

# Youth Partnership

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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



## Sustain-Mobility Conference

### Report

Marzena Ples

Supported by Susie Nicodemi

Co-ordinated by Lana Pasic

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## Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, beset by the consequences of climate change, the significance of sustainability has become more important than ever before. This is especially true for young people, who are the future custodians of our planet. Issues connected to environmental protection, social justice, well-being, economic opportunities and global citizenship are indispensable pillars in shaping a sustainable and promising future. An increasing number of youth movements and organisations are tackling these issues and organising activities to raise social awareness of them.

Furthermore, the topic of climate change and sustainability has been recognised by both international and European institutions as an important area of action.

### Linking sustainability and learning mobility

Learning mobility in the youth field refers to young people travelling for educational purposes in the context of youth work and formal and non-formal learning. Learning-mobility projects provide young people with unique opportunities to develop new competences, (skills, knowledge and attitude) in intercultural contexts. Learning mobility also involves organised activities, programmes and projects that enable young people to travel, experience different cultures and learn in diverse settings.

What does sustainability mean in the context of learning mobility? Can learning-mobility projects in the youth context be sustainable? The European Platform on Learning Mobility (EPLM) has worked towards finding a common ground on sustainability in the youth-learning mobility context since 2020.

The highlight of this effort was the [4th EPLM conference Sustain-Mobility, held from 26 February to 1 March 2023 in Schloss Hohenkammer, Germany.](#) It was hosted by JUGEND für Europa, the national agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ and the Youth and the European Solidarity Corps in Germany, and was organised in co-operation with the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership and other EPLM members.

The conference aimed to:

- establish a common understanding of sustainability in the area of youth-learning mobility, with a holistic focus on its economic, sociocultural and environmental dimensions;
- identify the main stakeholders and practices and give visibility to both;
- explore the main challenges related to sustainability in the context of learning mobility;
- raise political awareness of sustainability in non-formal education settings and in the youth policy area as well as connecting stakeholders and initiatives.

The Sustain-Mobility conference was designed to foster inclusivity and active participation, by providing a platform for diverse contributions from various levels, environments and stakeholders in the field. It also emphasised the importance of cross-sector collaboration

and a multi-perspective approach involving youth-work practice, youth research and youth policy.

The conference brought together over 120 participants to discuss different aspects of sustainability in the context of learning mobility. Among the participants were practitioners, researchers and policy makers from local, regional and national levels as well as young people.

This report summarises the main discussions and conclusions of the conference. It is based on detailed conference notes, nine workshop summaries provided by the rapporteurs,<sup>1</sup> and proposals and feedback from participants.<sup>2</sup>

### **What is the European Platform on Learning Mobility?**

The European Platform on Learning Mobility (EPLM) in the youth field is a network that brings together researchers, practitioners, policy makers and young people to foster high-quality and sustainable learning mobility. It is dedicated to enhancing community impact, knowledge, inclusivity, participation, sustainability, visibility and recognition of learning mobility (including blended or online formats) in non-formal and formal learning throughout Europe. It is co-ordinated by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.

The Platform functions as a connection point for different international mobility programmes, encompassing representatives from Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps National Agencies, regional and bilateral programmes as well as other initiatives providing workcamps, youth exchanges, volunteering opportunities, school exchanges, youth-worker mobility, vocational apprenticeships and more. The EPLM's strength lies in its diverse composition, extensive outreach and capacity to respond flexibly to the field's evolving needs.

The EPLM initiated work on exploring sustainability in learning mobility in 2020. Since then, [Sustainability in learning mobility: Exploratory study](#) (Barta, Ples 2021) and [Sustainability and learning mobility in the European youth field: Background paper](#) (Nicodemi 2023) have been published. The exploratory study defines sustainability and proposes a theoretical model of levels of sustainability in organisations implementing learning-mobility projects.

The background paper covers the different elements of sustainability and how they intersect with climate change, inclusion and human rights. It explores learning-mobility projects and sustainability, and includes a summary of sustainability policy frameworks and concluding remarks that highlight possible next steps to be taken and what is needed in this field. Both papers served as the foundation for shaping the conference programme.

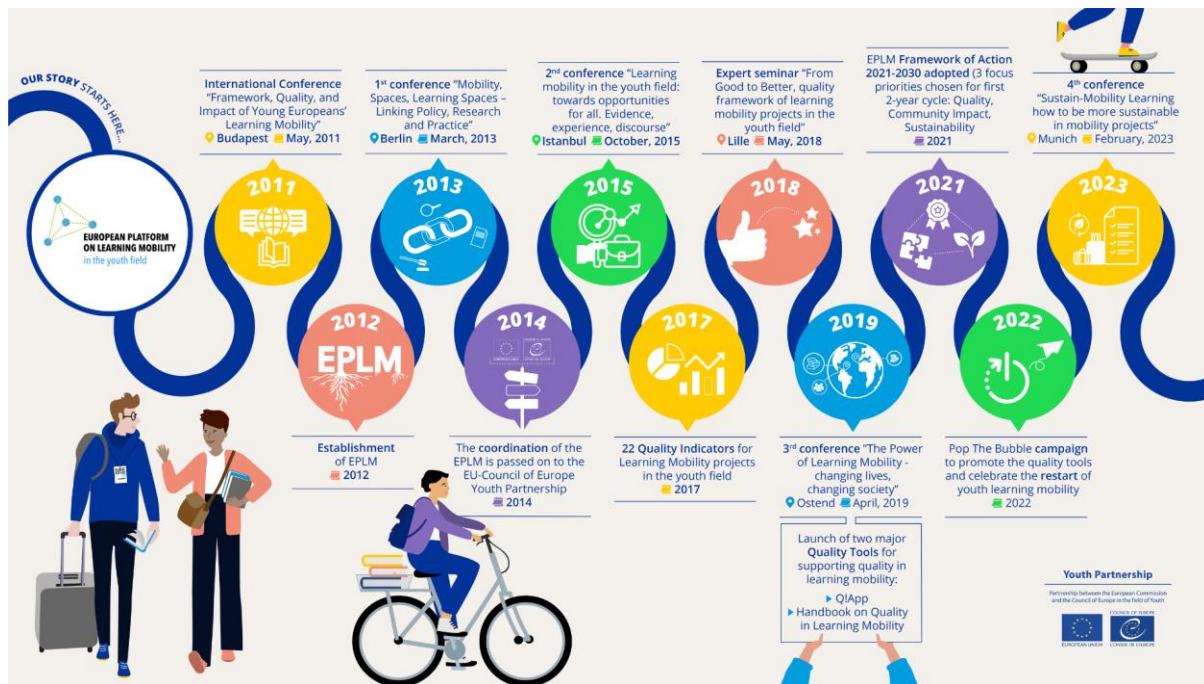
Furthermore, the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, developed [Greening the youth sector: Sustainability checklist](#) (Tuménaitė 2021). This comprehensive tool was designed to be used by youth organisations as well as policy and decision makers, to support the funding

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1. Marta Brzezińska-Hubert, Mary Drosopoulos, Elke Führer, Ewa Krzaklewska, Ingrid Müller, Alexandra Severino, Dragan Stanojevic, Sofie Van Zeebroeck and Manfred Zentner.

2. The report does not claim to be representative of all the views expressed during the conference. Omissions are unavoidable. Nonetheless, we hope it presents the main ideas and informs future discussions on the topic.

and implementation of sustainable projects. Its wide-ranging applications encompass initiatives such as learning mobility and enabling stakeholders to enhance their efforts towards a greener and more sustainable youth sector.



## Defining sustainability in learning mobility

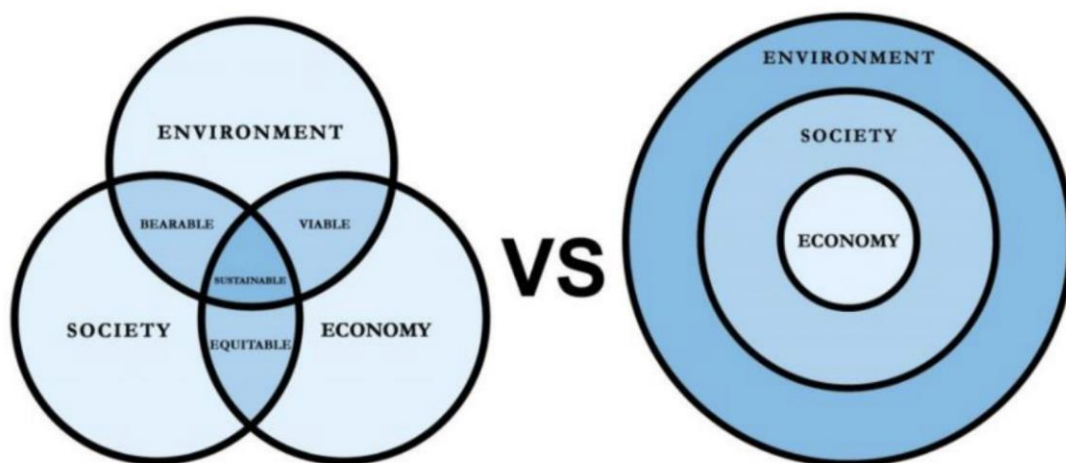
The concept of sustainability remains a subject of debate. The discourse surrounding it originated in the 1960s, but coming up with a precise definition of this concept continues to be problematic. Different contexts attribute varying interpretations to the term and it lacks coherence, as meaning fluctuates across policy frameworks and research publications. The most commonly used definition is still that of the *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (UN General Assembly 1987), also known as The Brundtland Report. According to the report, sustainability means meeting the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

While this definition is broad and general, it remains frequently cited in publications addressing sustainability. The same report also emphasised the need for a new era of economic growth that should be both socially and environmentally sustainable. In other words, sustainability requires the presence of a healthy economy, a just society and a sound environment. The Brundtland Report introduced the concept of the three dimensions of sustainability, which served as the foundation for what is known as the triple bottom line concept proposed by Elkington in 1999. It posits that all three dimensions – environmental, social, and economic – must be balanced to achieve sustainable development. Each dimension is crucial in building and transitioning towards a sustainable society. They are interconnected and depend on one another. However, the triple bottom line approach poses challenges in that the three dimensions are not inherently equal. The economic sphere holds significant power and influence over the other two. On the other hand, if the

environmental pillar is compromised, as environmental activists faced with climate change have predicted, the other two pillars will also suffer. And yet, it is worth noting that the state of the environment is a consequence of actions in society and the economy. Changes in these dimensions are needed if they are to have a meaningful impact on the environment. None exists in isolation; they are interconnected and mutually influential.

Moreover, there are overarching mechanisms that have led to the destruction of environmental and social systems. These have resulted in observable symptoms such as climate change, poverty, erosion of trust, inequalities and others, all of which can be traced back to unsustainable practices. Implementing measures in any dimension of sustainability inevitably affects the other two, and it is challenging to achieve sustainability without considering all three dimensions collectively. While discussions in the youth field often prioritise the environmental aspect of sustainability, it is crucial to recognise the interconnectedness of the environment, society, and economy. In the international youth field, a holistic understanding of sustainability should be embraced, which involves reflecting on the underlying causes of climate change and addressing them comprehensively.

Figure 1: Visualisation of the Triple Bottom Line (University of Maine not dated).



At the same time, “sustainability is an intersectional issue which can connect to different spheres. It can be viewed in relation to climate change, inclusion, human rights, minority rights, locality and many other issues” (Nicodemi 2023 p. 6), and all of these are in focus in learning mobility and international youth work. Sustainability addresses a fundamental enquiry into all aspects of human life. Its objective is to foster the well-being of societies and safeguard the environment for present and future generations.

The authors of the above-mentioned *Sustainability in learning mobility: Exploratory study* proposes the following definition, connecting learning mobility and sustainability:

Sustainability in learning mobility means aligning operations of a given learning mobility organisation on the procedural level with environmental, social, and economic sustainability principles. In other words, sustainable learning mobility organisations need to ensure that processes within the organisation, including implementation of learning mobility activities, are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable (Bárta, Ples 2021 pp. 13-14).

Sustainability inside organisations starts with their daily operations and extends to organising learning-mobility activities. It can be further extended at the content level, offering organisations the chance to:

(a) lead by example;

(b) prepare tailored content for their learning-mobility activities;

(c) engage in capacity building: internally by focusing on their staff and externally by extending capacity-building opportunities to a broader audience and involving external stakeholders. (Ibid. pp.14).

## **Overview of the conference programme**

### **Introduction**

The conference was opened by Manfred Von Hebel from the German National Agency for Erasmus+, who invited participants to contribute actively to the debate on sustainability and learning mobility. He also presented the rationale for organising the event, explaining that though the topic of the conference had yet to be fully explored, it was highly pertinent to learning-mobility practices because of the increasing number of international youth projects focusing on climate change and environmental protection. He added that while it was essential to agree on a common concept of sustainability and its relation to learning-mobility activities, it was also important to acknowledge the related challenges.

The conference emphasised the importance of bringing together individuals with different perspectives and backgrounds to initiate work on sustainability in this field. The participants were encouraged to become multipliers of their knowledge and good practices.

Lana Pasic, from the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, introduced the EPLM as a network that brings together various stakeholders involved in youth-learning mobility. Currently, the platform focuses on the three working priorities: quality, sustainability and community impact. Over the past ten years, the EPLM has been researching and developing knowledge and practical tools to support these topics and show their interconnectedness and importance in the learning-mobility context.

### **Widening the perspective of sustainability in learning mobility**

The first panel discussed broadening the perspective of sustainability from the standpoint of practitioners, researchers and activists. The panel included Andreea Loredana Tudorache, a practitioner, freelance trainer and consultant; Peter Akkerman, a policy maker and chairman of foundation Forest that Owns Itself; and Dražen Šimleša a researcher and practitioner for the European Network for Solidarity Economy (RIPESS), who called for increased activism in



both government and companies to drive meaningful change and accelerate the transition toward sustainability.

The panellists first emphasised the importance of protecting existing natural resources, avoiding greenwashing, addressing the root causes of environmental issues, raising awareness of the interconnectedness of humans and ecosystems, and recognising the rights of nature.

Secondly, there is a need to ensure that sustainable transitions are just and inclusive, particularly for marginalised communities. The panel highlighted the privilege of those in the green movement and the need to include voices from the global south. Therefore, local and regional approaches to achieve sustainability are important, but the ongoing need for global interactions must be acknowledged.

Thirdly, regarding inclusiveness and just transition, the panel acknowledged that teaching solidarity, co-operation and appreciation for one another in sustainability education was invaluable in this process, as is taking into account social justice in sustainability transitions.

Fourthly, societies need to reduce their reliance on technology and encourage more face-to-face interactions. At the same time, the impact of online projects on social interactions should still be researched to reflect on the values and costs of learning mobility in general.

Fifthly, from the activist point of view, young people should be fully integrated into the decision-making processes to ensure that ensuing policies will reflect their ideas and vision of the future.

Finally, sustainability is an evolving topic and requires skills, knowledge, attitude and practical implementation in daily life. It also needs regular self-reflection, especially on how sustainability practices can be improved.

When we talk about how we live our lives so that it won't jeopardise future generations, it's not just about the planet, it's about society, cultural groups ... Engaging in quality-learning mobility that will have a long-lasting impact in communities is still important (Andreea Loredana Tudorache)

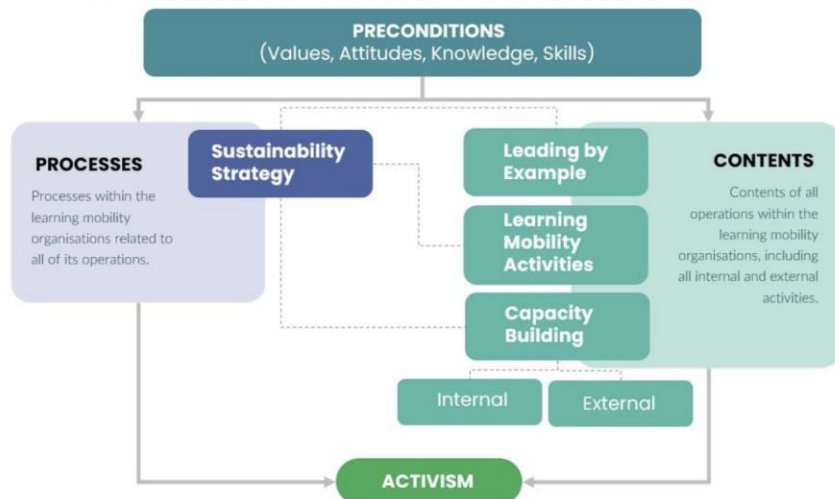
It's all about action, otherwise it's all about talking. Policymakers' ... job is not to answer all their emails, but to take bold steps. We need people that dare to take some action. Let's make a change together. We have a youth environmental council, that structurally sits at the table in Europe. (Peter Akkerman)

If you want to really change something, you are not dealing with the consequences, *but the* source of the problem. People want to have more sustainability in our environment, we have to work more to change the situation in society, especially at the economic level ... (Dražen Šimleša)

## **The EPLM perspective on moving towards sustainable learning mobility**

In a keynote address, Ondřej Bárta presented the outcomes of the [Sustainability in Learning Mobility Study](#) (Bárta, Ples 2021), which proposed a definition of sustainability in learning mobility, preconditions for sustainable practices (attitude, knowledge and skills) and a model of sustainability levels in organisations implementing learning-mobility projects.

## LEVELS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN LEARNING MOBILITY ORGANISATIONS



The most commonly used concept of sustainability consists of three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. There are two ways of visualising them: a Venn diagram where they are shown in circles of equal size and another which shows the economy in the centre and the environment overlapping both society and the economy. In the latter, the environment is preponderant because the economy cannot function without society and society cannot function without the environment.

All three of the above-mentioned dimensions of sustainability can be applied to learning mobility. Environmental sustainability can be addressed both as a topic and as a procedural aspect of organising activities, with checklists that are useful for monitoring. Social sustainability connects with concepts such as inclusion, equity and democracy, all of which are relevant to learning-mobility events. It is also essential to consider multicultural environments, and non-formal and informal learning approaches in promoting social sustainability. However, there are still challenges to be met regarding understanding and implementing economic sustainability, such as the need to balance funds and ensure sustainable practices in industry.

Sustainability ultimately revolves around people and the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and skills of those organising activities are very important. A precondition for achieving successful sustainability hinges upon equipping them with the required resources and abilities to address the issues at hand. Understanding processes (how sustainable the operation is) and content (focusing on the relevant topics) in learning-mobility organisations is the first step towards achieving successful learning-mobility activities.

Implementing sustainable principles in learning mobility through processes, content and the capabilities of an organisation's personnel would be the next step. Whereas it may not be necessary to intervene at all levels, aligning an organisation's operations with sustainability principles is essential, even if sustainability is not explicitly addressed. Organisations that excel in sustainable processes and tackle sustainability as a topic, have the potential to

become an activist organisation, thereby serving as an example of lobbying and contributing to the development of the field.

### **Competences for sustainability and learning mobility**

Ulrike Pisiotis, a policy officer at the European Commission, presented [GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework](#) developed to integrate sustainability into education and training systems. GreenComp is based on consultations with stakeholders from different educational fields, including young people who have expressed their concerns about climate change and the perceived failure of education and training to address sustainability issues. Education that helps people understand and take action on climate change today. GreenComp provides a list of competences that should be developed in this process. The framework was introduced as part of a broader ecosystem of competence frameworks for individuals, professionals and organisations. GreenComp is based on scientific underpinning and the development process, including scoping, literature review, expert workshops and stakeholder engagement. It provides an overview of the four competence areas: sustainability values, complexity in sustainability, envisioning sustainable futures and Each of these four areas consists of three specific competences, all of which are interconnected and non-sequential, emphasising their interrelatedness. Their focus on promoting nature and taking action for sustainability are factors which distinguish GreenComp from other frameworks. The framework uses the metaphor of a beehive to represent the dynamics and interplay between the competence areas and the total of 12 competences in GreenComp.

As GreenComp is a voluntary tool, measuring the success of its implementation and outcomes may be challenging. Further development in monitoring and assessing sustainability competences is needed.

The framework's holistic approach to sustainability was a result of discussions and compromises made during its developmental period. While the initial focus was on environmental sustainability, the framework also aligned itself with a broader concept of sustainability by incorporating social, economic and cultural dimensions, all of which are interconnected and have a significant role to play in protecting the planet.

GreenComp is a living document that users can adapt and shape to fit their specific contexts. It offers a common-ground definition of sustainability competence and serves as a reference model.

In the following discussion, participants expressed the need for more research to support policy work in the area of sustainability. They mentioned the possibility of using GreenComp to develop training content for beneficiaries of learning-mobility programmes and for non-formal education trainers and practitioners. Using GreenComp was considered valuable, but complicated to apply in the youth field. They suggested simplifying it for different users.

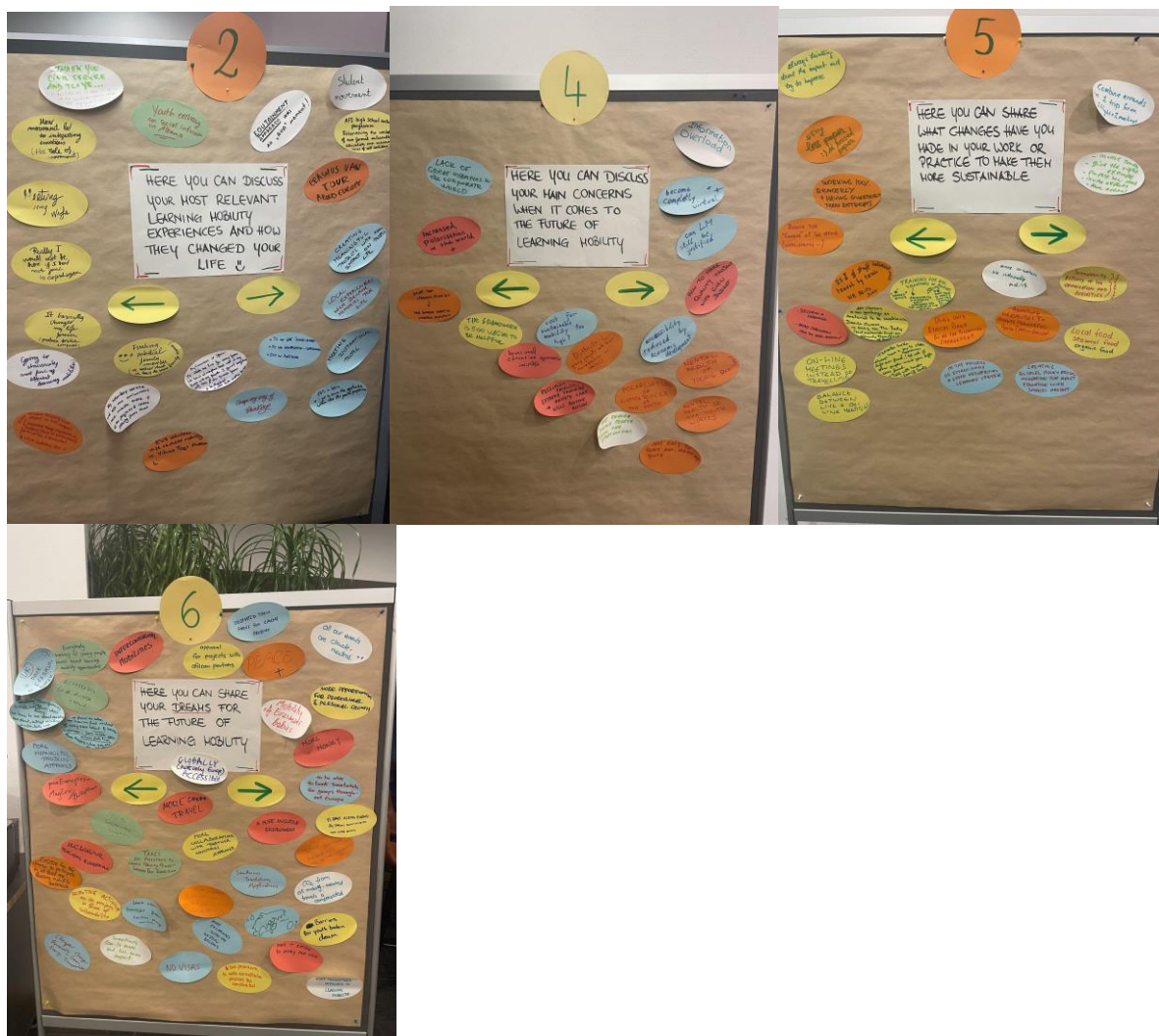
Participants discussed the complexity of the tools and thought they should be more accessible and useful for different actors in the field. They further highlighted the importance of including non-formal education sectors and early childhood education in the discussions and actions on sustainability. The importance of recognising and crediting skills

gained through sustainability projects was also mentioned. Overall, there was a call for collaboration in creating useful tools and promoting sustainability.

## Mapping and (re)connecting stakeholders, organisations and initiatives

During the networking session in small groups, participants:

- met people with the same professional profile as theirs and did networking;
- discussed their most relevant learning-mobility experiences and how these changed their lives;
- discussed their connections with the topic of sustainability;
- discussed their main concerns about the future of learning mobility;
- shared changes they made in work or practice to make their activities more sustainable;
- shared their dreams for the future of learning mobility.





## Sustainable exploration of the venue

In the evening participants were offered a choice of four activities/workshops:

1. an upcycling workshop;
2. a zero waste workshop;
3. a seed bomb workshop;
4. meditation.

## Sustainability and learning mobility through the golden pyramid

“Less is more”  
Lucie Schubert

Experts on the four angles of the EPLM pyramid were invited to the panel on sustainability and learning mobility: Lucie Schubert, a practitioner and trainer; Tomi Kiilakoski, a researcher; Almut Röder, a young person, Europeer; and Sebastian Thierry, a policy maker, Salto Green.

The panellists acknowledged that young people are generally more aware of and sensitive to environmental issues, due to the direct impact these issues will have on their future. However, despite this awareness, young people can feel powerless and frustrated when it comes to finding practical solutions and seeing meaningful action from policy makers. The question of balancing young people's expectations for quick action with the slow pace of policy change was raised.

It is clear that progress in the youth sector and in education and training regarding sustainability has been made. There are more educational activities, curricula and training courses devoted to it. However, there is a visible gap between awareness and action, and the challenges in translating knowledge into tangible activities. In addition, there is a need to shift towards a holistic approach regarding the environmental, and the social and economic dimensions of sustainability. The panel called for treating environmental and



social sustainability together if challenges are to be met effectively; currently, they are treated separately. Sustainability should not be a minor addition to society; it should be pervasive and at the core of learning-mobility activities.

To support this process, a network of motivated young people eager to effect change and share their learning experiences with others would greatly benefit spreading “know-how” in the field and keeping motivation high. Inclusivity and accessibility are necessary in working towards sustainability, as is acknowledging that it is a step-by-step process.

International Young Naturefriends has significant experience in organising sustainable events, but the organisers encountered various challenges, including not being taken seriously when implementing sustainable practices. There is a need for stronger and sustainable decision making to address these challenges effectively. At the same time, there are positive examples of learning-mobility activities with a strong sustainability focus, such as those of the European Youth Event (EYE), which, since 2014, has worked to improve its approach to sustainability and has introduced many sustainability measures. Initially, they focused on small changes such as using refillable water bottles, sourcing local food and avoiding gadgets. Today, the event has expanded its guidelines on sustainable participation and on travel accepted by the European Parliament. It holds collaborative hubs where participants work together on presenting topics instead of individually promoting themselves with printed materials and gadgets. This shift has allowed for more meaningful discussions, reflection and collaboration, and has led to the creation of programmes and materials on specific topics.

The panel discussion focused on the importance of sustainability research and the challenges posed by multiple crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and the need for social learning in education systems to address them effectively. Policy and educational practices are important in helping young people and adults learn how to cope with and mitigate these crises. Understanding how young people perceive and engage with environmental issues requires more research.

At the same time, a critical analysis of environmental sustainability is needed. An interesting example of Finland was given, a country where, despite its progress in social sustainability and gender equality, has fallen short in environmental policies and setting concrete goals. Young people are involved in the decision-making processes, but they are disappointed that their concerns and demands for urgent action are not being adequately addressed.

It is important to include both passionate ecological activists and indifferent individuals to ensure legitimacy and inclusiveness in change, but this also represents a challenge.

There are many examples of activists who believe in collective action, problem solving, and instilling hope and motivation to make a difference. From the standpoint of a “positive everyday utopia”, the societal ideals of environmental preservation and inclusivity can be achieved through meaningful actions in the present. To take action on issues is meaningful in itself and provides a source of hope.

The approach of a newly opened Salto Green was presented during the panel. It is currently focusing on the following:

- 1) lowering the carbon footprint of mobility programmes:

2) using mobility programmes to raise awareness and reflect on practices related to sustainability, including integrating sustainability practices into the preparatory process and support during projects;

3) focusing on placements and volunteering opportunities for participants in organisations already implementing sustainable practices.

These approaches can help participants in learning-mobility activities develop the necessary skills to contribute to an ongoing transition towards sustainability. At the same time, Salto Green will collate practices from national agencies and support their dissemination. Together with green contact points, they will create training courses for national agencies representatives.

The panel concluded that to achieve sustainable results one should not move too quickly. Making rushed decisions under stress or pressure may not lead to sustainable outcomes.

### **Workshops on good practice: How do we live sustainability through learning mobility?**

The nine workshops aimed to explore sustainability and learning mobility from different angles: policy, research and practice, and, at the same time show how they relate to the dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic. The workshops showcased methods of connecting the various facets of sustainability and learning mobility, or more specifically, how sustainability can be incorporated and experienced through learning mobility.

### **Results of the Learning mobility in times of climate change project**

The publications [\*Learning mobility in times of climate change: Recommendations for a climate-sensitive learning mobility\*](#) (Mierzowski, Piesche, Reinholz-Asolli, Walker 2022); [\*Listening to young people: Mobility for future\*](#) (Mierzowski, Piesche, Reinholz-Asolli 2022); and [\*Toolbox for more sustainability in international youth work: Mobility, diet, waste and energy\*](#) (Riemann, Mierzowski 2022), were published in the framework of the project Learning mobility in times of climate change project (LEMOCC). The project focused on environmental sustainability and how learning-mobility projects can improve it. LEMOCC's primary aim was gathering data on the interplay between youth, mobility and climate change, specifically involving young people as knowledgeable contributors.

The workshop recognised that one of the strengths of the project was that ministries were conducting international research on this topic and that funds for 18 organisations involved with LEMOCC had already been allocated. The workshop also emphasised the significance of young people's perspectives, highlighting their genuine appreciation for mobility, but also their concern about its impact on the environmental. Furthermore, it underlined the value of non-formal learning methodologies, and referred to the toolbox as a testament to their importance.

## **Sustainability checklist: tips and considerations for going green**

The participants discussed the dual nature of the climate crisis. On the one hand, a few major polluters contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, while a few privileged groups in affluent societies actually benefit from environmentally harmful practices. On the other hand, marginalised groups and populations in the global south bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change. Despite this disparity, successful climate lawsuits have been initiated by young people in various countries, holding policy makers accountable for ecologically damaging policies. The far-reaching impact of these policies, including biodiversity loss, deforestation, water scarcity, pollution, species extinction, and overall environmental degradation, affects lives on a global scale.

The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, in collaboration with the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) task force on greening the youth sector, developed the [Greening the youth sector: Sustainability checklist](#) (Tuménaité 2021). This resource is a valuable tool for youth organisations, policy and decision makers. It provides guidance on funding and implementing sustainable projects, including learning-mobility initiatives. The checklist offers an intersectional approach, outlining a series of processes that could enhance the sustainability of projects. It covers a broad span of valuable measures to turn practising learning mobility into a sustainable activity and was presented as an instrument for making environmentally conscious choices during educational activities.

## **Social and solidarity economy and its role in community building**

During the workshop, participants discussed the need for a social and solidarity economy to promote sustainability. The workshop agreed that the principles of economy needed to be fundamentally changed in order to achieve fair distribution. A social economy is one in which businesses give priority to social missions, such as ensuring a fair share of profits and democratic management. However, the main obstacles to a social economy are the interconnectedness of growing inequalities, diminishing trust, reduced co-operation and a declining sense of security. It was emphasised that feeling secure is one of the foundations of sustainable development. The youth field could be a catalyst for change, as could be recognising the significance of the economy.

## **Games: a bridge between sustainability and learners**

The workshop covered the topic of game-based learning (GBL), which is an educational method that uses games to teach a specific skill or to achieve a positive learning outcome. Gamification elements might include points, badges, levels, avatars and time-limited rewards. Games can be competitive or co-operative.

It underlined the importance of gamification in the context of sustainability. Examples of games addressing this topic sustainability were presented, followed by ideas for gamification in three areas: sustainable processes in organisations, preparation of mobility projects and compensation. The participants brainstormed ideas for games and applications that could strengthen these areas and motivate users to act more sustainably.



## **Ecovillages as learning spaces for holistic sustainability**

Participants explored examples of ecovillages, or purposeful communities intentionally designed through locally driven participatory processes. Ecovillages often host learning-mobility activities during which young people develop various practical and social skills, knowledge, and attitudes. For example, they learn gardening, ways to save energy, how to live in communities and make decisions jointly.

Ecovillages understand sustainability as having four dimensions: social, cultural, environmental and economic. Their purpose is to regenerate social and natural environments. Participants discovered the regeneration mandala, developed by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN Europe), which shows the entire interconnected system, representing the balance between sustainability dimensions. The workshop concluded that sustainability alone is insufficient, and the concept of regeneration holds the key to the future.

## **Can culture save the world?**

The cultural sector plays a significant role by creating collective learning and experimental spaces. It fosters actions that promote a more sustainable lifestyle. Inclusion and involvement were highlighted as essential aspects of a just transition towards sustainability. The cultural sector engages all stakeholders, including special target groups, to ensure a fair and inclusive transformation. Culture provides the imagination, shared vision and common values that give meaning to individual actions and contribute to the structure of society. It helps individuals navigate the complexities and uncertainties of our society and encourages them to contemplate the future through dialogue with others. The cultural sector has the potential to contribute to this transition and develop ecological citizenship, which allows everyone to commit on both a local and global level.

The cultural sector holds the power to establish various spaces within society where individuals, groups and civil-society stakeholders can come together, inspire one another and turn reflection into tangible actions. Three specific areas are closely intertwined with the cultural sector:

- A space for imagination: culture provides a platform for envisioning new possibilities and fostering creativity;
- A space for transitional experiments and practices: culture offers opportunities for exploring and implementing innovative approaches to societal change; and
- A space for reflection and public dialogue: culture facilitates conversations and public discourse that promote critical thinking and collective understanding.

By leveraging these spaces through cultural activities, culture can effectively act as a catalyst for societal transitions.

## **Global citizenship in European and intercontinental learning-mobility projects**

The workshop explored the definition of global citizenship and its connection to sustainability. It also examined potential challenges that may arise in the context of learning mobility. It discussed the differences in addressing these topics when working with

European groups as opposed to intercontinental ones. The European-centred approach to learning-mobility projects addressing sustainability and various pre-conceptions were highlighted as challenges. It raised the question of whether it is meaningful to educate people about the benefits of sustainability in countries that suffer from the unsustainable practices of wealthier nations. The workshop also highlighted the intersectional nature of sustainability and how inequality can shape the understanding of sustainability. Last, it examined how different cultures affect the design of learning-mobility projects.

### **Co-creating sustainable policies**

Representatives of the Flemish Youth Council shared their experiences in co-developing policies. A framework should be established to ensure that government decisions affecting young people involve consultation with youth representatives, such as youth councils. An optimal approach would involve implementing a comprehensive system where governments consistently consult with the youth sector on matters concerning young people. This consultation process should include a wide network of young people and multiple rounds of discussions to ensure their active participation in shaping and refining recommendations. It is essential to give young people a platform to express their opinions and ensure that their interests are considered when formulating policies. Clear advocacy strategies are necessary at all levels (local, national or regional). Adequate technical, financial and knowledge-based resources are required for effective advocacy. Ensuring representation of all segments of young people poses a significant challenge. The voluntary nature of youth-council activities may inadvertently exclude those from vulnerable groups or the financially disadvantaged. Moreover, efforts should be made to reach young individuals who are not affiliated with any organisation.

### **Back to the future: lab**

The future lab methodology is an effective approach to tackle sustainability issues, envision future scenarios and develop initiatives to realise them. It has been specifically tested in addressing how organisations can enhance their sustainability practices. It is based on three steps. The first is the criticism of the current state of affairs and listing the negative aspects. The second is to brainstorm ideas on what future utopias could be like and the third step would be to figure out how to get there.

Regarding sustainable processes in organisations, the participants highlighted the importance of the following: inclusive engagement, having accessible materials and tools, conscious consumption and integration of sustainability into lifestyles and values.

By implementing these actions, organisations can create a future where inclusivity and sustainability coexist harmoniously and become integral aspects of everyday life.

### **Researchers' reflections**

To date, research in the domain of sustainability and learning mobility has been limited. Researchers acknowledged that they lag behind practitioners, whose expertise and experience are already well-developed. They noted a weak connection between sustainability and learning-mobility research and emphasised the importance of establishing

parameters to measure sustainability and the significance of cross-sectoral collaboration and the intersectional approach. Further, they pointed out the challenges posed by language, as certain terms may carry different meanings, depending on the context and culture.

They considered interesting research questions such as how narratives influence policy making; how young people's understanding of sustainability challenges may differ; to what extent is sustainability a political issue linked to certain ideologies; and if and how a lack of mobility can give rise to xenophobia and nationalism. The absence of viewpoints from researchers outside of Europe, especially from the global south, and perspectives of indigenous people was noted.

### **How to fill in the gaps: what is needed in the future?**

Four observers, each representing a different level of the EPLM pyramid – a youth-work practitioner, a young activist, a researcher and a policy maker were present throughout the conference. They provided feedback and remarks at the conclusion of the event.

Yasir Syed shared his observations from a practitioner's point of view. He emphasised a need to understand sustainability and use a common language to communicate its importance; practitioners' frustration with the long list of sustainability tasks; and the challenges of reaching everyone. However, there is hope in a future where sustainability is embedded in our values and attitudes. We should take conscious actions prioritising the planet over profit. Creating a beautiful and sustainable future by including everyone and acting now is possible.

Anita Nyame, a young activist, highlighted the importance of acknowledging social sustainability, which in youth work is essential, but not yet fully recognised as working for sustainability. There is a need for inclusion and equity in sustainability discussions. Working with people of diverse backgrounds is crucial for ensuring equal opportunities and nurturing a sense of belonging, particularly for young people, thereby fostering social cohesion across different sectors. It's important to prioritise social aspects in sustainability efforts and encourage everyone to consider these factors in their own actions.

Alexandra Severino, a researcher, admitted that this topic requires additional research as researchers are far behind practitioners in exploring sustainability and learning mobility. One of the topics that needs to be explored is the influence of background and cultural perspectives on sustainability in learning mobility. There is a need for mapping and learning from other people's experiences to fill research gaps, including learning-mobility practices in different continents.

Manfred von Hebel, a policy maker, emphasised the importance of fighting for climate justice, even though sustainability can be expensive. There is a need for targeted measures and to consider inclusion when implementing learning-mobility programmes, as sustainability is interconnected with inclusion. Some are disappointed by the insufficient recognition of non-formal education and learning mobility at the policy level. Even though the youth field significantly contributes to sustainability, the GreenComp framework, for example, is mostly focused on formal education. It should be translated into practical

measures for the youth field. There should be more visibility of non-formal learning practices through activism and research. Learning-mobility programmes can make a significant impact when it comes to sustainability.

## Commitments for the future

The final segment of the conference focused on commitments and future actions related to sustainability in learning mobility. Participants, including young people, researchers, practitioners and policy makers, discussed their ideas on this topic.



*Quotes from plenary:* “We really have to stop talking and start acting. We are very good at coming up with strategies... but it’s time for a change right now. My task now is to find ways to offset having to travel ...” (NA representative)

“I will commit myself to remain an angry person ... We need to act. Please open doors for young people as they are involved in sustainability topics ... (young person)

“I don't see that youth workers, trainers, practitioners are political enough. I commit to being even more political and hope you will do so as well” (practitioner)

“I am continuing to mobilise and connect people all over the world to actually build this future that we want to live in together – green, sustainable and holistic.” (young policy maker)

## Mapping and connecting stakeholders

One of the conference objectives was to provide space for mapping and connecting different stakeholders and others active in the youth field who work towards sustainability in learning mobility. In Appendix II, inspiring practices, projects and initiatives presented at the Fair during the conference are listed. Furthermore, the publication of the conference outcomes, [\*Collection of resources on sustainability and learning mobility\*](#) (Bárta 2023) and *Sustainability and learning mobility: Compendium of practices* (Bárta, Ples 2023) are now available on the EPLM website. The first publication lists resources from research, practice and policy angles, whereas the second provides examples of practices illustrating each element of sustainability in a learning-mobility framework: processes, sustainability contents, activism, strategies and research.

## Sustainability and learning mobility dilemmas

Delving into the sustainability and learning mobility dilemmas proved to be a crucial yet demanding aspect of the conference. These dilemmas necessitate further exploration and research, and there are no straightforward solutions. Their outcomes depend on the specific context and individual decisions made by learning-mobility project organisers and participants. However, engaging in more discussions about these dilemmas can increase awareness and facilitate conscious decision making for all those involved in learning-mobility projects.

The dilemmas connected to sustainability and learning mobility were collected and distributed to participants before the conference and explored further during the programme.

### **Dilemma 1: Is the pollution generated by learning-mobility projects a necessary evil?**

“Trains are not as accessible and connected as we would like to believe”. (conference participant)

Travelling by plane for mobility projects is one of the significant dilemmas because of pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Alternative ways of international travel can be problematic due to availability, costs and duration. Calculating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for a flight is easy, as it is tangible. However, other factors should be considered, such as limited time, health and safety concerns, work-life balance, family life and childcare. More discussions about the intangible costs of not flying or not even going to remote places are needed. Employees are often refused two extra mobility days for green travel. Due to the lack of pay for these days, or/and work/life balance and family commitments, it is problematic.

There are regulations that allow only a short time to travel, due to health and safety concerns. Furthermore, taking care of social and economic sustainability means that sometimes there is an environmental cost to creating a meaningful impact on local communities and supporting local society.

Flying is necessary for international travel, especially for long distances. Attempting to eliminate air travel in learning mobility might lead to the exclusion of peripheral regions, a loss of intercultural elements and learning mobility implemented only between participants in close proximity to each other.

At the same time, a physical presence is a pre-requirement, as it is at the core of learning mobility.

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage participants to avoid plane trips without excluding those for whom green travel is not an option.
- Alternative travel should be additionally supported through financing schemes, such as covering accommodation for long trips.
- Look for and prioritise low-emissions flights, avoiding connecting flights.
- Establish a kilometre limit below which participants have to travel by land.
- Hold one-day meetings online.
- Identify ways in which learning-mobility activities can reduce emissions.
- Include content on sustainability in learning-mobility programmes, facilitating discussions on this topic.
- Ensure the high quality of learning-mobility activities that have a meaningful impact on participants and local communities.

### **Dilemma 2: The future of learning mobility is online/hybrid because it's more sustainable?**

“Clever combinations and leveraging between online to face-to-face (mobility) should be the future of education.” (conference participant).

Organising online/hybrid learning-mobility projects might prevent pollution due to travel, however, will it have the same impact as gathering in person? During the Covid-19 pandemic, activities went online and many were successful. However, prolonged exposure to online-learning causes online fatigue, and can have a negative impact on mental health. Some learning activities and their objectives are rooted in physical encounters and should not be replaced by an online or hybrid activity. Face-to-face and experiential learning are especially meaningful for young people. However, some formats of learning mobility, such as having short partner meetings could be held online without compromising quality and impact. With proper methodologies, online courses can develop targeted skills and competences.

Discussions on the costs of online learning, including emissions, is often overlooked. In the short term, holding online activities produces a much lower carbon footprint than a face-to-face meeting, however, the cost of long data storage, especially on multimedia, is often underestimated. On the other hand, online and hybrid formats are inclusive and might reach a much wider audience than residential mobility, but the digital gap should also be kept in mind in this context.

## Recommendations

- Activities and projects need to strike a balance. An assessment of the benefits of physical gatherings versus their environmental impact should be made.
- An assessment of what kinds of physical mobilities are needed and which ones can be conducted online should be made.
- Online activities need to be more attractive, interesting and engaging: the focus should be on increasing their quality and opportunities for participation.
- Promote meaningful youth participation in the design and implementation phases of the learning mobilities to maximise the impact of all its formats.

### **Dilemma 3: Social impact is the most important aspect of learning-mobility projects, but should it be prioritised regardless of the cost?**

“You meet in person and establish connections, which are viable for partnerships and making an impact as a whole.” (conference participant)

Social impact is an essential aspect of learning-mobility projects. Many practitioners believe this is a core of international youth work, however, its environmental and economic costs should also be considered. Without economic support, it is impossible to be socially sustainable or achieve the inclusion of various groups. The more resources there are, the more opportunities are available for excluded groups. Learning mobilities make an important impact on participants and local communities. It enables personal encounters between developed and developing countries, which is vital to sharing know-how, experiences and points of view. International youth work can amplify the change needed for future generations by providing young people with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to become active citizens and agents of change. The education sector should be supported by all possible means.

On the other hand, the exact outcomes of learning are hard to measure. For that reason, there is always an element of uncertainty involved. Investing in learning mobilities can only be partially justified and doing so is a value choice. This dilemma raises further questions: How can we redistribute resources better in society? How can fair taxation support social justice and social sustainability? How is policy helping to achieve social impact?

## Recommendations

- Encourage and support the network of learning mobility practitioners and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that the benefits of learning mobility are understood and consider the costs.
- Design and implement strategies at local level, not only at global level.

#### **Dilemma 4: Doing sustainable projects means making choices and priorities, and there will always be some level of negative impact?**

“A learning mobility experience could be a one-time life opportunity for some marginalised groups. You can achieve a bigger social impact by promoting opportunities to people who have less.” (conference participant)

Many elements that make up the dimensions of sustainability need to be considered when making decisions regarding learning mobility. Thinking and acting fully green has an impact on sustainability's economic and/or social dimension. Whatever we do has a negative impact somewhere else. This is because sustainability is not just about avoiding harm to the environment or society, but is also about balancing different social, economic and environmental objectives to achieve long-term benefits for all. On the other hand, measuring and comparing the impact of all sustainability dimensions is challenging. Sustainable choices can have negative economic or social effects on local communities and participants. However, the contribution of in-person meetings to social well-being is precious. The cultural aspects of where mobility occurs and how to work within a context of local values and norms are also important.

The question was raised regarding access to sustainability: Is it something for the privileged?

#### **Recommendations**

- Strike a balance between learning mobility's positive and negative impacts. Although it will never be perfect, it can be refined, and organisers can be more aware of it.
- Consider organising more exchanges within the country and nearby countries to develop and promote regional mobility.
- When selecting participants for learning-mobility projects, select those for whom it will be a unique opportunity and who are the most likely to benefit the most.
- Applying critical thinking and raising awareness of sustainability in the collective consciousness might lower the negative environmental impact.
- Spotlight the positive effects of learning mobility.

#### **Dilemma 5: Do we need systemic changes in governments, corporations and the economy, rather than putting blame on individuals?**

“Society must be the forerunner in sustainability. Individuals cannot be blamed. Everyone is responsible, but governments and local authorities must show the way. The whole society must take responsibility.” (conference participant)

Statistically, personal impact on the environment is minor compared to the pollution caused by global corporations, companies and governments. While individuals can make a difference through choices and actions, the root causes of unsustainability require systemic changes in policies, regulations and economic incentives. Sustainability is the responsibility of the whole of society. An individual's role should be lobbying and putting pressure on the system.



The role of youth work would be to educate young people about sustainability issues and encourage them to advocate for systemic changes. Policies and regulations need to be changed, however, this requires a lot of time and energy.

### **Recommendations**

- Advocate for putting increased pressure on politicians to openly discuss and enact systemic changes in response to climate crisis.
- Collect best practices on how activists are engaged in advocacy towards systemic change.
- Prepare a statement for policy makers at the European level to increase financial support for organisations in the youth field in order to implement sustainable strategies.
- Draw-up a “climate commitment strategy” and invite politicians to sign it.
- Identify a realistic field of activism where the youth sector can have a significant impact. Capacity-building support for organisations responsible for a non-formal education on sustainability is needed.
- Support more holistic climate change education.

### **Dilemma 6: Are inclusion and the accessibility of a learning-mobility project more important than its environmental impact?**

“Disadvantaged target groups are the most affected by climate change, the least represented and least able to find solutions.” (conference participant)

The word “more” in this dilemma already assumes that inclusion and environmental impact are mutually exclusive, while in reality, they are both part of the same system and have some common causes and solutions. Sustainability is a complex and multifaceted topic; thus an intersectional approach is needed. Many of the horizontal priorities of educational programmes focus on specific aspects for efficient discussion, but they should be treated as part of a system, not erroneously treated as competing priorities.

Prefinancing is a systemic challenge of the European youth programmes; it leads to the exclusion of young people who are not able to buy their tickets in advance. At the same time, many organisations are too small to purchase tickets for their participants. The approach of the programme excludes those most in need of financial aid. To reach out to diverse groups of young people, there is a need for different opportunities and suitable and affordable options for them to participate. As green choices are often expensive, disadvantaged young people cannot always afford them, therefore sufficient support measures should be planned. The inclusion of learning-mobility projects is critical, and so is environmental impact. It is essential to strike a balance between these factors to ensure that the projects are sustainable and have a positive impact on both individuals and society as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

- Change the prefinancing of tickets for young people in learning-mobility programmes.

- Support more co-operation between formal and non-formal education to ensure inclusion.
- Bring together young people with different backgrounds.
- Encourage young people with disadvantaged backgrounds to be involved in sustainability actions, promoting different ways of participation for them.
- Share good practices on inclusion.

### **Dilemma 7: Sustainable practices can't happen in an international group - the cultural perspectives differ too much?**

“The value of (international) learning mobilities is to contrast perspectives and learn from the shock of cultural aspects, as it leads to reflection and growth (change) on both sides.”  
(conference participant)

Sustainability is understood differently depending on the culture, and finding common standards for sustainable practices might be difficult or even impossible. Perspectives on sustainability are based on values, priorities, history, lifestyle and preferences. And in some contexts, the change towards sustainable practices is perceived as a threat.

In learning-mobility, participants can explore these differences, reflect on their realities and decide for themselves which practices are more sustainable in the given context. Is vegan/vegetarian food always more sustainable than a meat diet? How is this food produced? Is it local or imported? Is it seasonal? What are the costs and impact of these practices on the local communities? Many of these aspects are grounded not only in culture but also, or mainly, in the economy. An intercultural exchange can bring different perspectives on these questions.

Cultural differences can pose a challenge to sustainable practices in international groups, but, at the same time, sustainability requires co-operation between different cultures and nations. Recognising and respecting cultural differences when implementing sustainable practices in an international group is important. This may require adapting practices to fit each group member's cultural norms and values.

However, it is also significant that many sustainability issues, such as climate change and resource depletion, are global and require collective action. Ignoring these issues because of cultural differences will only exacerbate the problem. Therefore, international groups must find ways to bridge cultural differences and work towards common goals for a sustainable future. The climate crisis mainly affects young people and they and their descendants will have to live with its consequences. This is why young people are often motivated to contribute towards sustainability, in spite of their differing backgrounds. The youth field is flexible and diverse and can adapt to the changing world rapidly.

### **Recommendations**

- Different recommendations are needed for different countries, cultures and contexts.
- Pay more attention to nature while organising learning-mobility activities.

- Prioritise specific aspects of sustainability that resonate with particular cultures; this could be a basis for working towards consensus.
- Think carefully about the value of mobility. Is it valuable because its participants declare it is valuable, or is more research required to prove its impact? The answer to this question and increased research on youth-mobility impact is needed to justify the environmental costs of mobility.

## **Strengths of the youth field in the context of sustainability in learning mobility**

Mapping and networking exercises, workshops as well as the fair of practices showed that organisations have already acquired considerable expertise in implementing sustainable learning-mobility projects. The significance of youth and community work in learning mobility cannot be understated. Civil society and youth work play a crucial role in supporting young people, especially the most vulnerable, as they face the challenges of climate change. The competences cultivated through quality learning-mobility projects, with a focus on inclusion, diversity, social justice and human rights, along with the efforts of the organisations involved, will be invaluable in promoting sustainability in the years ahead. There is a high level of awareness, especially in social and environmental sustainability dimensions among stakeholders in the youth field. Many organisations have developed checklists, tools and methodologies to enhance sustainability in their daily processes as well as in the content of their projects. There are numerous successful practices in learning mobility that should be shared among various sectors. Examples of them can be found in the *Compendium of Practices* (Bárta, Ples 2023). Other sectors can contribute to building a more sustainable future by leveraging the expertise of the international youth field work developed over many years.

During the conference, the following strengths were distinguished in particular:

- Young people gain knowledge and develop skills and attitudes toward sustainability during learning-mobility projects. The immersive approach of non-formal learning methodology positively affects the sustainability of learning outcomes.
- Learning-mobility organisations are advanced in developing projects devoted to social sustainability, including equality, democracy, social justice, community resilience and adapting to environmental challenges. These projects are about community work, participation, social inclusion, and equality. Learning-mobility projects often focus on solidarity, understood to mean human rights, empathy, active citizenship and inclusion, and which is at the core of social sustainability.
- Diversity and inclusion are highly important features in the international youth field. Providing an opportunity for any young person to participate in a learning-mobility project ensures fairness, enhances understanding of other cultures and groups, increases openness, and reduces radicalism.
- Learning-mobility projects address the needs of participants/volunteers, organisations and local communities. Impact on the target groups is connected with

sustainability as it enhances healthy, just and more inclusive societies, responds to societal and humanitarian challenges, and empowers participants to act.

- Many organisations have advanced programmes for maintaining environmental sustainability and raising awareness of climate change and climate injustice.
- Learning mobility organisations practise sustainability in a participatory way that is tailored to their contexts.
- Young people, who participate in learning-mobility activities tend to be aware of current world challenges (for example climate crises, human rights violations and inequality) and are motivated to vocalise their concerns and needs and practise sustainability.
- Youth organisations are strong in advocating and lobbying for changes and influencing policy makers, at the same time, they are flexible and can adjust quickly to changing circumstances. International youth work has already influenced sustainability-related initiatives.
- The international youth field has creative responses to challenges.
- Organisations have expertise in combining different forms of learning mobility, including residential, online, hybrid and blended.
- Young people are committed to using green travel options, more sustainable accommodations and food choices.

## **Sustainability gaps in learning mobility in the youth field**

Despite the advances made by many practitioners in implementing sustainable learning-mobility projects, there are still gaps, challenges and opportunities for further improvements, which are listed below.

- Insufficient financial support for sustainable practices in learning-mobility programmes (sustainable accommodation, travel and subsistence can be expensive).
- Language discrepancies, where terms such as sustainability have different meanings in various contexts, cultures and countries.
- Limited research coverage on the topic of sustainability and learning mobility.
- Marginalisation of remote areas that are hard to access by public transport.
- Lack of transcontinental perspectives on sustainability and learning mobility, which focuses mainly on European practices.
- Judgmental approach towards those who are at the start of implementing sustainable practices.

- Learning-mobility projects are not yet fully inclusive. There are still challenges in reaching out to unprivileged young people.
- Lack of intersectoral co-operation.
- The need for increased representation of young people in decision-making positions.
- Policy changes in the fields of sustainability and learning mobility are too slow.
- It is difficult to measure the social impact of learning-mobility projects.
- Training courses are needed for youth workers, trainers and facilitators on sustainability, which include new learning-mobility formats (online, blended, hybrid).
- Limited understanding of the economic dimension of sustainability in the learning-mobility context.

## **Recommendations: research, policy and practice<sup>3</sup>**

### **Sustainability is more than “green”**

Although environmental sustainability is one of the pillars of the triple bottom line model and undoubtedly very important, awareness and recognition by different actors that sustainability is not just about “green” choices will be important in the future years. Incorporation of other elements of sustainability will give a wider, more appropriate picture of the needs, challenges and possible solutions, aiming towards balance and regeneration. The social aspect of sustainability is especially crucial in the context of international youth work and learning mobility, as it is one of the field's strengths.

### **The importance of youth and community work in learning mobility**

Civil society and youth work will be fundamental to support young people, especially the most vulnerable, when confronted with the future challenges of climate change. The competences developed through quality learning-mobility projects and the organisations that deliver these, will be an important asset in helping to frame sustainability in the coming years. There are already many good practices in the field of learning mobility that should be shared across sectors. This will help gain more recognition of the field's strengths. using the vocabulary and needs of sustainability. It will also allow other sectors to profit from decades of international civil-society's expertise, in order to build a more sustainable future, together and across borders. Climate change does not have borders and neither does learning mobility.

A sustainable approach will be the best way forward to face climate change. The youth field and, more specifically, that of learning mobility, are centrally placed to deliver on the elements of social sustainability. Competent and trained stakeholders, respecting the internationally shared values of youth work, can implement quality mobility projects inclusively and equitably. Promoting the values of inclusion, diversity, social justice and

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3. This chapter was co-authored with Susie Nicodemi.

human rights, with a combined aim to upskill future generations of young people, will enable future generations to be better equipped to deal with the future they will inherit.

## Youth research

Further research is essential if we are to understand the potential of sustainability and learning mobility. Some of the research gaps that require further investigation are discussed below.

1. There is still no agreed definition of sustainability and its related terms in learning mobility and international youth work. A common language and understanding of the concept could help frame shared concerns and give a collective direction for action by different stakeholders. Common phrasing should be developed as a point of reference. The field should use commonly agreed phrasing related to sustainability and standardised language at the international level, to allow for easier internet search results for future research and comparison as well as visibility and recognition. Translating definitions into other languages is important; learning-mobility projects reach communities in many different places and the inclusion of their concerns is crucial.
2. There needs to be an analysis of the content/activism relationship of organisations working with sustainability. For example, some learning-mobility organisations encourage sustainability activism. What is the best way to transfer the content of sustainability projects to activism, the community or in a system change? And how do organisations model the values and change they are promoting?
3. There is no agreed system with which to measure the impact of sustainability activities in the youth field. In order to assess impact, researchers would need to develop a set of shared indicators as well as parameters of what is measurable.
4. The interconnection between the strengths of youth work and learning-mobility projects, and the needs of social sustainability should be researched and further elaborated upon. The youth field has much experience and expertise in social sustainability that other stakeholders can benefit from.
5. An analysis is needed on the strengths and benefits of learning mobility as opposed to the environmental cost of travel. The EPLM and Youth Partnership have explored this comparison in the upcoming paper “Value and cost of learning mobility” (Garcia Lopez 2023).
6. A mapping of the key stakeholders in the field of sustainability and learning mobility, reflecting their strengths and which of their resources can be shared should be carried out. This will group resources in one place and increase other stakeholders’ recognition of the strengths of the youth-work field. Once a composite picture has been obtained, gaps, which need further work, can be identified. An [initial mapping](#) of resources was carried out by the EPLM in early 2023.
7. A mapping exercise exploring the interconnectedness of learning mobility and sustainability, with a focus on understanding how learning mobility connects to the economy, environment and social relations would be useful.

8. Research should be conducted to determine how learning-mobility funding programmes can be adjusted to encourage organisations and projects to be more holistically sustainable, and not based only on green travel.
9. Research mapping sustainability in learning mobility outside of the European context would lead to a broader understanding of cultural diversity and different cultural approaches to sustainability. The economic dimension of sustainability and learning mobility needs more exploration and requires an approach beyond that of the profit and growth-focused perspective.
10. An inter-sectoral approach to sustainability is needed to explore what can be implemented from other sectors of the learning-mobility field, such as tackling poverty, economic injustice, social inclusion, education, climate change, inclusion, human rights, minority rights, and many more. At the moment, the topic is broad and difficult to research. Discourse on sustainability is shifting away from solely a green focus, and finding consensus is challenging.
11. Research could focus on analysing how narratives around sustainability and learning mobility are used in the policy-making process.
12. Young people's understanding and perception of sustainability in the context of learning mobility and their engagement could be explored.
13. Research on intersectionality in the context of sustainability in learning mobility would allow for a more nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and needs; and would help develop a more inclusive response to mobility programmes.
14. New concepts are emerging in the field of sustainability: restoration, regeneration and degrowth. Some practitioners have shifted their focus in this direction, arguing that sustainability alone is insufficient.

## **Youth policy**

1. Many learning-mobility programmes aim to include young people with fewer opportunities. A just transition to a decarbonised future must be ensured for everyone in society – for those with many opportunities and for those with fewer. Inequality must be considered as a core element of any sustainability policy. Policy needs to be devised keeping in mind such inequalities and need for inclusion (Gorman 2021).
2. Learning mobility should be upscaled to include climate justice. Many funding programmes have a policy focus on elements such as human rights, equality and inclusion which need to be expanded to include climate justice as a transversal element linked to all of them. When social values are discussed and included in learning-mobility projects, a connection should be made to unequal impact of climate change on different social groups and the need for social justice.

Mechanisms for increasing competence on climate justice and funding need to be in place to make this happen.<sup>4</sup>

3. Learning-mobility programmes should be shaped around a sustainable approach from the beginning. Funding green travel is a positive step, but many other aspects of learning-mobility projects, programmes and organisations could be more sustainable. There needs to be more funding; the administrative procedures need to be simplified; and reaching out to unprivileged young people needs to be facilitated.
4. Young people should be structurally involved in decision-making processes to ensure future-proof policies. The ongoing consultation with the youth sector on matters concerning young people, consisting of multiple rounds and involving a wide network of young people representing different groups, should be made a common practice.
5. Clear advocacy strategies are necessary at local, national, regional and international levels.

### **Youth work practice**

1. Sustainability should be integrated as a fundamental approach throughout all stages of implementing learning-mobility projects and within the procedures of learning-mobility organisations. The comprehensive and holistic understanding of sustainability, including environmental, social and economic dimensions in learning mobility, should be disseminated and promoted among practitioners.
2. Learning-mobility organisations should share their good practices, sustainability checklists, recommendations and sustainability policies with others. This would save on resources, allow momentum to build on existing good practices and be more effective, efficient, and sustainable in itself. International networking encourages this kind of peer support and the sharing of practices with for learning-mobility organisations.
3. While organising learning-mobility projects, local cultural contexts should be considered. Travel, accommodation and food should be provided in keeping with local communities and culture. Sustainability can be practised through different patterns depending on the context. At the same time, peripheric areas shouldn't be excluded from the programmes. Learning mobility requires compromises.
4. An open-access online platform is needed to share research and policy developments in learning-mobility and sustainability. Intellectual outputs from strategic and networking projects should be made available for public use and any research or practices produced by the field should be shared. Resources, support and strategies on a European level need to co-ordinated if learning-mobility organisations are to benefit and contribute to them.

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4. Input from Aine O'Gorman, Erasmus, the European Solidarity Corps National Agency YouthLAB event, Istanbul March 2022



5. The European Commission's GreenComp: The European sustainability competence framework (Bianchi et al 2022) provides a fertile base with which to support youth learning-mobility stakeholders and organisations, in the transition towards a more sustainable future. More should be done to raise awareness of GreenComp's ~~its~~ potential – its links and interconnections with other existing competence models, and the opportunities it could provide as a vehicle to strengthen sustainability's connection to other priority areas in learning mobility and using non-formal education specifically. GreenComp should be adjusted to focus more on youth-work field and disseminated among learning-mobility organisations. Competences included in GreenComp could be developed in training modules with a non-formal learning approach for young people and youth workers are needed.
6. Learning mobility organisations should consider developing their own sustainability strategies and making them publicly available. A framework for developing such strategies is included in the *Sustainability in Learning Mobility: Exploratory Study* (Barta and Ples 2021).
7. Practitioners should use the results of research and mapping (detailed above) to increase collaboration and co-operation to build stronger networks.
8. Practitioners should increase the dissemination of good practices on sustainability and learning mobility. There are many case studies in the field worth showcasing; the compendium of practices resulting from the EPLM conference is a first step towards more knowledge-sharing.

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## Appendix I: The conference programme

	27 February	28 February	1 March
Morning	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Widening the perspective: understanding(s) of sustainability in relation to learning mobility.</p> <p>EPLM (perspective) towards sustainable learning mobility</p> <p><i>Sustainability dilemmas</i></p>	<p>Sustainability and learning mobility through the golden pyramid</p> <p>Good practice workshops: What is sustainability nowadays in learning mobility?</p> <p><i>Sustainability dilemmas</i></p>	<p>How to fill in the gaps: what is needed in the future?</p> <p>The EPLM and the future of sustainability and/in/with learning mobility</p> <p>Commitments for the future from the golden pyramid</p>
Afternoon	<p>Sustainability and learning mobility as a systemic challenge and opportunity</p> <p>Mapping and (re)connecting stakeholders, organisations, and initiatives</p> <p><i>Sustainability dilemmas</i></p>	<p>The fair of good practice</p> <p>Common reflection topics: What are the highlights? What is (still) missing?</p> <p><i>Sustainability dilemmas</i></p>	
Evening programme	<p>Sustainable exploration of the venue</p>	<p>Sustainable food evening: celebrating the community</p>	

## Appendix II: Inspiring practices, projects and initiatives presented at the fair

	Practice	Institution/organisation supporting the practice example	A short description
1.		Austrian Association for Cultural Relations	Climate Fresk is an educational card game in which players determine the causes and effects of climate change to better understand its complexity.
2.	Co-operation between stakeholders in the field of environmental and adventure education	<a href="#">Finnish Youth Centres Association</a>	<p>The Finish Youth Centres Association provides various activities for young people and educators with an environmental focus.</p> <p>The Finnish Adventure Education Network, co-organises the ULOS-UT-OUT Outdoor Learning conference in Finland, which brings together teachers, educators, instructors, policy makers and researchers to identify paths to a more sustainable future and facilitates co-operation between stakeholders in environmental and adventure education.</p>
3	Co-operation between locals and migrants on the environment – <a href="#">Terre de diversité</a> project	Compagnons Bâisseurs	This project encourages the collaboration and active involvement of both local residents and migrants in addressing environmental concerns through collective action.
4	Corporate social responsibility		Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to a business approach beyond the traditional goal of maximising profits. It proposes ways to bridge the gap between the third sector and the corporate world, and funding opportunities. Sustainability can help build bridges between sectors, such as strategic partnerships. Where and how to look for funding opportunities and additional ways to co-operate were shared.
5	Eco-communities	<a href="#">Liberta Care Foundation</a>	LiberTerra is an eco-community in the Netherlands that organises various events devoted to sustainability, eco-communities and climate change.

	Practice	Institution/organisation supporting the practice example	A short description
6	Eco-friendly event planning	EuroPeers Advisory Group/EuroPeers France	The EuroPeers Advisory Group drafted a toolkit on eco-friendly and sustainable event planning. It includes the concept of social sustainability.
7	Ecological foot and handprint	Climate Change Connections	What is our ecological footprint and what do we leave behind? This practice explored options for reducing our carbon footprint using <a href="#">Ecological Handprint</a> .
8	Environmentally friendly projects in European youth programmes	JUGEND für Europa	The manual <a href="#">Leitfaden für klima- und umweltschonende Projektdurchführung</a> , currently available in German, covers guidelines for climate and environmentally friendly implementation of projects in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. The manual presents many examples of good practice (e.g. on mobility, food, use of resources and communication) from beneficiaries of the European youth programmes, which could inspire other organisations and young people.
9	Estimate the carbon footprint of travel	Active Youth Association	A <a href="#">tool</a> that will estimate the carbon footprint of travel to any meeting/event in less than thirty seconds.
10	The European Youth Card as a tool to implement youth policies	European Youth Card Association	The European Youth Card, a tool to implement youth policies, was presented. It offers young people transport, cultural and accommodation benefits, and is also a means of communicating with other users. Many municipalities and governmental bodies subsidise the card and make it available to young people.
11	Foundation Youth Exchange Bavaria	Foundation Youth Exchange Bavaria	Presentation of an environmental programme.

	Practice	Institution/organisation supporting the practice example	A short description
12	Gaia Participatory Budgeting for Youth	Municipality of Gaia	<p>The Gaia Participatory Budgeting for Youth, with a budget of €240 000, reaches almost 80 000 young people invited to present proposals for development within the municipality. Its funding is allocated exclusively by young people and covers three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creativity, culture and sport;</li> <li>• environment and sustainability;</li> <li>• social inclusion.</li> </ul> <p>Examples of implemented projects: a sensory garden, an animal park, a sports centre for the elderly and a stop-bullying project in kindergartens.</p>
13	Game for building connections	Culture Clash 4U (CC4u)	Card game for building connections.
14	Games based on climate change		<p>Games and how they can be used for learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">K2 Pioneer City</a> – a collaborative board game about building a sustainable city resilient to climate change;</li> <li>• MOVE! – a live action roleplay game in a post-apocalyptic climate-crisis setting.</li> </ul> <p>Games-based learning is an immensely valuable approach to learning and training.</p>
15	Greening up projects	Asociación Biodiversa	A presentation compiling good practices for greening up projects, with a particular focus on EU mobility projects.
16	Group games based on sustainability and ecology		Presentation of the book <i>Happy Planet</i> , with explanations of different games that encourage groups to become more sustainable and ecological.



	Practice	Institution/organisation supporting the practice example	A short description
17	Guidelines for sustainable events	JINT vzw	JINT vzw developed <a href="#">guidelines for sustainable events and a checklist</a> . The checklist is in English and is a useful instrument to share with a project team.
18	Manuals for trainers and facilitators	A.R.T. Fusion Association	<p>The following manuals were presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Global Education Manual</i> (for beginner facilitators);</li> <li>• <i>Manual for Facilitators in Global Education</i> (available in English, Romanian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian);</li> <li>• <i>Manual on Street Campaigning for Global Issues</i>;</li> <li>• <i>Manual for Facilitators in Diversity and Sensitivity Learning</i>.</li> </ul>
19	Nature-based learning and sensorial mindfulness	EUROPEAN M.I.N.D	<p>Nature-based learning and sensorial mindfulness are methods that use cognitive-science principles and experiential learning.</p> <p>They recognise and address the needs of young people, youth workers and the natural world, and the need to reconnect with oneself, reduce anxiety and regain a life-work balance.</p>
20	Public funding and eco-friendly travel	Sand für Alle e.V.	The practice demonstrates the need for public funding to prioritise and financially support eco-friendly travel as the standard approach for conducting trans-European youth exchanges. It provides an example of organising a youth exchange between Hamburg and Athens, using solely green transportation as opposed to relying on air travel.
21	<i>Handbook on Quality and Learning Mobility</i> and the Q! app	The EPLM	The Q!Tools ( <a href="#">Q! Handbook</a> and the <a href="#">Q! app</a> ) are designed to assist organisers of learning-mobility activities in the youth field and support project quality. The revised Q!Tools will include a sustainability topic.

	Practice	Institution/organisation supporting the practice example	A short description
22	Soil-Soul-Society approach to learning mobility	Szatyor Association	The Soil-Soul-Society approach emphasises the interconnectedness of caring for oneself, and the environment and the community in the context of a learning-mobility event. This approach encompasses various elements, such as event planning, programme design, venue selection and interaction with the local community.
23	Sustainability in youth exchanges	GEN Europe	<p>The brochure <a href="#"><i>Sustainability in youth exchanges</i></a> proposes advice and good practices with which to raise awareness on different aspects of sustainability (ecological, economic, social and cultural) during the organisation of youth exchanges. The GEN's ecovillage design cards are a valuable tool for exploring and assessing different aspects of sustainability.</p> <p>Both tools are based on the GEN mandala of sustainability and regeneration, resulting from thirty years of experience with the ecovillage movement in this field.</p>
24	Youth participation and the Dutch Government through the Youth Environment Council	Jongerenmilieuraad & Ministry of Infrastructure and Watermanagement of The Netherlands / NGO Bos dat van zichzelf is / NGO Jongerenmilieuraad	<p>This success story highlights meaningful and structural youth participation in shaping future environmental policies in the Netherlands, through the Youth Environment Council. It showcases how young individuals can actively contribute to environmental protection, the rights of nature, biodiversity restoration and changing the perception of humans as part of nature. Moreover, young people play a role in educating others at national and international level to adopt similar practices.</p> <p>The Jongerenmilieuraad, an NGO entirely created and led by young people under 30, is a successful example of youth participation at the national government level.</p>

## **Appendix III: Workshops – short descriptions**

### **1. Global citizenship in European and intercontinental learning-mobility projects**

*Andreea Loredana Tudorache*

*A.R.T. Fusion*

In this session, participants sought answers to questions such as:

- How is global citizenship linked to sustainability?
- How does learning mobility addressing these topics differ (if it does) when working with a European or intercontinental groups?
- Does it make sense to “educate” about sustainability in countries which suffer from the unsustainable practices of richer countries?
- How to practise global citizenship and sustainability in learning mobility without actually addressing the topics in the learning sessions?
- What types of defence mechanisms do learners use to *avoid* changing their lifestyles?

### **2. Co-creating sustainable policies**

*Anita Nyame and Elisa Briga*

*Flemish Youth Council*

Whether you are young or old, policy has a remarkable impact on everyone. Young people are nearly always left out of the picture during the policy processes of local and national governments. For this reason, the Flemish Youth Council advocates for the leaders of tomorrow. During this session, Anita Nyame, member of the Flemish Youth Council, shared her experience of bringing the voices of youth all the way to policy makers, and of how youth workers and organisations can influence policy decisions.

### **3. Games: a bridge between sustainability and learners**

*Anna Mayfat and Łukasz Kosowski*

*Vice Versa CZ*

Sustainability is a very wide topic that stretches across many scientific disciplines and into the layers of daily life. To convey its importance in an interactive way, the facilitators proposed using the age-old practice of games, which have accompanied humanity since the dawn of time. To some extent they are inscribed in our very nature. They strongly believe that using the elements of gamification and game design can enhance mobility itself and make it easier to pass important knowledge and information to young people. Game-based learning and gamified experiences help create positive emotions, keep motivation levels high and encourage learners to renew the learning process and stay curious.

#### **4. Results of the project “Learning Mobility in Times of Climate Change**

*Claudia Mierzowski and Christiane Reinholz-Asolli*

*International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany IJAB*

How can we adapt international learning-mobility activities to make them more climate sensitive?

The basis of the LEMOCC project was an international youth survey. Different materials and recommendations were developed together with 19 partner organisations from seven countries. International mapping, a toolbox and recommendations for practitioners and funding organisations were introduced in a practical and interactive way.

#### **5. Ecovillages as learning spaces for holistic sustainability**

*Dario Ferraro and Franziska Reißig*

*GEN Europe*

What does the sustainable “commuManity” of your dreams look like? What is the difference between “sustainable” and “regenerative”? And do ecovillagers dream of vegan pork? Participants explored how ecovillages and other intentional communities approach sustainability as a holistic paradigm that binds ecology, society, culture, economy and whole systems design. The workshop showed how ecovillages are active in non-formal education. The network Yes to Sustainability, which aims to create transformative learning opportunities for young people in ecovillages and other sustainable initiatives in Europe, was introduced.

#### **6. Social and solidarity economy and its role in community building**

*Dražen Šimleša*

*ZMAG Croatia, RIPPES Europe, the Institute for Social Science Ivo Pilar*

This workshop had three parts. The first was devoted to discussing the current economic system and problems that are generated by the “economy above all” design. The second one focused on a good economy approach and values, including a social and solidarity economy (SSE). Participants learned about different social and solidarity economy models and how they work in reality. In the third part, a short session about SSE was held. Participants discussed what this kind of economy would mean for the field of learning mobility.

#### **7. Can culture save the world?**

*Finn Van Dinter*

*Pulse Transitienetwerk*

Why should culture and youth work get involved with the transition to a just and sustainable society? How can we make a difference? And what perspectives should we take into account? During this workshop, participants looked into the potential of the space that cultural practice provides; how we can connect to different practices; and what we can learn from each other. The starting point of this session was focused on Pulse. Pulse is a Flemish

network of cultural players, including youth-work organisations which advocate shifting society towards a just and sustainable future.

#### **8. Sustainability checklist: tips and considerations for going green**

*Neringa Tumenaite*

*Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), co-ordinated by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership*

*Greening the youth sector: Sustainability checklist*, published by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, provides tips on how to make environmentally conscious choices during educational activities. The interactive workshop aimed to:

- Provide space for discussion on how multiple global issues (e.g. income inequality, racism) are interlinked with climate change.
- Present best practices and guidelines in the following areas: teamwork; accommodation and venue; food and consumables; transport; printing and paper; welcome packs and promotional gifts; buying fairtrade; digital footprint; and education.
- Increase participants' knowledge on environmentally friendly project design and how to integrate elements from the checklist into their project work and organisations.

#### **9. Back to the future: lab**

*Nina Festing*

*transfer e.V.*

In 2021, the network Research and Practice in Dialogue implemented the German-French Future-Lab Green Mobility with young people from both countries. Providing a few insights on the setting and findings of the project, this workshop gave participants the opportunity to experience the three phases of a future-lab in super-speed, addressing the conference topic of sustainability and mobility.