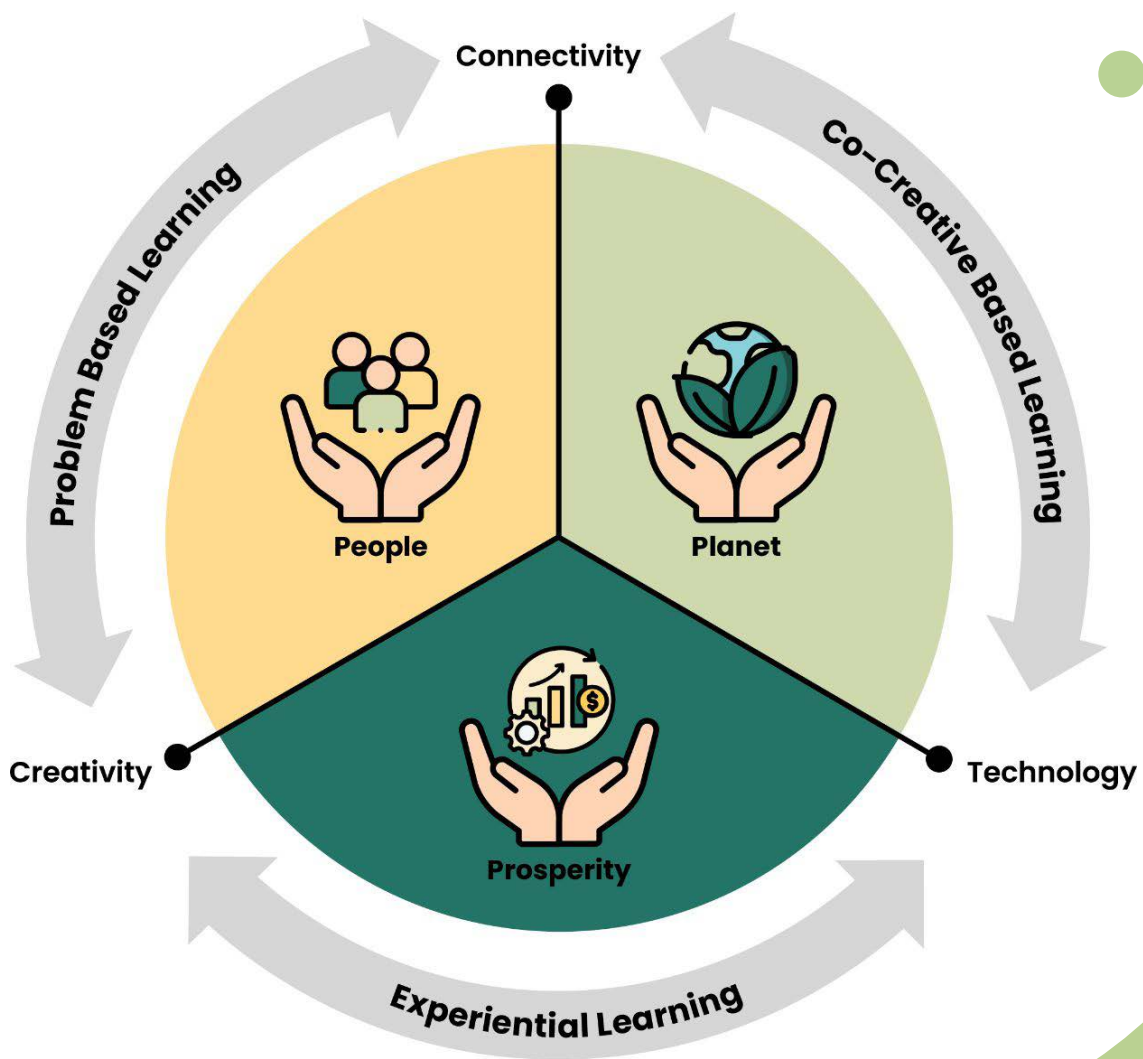


EDUS

METHODOLOGY



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Stefanía G. Kristinsdóttir
Einurð – November 2025



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Introduction

The [EDUS Project](#) is funded by the EU through Erasmus+ and promotes sustainable education in VET through an innovative methodology aligned with the SDGs. Aalborg University leads it and includes partners from the social, academic, and artistic sectors, including Einurð, Sineglossa, Geoss, and Ciber Voluntarios.

Einurð led the development of the Training Methodology and built on the [EDUS Framework](#), and is the foundation for developing the EDUS Toolbox. It serves as a guide for VET trainers in translating the EDUS Framework into effective learning processes. It provides a pedagogical foundation and conceptual guidance, supporting the co-creation of training approaches aligned with the EDUS vision of sustainability transformation in vocational education.

VET Trainers play a dual role as facilitators and co-designers of the EDUS approach. Their reflections, adaptations, and contributions during piloting of the EDUS Framework were informed by the EDUS Framework and shaped approaches to developing the EDUS Training Methodology and EDUS Toolbox to assess its applicability across diverse VET settings.

EDUS Objectives



At the core of the EDUS approach is the **EDUS Framework**, which structures sustainability learning around three dimensions:

- **Planet** – Environmental sustainability, focusing on responsible interaction with ecosystems and sustainable resource management.
- **People** – Social sustainability, addressing inclusivity, well-being, and ethical responsibility.
- **Prosperity** – Economic sustainability, promoting responsible business models and sustainable policy development.

Creativity, Connectivity, and Technology enable these competencies and enhance sustainability competencies by embedding them into teaching/learning:

- **Creativity** fosters problem-solving and innovation through **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)**, where students analyze real-world sustainability challenges and develop practical solutions.
- **Connectivity** strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration through **Co-Creative Based Learning (CCBL)**. It goes beyond traditional collaborative learning by making shared authorship, mutual responsibility, and participatory design the foundation of the learning process.
- **Technology** supports sustainable solutions by integrating digital tools through **Experiential Learning**, allowing students to apply digital tools and sustainability concepts in hands-on activities and industry projects.

The EDUS Framework offers a structured learning path spanning Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, enabling adaptation to diverse VET contexts. Each methodology is tied to specific learning objectives (e.g., students will develop critical reflection, stakeholder collaboration, and applied innovation skills), ensuring structured progression from awareness to action. The trainer facilitates this progression through adaptive design, inclusive facilitation, and formative assessment.

Role of teachers, educators, and trainers in Integrating EDUS Methods into VET

In this context, teachers, educators, and trainers collectively facilitate the development of sustainability competencies, serving as co-learners and enablers of transformation. This paradigm shift aligns with the broader vision of the EDUS project to promote a co-creative, inclusive, and future-oriented approach to learning in vocational education and training (VET). Trainers

(teachers/educators) are encouraged to adopt a facilitation stance: guiding learners through problem-solving, reflection, and experimentation rather than delivering content in a top-down manner. This includes nurturing an ethically grounded learning environment, promoting critical thinking, and encouraging open-ended exploration of real-life sustainability challenges. Trainers, educators, and teachers model lifelong learning by reflecting on their practices, biases, and areas for growth, particularly in digital literacy, sustainability ethics, and inclusive communication.

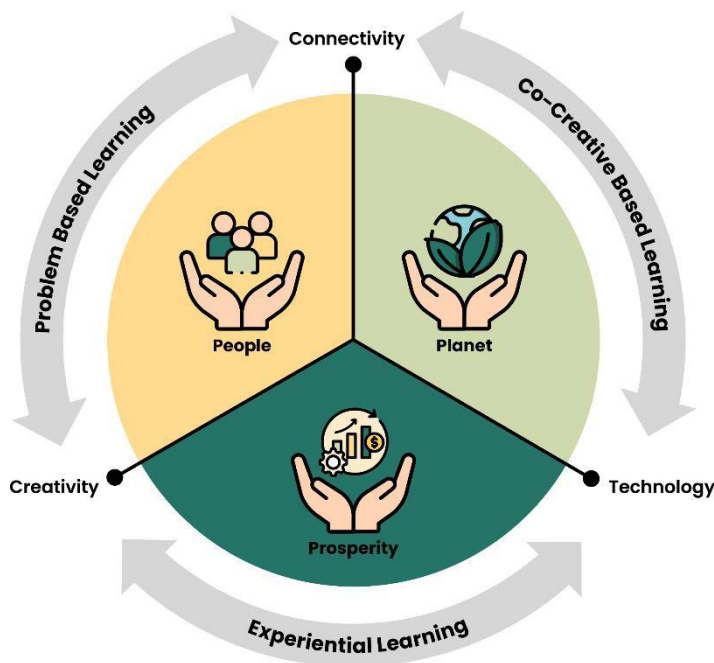
The EDUS self-assessment grid is a tool for learners and can also help trainers track their development across the EDUS dimensions. For example, trainers may reflect on how effectively they foster creativity (e.g., by allowing divergent thinking), connectivity (e.g., by engaging external stakeholders), and the use of technology (e.g., digital tools that enable student co-creation or monitoring sustainability impacts). By repositioning themselves as co-creators in the learning journey, EDUS-aligned trainers help build resilient learning communities that are capable of shaping more sustainable and inclusive futures within and beyond the classroom.



EDUS Training Methods for Sustainability

VET teachers can apply the EDUS Framework and training methodologies in their classes, and VET Schools can use it holistically in their curricula and cultures. The training should allow flexibility in application across different VET contexts, from technical and industrial training to service-oriented programs. A key principle of the approach is adaptability and co-creation within the teacher and student groups, ensuring that teaching methodologies can be adapted to various VET disciplines while maintaining a strong focus on sustainability.

These three methodologies: Problem-Based, Co-Creation-Based, and Experiential Learning (see figure) are core pedagogical approaches already widely used in VET training, now harnessed here with a sustainability focus. These methods are designed to activate all three EDUS enablers, **Connectivity**, **Creativity**, and **Technology**, while fostering sustainability competencies such as systems thinking, critical reflection, participation, and applied innovation.



These methods address real-world sustainability challenges through hands-on (experiential), learner-centered pedagogy, supporting VET learners in becoming agents of sustainability transformation within their respective fields.

Table 1 presents examples of aligning EDUS training methodologies, their pedagogical application, and the EDUS framework’s enablers to guide VET trainers in selecting and adapting

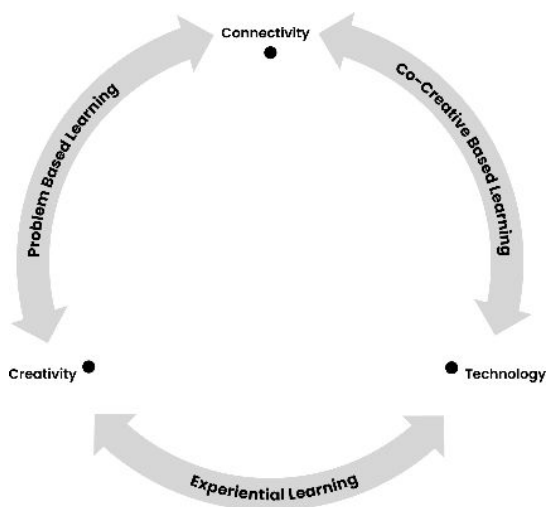
methods based on target competences and sustainability dimensions.

Table 1. EDUS Methodology and Framework Alignment

Training Method	Primary function	Matching EDUS Enablers	Suggested tools
Problem-Based Learning (PBL)	Foster inquiry and solution-oriented thinking on real-world sustainability problems.	Creativity fosters innovative problem-solving and reflective learning in teams (connectivity)	Scenario mapping, sustainability audits, and critical AI-supported exploration
Co-creative-based Learning	Engage students in shared ownership of learning and solutions with trainers, peers, and stakeholders.	Connectivity strengthens dialogue, and Creativity supports the design of inclusive solutions.	Miro, Padlet, co-design workshops, stakeholder interviews
Experiential Learning	Enable applied, hands-on learning through real-life contexts and reflection.	Technology enables data use and testing; Creativity fuels solution prototyping.	Field visits, simulations, digital storytelling, sensor-based monitoring

The application of the EDUS approach to sustainable vocational education is grounded in core values, competences, and democratic principles rather than in fixed structures and methods.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)



Problem-Based Learning engages students in complex, real-life sustainability issues, encouraging them to collaboratively analyze problems, research, and propose innovative, actionable solutions. Rather than passive content recipients, learners are active investigators, empowered to apply theoretical knowledge in hands-on vocational contexts (Savery, 2006).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Analyze real-world problems, apply systems thinking, and propose sustainable solutions.

In the EDUS Framework, PBL supports the enablers of **Creativity and Connectivity** by promoting design-oriented thinking and aligns with competences such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and problem-solving. Integrating Design Thinking into PBL further strengthens this approach by guiding learners to empathize with stakeholders, define the problem, ideate potential solutions, prototype interventions, and test them. This iterative, user-centered cycle empowers students to generate context-sensitive and ethical responses to sustainability challenges.

Effective implementation of problem-based learning calls for:

- Teachers to co-create **authentic problems** with students and stakeholders, ensuring relevance and appropriate complexity.
- Teachers act as **facilitators**, guiding inquiry, supporting research, and encouraging reflective dialogue.
- Continuous formative **assessment** includes peer feedback and self-reflection.

Problem Based Learning ideas for different VET disciplines

- **Construction and engineering** students can evaluate sustainable building materials or propose waste reduction systems.
- **Business and entrepreneurship** students can develop green business models by applying circular economic principles.
- **Tourism and hospitality** students can explore sustainable sourcing and energy use.

Additional reading and resources

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Co-Creation-Based Learning

Co-Creation-Based Learning (CCBL) fosters **Connectivity** by engaging students in teamwork and interdisciplinary communication to address sustainability challenges. Through shared problem-solving and peer dialogue, learners internalize sustainability concepts while developing comprehensive, inclusive solutions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Practicing stakeholder engagement, co-designing sustainable alternatives, and developing ethical communication.

Co-Creation-Based Learning (CCBL) extends traditional collaborative learning by establishing shared authorship, mutual responsibility, and participatory design as the foundation of the learning process (Brookman et al., 2020). CCBL is rooted in critical pedagogy, participatory action research, and transformative learning theory. It builds learner agency and community relevance, ensuring that VET-based sustainability learning leads to systemic and socially embedded change. Within the EDUS framework, CCBL emphasizes dialogue, empathy, and co-production between learners, trainers, and stakeholders linked to the sustainability challenge.

Co-Creation-Based learning ideas for different VET disciplines

- **Health and social care** students co-develop waste-reduction strategies with local clinics and service users.
- **Fashion and textile** learners work with consumers and local producers to design circular clothing systems.
- **Construction and engineering** students co-create decentralized energy solutions with off-grid communities.

This approach activates the EDUS enablers of **Connectivity** and **Creativity** simultaneously. Learners and educators co-design the learning process, define the sustainability problem, engage stakeholders as collaborators, and jointly develop solutions. Knowledge is transferred and built collectively, respecting lived experience and context.

Core competencies developed through CCBL include participation, ethical awareness, communication, applied innovation, and systems thinking. This methodology is especially relevant in VET contexts, where sustainability transformations emerge through cooperation between multiple actors.

Effective implementation of CCBL fosters:

- **Inclusive, horizontal dialogue** among all participants
- Structures the learning process **around iterative cycles of stakeholder engagement and reflection,**
- Support for **learners' initiative and shared leadership** are interconnected strategies that promote equity and inclusion in education.

Additional reading and resources

- **Brookman, H., Groués, D. Forrest, S. & Tomczuk, S.J. (2020). The Pedagogical Value of Co-Creative Education: A Systematic Review of the Evidence for the CREATES Approach.** <https://europe-creates.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CREATES-Scientific-Paper.pdf>
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Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning in EDUS is grounded in real-world vocational practices, linking theory with action through fieldwork, apprenticeships, and simulated environments. It primarily activates **Technology** and **Creativity** enablers while developing competencies in applied innovation, systems thinking, and critical reflection.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Apply digital tools in real-life settings, reflect on data-driven insights, and iterate practical prototypes.

Technology plays a transformative role in experiential learning. Learners are encouraged to design, test, and evaluate sustainability solutions using digital tools and AI-powered applications. Technology is not a passive medium, but a dynamic interface for experimentation and co-creation. Students need to critically assess the negative aspects of technology.

Effective implementation of experiential learning calls for:

- **Integrating emerging tools** (e.g., virtual labs, design software, simulation environments).
- Support students in **interpreting data** and the ethical implications of digital outputs.
- Creating **safe environments** for iteration, failure, and redesign.

Experiential Learning ideas for different VET disciplines

- **IT and Digital Technologies** students can apply environmental monitoring tools and AI dashboards to manage energy efficiency.
- **Construction and engineering** students can analyze solar performance data using simulation software.
- **Textile and fashion** students can use AI-generated design tools to reduce waste and prototype circular products.

Additional reading and resources

- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235701029>
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EDUS methodologies for VET teachers/educators & trainers

VET trainers should treat these methods as interconnected practices; the learning process may begin with Problem-Based Learning to frame the challenge, use Co-Creation-Based Learning for participatory design and stakeholder engagement, and apply Experiential Learning to prototype and test solutions.

Teachers can frame learning around authentic sustainability issues relevant to students' vocational and community contexts, while encouraging cross-disciplinary group work and active involvement of stakeholders. They are encouraged to facilitate the critical and purposeful use of digital tools to support learning. Throughout the training, teachers should engage students in self and peer reflection and apply various formative assessment methods to track learning outcomes in alignment with the EDUS framework.

This integrated approach positions students as learners and co-designers of sustainability transitions in their professions and communities.



Scope of EDUS integration to VET

The EDUS training methodology recognizes that sustainability in VET cannot be addressed through a one-size-fits-all format. Instead, training processes should be understood as adaptive, co-creative, and iterative, embedded in real-world contexts.

The EDUS framework encourages VET trainers (educators/teachers) to structure learning around the dynamic interplay among the sustainability dimensions (Planet, People, Prosperity), EDUS enablers (Creativity, Connectivity, Technology), and applied teaching/learning methods. Informed by frameworks such as the New European Bauhaus Compass and GreenComp, the EDUS approach aligns sustainability with beauty, inclusivity, and systemic transformation (Lourenço et al., 2024; Bianchi et al., 2021).

At its core, the training process is co-creative, fostering agency among students and trainers while engaging external stakeholders throughout the learning process. Training is a formative ecosystem where new sustainability competences emerge through dialogue, iteration, experimentation, and reflection. Training processes in EDUS are guided by principles of shared ownership between students and trainers, engagement with authentic sustainability challenges rooted in learners' vocational and community contexts, continuous interaction with stakeholders, and an iterative learning methodology that includes questioning, ideation, prototyping, reflection, and revision, all within a flexible framework that adapts competence levels to each learner's needs and background. VET trainers, educators, and teachers can implement the EDUS framework and methodologies in modules, stand-alone learning units, or short-term projects. This approach enables trainers to focus on specific EDUS competences, such as sustainable resource flows or equality, by applying critical thinking and reasoning in one to three modules using Problem-Based Learning, Co-Creation-Based Learning, or Experiential Learning. These modules can be tailored to specific vocational subjects and adapted to address real-world challenges using the EDUS enablers (Creativity, Connectivity, Technology). The EDUS Self-Assessment Grid then supports

formative evaluation, guiding students as they reflect on their sustainability competencies.

Alternatively, EDUS can be fully integrated into an existing course or semester-long subject, enabling deeper progression through sustainability competencies across the three dimensions: Planet, People, and Prosperity. This longer-term approach supports iterative learning cycles, stakeholder engagement, and embedded reflection as learners apply EDUS methods and framework across multiple topics or projects. Over time, this allows trainers and learners to co-develop a sustained, holistic understanding of sustainability in their vocational field.

Beyond the classroom, the EDUS framework may also be adopted at the institutional level through a whole-school-centred approach, embedding sustainability in school culture, partnerships, and planning (UNESCO, 2017; EDUS Project, n.d.).

These approaches align with a learner-centered philosophy, emphasizing that sustainability is transmitted and cultivated through active learning. Drawing on Freire's (1970) concept of critical pedagogy and Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (UNESCO, n.d.), the focus shifts to empowering learners to reflect critically, engage in dialogue, and transform their perspectives. These methodologies encourage learners to actively participate in learning, fostering a profound commitment to sustainable practices.

EDUS ideas for different VET sectors

- **Textile:** Using Co-Creation-Based Learning, students partner with refugee artisans to design upcycled fashion collections, integrating cultural sustainability and circular economy principles.
- **Construction and Engineering:** Through PBL, learners assess eco-friendly building materials and simulate construction scenarios focused on energy efficiency and low-waste design.
- **Tourism and Hospitality:** Experiential Learning is applied in planning sustainable tourism itineraries, where students measure environmental impact and engage with local community hosts.

- **IT and Digital Technologies:** Using PBL and Technology as enablers, students co-develop environmental monitoring dashboards using real-time data and open-source AI tools.
- **Health and Social Care:** Co-Creation-Based Learning supports learners in designing inclusive community health campaigns addressing waste reduction in clinics or shelters.

The EDUS framework and methodology aim to enhance learning by enabling students to work and act on sustainability (Intermediate-Advanced competences) rather than learning about it (Basic). This reflects EDUS's ambition to empower students as agents of sustainable transformation.



EDUS Assessment Grid

The EDUS Framework provides a structured foundation for assessing sustainability learning outcomes, emphasizing knowledge, skills, values, agency, and transformative potential. Inspired by the New European Bauhaus assessment principles and the GreenComp dimensions, EDUS learning outcomes are holistic and contextual. Trainers, educators, and teachers can use the Self-Assessment Grid to evaluate competence development and to structure initial diagnostics, peer learning, and project reflection sessions. When introduced early, the grid fosters learner autonomy and guides them in setting personal sustainability learning goals. While EDUS dimensions and competencies specify preferred learning outcomes, enablers specify means of achieving them and are directly related to applied training methodologies.

Table 2 summarizes the EDUS framework across its sustainability dimensions, competencies, and enablers, highlighting the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels, clarifying the conceptual distinction between competencies and enablers in the EDUS learning model:

Table 2: Dimensions, Competence Levels, and Enablers in the EDUS Framework

Sustainability Dimensions and Competences				
Dimension	Competences	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Planet	Earth Preconditions Sustainable Resource Flows	Awareness of environmental limits and ecological inter-dependence	Understanding of systems and resource cycles	Ability to assess, design, or regenerate ecological and resource systems
People	Basic Human Needs Equality & Social Inclusion	Empathy and awareness of diverse needs	Ethical reasoning, critical reflection	Acting with equity and advocating for structural change

Sustainability Dimensions and Competences				
Prosperity	Social & Economic Development Community & Governance	Recognize sustainability impacts in community/life	Apply Apply sustainable entrepreneurship or digital tools	Co-create community or governance innovations for sustainability
EDUS Enablers				
Dimension	Competences	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Creativity		Express ideas in familiar ways	Explore multiple solutions and perspectives	Generate transformative or innovative outcomes
Connectivity		Communicate with peers; participate	Collaborate across disciplines and perspectives	Build partnerships, facilitate dialogue, and collective action
Technology		Use tools to support learning	Apply digital methods for sustainability	Design and evaluate digital/technical solutions for real-world challenges

The EDUS Self-Assessment Grid enables learners to evaluate their development across six core competencies at three levels (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced), each linked to sustainability dimensions and enablers. This grid supports ongoing pre- and post-training reflection, making visible the growth of Knowledge as a cognitive basis for understanding sustainability and Skills in applying this knowledge to perform tasks or make decisions in real-life contexts, from basic to intermediate and advanced competence levels. **Attitudes** are not defined by competence levels but by values, ethics, and engagement with sustainability.

The EDUS assessment Grid is not a means of judgment but an integral component of learning-in-action, engaging trainers and students. Before training, this tool uncovers existing knowledge, experiences, and the vocational relevance of sustainability topics. During training, it is a reflective instrument to foster self-awareness and encourage peer learning. After the training, the grid captures developed competencies and assists learners in planning future actions to apply sustainability principles in their careers and communities. This approach aligns with a learner-centered philosophy, emphasizing that

sustainability is cultivated through active learning processes rather than merely transmitted.

The EDUS framework and Self-Assessment Grid (competence-based) can enhance and support various evaluative methods, such as reflective journals, learning portfolios, and co-created feedback involving peers, stakeholders, and trainers. These methods offer diverse perspectives and foster deeper engagement. Further application-based evaluations, such as project presentations, simulations, and community-based problem-solving activities, provide practical contexts for learners to apply their knowledge and skills.



From Pilot to Practice: EDUS Toolbox

The EDUS Training Program is designed not as a prescriptive curriculum but as an adaptable methodology that invites trainers to co-create learning experiences with students, institutions, and community stakeholders. To implement EDUS meaningfully, VET trainers are encouraged to pilot selected methods, such as co-creation or problem-based learning, in alignment with local curricula and sustainability challenges. Institutions can support this by embedding EDUS enablers and competences into their internal quality assurance systems and integrating the EDUS Self-Assessment Grid into reflective learning and teaching cycles.

To support teachers in the practical implementation of these methodologies, a toolkit has been created that provides practical tools to assist with the three main phases of an educational process: **Framing the activities - Developing the activities - Evaluating the activities**

The toolkit was developed based on a focus group involving VET teachers from different fields, through which the following training needs were identified:

- **Framing the activities:** defining learning objectives and topics based on students' expectations and prior knowledge
- **Developing the activities:** having models of practical activities and examples to speed up the adaptation of activities to the curricular needs
- **Evaluating the activities:** having a pre-structured and validated evaluation form as a starting point for assessing the activities

In response to these needs, the toolkit provides the following tools:

- **Tool #1: Co-design of a Lesson:** A tool to actively engage students in identifying the topic to be explored and the type of activity to be carried out.
- **Tool #2: AI Tutorial:** A tool to effectively use Artificial Intelligence for

developing practical activities based on teachers' needs, resources, and knowledge level.

- **Tool #3: Assessment Grid:** A grid for the self-assessment of competences related to sustainability topics, which can be adapted according to teachers' specific needs.

Beyond classroom use, EDUS can contribute to a whole-school transformation when embedded into staff development, institutional policy, and partnerships with local actors. Trainers, educators, and teachers are invited to share their adaptations and results on the EDUS platform and participate in co-creation events to further refine the methodology. A long-term goal is to cultivate a European community of practice where VET providers learn from one another, engage with policy, and contribute to a sustainable future rooted in creativity, connectivity, and the ethical use of technology.



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