



"Our Green Future: A Step-by-Step Guide"



*This recourse was created during the Erasmus Plus youth exchange **"Our Green Future"** (2023-1-LV02-KA152-YOU-000130633)*

Welcome Section

Introduction to the guide

Welcome to the "Our Green Future" guide, created during the Erasmus Plus youth exchange project **"Our Green Future" (Project Number: 2023-1-LV02-KA152-YOU-000130633)**. This project took place from May 13th to 21st, 2024, in the beautiful town of Saulkrasti, Latvia.

Funded by the Erasmus Plus program of the European Union, this guide reflects our collective efforts and shared experiences from the exchange. It aims to promote sustainable living practices and environmental awareness among young people. Within this guide, you will find practical tips and insightful information to help you embrace and advocate for sustainability in your daily life.

Countries and partners:

- Youth Line - Latvia
- Genclikte Spor Sanat ve Egitim Dernegi - Turkey
- Civic Organization "Development and Initiative" - Ukraine
- ASSOCIAZIONE EUROPALMENTE - Italy
- Proactive Future - Spain

Join us on this journey towards a greener future, and let this guide serve as a valuable resource for making positive environmental changes in your community and beyond.



Section 1: What is Sustainability?



- **Basics of Sustainability**

Sustainability is about meeting our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It involves balancing economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social well-being. By using resources wisely and minimizing waste, we can create a healthier planet for everyone.

- **Simple Definition**

Sustainability means living in a way that does not deplete resources or harm the environment. It's about making choices that protect the earth and ensure that future generations can enjoy a good quality of life. Sustainability encourages mindful consumption and practices that contribute to the long-term health and balance of our planet.

- **Importance**

Sustainability ensures the long-term health of our planet by protecting natural resources, supporting biodiversity, and fostering a more equitable society. Sustainable practices lead to cleaner air and water, healthier communities, and a stable climate. By adopting these practices, we can create a better quality of life for current and future generations.

- **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns primarily caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation. It results in severe weather events, rising sea levels, and habitat loss, impacting both humans and wildlife.



• Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals set by the United Nations to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity by 2030.

- **No Poverty:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- **Zero Hunger:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **Good Health and Well-Being:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **Quality Education:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

- **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- **Reduced Inequalities:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **Climate Action:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- **Life Below Water:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Life on Land:** Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.
- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Partnerships for the Goals:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Section 2: Sustainable Living Tips

- **Food Choices**

Eat Local and Reduce Waste:

One of the easiest ways to live more sustainably is by eating seasonal and local produce. This practice reduces the carbon footprint associated with transporting food over long distances and ensures that you are consuming fresh and nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables. For example, in Italy:

- 1.Strawberries: Available from April to June, perfect for fresh salads and desserts.
- 2.Watermelon: Best from June to September, ideal for cooling off in the summer heat.
- 3.Blackberries: Ripe from July to September, great for snacking and making jams.
- 4.Apples: Harvested from September to November, versatile for many dishes.
- 5.Oranges: In season from December to May, providing a vital source of vitamin C during the winter months.

Personal Urban Gardens: Growing your own fruits and vegetables can significantly contribute to a sustainable lifestyle. An urban garden reduces the need for commercial agriculture, decreases the carbon footprint associated with transporting produce, and ensures that you have access to fresh, organic food. Additionally, gardening can be a therapeutic activity that enhances mental health and provides educational opportunities for learning about plant biology and ecology.



Reduce Meat Consumption: Reducing meat intake has multiple benefits. From a health perspective, it can lower the risk of heart disease, obesity, and certain cancers. Environmentally, meat production is a significant source of greenhouse gases and requires extensive resources like water and land. Ethically, reducing meat consumption can address concerns about animal welfare. Incorporating more plant-based meals into your diet can help mitigate these issues.

- **Transport**

Walk, Cycle, and Use Public Transport: Adopting sustainable transportation methods can greatly reduce your environmental impact. Walking and cycling produce zero emissions and provide health benefits such as improved cardiovascular health and reduced stress levels. Public transportation, when used instead of private cars, can significantly lower traffic congestion and reduce pollution.

Car Sharing: Sharing rides with coworkers or friends can decrease the number of vehicles on the road, reducing traffic and emissions. Carpooling is a practical solution for daily commutes and can save money on fuel and vehicle maintenance.

Public Transport Discounts: Encouraging the use of buses, trains, and subways through discounted fares can make public transportation more attractive and accessible. This shift can lead to fewer cars on the road, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and less urban air pollution.





- **Simple Energy-Saving Tips**

Unplug Electric Items: Many electronic devices continue to draw power even when not in use, a phenomenon known as "phantom load." By unplugging chargers, appliances, and other electronics when they are not needed, you can save energy and reduce your electricity bills.

Eco Options: Modern appliances often come with eco-friendly settings designed to minimize water and energy usage. Using these settings on your washing machine, dishwasher, and other appliances can significantly reduce your household's environmental impact.

Efficient Ventilation: During winter, it's important to ventilate your home efficiently to maintain indoor air quality without wasting energy. Instead of leaving windows slightly open all day, which can lead to significant heat loss, open them fully for a short period to quickly refresh the air, then close them to retain warmth.

Support Solar Panels: Advocating for and supporting the installation of solar panels on buildings can contribute to a more sustainable energy system. Solar panels harness renewable energy from the sun, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Encouraging community initiatives and government incentives for solar panel installations can help accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources.

Section 3: Waste Management

- **Easy Ways to Cut Down Waste**

Reducing waste is imperative for a sustainable future. Simple steps like reducing, reusing, recycling, avoiding single-use plastics, and composting organic waste can significantly minimize our environmental footprint. Implementing these strategies contributes to a more sustainable world.

1. **Reuse and Recycle:** Minimize waste by choosing products with minimal packaging, reusing items, and recycling materials whenever possible.
2. **Say No to Single-Use Plastics:** Opt for reusable alternatives such as metal straws, refillable water bottles, and cloth shopping bags.
3. **Compost Organic Waste:** Turn food scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich compost for gardens.
4. **Choose Sustainable Packaging:** Prioritize products with eco-friendly or minimal packaging.
5. **Embrace Secondhand Shopping:** Extend the lifespan of items by purchasing gently used goods.
6. **Go Digital:** Utilize electronic alternatives to minimize paper waste.
7. **Conscious Consumerism:** Consider the environmental impact before making purchases.
8. **Dispose of Hazardous Waste Properly:** Handle items like batteries and electronics responsibly.
9. **Support Sustainable Businesses:** Choose to support businesses that prioritize sustainability.
10. **Spread Awareness:** Share knowledge and encourage others to adopt eco-friendly practices.

- **Basics of Recycling**

Recycling is the process of converting waste materials into new products to conserve resources and reduce environmental impact. It involves collecting recyclables such as paper, glass, plastic, and metal, sorting them, processing them into raw materials, and remanufacturing them into new products. The process includes:

- 1.Collection: Recyclables like paper, glass, plastic, and metal are collected through curbside pickup or recycling bins.
- 2.Sorting: Materials are sorted by type to prepare them for processing.
- 3.Processing: Recyclables undergo cleaning, shredding, or melting to create raw materials.
- 4.Remanufacturing: These raw materials are used to make new products.

Recycling offers both environmental and economic benefits, including resource conservation and waste reduction. Effective recycling involves following local guidelines, rinsing materials, and minimizing consumption.



• Simple Water Conservation Tips

Conserving water is crucial for sustainable living. Simple habits can make a big difference in reducing water consumption. Start by fixing leaks promptly, as even a small drip can waste significant amounts of water over time. Here are some simple water conservation tips:

1. Fix Leaks Promptly: Check faucets, toilets, and pipes for leaks and repair them promptly.
2. Shorter Showers: Aim for shorter showers to reduce water usage.
3. Turn Off Taps: Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or washing dishes to save water.
4. Water Plants Wisely: Water outdoor plants in the early morning or late evening to minimize evaporation.
5. Collect Rainwater: Use a rain barrel to collect rainwater for outdoor tasks like watering plants.
6. Upgrade Appliances: Invest in water-efficient appliances like dishwashers and washing machines.
7. Reuse Water: Reuse water from washing fruits and vegetables to water indoor plants.
8. Sweep, Don't Hose: Use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sidewalks.
9. Mulch Garden Beds: Mulch garden beds to retain soil moisture and reduce watering needs.
10. Spread Awareness: Educate others about the importance of water conservation.



Section 4: Green Building and Planning

- **Green Buildings: What Makes a Building Green**

A green building is designed and constructed to improve the quality of life and the environment where it is located. Its impact on nature is significantly less than that of a conventional building.

The basic elements of a green building include:

1. Sustainable Materials: Constructed with materials that are sustainable and environmentally friendly.
2. Natural Energy Utilization: Maximizes the use of renewable energies available in nature, such as solar panels and windmills.
3. Water Efficiency: Enhances water efficiency by collecting rainwater and using hydroelectric systems.
4. Air Quality Improvement: Improves air quality by incorporating vegetation on the exterior structure, which performs photosynthesis to reduce carbon dioxide levels. Additionally, using solar panels decreases reliance on fossil fuels, thereby reducing air pollutants.



• Sustainable Cities: Basics of Urban Planning

Sustainable cities are crucial because they balance urban development with environmental preservation, social equity, and economic viability. They use efficient land, reduce environmental impact, and improve the quality of life for residents.

Key principles of sustainable cities include:

1. **Efficient Land Use:** This involves minimizing urban expansion and preserving natural landscapes. By creating mixed-use residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, the need to travel is reduced, promoting walking and reducing reliance on cars.
2. **Green Infrastructure:** Incorporating parks, green roofs, and urban gardens is vital for reducing heat, improving air quality, and maintaining biodiversity in cities.
3. **Sustainable Transportation:** Prioritizing public transit, cycling, and walking over car use reduces greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion.
4. **Energy Efficiency:** Promoting energy-efficient buildings and renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and energy-efficient appliances, helps reduce the carbon footprint.
5. **Community Engagement:** Encouraging active participation from residents, such as creating urban gardens, fosters a sense of community and involvement in sustainability initiatives.



- **Get Involved: Participate in Community Planning**

Green urbanism is an approach to sustainable urban design that creates eco-friendly cities. In these cities, you can participate in community planning. But what is community planning? It involves collaboration between local government and community members to create projects and initiatives that improve the local environment, quality of life, and sustainability of the city.

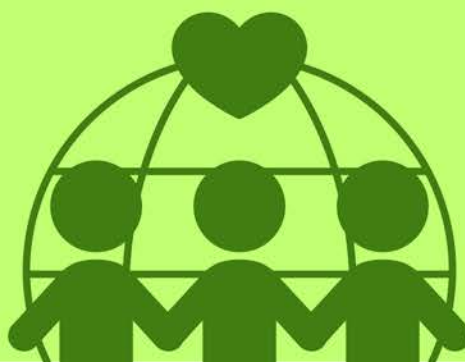
Participating in these projects is valuable because it allows community members to influence decisions that address their needs. It also enhances the quality of life by creating amenities and services, and fosters a sense of community ownership.

Benefits of Community Planning:

- 1.Improve Quality of Life: Advocate for better amenities and services.
- 2.Build Community: Foster a sense of ownership and strengthen community ties.

Additional benefits include:

- 1.Sustainable Development: Meet current and future needs.
- 2.Enhanced Livability: Create safe and vibrant communities.
- 3.Economic Growth: Attract businesses and jobs.
- 4.Environmental Protection: Preserve natural resources.



Section 5: Advocacy and Art

- **Eco-activism: How to Start**

In recent years, living a more sustainable lifestyle has become increasingly trendy. But how do you start? Here are some tips and tricks to help you embrace eco-living.

First, educate yourself. Understanding the issues is the first step. Do some research and learn about key topics such as climate change (its causes, impacts, and mitigation strategies), sustainability (practices that support long-term ecological balance), and environmental policies implemented at the local, national, and global levels that affect the environment.

Second, adopt sustainable practices. This can be the most challenging step, but don't try to save the world in one day—take it step by step. Start with simple habits. The three “R’s” rule is easy to remember: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Aim to minimize your waste every day. Be mindful when buying new things, like clothes or technology. Try to find new uses for items you no longer need. For example, that colorful skirt in your wardrobe that you haven't worn in three years might find new life with someone else.

Another way to contribute to an eco-friendly lifestyle is by using energy-efficient appliances and reducing electricity usage. Additionally, opt for public transportation, biking, or walking instead of driving.

Finally, if you feel you've reached the level of eco-consciousness akin to Greta Thunberg, it's time to take action and start sharing your knowledge. Join associations, NGOs, volunteering programs, environmental strikes, or other activities that raise awareness about sustainable living.



- **Using Media: Photography and Videos for Change**

Nowadays, we all have a phone practically glued to our hands. Instead of using it for endless scrolling on social media, we can make a difference with just a few clicks. A picture can be worth a thousand words, conveying deep meanings. Here are some tips to help you contribute to eco-awareness on social media:

Highlight Environmental Issues: Capture images that showcase the beauty of nature as well as the devastating impacts of environmental degradation.

Storytelling: Use a series of photographs or a video to tell a story about a particular environmental issue. For example, document the life cycle of a plastic bottle from production to disposal and its environmental impact.

Awareness Campaigns: Create photo campaigns that raise awareness about specific issues. Share these images on social media, in exhibitions, or through collaborations with environmental organizations.

Educational Content: Produce short videos explaining environmental issues, sustainability practices, and the importance of conservation. Use clear, engaging visuals and narratives to educate your audience.

Calls to Action: Use videos to call for specific actions, such as attending a protest or making lifestyle changes.

Some final tips for creating content:

1. **Quality Recording:** Try to record in high quality and ensure there is enough light.
2. **Compelling Stories:** Tell compelling stories that connect with viewers emotionally.
3. **Consistency:** Be consistent with posting.
4. **Authenticity:** Be authentic and transparent. Remember, people connect with people, so try to be as natural as possible.



- **Environmental Art: Creating Eco-Friendly Art**

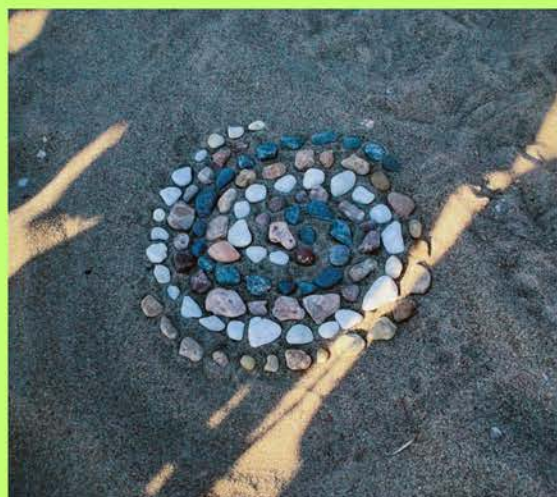
Eco-friendly art prioritizes sustainability by using recycled, natural, and non-toxic materials to minimize environmental impact. This movement embraces various practices and philosophies aimed at promoting environmental awareness through creativity.

If you want to create an art piece yourself, it's as simple as finding a natural space such as a beach, forest, park, or any other natural setting. Look around and draw inspiration from what you see. If you find something appealing, ask yourself how you can transform it to convey a meaning or express something. Can you take a picture or video of that composition? By intervening in nature, you are already creating art.

The only rule is that your intervention should not harm the environment.

For inspiration, look at the works of Agnes Denes and Andy Goldsworthy, who are pioneers in this field. Denes' "Wheatfield - A Confrontation" and Goldsworthy's site-specific land art exemplify how art can be both impactful and environmentally conscious.

Now it's your chance to be an artist!



Conclusion

- **Key Takeaways**

Sustainability is essential for preserving our planet and ensuring a high quality of life for current and future generations. By making mindful choices in our daily lives—such as eating local produce, reducing meat consumption, adopting sustainable transportation, conserving energy and water, and managing waste effectively—we can significantly reduce our environmental impact. Embracing green building practices and contributing to the development of sustainable cities further promotes a healthier and more sustainable environment.

Eco-activism plays a crucial role in driving change. Educating ourselves on environmental issues, adopting sustainable habits, and actively participating in community and global initiatives can lead to meaningful progress. Utilizing media to raise awareness and creating eco-friendly art can inspire others to join the movement towards sustainability.

Together, through conscious efforts and collective action, we can create a more sustainable world. Let's commit to making small, consistent changes in our lives and communities to protect and preserve the planet for future generations.



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