

## **PROJECT CLASSROOM FOR LIFE USING OCE RESOURCES (SLOVENIA)**

Teachers support us in developing learning scenarios for primary and secondary schools. They have the opportunity to get to know various learning tools and approaches, including handbooks and manuals developed by the [Office for Climate Education](#). Everything selected in these study groups will be also used in upcoming teacher training (2024) and teacher manual.

We are working separately with primary and secondary school teachers, these are the numbers:

**20 primary school teachers + 2 students of pedagogy**

**46 secondary school teachers**

### **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

#### **Short description**

What is Classroom for Life?

It's an [EUKI](#) project that aims to strengthen and innovate the Slovenian education systems in a time of climate emergency in order to nurture and empower generations of proactive citizens. We are exploring and developing tools that will enable teachers to shift from teacher to sustainability learning facilitator. Classroom for Life deals with the need for effective learning for sustainability, action-oriented and socio-emotional learning by incorporating knowledge from ecovillages, environmental NGOs, various community-led initiatives etc. Lead partner of the project is Sunny Hill, Association for sustainable culture of living, implementing project activities together with project partner University of Primorska, Faculty of Education. This project is part of the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK).

Why Classroom for Life?

Teachers today find it difficult to bring climate and sustainability themes into classrooms. Factory model education is inadequate in addressing these complex and wicked issues we are facing. New future competencies and skills frameworks are calling for reimagining pedagogical approaches. Classroom for Life aims to introduce tools that will enable teachers to shift from teacher to sustainability facilitator - a role that is critical to any type of alternative learning approach (e.g. project, research-based learning, etc.). To support teachers in their work, we will design training and manual for teachers, develop learning scenarios, hold annual conferences on environmental education and publish an academic publication. Project activities are intended to transfer knowledge from eco-villages and transition movements to public schools. The training will be multiplied by the institutions of the Ministry of Education and the Faculty of Education may incorporate it in their courses.

#### **Key challenge**

Slovenian teachers are facing problems when introducing awareness of the Earth system relationships and the impact of human activities on Earth systems in the classroom. Working with schools we are encountering same pattern of reasons teachers give for not teaching ecological literacy - the first is lack

of time in the current curriculum, the second reason is a lack of resources, the third reason is lack of teacher training and the fourth is lack of support from colleagues, administration, school board, and parents. Besides that, approaches in environmental education that have been taught for decades aren't relevant in times when we are dealing with complexity and living unpredictable changes. We expect teachers to apply innovative pedagogies for sustainability education while they often do not benefit from them in their own learning. In Slovenia, national strategies for Education for sustainable development (ESD) have been developed in the formal education systems. ESD is achieving an interdisciplinary role in the curricula from kindergarten to the university. Sustainable development goals (SDG) are integrated into biology and other science subjects at the lower and upper secondary school level. Despite that, teachers are more aware of ecological aspects of sustainability, less aware of economic aspects of sustainability and even less aware of its social aspects and intergenerational equity. Research shows that traditional teaching methods are still most widely used; newer learning methods are rarely used. Teachers have a lack of understanding of the interrelations between different approaches to sustainability. This means that support for teachers is crucial.

### **Contribution to transformational processes**

On 16 June 2022 the Council of the European Union adopted a Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development. This new policy statement emphasises the key role of education and training in the green transition. Achieving a climate-neutral economy and society requires equipping learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to act, work and live in a more sustainable way. The Recommendation is a commitment by the Member States to support the education and training sector, from early childhood education and care all the way to adult learning. This is crucial to ensure learners of all ages acquire the knowledge to live more sustainably, obtain the skills needed in a changing labour market and take action for a sustainable future. Among other things member states are recommended to: (1) Establish learning for the green transition and sustainable development as one of the priority areas in education and training policies and programmes; (2) Provide learning opportunities in formal, non-formal and informal settings; (3) Support and enhance teaching and learning for the green transition and sustainable development by providing infrastructure, digital tools and resources and building in particular on the new European Competence Framework on Sustainability (GreenComp); (4) Provide fact-based and accessible information on the climate, environmental and biodiversity crisis and its drivers (5) Help educators to take part in professional development programmes related to sustainability.

In many countries, learning for sustainability has been taken up in policies, strategies and curricula. However, educators need further targeted support, expertise, and training opportunities to incorporate the principles of the green transition and sustainable development in their teaching and training practices. (Council of the EU, Press release, 16 June 2022 - 10:00) This is exactly what our project is trying to do.

Classroom for Life addresses to the point most of these recommendations, like: (1) Facilitate learning methods and approaches that are collaborative, experiential, practically oriented and relevant to local contexts and traditions and support interdisciplinary and cross-curricular activities. Classroom for Life will use exactly these kinds of methods that will be transmitted to teachers by teachers training. These methods are addressing the development of problem-solving and collaboration skills; foster critical thinking, media literacy skills and systems thinking; and support positive action, including volunteering, to confront and reduce the fear and disempowerment that learners might experience in the face of the

planetary crisis. (2) Point 6. of the Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development is specifically mentioning the Further support educators to facilitate learning for the green transition and sustainable development by considering the following measures: a) Recognise that all educators, whatever their discipline or sector of education, are sustainability educators who need to support their learners in preparing for the green transition. Enable them to raise their learners' awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. Include, consult and support educators on curriculum and programme development and other educational reforms related to the green transition and sustainable development and on the design of appropriate professional development. b) Support integration of the green transition and sustainable development into initial teacher and trainer education programmes; in continuing professional development programmes; and in teacher professional standards and frameworks, in order to support educators' competence development with regard to sustainability. d) Further develop and explore opportunities and incentives for educators to take part in professional development programmes related to sustainability, for example by considering them in career progression and development and creating roles for educators such as sustainability coordinator. e) Support educators, including by providing the necessary time and space, in adopting pedagogies that enhance teaching and learning for the green transition and sustainable development in interdisciplinary ways and develop the socio-emotional aspects of learning, so that all learners can become agents of change and learn to reflect and act, both individually and collectively, locally and globally, for a more sustainable world etc. In order to rapidly transform our society, economy and future, we need to re-imagine learning for sustainability – not only as a discipline to be taught but also as a mindset and practice to be applied in schools. By putting sustainability at the heart of education and training, we can deliver future-oriented, engaging and inclusive education and training.

### **Target group**

Classroom for Life will reach teachers and future teachers of various subjects in public primary and secondary schools. Teachers are expected to educate students in the direction of sustainable development strategies, but are insufficiently supported by the system, often confuse sustainability with ecology and/or think that climate and sustainability are topics unrelated to their subject and/or teach about these topics through vertical transmission only. At the same time, they are often highly motivated. Through our project teachers will be supported to develop competences in three crucial areas: 1) Basic understanding of climate action and sustainability through the integration of ecological, social, economic and cultural dimensions; 2) Tools to work with students as facilitators, in a more participatory, problem/design-oriented and collaborative way that helps students become proactive agents of synergistic change; 3) Tools to integrate climate and sustainability into their teaching (any subject) so that climate action can become an organic part of every field and sector. Teachers will receive training, have the opportunity to participate in study groups and a learning community that will grow through the project and provide peer mentoring and collaboration. The project will also develop learning scenarios and teacher's manual that will complement the training. During the annual conference, teachers will have the opportunity to attend master classes, workshops, share examples of good practice etc., to further and expand their knowledge and skills.

### **Impact**

With Classroom for Life project we expect to strengthen and innovate education systems in Slovenia in a time of climate emergency in order to nurture and empower generations of proactive citizens who will have a complex integrative understanding of climate and sustainability, empathy for their social and

natural contexts and the will to act in a responsible, multidisciplinary, participative, systemic and collaborative way in any field of expertise, towards the common goal of a clean, healthy, fair and prosperous Planet. The project is of wider public interest, as it will indirectly reach the whole generation of young people who will face the consequences of climate change. Classroom for Life deals with the need for effective learning for sustainability, action-oriented and socio-emotional learning, and systemic change in educational and training policy in Slovenia and the EU. In order to rapidly transform our society, economy and future, it aims to rethink learning for sustainability and traditional learning approaches.

### **Results logic and capacity development**

As part of the Classroom for Life project, we will design and implement teacher training related to systems understanding, facilitation tools and methods, and integrating climate and sustainability into their areas. We will provide them with learning scenarios, as well as a teacher's manual. We will hold 2 conferences for a broader community of educators and publish an academic publication explaining the results of the project, the process and the resources. This will strengthen teachers' competencies and allow them to create leading-edge learning situations in their classrooms. They will be able to leverage this potential through professional development, in conjunction with conference participants and the learning communities created over the course of the project. The Slovenian Faculty of Education will be able to integrate these scenarios and materials into environmental science courses. This all will enable existing and future teachers to take on the role of facilitators with an integrative understanding of sustainability, capable and willing to create learning situations that deal with climate and sustainable development in a motivating, participatory, collaborative and interdisciplinary way. In a time of climate crisis, this is needed to nurture generations of proactive, responsible and empathetic citizens who collaborate towards the common goal of a clean, healthy, fair and prosperous Planet.

The Classroom for Life project will enable existing and future teachers to take on the role of facilitators with an integrative understanding of sustainability, capable and willing to create learning situations that deal with climate and sustainable development in a motivating, participatory, collaborative and interdisciplinary way. We expect to strengthen and innovate education systems in Slovenia. So it will nourish and empower generations of proactive citizens grappling with complex challenges. The new generations will be empathetic to their eco-social environment and will act in a responsible, participatory, systemic and collaborative manner. This will contribute to planetary well-being.