidelines.

- In parallel, we worked to **position the Chair within the university and beyond**, aiming to raise visibility across relevant departments, academic networks, and external stakeholders. This was supported through:

- **Lectures, workshops, and courses in teacher education**, particularly in areas such as *Environment and Sustainable Development* and *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD),* and **in ASPnet (>140), Ecoschool network (>700)**

- Engagement in multiple **national and international projects**, including:
  - *Multipliers*
  - *CREA+BIRD - Through education to a deeper connection with nature*
  - *Microcredentials and curriculum changes at the UL*
  - *Core-to-Core Programme*
  - *Transforming Futures: Enhancing Practice for ESD for 2030 through Action Research*
  - *OHTC – One Health Teaching Clinic*

- Active contribution to the **National Curriculum Reform (2022–2025)**

- Involvement in **educational policy** efforts, including as a University of Ljubljana member in the *Covid-19 Global Education Coalition* and related national initiatives

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UNESCO Chair on Teacher Education for Sustainable Development, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
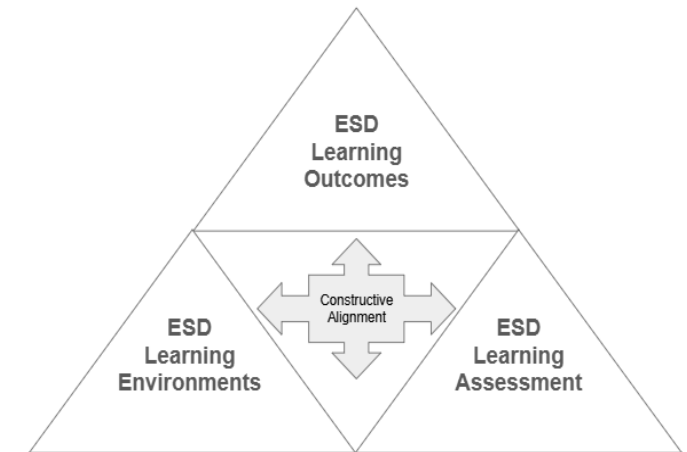
Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

- To support member states and partners in **implementing the ESD for 2030 framework and the Agenda 2030**, the project Transforming Futures: Enhancing Practice for ESD for 2030 through Action Research will generate **evidence and technical guidance tools** in critical areas of ESD and transformative education.

- The project is carried out through the global ESD for 2030 Network (ESD-Net), engaging members such as UNESCO Chairs, higher education institutions, APE-Net institutions, and countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Egypt, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Romania and **Slovenia**).

- The project is generously supported by the Government of Japan.

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Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

Education for Sustainable Development aims to transform education globally by reorienting formal education and training systems to prioritize sustainable development. It gives learners the **knowledge, skills, values and attitudes** to address interconnected global challenges.

- Is a **lifelong learning** process

- Is an integral part of quality education

- Enhances the **cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral** dimensions of learning

- Encompasses learning **content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment** itself.

- Should lead to **transformation** of society towards a more just and sustainable one as well as education to become more relevant

Fischer, 2024

Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

Objectives

- Strengthen capacity of institution and individuals to promote sustainability, quality education and transform society

- Focusing on three thematic areas

- Carried out through action research: testing and reviewing of guidance tools and sharing experiences
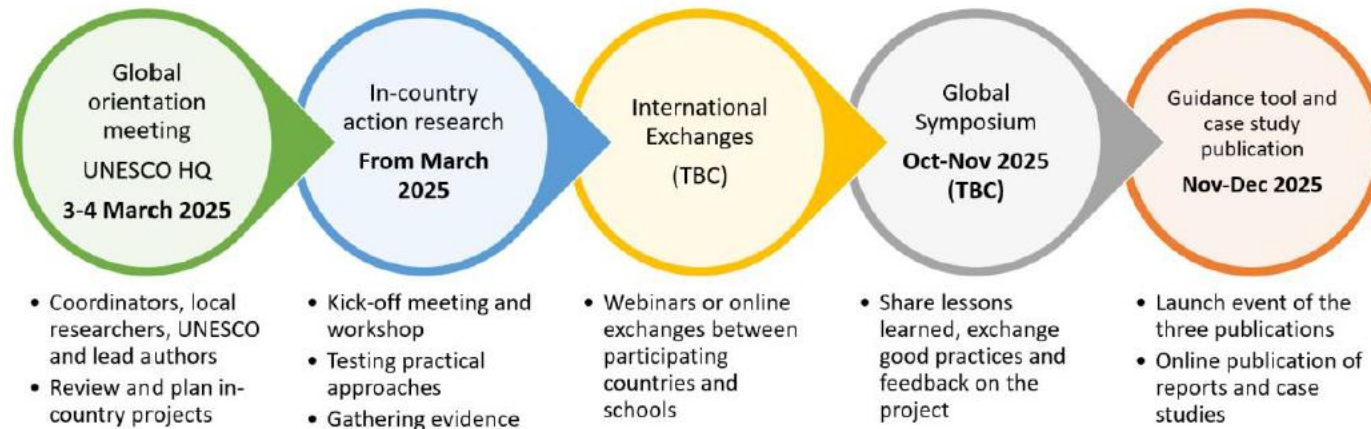
Expected outcomes and outputs

- 3 technical guidance tools

- Policy guidance briefs

- Case studies documenting good practices

- Strengthened capacity, awareness, and understanding for education

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Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

3 technical guidance tools:

- whole-institution approaches in ESD,

- transversal sustainability competencies and pedagogies, and

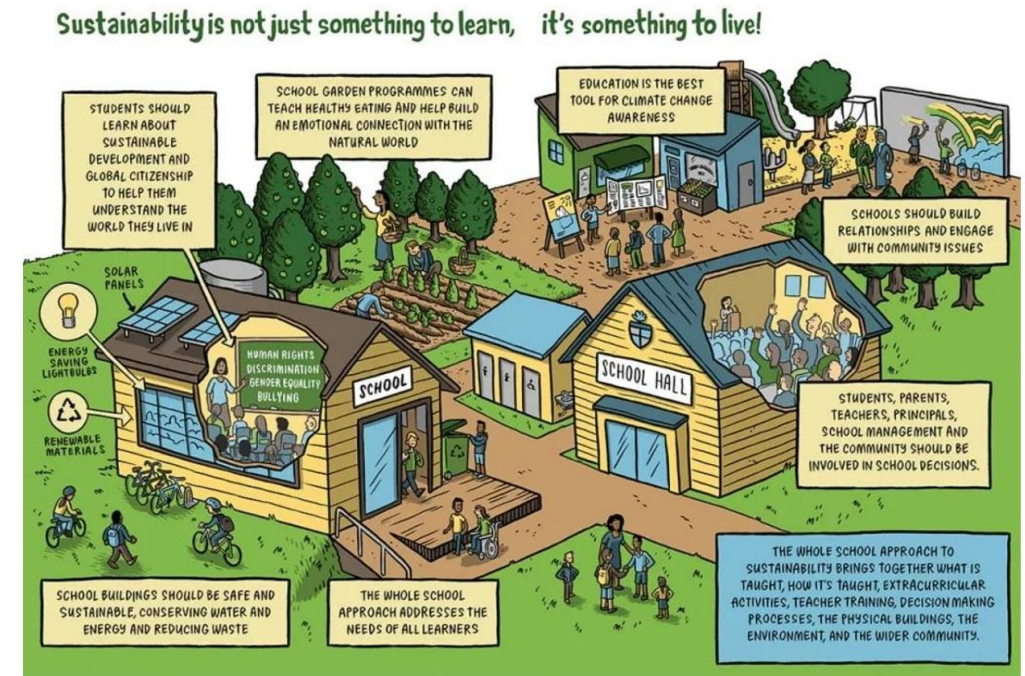- Learning assessment for ESD.

Stages of the project implementation:

Global orientation meeting UNESCO HQ 3-4 March 2025
- Coordinators, local researchers, UNESCO and lead authors
- Review and plan in-country projects

In-country action research From March 2025
- Kick-off meeting and workshop
- Testing practical approaches
- Gathering evidence

International Exchanges (TBC)
- Webinars or online exchanges between participating countries and schools

Global Symposium Oct-Nov 2025 (TBC)
- Share lessons learned, exchange good practices and feedback on the project

Guidance tool and case study publication Nov-Dec 2025
- Launch event of the three publications
- Online publication of reports and case studies

Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

Technical guidance tool: whole-institution approaches in ESD.

"...involving the entire institution and all departments or units, its staff and its students working together to create a sustainable institution, making it a microcosm of a sustainable society by practicing what it teaches." (UNESCO 2018).

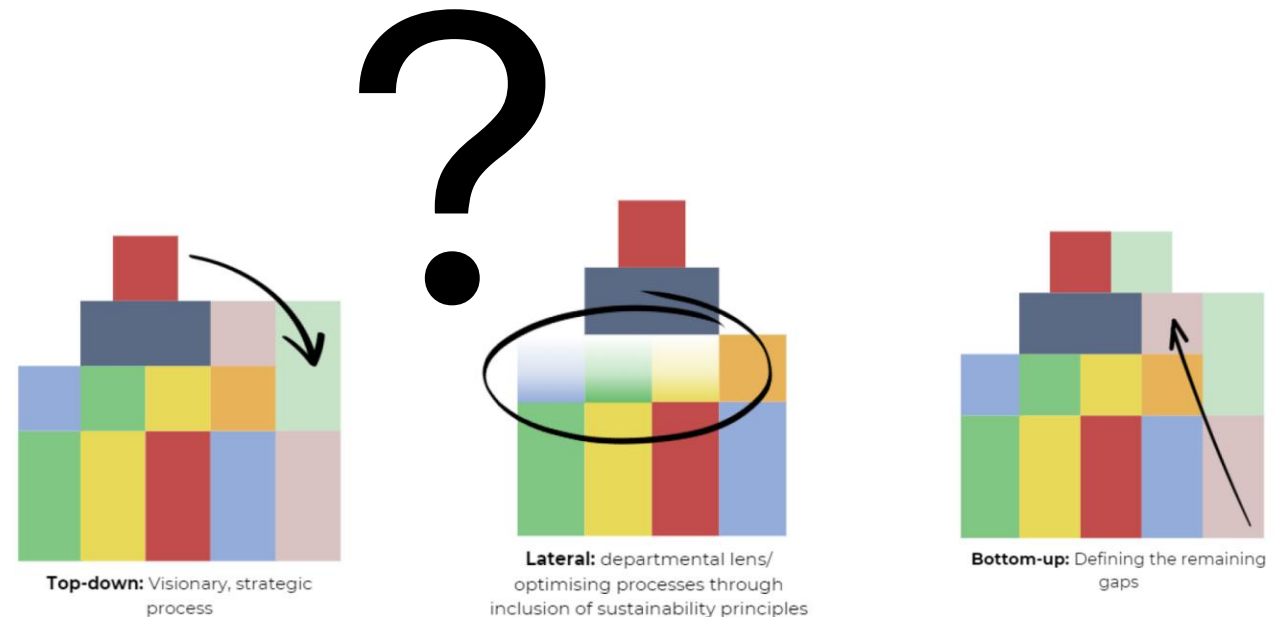"Assess current practices to identify areas for improvement and set realistic goals." (S. Sterling)

Sustainability is not just something to learn, it's something to live!

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Introduction to the project Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

Technical guidance tool: whole-institution approaches in ESD.

Components (14)

- Leadership

- Teaching & Learning:
  - Assessment
  - Curricula
  - Pedagogy

- Research

- Community Engagement

- Culture of Institution

- Partnerships, networks

- People

- Governance

- Campus/School operations

- Student Services

- Finances

- Internal and external communication

Top-down: Visionary, strategic process

Lateral: departmental lens/ optimising processes through inclusion of sustainability principles

Bottom-up: Defining the remaining gaps

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Technical guidance tool: v

Components (14)

- Leadership

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Reporting and Indicators:
- Decide on which indicators for which components/activities can be used in your AR context
- possibly cluster dimensions (for components/groups or a selection)
- Link to existing reporting and monitoring mechanisms (where possible)

Factors to consider:
- Integrated approach: connect to existing activities
- Context: school, national, regional
- Understanding of Sustainability and local challenges might vary (environmental, social, economic, cultural,..)

Component: Community Inclusion
Possible Indicator: Projects linking the school with the local community in the field of ESD
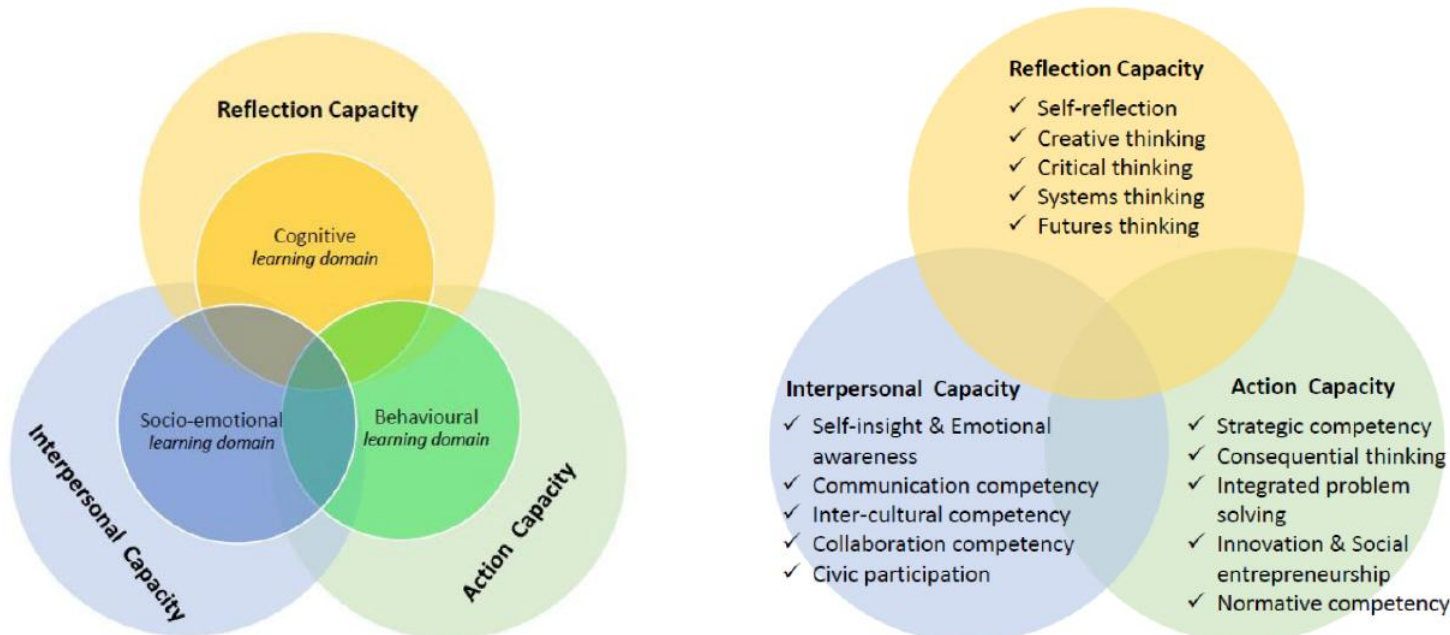Component: People
Possible Indicator: Number of teachers and students involved in ESD projects and activities

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Technical guidance tool: transversal sustainability competencies and pedagogies.

Sustainable competencies and competency-based education create a bridge between knowledge and action (S. Sterling)

ESD Domains, Capacities & 15 Competencies

Reflection Capacity
Cognitive *learning domain*

Socio-emotional *learning domain*

Behavioural *learning domain*

Interpersonal Capacity

Action Capacity

Reflection Capacity
- ✓ Self-reflection
- ✓ Creative thinking
- ✓ Critical thinking
- ✓ Systems thinking
- ✓ Futures thinking

Interpersonal Capacity
- ✓ Self-insight & Emotional awareness
- ✓ Communication competency
- ✓ Inter-cultural competency
- ✓ Collaboration competency
- ✓ Civic participation

Action Capacity
- ✓ Strategic competency
- ✓ Consequential thinking
- ✓ Integrated problem solving
- ✓ Innovation & Social entrepreneurship
- ✓ Normative competency

Annex 2: Sustainability capacities worksheet for lesson planning

Tool 2: Sustainability capacities worksheet for lesson planning

Background

Teachers can utilise the ESD capacity approach worksheet to either analyse an existing lesson plan or map out the design of a new lesson plan. This worksheet provides a structured approach to integrating reflection, interpersonal, and action capacities into lesson planning, ensuring a holistic and comprehensive educational experience for students.

This worksheet will help to define the specific targets for reflection (e.g., knowing, understanding, and thinking), interpersonal (e.g., emotional awareness, collaboration, communication), and action (e.g., problem-solving, strategizing, and cause-effect relationships) for a given topic, a lesson, or module. It also supports the identification of teaching methods and approaches that create synergy between these different capacity targets. In addition, this can also support a progression towards incorporating critical reflection around an ESD competency approach into lesson planning, as it becomes only one step away to integrate a further competency analysis into this planning process.

Lesson plan mapping

Lesson/Module Title:

Topic/Theme:

Grade Level:

Duration:

Learning targets
Reflection capacity

Knowledge: *What specific knowledge should students gain from this lesson?*

Learning targets:

Understanding: *What should students understand and be able to explain?*

Learning targets:

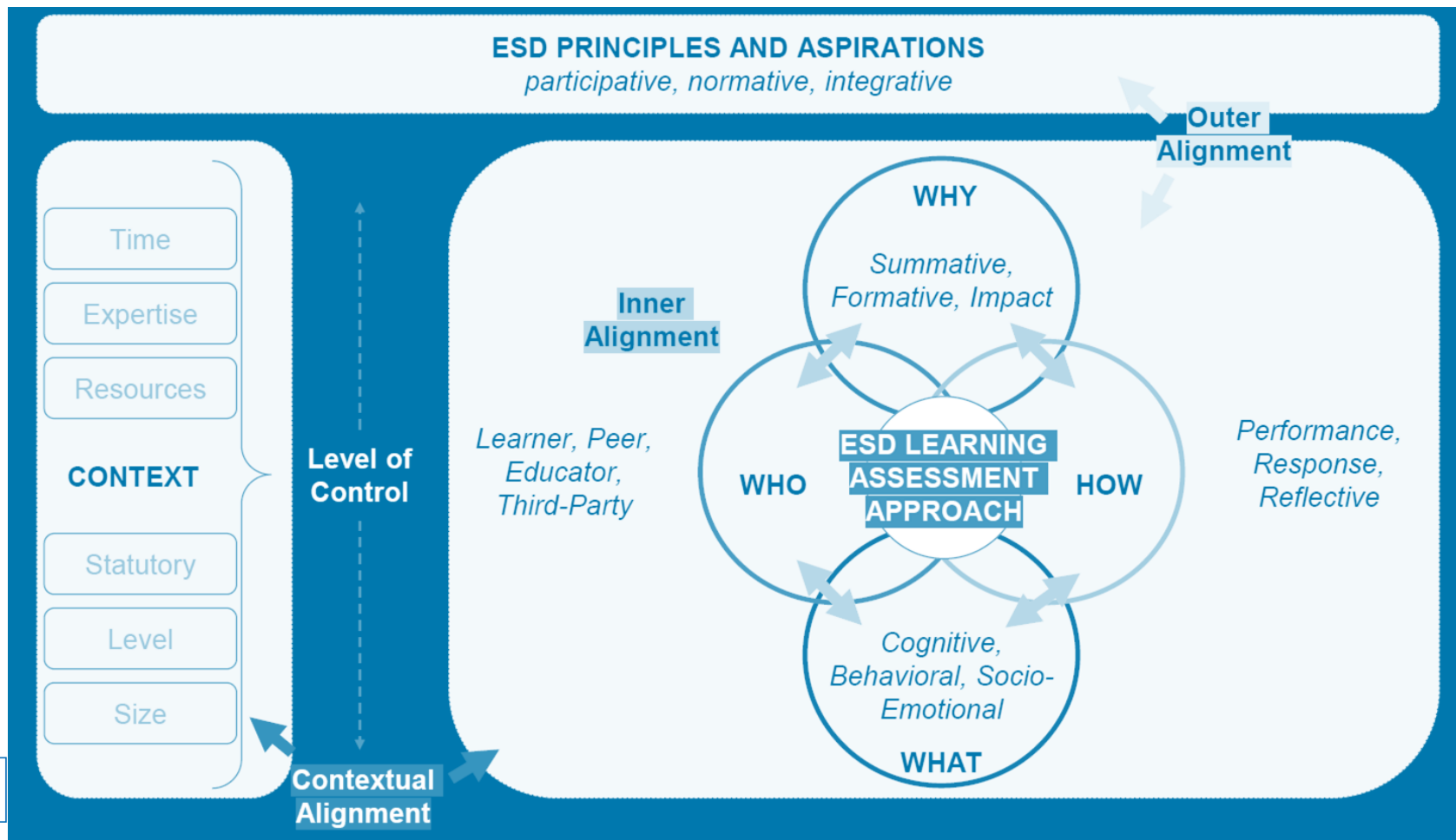Critical Thinking & Analysis: *What critical thinking or analytical skills should students develop?*

Learning targets:

Interpersonal capacity

Emotional Awareness: *How should students develop their emotional awareness?*
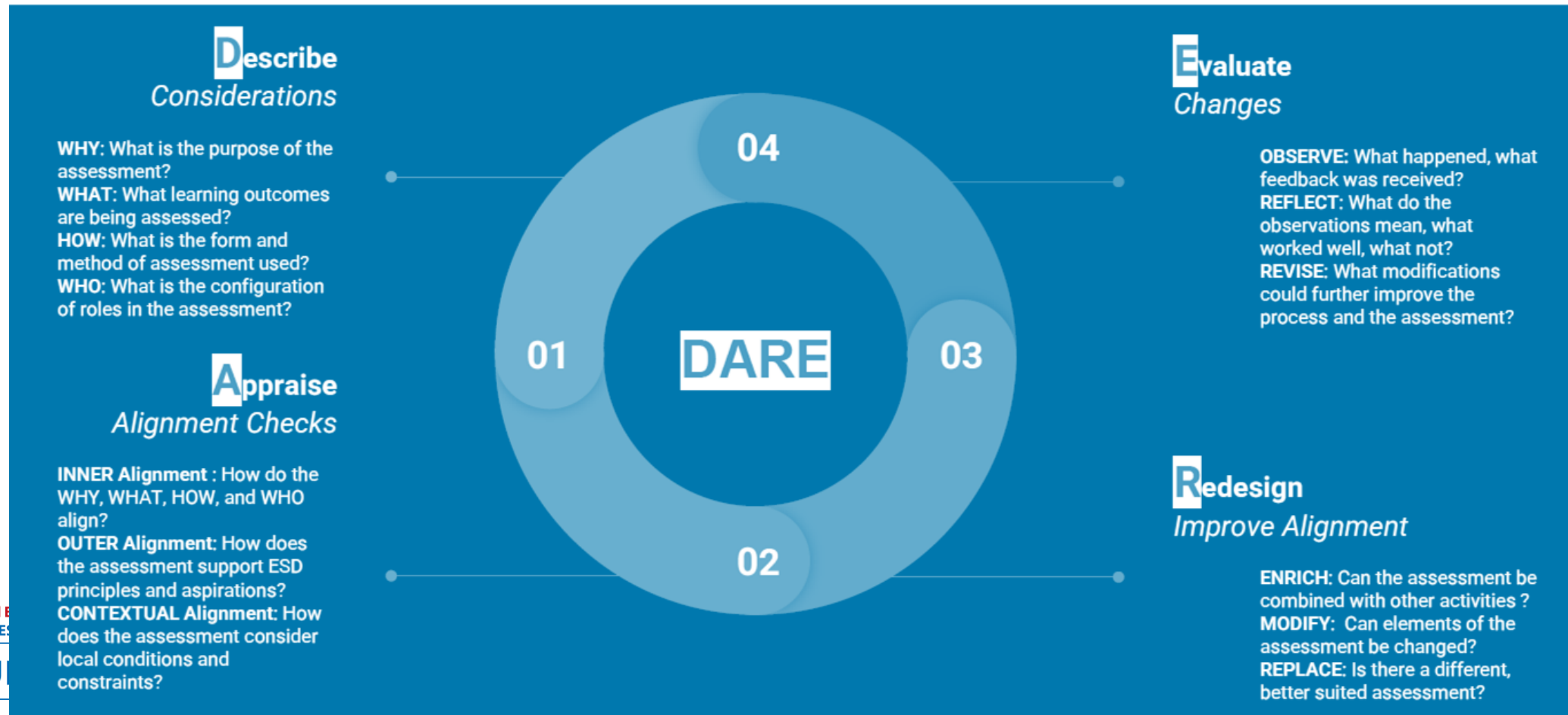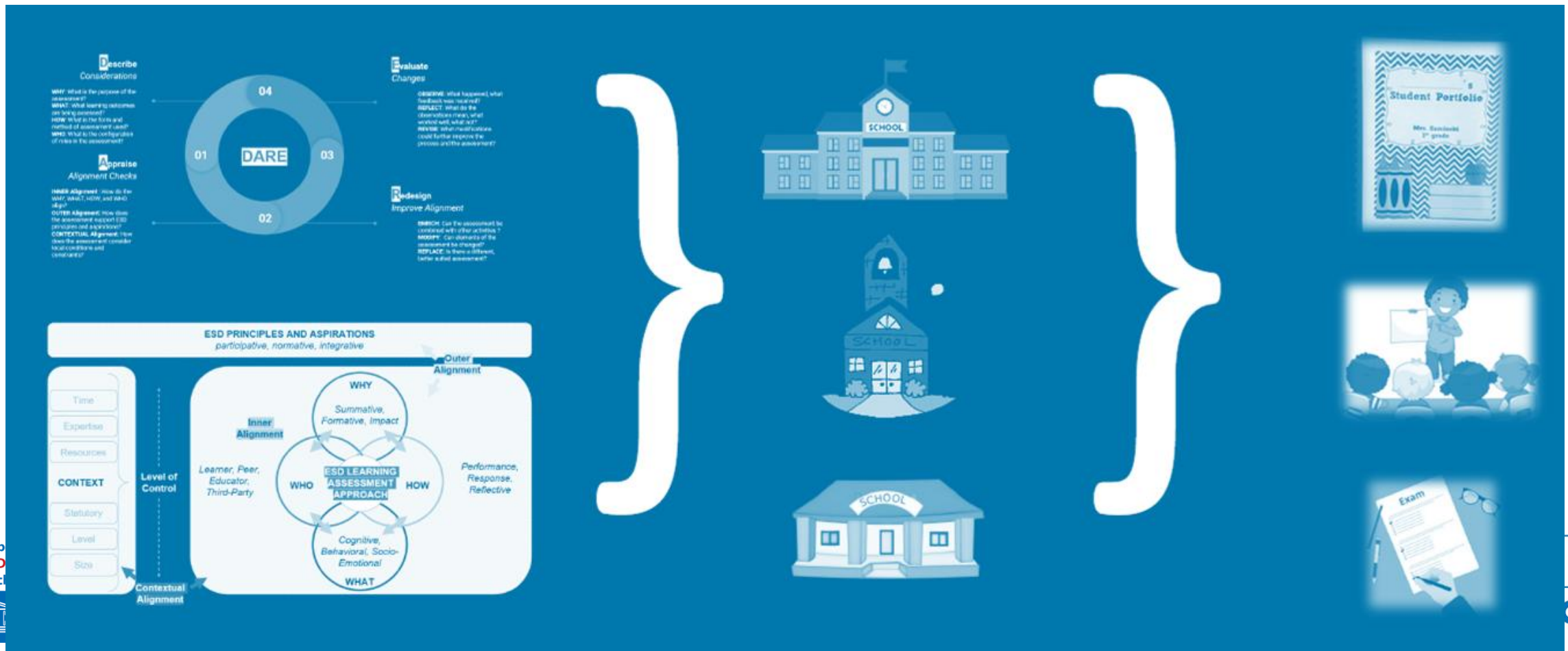
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Technical guidance tool: learning assessment for ESD.

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Technical guidance tool: learning assessment for ESD.

- **Make assessment better reflect and support ESD principlesand aspirations**
  - **Participative:** strengthen learner participation in assessment.
  - **Normative:** contestation and grappling with the unknown
    - Develop learner reflection skills
    - Enable learners to engage critically with sustainability
  - **Integrative**
    - Integrate authentic solution orientation (real world)
    - Integrate different domains of learning (behavioral, socio-emotional, cognitive)
    - Integrate different ways of thinking (values, strategic, systems, futures)
    - Integrate as formative part of the learning process
    - Integrate different forms of assessment
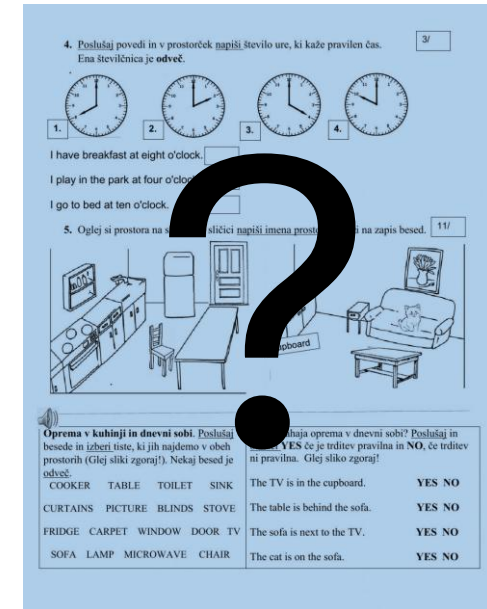
Written exam on sustainable food consumption: cognitive (knowledge recall in multiple choice questions) and behavioral (problem-solving skills in a scenario exercises)

First Lessons Learned: The Case of Slovenia

- **4 schools in Slovenia implemented the tools:**
  - Gimnazija Celje Center (upper secondary school): **whole school or institution approach**
  - Gimnazija Nova Gorica (upper secondary school): **learning assessment**
  - Osnovna šola Selnica ob Dravi (primary and lower secondary school): **transversal sustainability competencies and pedagogies**
  - Osnovna šola Sveta Trojica (primary and lower secondary school): **transversal sustainability competencies and pedagogies**

First Lessons Learned: The Case of Slovenia
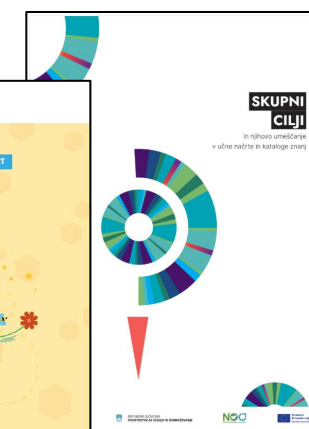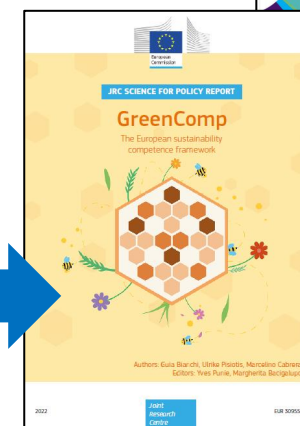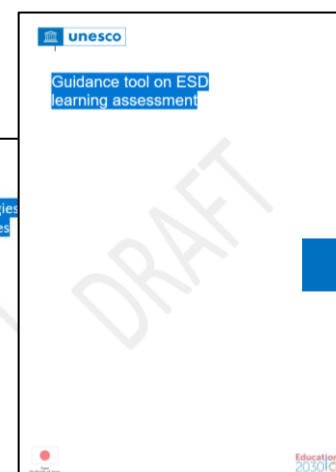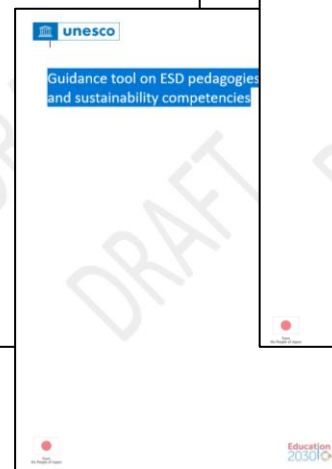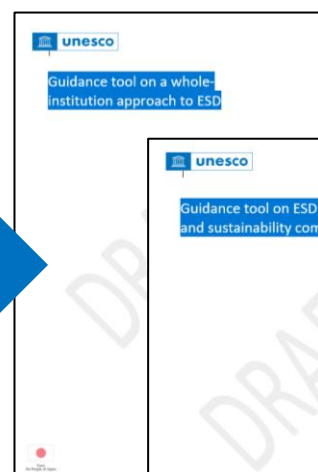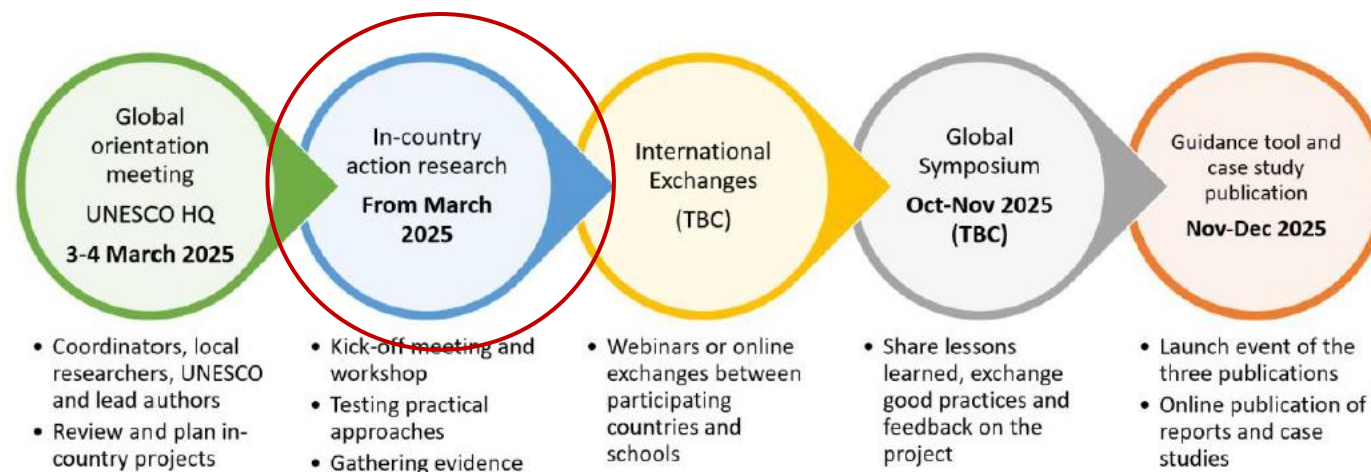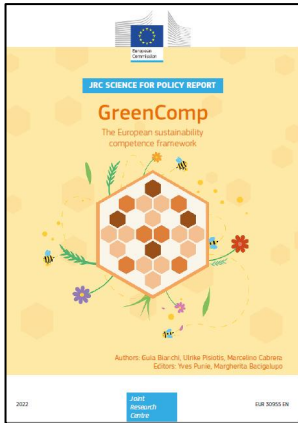
Visual representation of *GreenComp*.
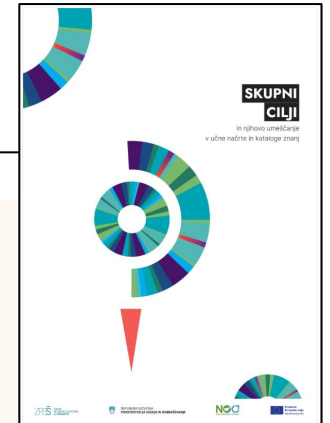
Critical thinking

Problem framing

Systems thinking

Valuing sustainability

Futures literacy

Individual initiative

Supporting fairness

Adaptability

Collective action

Exploratory thinking

Political agency

Promoting nature

Embodying sustainability values

Embracing complexity in sustainability

Envisioning sustainable futures

Acting for sustainability

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First Lessons Learned: The Case of Slovenia

- Learning assessment for ESD.
  - **Rethinking assessment** (of/for/as learning, emotional and cognitive domain)
  - Written exams, reports, questioners
- Whole-institution approaches in ESD,
  - **Developing indicators** for strengthening students & teacher engagement and professional development, improve management of resources, collaboration in local community etc.
  - Collecting current practices and proposing indicators
- Transversal sustainability competencies and pedagogies, and
  - **Develop student competencies** (interpersonal & action capacity) using outdoor education, project-based approach, STEAM, citizen science projects etc.

Contact
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