Learning to Be

Education for Sustainable Living

Policies and practices from around the world



Developing the ability to

- learn continuously
- extend one's knowledge beyond traditional limits
- trust and empathise
- dare to get involved
- become a global change-agent





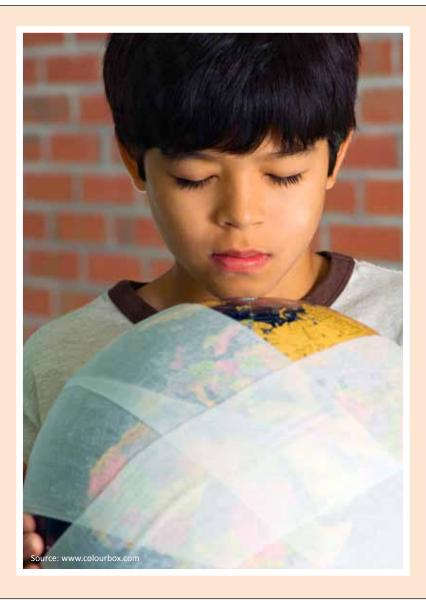


Learning to Be: Education for Sustainable Living

All around the world groups of informed and motivated people are striving to promote and adopt more responsible ways of living. Education is recognized as being essential to achieving sustainable development for all. There is also a growing acknowledgement that people everywhere need to develop the values and acquire the knowledge and skills to change their consumption behavior and to become more creative and active citizens. A key to this process is seeing oneself as a main actor in defining positive outcomes for the future.

To assist in moving forward with this vision it is worth exploring what policies and practices are needed to facilitate education for sustainable living and what lessons can be learned from the initiatives already taking place in different countries.

This brochure is the third in a series which focuses on formal and informal education for sustainable living and provides an overview of policies and practices from different countries.



"Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have — And underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up."

James Belasco and Ralph Stayer

Education for sustainable living is gaining ground

"Business as usual" is an option many now realize is no longer viable. Many social structures are failing to cater for the diverse needs of people. Even existing economic systems are being questioned as to their equity and efficiency. To meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, nations need citizens who are willing and able to learn, unlearn and relearn, to investigate and reflect, and to initiate, adapt to and evaluate change, not only within themselves, but also in society.

A common understanding of the concept of sustainable lifestyles which leads to greater human development is growing. Not only is the need for material changes in consumption, production and infrastructure being increasingly acknowledged, but the role values play in determining attitudes and behavior is also being recognized. More and more educators are realizing the importance of connecting cultural and theoretical knowledge to practical skills.

How does education for sustainable living differ from existing educational programs?

Education for sustainable living is about developing core life skills that people of all ages need. It involves nurturing and strengthening specific consumer and civic skills for functioning productively and meaningfully in today's global community. Education for sustainable living seeks to embrace a values-based application of knowledge and skills. It includes participatory, practical and personalized teaching and learning as well as strategies which involve the local community in the learning and development process.



Life skills which are needed include the ability to:

- learn continuously through setting short-, medium- and long-term personal development goals and working in multidisciplinary teams;
- extend one's knowledge beyond traditional limits by seeing the world from different perspectives and using lateral and critical thinking, intuition and spirituality;
- trust and empathise by practising transparency and seeking a deeper understanding of diverse cultures as a part of shaping one's identity and appreciating diversity;
- dare to get involved by embracing innovation and collaborating with others to engage on personal, local, national and global levels;
- become a global change-agent through the internalization of global values and ethics, through taking on the role of a global actor, and by inspiring others, promoting hope and coexisting peacefully with others.

The UN decade of education for sustainable development (DESD 2005-2014), led by UNESCO, endeavors to integrate sustainable development into all levels of education and learning. An important part of education for sustainable development deals with consumption and production, practical topics which touch the daily lives of people around the globe. After 2014, UNESCO plans to start up a new process, named the Global Action Program on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

The 10 Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) was adopted by world leaders at the Rio+20 earth Summit in the final document "The Future we want". The 10YFP is about increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles. It offers important solutions for poverty alleviation and the transition towards low-carbon and greener economies. An important tool for the implementation of the 10YFP is building cooperation with different stakeholders, such as the education sector, research institutions, businesses, and national and local governments. The Clearinghouse for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is a digital platform where many SCP activities are showcased. See: www.scpclearinghouse.org



Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC) aims at providing knowledge, values and skills to enable individuals and social groups to become actors of change towards more sustainable consumption behaviors. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved, inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with the appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms including consumers' rights, and aims at empowering citizens for them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed and ethical way.

Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption, UNEP 2010, p.11

How can PERL assist?

PERL (The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living) is an international network of experts, researchers, teachers and policy-makers (from over 140 institutions in more than 50 countries) who are developing methods, materials and guidelines to promote education for responsible, sustainable living. Knowing what other regions are doing often stimulates ideas about how to initiate or further develop policies and practices in one's own country. PERL's global network can provide information on a wide variety of initiatives in different countries and settings. The process of establishing a public dialog involving stakeholders, the educational sector and the government, is often a demanding one. PERL can offer advice based on previous experiences. PERL also has professional partners who can assist with adapting methods and materials to local conditions.

What policies and practices are being used?

Various policies and practices have been adopted to implement education for sustainable living. The examples shown in this brochure represent a selection of these from different regions of the world. The following categories have been used to describe these different policies and practices:

- Revising the way we live
- Envisioning alternative futures
- Daring to be different
- Contributing to a responsible, just economy

What can be learned from current experiences?

The examples presented in this brochure show that there are many ways to implement education for sustainable living. Valuable lessons can be learned from what has worked; but it is equally valid to learn from the activities, models and tools that have not been successful. Experience shows that four factors are particularly important:

- 1. Cultural and historical context: What works in one country or location may not work in another. It is important to look at the factors that have shaped the educational situation that exists in a given place, and to look for strengths that help implement educational initiatives.
- **2. Collaboration between civil society, the educational sector and government:** Initiatives may have different leaders, but collaboration between relevant stakeholder groups is essential to ensure that progress is made.
- **3. Encouraging creativity:** Learning to recognize and develop creative solutions is essential for stimulating innovation.
- **4. Monitoring of initiatives:** Periodic monitoring is necessary to ensure that essential themes are not missed, to track implementation progress and to identify weaknesses that need to be addressed.



Revising the way we live

Many of the choices we make are based on cultural norms, pure habit or reactions to marketing. Reflecting upon the way we live requires that we consider why we are making certain choices and what the consequences of the choice may be for ourselves and others. This involves understanding the symbolic value of objects and services and gaining insight into the influence advertising and branding has. By stimulating social conversations on our goals and daily actions, and by building consensus on alternative approaches, lifestyles can be modified. Learning to participate in these processes is a central task for education for sustainable lifestyles.

India

Brake Even ¹



Brake Even is Swechha's endeavor to instill environmental and citizenship values among youth in India. It is an innovative short-term outreach program targeting students in middle and secondary schools. The students learn through games, exercises, videos and films to take positive action as global citizens and environmental stewards.

Swechha was launched in 2000 as a campaign to improve the state of the Yamuna River, the lifeline of Delhi. Swechha is a youth-run, youth-focused NGO working on environmental and social development issues. Swechha's goal is to encourage young people to think before they act and to be involved in the community where they live, so that together everyone can bring about change for a healthier, cleaner society. Swechha aims to help the younger generations realize that citizenship is not just about belonging to a particular nation state, but is about responsibility, partnership, participation and action.

Finland

TANGO project²

Redefining life quality and well-being was the main focus of the *TANGO project* which started in 2011 and lasted for two years. The project encouraged students and adults in Helsinki, Kannelmäki suburb, to take responsibility in their own neighborhood by encouraging inter-generational dialogue through a participatory and experimental design process in a social context. Several institutions and organizations were involved in the development and execution of the project which included students from Finland, France and Italy and around 100 local inhabitants.

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Albert Einstein

¹ http://www.swechha.in/

² Kirsi Niinimäki, Aalto University School of Art and Design, www.designtango.eu

The most significant moment in the project was when the students organized a neighborhood party to show that small initiatives can have an impact on how the social environment is experienced and that this can be done with little effort. Local actors and associations were invited to implement various activities during the day with this goal in mind. For example, a local teenage band performed a gig, an art therapist organized a painting workshop, and a local association of retired people ran a bingo session.



The project was successful in that it not only forged new friendships, but also helped increase awareness and understanding of the meaning of social well-being and how knowledge can be gained through collective activities and artistic approaches.

Australia

Stories of Simplicity 3

The Simplicity Institute is a research center that seeks to facilitate the rapid transition from growth-based consumer societies to sustainable and more rewarding societies based on material sufficiency. It seeks to understand what a society would look like if it were based on a 'simpler' way of living and how we might get there.

The Simplicity Institute has developed networks of active and collaborating participants and has published reports focusing primarily on education, mindfulness and degrowth. Living simply in a consumer culture involves heading in the opposite direction to where most of society is moving. At times this can produce feelings of social isolation, so it is very important that those who choose to live simply share their experiences. With this in mind, The Simplicity Institute has launched a project called 'Stories of Simplicity' which aims to provide insight into the various ways people are living simpler lives by collecting and sharing these stories in publications and online.



"In 2014, consumers epitomise contradictions. They show a desire to indulge in luxury and instant gratification, expressed by the need for an even smarter smartphone, a passion for apps, a faster route to purchase and a craving for the visual. However, in parallel are struggles for better work/life balance, the concerns of eco-worriers, an appreciation of frugality and imperfection and a longing for the authenticity of home and community."

Top 10 Global Consumer Trends, Euromonitor International, Daphne Kasreil-Alexander

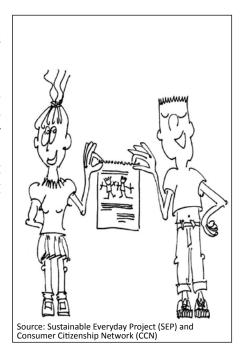
Envisioning alternative futures

What will tomorrow bring? There are people all over the world who are trying to envision and create alternative futures. These individuals and groups ask if we can actually afford to heedlessly devour the earth's natural resources. They search for means to reduce lifestyle-related illnesses. And they work for a global society based on values which contribute to equity and global cooperation. Teaching systems-thinking and stimulating the ability to imagine alternative futures are important aspects of education for sustainable lifestyles as some of the following examples indicate.

Belarus, Kosovo, Macedonia, Ukraine and Albania

Drawing for Life 4

The use of comic strips offers the opportunity to communicate across linguistic and cultural barriers and to take a fresh look at the contours of our everyday lives. "It gives us hope", said a teenager who participated in the innovative transnational program called *Drawing for Life*. The program's approach helps communicate the search for responsible lifestyles as a 'hero's journey'. It teaches participants about sustainable lifestyles by helping them learn how to draw comics. A science fiction theme is used and the process is described as the different stages in a heroic journey. The program is open to young people, youth leaders, educators and others. The project began in 2006 in Belarus and has since spread to Kosovo, Macedonia, Ukraine and Albania. In Belarus it is promoted by the National Centre of Education for Sustainable Development (at the Sakharov University). In Ukraine it is promoted by a national NGO, Teachers for Democracy and Development, working with public schools. In Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania it is promoted by local NGO's.



Brazil

Way Beyond Weight 5

Films can convey multiple perspectives on problems, as well as describe solutions and provide images of possible results. Used in classrooms and at parent teacher meetings, films can provoke discussion and challenge the way we see the present and the future. A recent film titled Way Beyond Weight deals with the challenge of obesity, the biggest childhood epidemic in history in many countries. Produced by Maria Farinha Filmes and directed by Estella Renner, this film was presented at the 36th Sao Paolo International Film Festival. The film exposes the advertising and marketing techniques used to get children to eat fast food and drink soft drinks. It challenges parents, teachers and youth to consider how to avoid joining the millions that struggle with the effects of obesity.

⁴ GAP, Marylin Mehlman, http://comics.globalactionplan.com/history/

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8N65getIYI

Europe

SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 6

This social platform project created *future visions* and *visualized scenarios* that provided a picture of what sustainable living could look like in 2050 in Europe. Through a multi-stakeholder co-creation process action roadmaps were made for the transition to sustainable living and green economy 2012-2050. The *roadmaps* offer different pathways of possible actions and opportunity spaces to address current lifestyle impact hot spots and kick start the transition to more sustainable living 2012-2050. The project has produced a rich set of visual tools, synthesizing learning and research, as well as policy briefs and an agenda for future research, innovation, and action for sustainable lifestyles. The project visualized possible sustainable ways of living in 2050 through alternative future lifestyles scenarios. It described necessary social and behavioral innovations and provided recommendations for the development of supporting infra-



structure. The identification of "groundswells of promising practice" of sustainable living already available today was one of the significant results achieved by the project.

United States of America

The Center for a New American Dream 7

Every day, we're bombarded with hundreds of ads encouraging us to consume more and more. The average American adult receives 41 pounds (18.6 kilos) of junk mail each year (about 560 pieces), 44 percent of which is thrown away unopened, according to the group 41 pounds.org. Americans spend more than four hours a day watching television and are exposed to 52,500 TV ads a year—that's 15.5 days of advertising annually! In 2005, 5.8 million tons of catalogues and other direct mailings ended up in the U.S. municipal solid waste stream—enough to fill over 450,000 garbage trucks.

The Center for a New American Dream has developed a series of educational materials called "I Buy Different" designed to help young people understand their purchasing power and what they can do to reduce their environmental impact. These materials include a 37-page guide containing resources to help teachers and their students take on a group action project. A resource book, Smart Consumers: An Educator's Guide to Exploring Consumer Issues and the Environment, is also available. This joint publication by WWF and New Dream offers 300+ pages of lesson plans, activities, and information to help stimulate discussions on responsible consumption in the classroom. Another useful educational resource available at the Center is entitled: "Get Real! What kind of world are you buying?" and shows what one really buys when one buys a burger, a cheap t-shirt, or a cell phone—and points the way to better choices, both for people and the planet.



⁶ www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu

⁷ http://www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/kids-and-commercialism/resources-for-educators

Daring to be different

It takes courage and self-confidence for individuals to dare to be different from their peer group, their social group or the masses of people around them. Cultural conditioning, trends and the influence of media and advertising determine, to a great extent, the lifestyles people choose. Breaking with existing ways of behaving is seldom done lightly. Daring to be different requires strength of character and often depends on the support of like-minded individuals. Learning lifeskills which instill the ability to independently assess conditions, critically assess personal behaviours and consequently change the way one lives are not always focused on in schools. Below are some examples of educational initiatives which do aim to help students dare to be different.

Thailand

Roong A-Roon (School of Dawn) 8

Roong A-Roon is a private school set up in 1997 in Bangkok, Thailand to provide an education based on Buddhist principles. To many, Buddhism is both a religion and a 'way of life'. Buddhist philosophy, as presented in this school, means to lead a moral life, to be mindful and aware of thoughts and actions, and to develop wisdom and understanding.



The school uses a holistic educational model which connects theoretical learning to daily life. The school's aim is to create consciousness, morality and wisdom in its students by combining action-based land-service learning with in-class learning. The school is situated around a small lake with several outdoor learning centers, a rice paddy, and a building for crafts and music. The learning centers encourage students to learn about health, medicinal herbs, rice growing, preparation, recycling, biodiesel, wood working, pottery, textiles and weaving. The main classroom buildings each contain 3 classes of students and operate as a "family unit". Students are encouraged to identify their own dreams and goals and to set their own learning targets.

The UNEP publication: Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption outlines the following central themes which contribute to education for sustainable consumption which is interdisciplinary and personalized: life quality, lifestyles, resource management, economics, consumer rights and responsibilities, information management, health and safety, change management and global awareness.

United Kingdom

Values Quality Mark 9

"What appears to be missing from schools and society at large is a shared ethical vocabulary, based on universal, positive human values, which can provide a sense of direction and nurture a positive sense of self, support the raising of academic standards and foster a stable moral society, "states Neil Hawkes, Founder of the International Values Trust. This Trust has established the *Values Quality Mark* which is given to schools to indicate their commitment to education which highlights and stimulates values such as trust, respect, honesty, compassion and integrity. A values-based school seeks to promote an educational philosophy based on valuing self, others and the environment, through the consideration of an ethical values vocabulary (principles that guide behavior) as the basis of good educational practice. A school which has received a Values Quality Mark engages in a continual process of self-evaluation and improvement.

Malta

Young Reporters for the Environment 10

Young Reporters for the Environment is focused on engaging secondary and post-secondary students in investigative journalism regarding sustainable development. This ongoing international project was initiated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and is run in Malta by the NGO Nature Trust Malta. Students aged 11-21 compete internationally with other students by proposing solutions to environmental problems both locally and abroad. Some students even manage to get international recognition for their solutions. Described below is one example of the reports written by a group of student journalists on their environmental project.

The whole town's on board – Are you? 11

A recycling competition was organized at a school in Malta. Parents and students were involved in bringing their paper and plastic to school for collection for recycling. Word about the competition quickly spread through local radio stations, local church services and by word of mouth. People brought all sorts of materials to the school and it soon became clear that more awareness needed to be raised on what type of materials could be recycled and how. The campaign therefore took on this additional role by educating the public and by involving local shops, factories, printing presses, offices, churches, and other institutions in disseminating information. The school continues to successfully involve the local community in learning more about recycling and putting it into practice.





⁹ http://www.valuesbasededucation.com

 $^{^{10}\ \}text{Young Reporters for the Environment, www.yremalta.org (national), www.youngreporters.org (international)}$

¹¹ G. Caruana, K. Spiteri, M. Mercieca, M. Attard, M. Vella. Article 11-14 years. Gozo College, Victoria School, Malta

Contributing to a responsible, just economy

"In a world of finite resources, constrained by strict environmental limits, still characterized by "islands of prosperity" within "oceans of poverty", are ever increasing incomes for the already-rich really a legitimate focus for our continued hopes and expectations? Or is there perhaps some other path towards a more sustainable, a more equitable form of prosperity?"

Tim Jackson, Prosperity Without Growth

Redistribution of wealth, fair trade, and reinvestment of profits into community service projects are some of the issues connected to the present discourse on how to improve the global economic system. Concepts such as "green economy" and the "economy of happiness" have also entered the debates, bringing with them sets of principles such as those the World Future Council presented at the Rio+20 Summit which included: the earth integrity principle, planetary boundaries principle, the dignity principle, the justice principle, the precautionary principle, the resilience principle, the governance principle and the Beyond-GDP principle. Therefore, gaining insight into alternative economic systems and learning to be financially literate are essential aspects of education for sustainable lifestyles, particularly in a world where overindebtedness increases in all corners of the globe.

Mexico

Aalto LAB Mexico, The Mayan Project 12



The Mayan Project was initially designed to help learners use pieces of wood which had fallen on the jungle floor to create hand-made products. The project has since expanded and now holds the Mayan Design Workshop which focuses on maintaining indigenous knowledge while adapting it to meet current market needs.

The Workshop lasts one week, during which a group of designers, architects, artists and students travel to the jungle of Calakmul in Mexico. Participants get the opportunity to develop their creativity and imagination by working in this very particular area, which is the home of numerous archeological sites almost fully covered by thick jungle growth. Over the past years the project participants have worked closely with the people of Calakmul, especially in Xpujil, Zoh Laguna. The participants collaborate with the local artisansto create new surface treatments for the artisans'existing objects in order to give them added value when sold. Workshop facilitators encourage participants to explore shapes in a creative way so that new sustainable objects can be designed, produced and sold by the local artisans.

Bulgaria

BRAND !DEA: International Student Competition for Creative Projects 13

BRAND !DEA targets economics students in the field of marketing communications and provides them with a platform to showcase creative and innovative thinking. This project stimulates student creativity during project development and sharpens the skills necessary to apply theoretical knowledge in the context of real business situations and scenarios. Although the project was initiated by the University of Economics, Varna, different NGOs are now also involved through proposing assignments or business case files to be developed for the competition. One of these was named "Let's See Together", a communication campaign for the foundation "Happiness for our children". The students were inspired by the foundation's goal of trying to improve the lives of Bulgarian families who have a member with special needs, by supporting the parents and the children. The students created a communication campaign to promote the foundation and to develop a new service of the



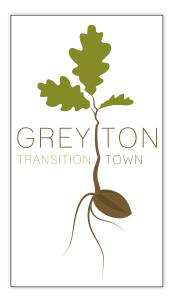
organization: paid social therapeutic service for children with hyperactivity. The overall goal of the students was to create awareness within the local community about this new service.

South Africa

Greyton Transition Town 14

Greyton Transition Town is a community-based, non-profit organization that seeks to inspire and empower the people of Greyton and neighboring communities to work together to achieve sustainability and resilience in the face of rising energy and food costs, economic crisis and environmental degradation. Local inhabitants are brought together in an extended process that helps them work through all stages of increasing Transition: assessment, visioning, action planning, goal setting, and follow-up. They are also committed to educating local young people about the importance of protecting the environment. The principle upon which Greyton Transition Town is based is that climate change and fossil fuel depletion require urgent action, including reskilling.

- Life with less energy is inevitable. It is better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
- Industrial society has lost the resilience to be able to cope with energy shocks.
- We have to act together, now.
- Infinite growth within a finite system (such as planet Earth) is impossible.
- If we plan and act early enough, and use our creativity and cooperation to unleash the genius within our local communities, we can build a future that is far more fulfilling and enriching, more connected to and more gentle on the Earth, than the life we have today.
- The move away from oil dependency, from high-carbon living, is not a move away from something, but rather a push towards something.



¹³ Bistra Vassileva. http://brand-idea.net/en

¹⁴ http://www.greytontransition.co.za/

United Kingdom

Kids 4 Clean Air 15

Kids 4 Clean Air is a website providing activities for children ages 5 to 11, to help learn about our planet's air and people's impact upon it. The materials include a series of information sheets for learners from ages 5 to 11. There are also a series of games and puzzles designed to encourage understanding and awareness about our Atmospheric Environment. There are for example, 4 crossword puzzles for you to try, each dealing with a particular aspect of air pollution such as, Global Warming and Ozone Hole. Other games are called, Switch off the Lights, Bus-to-School and Word Scramble. Illustrated with cartoons and filled with practical suggestions about how to help improve air quality, these materials make learning about sustainable lifestyles fun.

The way forward

There are three levels of action that are important to further implement education for sustainable living:

- 1. Internationally: The UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development will be followed by a Global Action Plan which will support the continued efforts to reorient education towards sustainable development. The UN 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production includes a program on education and sustainable lifestyles which will also focus specifically on education for sustainable living. New Millennium Development Goals (expected to be called "Sustainable Development Goals") are being designed and are expected to include quality education for all as a goal, bringing together initiatives on climate change education, education for sustainable development and education for sustainable consumption.
- **2.** Nationally: In many countries national focal points for the UN 10-Year Framework of Programs have been appointed to coordinate activities related to sustainable consumption and production. Additionally, countries can initiate national roundtables to bring stakeholders together to discuss education for sustainable living, to agree on recommendations and to form implementation plans and assist in carrying them out.
- **3. Locally:** Discussions about education for sustainable living must be stimulated in different fora (e.g. in schools, faith gatherings, NGOs, local mass media and local governance) and local projects and initiatives supported. Individuals, families and groups who are at different stages in their life and who are functioning in different settings must be motivated and enabled to seek and adopt sustainable lifestyles whilst appreciating the need and embracing the global vision.





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How to achieve education for sustainable living

Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption is a set of guidelines and recommendations published by UNEP which contains the following roadmap for achieving education for sustainable consumption.

- 1. Ensure education institutions reflect in their daily management the priorities given to sustainable development
- Include themes, topics, modules, courses and degrees about education for sustainable consumption in established curriculum
- 3. Encourage research in education for sustainable consumption-related areas
- **4. Strengthen connections** between researchers, lecturers, teacher trainers and socio-economic actors and stakeholders
- **5. Enhance cooperation** between professionals from diverse disciplines in order to develop integrated approaches to education for sustainable consumption
- **6. Facilitate teaching and teacher-training** which strengthens global, future-oriented, constructive perspectives within education for sustainable consumption
- Reward creative, critical, innovative thinking related to education for sustainable consumption
- Ensure that education for sustainable consumption respects the importance of indigenous knowledge and recognizes alternative lifestyles
- **9. Foster intergenerational learning** as an integrated aspect of education for sustainable consumption
- **10. Provide opportunities for practical application** of theoretical study through social involvement and community service.



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