Green Youth Employability: Emerging Skills and Jobs for a Fair and Green Society

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GREEN YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY: EMERGING SKILLS AND JOBS FOR A FAIR AND GREEN SOCIETY

# GREEN YOUTH LAB HANDBOOK

## A handbook for Youth Workers based on Non-Formal Education

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Green Youth Employability: Emerging Skills and Jobs for a Fair and Gree Society

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# FOREWORD

The transition towards a sustainable and climate-neutral economy is transforming labour markets across Europe, creating new opportunities while also demanding new knowledge, skills, and competences from current and future generations. Young people will play a key role in this transition, both as future professionals and as active citizens who can help build more sustainable societies and economies. In response to these challenges, the Green Youth Employability project was developed within the Erasmus+ Programme to support young people in strengthening their green competences, enhancing their employability, and preparing them to successfully navigate an evolving labour market shaped by sustainability principles.

The project is fully aligned with the European Union's priorities on the green transition, sustainable development, and lifelong learning. The design of the project draws on recognised European competence frameworks, including GreenComp – the European Sustainability Competence Framework, which underpins the development of sustainability competences; LifeComp – the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Competence, which supports the development of transversal skills; and, where relevant, EntreComp – the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, encouraging initiative, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking as key drivers of sustainable innovation and employability.

One of the project's main achievements is the development and pilot implementation of the Green Youth Labs—a series of non-formal learning workshops designed to help young people understand the green transition, explore sustainable career opportunities, develop transversal competences, and reflect on how sustainability can be integrated into both emerging green occupations and traditional professions, as well as in their personal values and lifestyle.



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# FOREWORD

Through an embedded learning approach, the Green Youth Labs combine face-to-face workshops with online learning opportunities provided through the project's MOOCs, enabling participants to reinforce and extend their learning beyond the workshops.

This Handbook has been developed to document the Green Youth Labs implementation methodology and to facilitate its transfer to other organisations, educators, youth workers, and trainers interested in promoting green employability through non-formal education. Building upon the experience gained during the project, the Handbook provides practical guidance for planning and delivering Green Youth Labs in different educational and community contexts.

Rather than presenting a fixed model, this publication offers a flexible implementation framework that can be adapted to diverse organisational realities and participant needs while maintaining the educational principles that underpin the methodology. By sharing the lessons learned throughout the project, the consortium aims to support the wider adoption of innovative educational practices that empower young people to contribute confidently and effectively to Europe's green transition.

### The Green Youth Employability Consortium






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# INTRODUCTION

## About the Green Youth Employability Project

The Green Youth Employability project (- GYE (2023-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000157988) is an Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership that aims to empower young people by developing the competences needed to actively contribute to the green transition while improving their employability and resilience in an evolving labour market.

The transition towards a more sustainable economy is reshaping occupations across all sectors, generating new employment opportunities while transforming existing professions through the integration of environmentally responsible practices, circular economy principles, and sustainable innovation. In this context, young people require not only environmental awareness but also the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to recognise and respond to these changes throughout their educational and professional pathways.

To address these challenges, the project has developed a set of complementary educational resources that support both young people and professionals working in the youth sector. These include the Green Youth Toolkit, which provides educational activities and learning resources; a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that offer flexible opportunities for self-directed learning; and the Green Youth Labs, which constitute the project's practical methodology for developing green competences, employability, and transversal skills through non-formal education.

Together, these resources provide organisations with a flexible framework that can be adapted to different learning contexts and participant needs.



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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of this Handbook

This Handbook has been developed to support organisations, youth workers, educators, trainers, and other professionals interested in implementing the Green Youth Labs methodology.

While the Green Youth Toolkit focuses on educational resources and learning activities, this Handbook focuses on the implementation of the methodology. It provides practical guidance on how to design, organise and facilitate Green Youth Labs in different educational and community settings. The publication has been informed by the pilot implementation carried out by the project consortium across four European countries. It brings together the methodological principles underpinning the Green Youth Labs together with practical recommendations, lessons learned, and examples of good practice that can support future replication and adaptation.

Rather than prescribing a fixed programme, the Handbook presents a flexible implementation framework that organisations can tailor to their own objectives, resources, participant profiles, and local realities.

## What are Green Youth Labs?

Green Youth Labs is a methodology composed of structured non-formal learning workshops specifically designed to develop young people's green competences, strengthen their employability, and foster the transversal skills required to thrive in an increasingly sustainable labour market.

The methodology is based on the understanding that preparing young people for the future of work involves more than raising awareness about environmental challenges. It also requires supporting them in understanding how sustainability is transforming labour markets, identifying opportunities within both emerging green occupations and traditional professions, and developing the competences needed to contribute to more sustainable workplaces and communities.



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# INTRODUCTION

Accordingly, Green Youth Labs encourage participants to explore the concept of green jobs, while also recognising that sustainability is becoming a cross-cuttingdimension of almost every profession. Participants are invited to reflect on how existing occupations are evolving through greener practices, responsible resource management, innovation, and sustainable business models, helping them to understand that the green transition creates opportunities across a wide range of economic sectors. Green Youth Labs adopt an integrated learning approach, where face-to-face workshops constitute the core learning experience and can be complemented by additional educational resources according to the objectives of each programme. These resources may include activities from the Green Youth Toolkit, self-directed learning through the project's MOOCs, local initiatives, expert contributions, study visits, or community-based experiences. This flexibility enables organisations to design learning pathways that respond to their own contexts while maintaining the educational principles of the Green Youth Labs methodology.

## Who is this Handbook for?

This Handbook is intended for organisations and professionals working with young people, including youth workers, trainers, educators, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, schools, local authorities, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders interested in promoting green competences and employability through non-formal learning.

The methodology has been designed to be adaptable to different organisational capacities and participant profiles. Previous expertise in environmental education is not required, making the Green Youth Labs accessible to a wide range of organisations seeking to support young people in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of the green transition.



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# INTRODUCTION

## How to Use this Handbook

This Handbook is organised as a practical implementation guide that accompanies organisations throughout the process of planning and delivering Green Youth Labs.

The following chapters describe the educational principles underpinning the methodology, provide guidance for designing and facilitating workshops, present complementary learning resources that may enrich the learning experience, and outline practical recommendations for implementation in different contexts. The Handbook also documents the experience gained during the pilot phase of the project, highlighting lessons learned, examples of good practice, and recommendations that can support the successful replication of the methodology.

The Handbook should be used in conjunction with the other resources developed within the Green Youth Employability project. While the Toolkit offers practical educational materials and the MOOCs provide additional opportunities for self-directed learning, this publication focuses on the methodological and organisational aspects of implementing Green Youth Labs, enabling organisations to create meaningful, flexible, and context-sensitive learning experiences for young people.



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# CHAPTER 1
# Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

Preparing young people for the green transition requires more than providing information about sustainability. It calls for learning experiences that enable participants to develop the competences, attitudes, and confidence needed to navigate an evolving labour market, embrace sustainable practices, and actively contribute to their communities.

The Green Youth Labs methodology has therefore been designed **as a flexible educational framework that combines green competence development with employability, education and the strengthening of transversal skills through non-formal learning.** Rather than prescribing a fixed curriculum, it provides organisations and facilitators with a common pedagogical foundation that can be adapted to different contexts, participant profiles, and local priorities.

This chapter presents the educational framework that underpins the implementation of the Green Youth Labs. It introduces the educational objectives of the methodology, the non-formal learning approaches on which it is based, the learning environments and educational resources that can be integrated into the learning process.

Understanding these elements is essential for ensuring that Green Youth Labs remain consistent in their educational purpose while allowing sufficient flexibility for organisations to design meaningful and context-responsive learning experiences.



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# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

## 1.1 Educational Objectives

The Green Youth Labs methodology has been designed to address the challenges and opportunities arising from the green transition by supporting young people in the development of competences that are increasingly relevant for their personal, social, and professional lives. Rather than focusing on the acquisition of knowledge alone, the methodology promotes a holistic learning process that combines sustainability awareness, employability, personal development, and active participation. Each session of the Green Youth Lab is therefore designed to contribute to four interconnected educational objectives that together define the pedagogical identity of the methodology.

These objectives should not be understood as separate learning dimensions. Instead, they are mutually reinforcing and are intended to be addressed simultaneously.

### Developing Green Competences

The primary objective of the Green Youth Labs is to strengthen young people's understanding of sustainability and to support the development of the competences required to contribute to a more sustainable future. Through participatory and experiential learning activities, participants are encouraged to explore environmental challenges, analyse the social and economic implications of the green transition, reflect on their own behaviours, and identify opportunities to promote sustainability in their daily lives, education, and future careers. The methodology is informed by the principles of the European Sustainability Competence Framework (GreenComp). Rather than teaching sustainability as an isolated topic, Green Youth Labs encourage participants to apply sustainability thinking to real-life situations and to understand its relevance across different comtexts and sectors.



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Further information on the GreenComp framework and its application within the project is provided in the Green Youth Employability Toolkit.

### Strengthening Green Employability

Green Youth Labs aim to improve young people's employability by helping them understand how sustainability is transforming labour markets and creating new professional opportunities.

Participants are introduced to the concept of green jobs while also exploring how traditional occupations are evolving through the adoption of more sustainable practices, technologies, and business models. This broader understanding enables young people to recognise that the green transition extends beyond specific environmental professions and increasingly influences employment across virtually all economic sectors. Through career exploration, practical activities, interaction with professionals, and reflection on labour market trends, participants are encouraged to identify their own interests, recognise emerging opportunities, and consider how they can develop the competences required for future education, employment, or entrepreneurship within a greener economy.

### Developing Transversal Competences

Alongside sustainability and employability, Green Youth Labs place strong emphasis on the development of transversal competences that enable young people to successfully navigate changing educational, professional, and social environments.

The methodology encourages participants to strengthen communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, adaptability and learning-to-learn competences through interactive and collaborative learning experiences.



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These competences are not developed through theoretical instruction but through active participation in discussions, teamwork, project-based activities, practical challenges, and reflective exercises that mirror real-life situations.

### Empowering Young People as Agents of the Green Transition

Beyond competence development, Green Youth Labs seek to empower young people to become active contributors to the green transition within their communities, workplaces, and wider society.

The methodology encourages participants to move from awareness to action by recognising their own capacity to influence positive change, make informed decisions, and participate in initiatives that promote environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

By fostering confidence, initiative, and civic engagement, Green Youth Labs support young people in developing not only as future employees but also as responsible citizens capable of contributing to more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities. Together, these four educational objectives provide the common foundation for the Green Youth Lab method, regardless of their specific themes, duration, or learning activities. They ensure that each learning experience contributes to the overarching aim of preparing young people to successfully navigate and actively contribute to Europe's green transition.

## 1.2. Non-formal Learning Principles

The educational objectives described in the previous section define what the Green Youth Labs aim to achieve. Equally important is understanding how these objectives are translated into meaningful learning experiences.



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# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

The Green Youth Labs **are grounded in the principles of non-formal education**, recognising that competences are developed most effectively when young people actively participate in the learning process, engage with authentic challenges, collaborate with others, and reflect on their experiences. Rather than relying on traditional teacher-centred instruction, the methodology promotes learning environments where participants take an active role in constructing knowledge, exploring ideas, testing solutions, and connecting learning with their own lives and future careers.

These principles provide the pedagogical foundation for the sessions of the Green Youth Lab, regardless of their specific topic, duration, or setting. They ensure that **learning remains participant-centred, inclusive, practical, and relevant to the realities of young people** while allowing facilitators the flexibility to adapt activities to different contexts.



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## Active Participation

Young people are the protagonists of the learning process. Green Youth Labs encourage participants to contribute their ideas, share experiences, ask questions, and actively engage in discussions and practical activities. **Learning is viewed as a collaborative process** in which every participant has valuable knowledge and perspectives to contribute.

Example of Active Participation in a session in Slovakia



Green Skills for Teaching Staff (in-person lab). Topcoach.16 August 2026.

Participants sat together around one shared table. The session opened with a short framing of green skills as part of employability and everyday wellbeing, including the time pressure of working parents. Facilitators then modelled four classroom-ready methods: a “question basket” so every learner can contribute without a lecture; a mapping exercise linking climate processes, habits and possible student projects; a conversation on emerging green jobs that non-counsellor teachers can still mention; and a closing personal-commitment round. The group discussed how an NGO can support a school without replacing the teacher and closed by naming one change each person wanted to try in the next lesson.



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## Learning by Doing

The methodology emphasises experiential learning, where knowledge and competences are developed through action, experimentation, and reflection. Rather than simply receiving information, **participants learn by solving problems, analysing situations, testing ideas, and applying concepts to real-world contexts** related to sustainability and employability.

**Example of Learning by doing in a session in Italy**



Cucina vegetale lab. Scambieuropei. 22 June 2026.

The main goal of this workshop (in collaboration with Pasto Nomade, a local reality specialized in vegan kitchen), was to learn more about vegan nutrition and to put these principles in practice preparing a vegan meal. Through a hands-on cooking activity, participants explored plant-based ingredients, learned about sustainable food choices, and experienced how to create a balanced vegan meal.



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### Collaboration and Peer Learning

Green Youth Lab methodology creates opportunities for participants to learn with and from one another. Group work, peer exchange, and collaborative problem-solving encourage the sharing of different perspectives while strengthening communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills.

### Reflectionand Critical Thinking

Learning is reinforced through structured reflection. Participants are encouraged to analyse their experiences, question assumptions, evaluate different viewpoints, and consider how newly acquired knowledge can influence their personal choices, educational pathways, and professional aspirations.

Critical thinking is particularly important when addressing sustainability challenges, which often require the consideration of complex environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

### Inclusion and Participation

The methodology promotes inclusive learning environments where every participant feels respected, valued, and able to contribute regardless of their background, previous knowledge, abilities, or learning preferences. Facilitators are encouraged to adopt participatory approaches that foster equal opportunities, dialogue, and mutual respect .



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### Flexibility and Adaptability

The Green Youth Lab is designed as a flexible methodology rather than a fixed curriculum. While they share common educational objectives and pedagogical principles, facilitators are encouraged to adapt activities, learning resources, examples, and delivery methods to the characteristics of the participants, organisational capacities, and local contexts.

This flexibility allows organisations to create learning experiences that remain relevant and meaningful while preserving the educational identity of the Green Youth Labs methodology.

## 1.3 Learning Approaches and Learning Environments

The non-formal learning principles presented in the previous section are translated into practice through a variety of learning approaches. Rather than following a single instructional model, **the GyIs encourage facilitators to combine different educational strategies that respond to the learning objectives, participants' needs, and the characteristics of the local context.**

The methodology recognises that meaningful learning can take place in many different settings and through a wide range of experiences. Consequently, the Green Youth Lab is designed to create dynamic learning environments that encourage participants to explore sustainability, employability, and personal development from multiple perspectives.



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# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

## Experiential Learning

Experiential learning lies at the heart of the Green Youth Labs methodology. Participants develop competences by engaging directly in activities, analysing real-life situations, experimenting with possible solutions, and reflecting on their experiences. Rather than presenting sustainability as a theoretical concept, Green Youth Labs encourage participants to experience sustainability through **practical challenges, simulations, collaborative tasks, and real-world examples** that promote deeper understanding and long-term learning.

**Example of Experiential learning in a session in Italy**



Seed bombs Green Youth Lab. Scambieuropei. 5 June 2026

Participants produced seed bombs using soil, clay,and seeds. They acquired practical knowledge about seed bombs, and the regeneration of green urban spaces while also improving teamwork, collaboration, and environmental awareness.

During the making of the seed bombs, facilitators followed the participants step by step in the procedure, offering support and clarifying any doubt.

At the end of the activity, they shared information about the impact of the seed bombs and indicated suitable places where they can be left.



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## Outdoor Learning

Whenever appropriate, the Green Youth Lab encourages learning beyond the traditional classroom environment. Parks, forests, community gardens, nature reserves, urban spaces, recycling facilities, and other local environments can become valuable learning spaces where participants experience sustainability in authentic contexts. Outdoor learning helps strengthen participants' connection with environmental issues while promoting observation, teamwork, wellbeing, creativity, and experiential engagement with local sustainability challenges.

**Example of Outdoor learning in a session in Slovakia**



The Human Ecosystem. Topcoach– Červený Kláštor. 3 July 2026.

The main goal of this session was to help participants understand that personal well-being and sustainability are closely interconnected. Through interactive and experiential activities, participants explored how physical health, mental well-being, daily habits, relationships, technology, and the environment influence one another as parts of one "human ecosystem." The workshop aimed to develop systems thinking, critical thinking, self-reflection, and responsible decision-making while encouraging participants to identify one realistic personal action they could implement in their everyday lives.



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## Community-Based Learning

Green Youth Lab methodology promotes strong connections between learning and the local community. Participants are encouraged **to explore sustainability challenges and opportunities within their own surroundings, interact with local stakeholders, and identify initiatives that contribute to environmental protection, social innovation, and sustainable development.**

Community-based learning enables young people to recognise their own potential **to contribute to positive local change** while developing a stronger sense of civic engagement and social responsibility.

**Example of Community-based learning in a session in Spain**



Local products and sustainability. IDEA. External visit – Local products and sustainability. "Hoya de la Iglesia" Artisan Cheese Factory. 11September 2026.

The main goal of this session was to provide young participants with a practical, first-hand understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship and circular economy practices in rural areas. The field visit followed a structured, three-stage learning workflow designed to combine theoretical context, hands-on practice, and product evaluation.



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**First (Guided Tour & Inspirational Background):** The activity began with a comprehensive guided tour of the factory facilities. The entrepreneurs shared the history of "Hoya de la Iglesia," focusing on their journey of rural, social, and green entrepreneurship. Participants learned about their sustainable operations, resource management, and how a traditional rural business can thrive by adopting eco-friendly practices.

**Second (Hands-on Workshop):** Next, the participants took part in a practical, experiential workshop. Under the guidance of the expert cheese makers, they learned the technical process of artisan cheese making and actively crafted their own dairy products. This stage allowed them to understand the value chain, resource efficiency, and the effort behind sustainable food production.

**Last (Tasting & Sensory Evaluation):** The session concluded with a structured cheese tasting. This final activity served to analyze the organoleptic qualities of the products, understanding how sustainable agriculture, traditional methods, and animal welfare directly translate into high-quality, zero-kilometer final products.

## Project- and Challenge-Based Learning

Some of the sessions are designed to engage participants in addressing real or simulated sustainability challenges. Working individually or in teams, young people investigate problems, generate ideas, design solutions, and present their proposals through project-based or challenge-based activities.
This approach encourages creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and initiative while helping participants understand the complexity of sustainability-related issues and the importance of interdisciplinary solutions.



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# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

## Peer Learning and Collaborative Learning

Learning is enhanced when **participants share experiences, exchange perspectives, and work together towards common objectives**. Green Youth Lab's sessions therefore create opportunities for peer learning through discussions, teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, and mutual feedback.

This approach recognises that every participant brings valuable knowledge and experiences that enrich the collective learning process while strengthening communication and interpersonal competences.

**Example of Peer and Collaborative Learning in a session in Spain**

The main goal of this session was to help young people explore, understand, and express their personal vision of sustainability through a creative, hands-on activity using natural materials collected from a local park.

By building a model that represents what sustainability means to them, participants were encouraged to reflect on the relationship between people and nature, recognize the value of natural resources, and develop environmental awareness. The activity was designed to encourage active participation, creativity, collaboration, and self-expression, ensuring that all participants could contribute their ideas and perspectives on sustainability in a supportive learning environment.



Sustainability and creativity. IDEA. 10 June 2026.



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## Digital Learning

The Green Youth Lab methodology is conceived as a blended learning process that combines face-to-face workshops with access to the project's MOOCs, enabling participants to continue their learning journey autonomously and at their own pace. All Green Youth Lab pilot projects include at least one session dedicated to introducing the MOOCs, with the aim of encouraging continuous learning and promoting the independent use of digital learning resources.

Digital resources can enrich the learning experience before, during, or after the sessions. Depending on the objectives of each programme, facilitators may encourage participants to access online materials, digital tools, multimedia resources, or the project's MOOCs to reinforce specific topics or continue learning independently.

Digital learning is not intended to replace face-to-face interaction but to **complement it by providing flexible opportunities for further exploration and self-directed learning.**

**Example of Digital Learning in a session in Slovenia**



MOOC Presentation. Novo Mesto. 7 May 2026.

Facilitators introduced the project, guided participants through the platform, supported the registration process, provided technical assistance, and encouraged active engagement with the learning materials, giving participants the opportunity to enrich their learning process at home.



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## Learning Through Practice and Professional Exposure

Whenever possible, **Green Youth Lab sessions encourage participants to engage with professionals, organisations, and workplaces involved in sustainability and the green economy**. Guest speakers, company visits, study visits, mentoring activities, and meetings with entrepreneurs or experts help participants understand how sustainability is applied in different professional contexts.

These experiences contribute to strengthening employability by connecting learning with real labour market opportunities and exposing participants to diverse educational and career pathways.

**Example of Professional Exposure in a session in Slovenia**

Held in a community herb and learning garden, the session engaged six participants in hands-on activities such as plant identification, sustainable gardening, composting, natural water management and herb tasting. Rather than relying on theoretical explanations, participants learned directly from the garden environment and from facilitators with expertise in sustainable gardening and green career pathways. This approach helped participants connect everyday practices such as growing food and managing green spaces with wider issues such as emerging opportunities in the green sector.



Bee Community visit. Topcoach.
5 June 2026.



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The Green Youth Lab methodology does not prescribe the use of any particular learning approach or environment. Instead, facilitators are encouraged to combine different strategies in ways that best support the educational objectives of each workshop, creating engaging, inclusive, and context-responsive learning experiences.

**The following table illustrates how the non-formal learning principles are translated into practice through different learning approaches and the use of a wide range of educational resources.**

| PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES | LEARNING APPROACHES & ENVIRONMENTS | POSSIBLE RESOURCES |
|---|---|---|
| **Active participation**<br>Young people are protagonists in the learning process. | **Experiential learning**<br>Learning through experience, action, and reflection. | • Toolkit activities<br>• Simulations and role-play<br>• Practical exercises<br>• Real-life challenges |
| **Learning by doing**<br>Knowledge is developed through action, experimentation, and real-life application. | **Outdoor learning**<br>Learning in natural and outdoor environments. | • Nature-based activities<br>• Field visits<br>• Outdoor observations<br>• Environmental exploration |
| **Collaboration and peer learning**<br>Learning with and from others through cooperation and shared ideas. | **Peer learning and collaborative learning**<br>Sharing experiences and working together to solve problems. | • Group projects<br>• Team challenges<br>• Discussions and debates<br>• Peer feedback |
| **Reflection and critical thinking**<br>Analysing experiences and questioning to gain deeper understanding. | **Community-based learning**<br>Connecting learning with local communities and real social contexts. | • Community projects<br>• Local case studies<br>• Meetings with stakeholders<br>• Service-learning activities |
| **Flexibility and adaptability**<br>Adapting learning to the needs of participants and local contexts. | **Digital learning**<br>Using digital tools and online resources to extend learning opportunities. | • MOOCs and online courses<br>• Educational videos and articles<br>• Online tools and platforms<br>• Digital resources and games |
| **Employability orientation**<br>Connecting learning with real-life professional opportunities. | **Learning through practice and professional exposure**<br>Exploring the world of work and engaging with professionals. | • Company visits<br>• Guest speakers and experts<br>• Mentoring and interviews<br>• Workplace challenges |



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## 1.4 Integrating Learning Resources

One of the defining characteristics of the Green Youth Lab methodology is its flexibility in combining different educational resources to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences. **While face-to-face workshops represent the core of the methodology, learning can been riched through the integration of complementary resources that extend, reinforce, or contextualise participants' experiences.** Rather than following a standardised curriculum, Green Youth Labs encourage facilitators to select and combine resources according to the objectives of each workshop, the profile of the participants, the available time, and the opportunities offered by the local context. This integrated approach enables organisations to create learning pathways that are both coherent and adaptable while maintaining the educational objectives of the methodology.

### The Green Youth Toolkit

The Green Youth Toolkit provides a collection of educational activities and practical resources designed to support facilitators in delivering Green Youth Lab sessions. The incorporation of Toolkit activities is a key element of the Green Youth Lab methodology, given their effectiveness in fostering the development of green competences and life skills. Accordingly, all pilot implementations integrated activities from the Toolkit, with at least three sessions in each country incorporating these dynamics.

While the Toolkit provides a common pedagogical foundation, facilitators are encouraged to adapt the activities to the specific objectives of each workshop and to the interests and needs of participants. This approach ensures that the activities remain relevant and engaging while maintaining the methodological consistency of Green Youth Lab and maximising their contribution to participants' personal development, sustainability awareness and acquisition of green competences and life skills.



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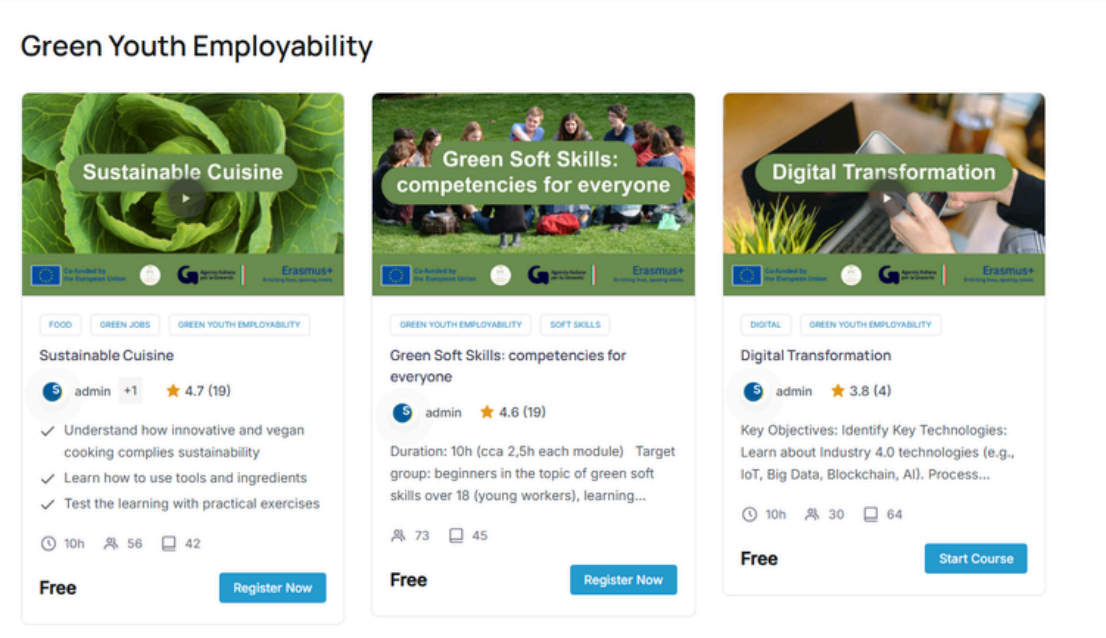
# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

## Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

The Green Youth Employability project offers a series of MOOCs designed to support participants' ongoing learning. The Green Youth Lab methodology follows a blended learning approach, combining in-person activities with digital learning resources that enable participants to deepen their knowledge, revisit key concepts and explore specific topics independently, at their own pace.

In all participating countries, at least one session was dedicated to presenting the online courses developed within the project. Their use was actively promoted alongside the delivery of the Green Youth Lab workshops, encouraging participants to engage with the MOOCs as an integral part of their learning journey. Facilitators were encouraged to introduce relevant courses and modules during the workshops and motivate participants to use them to consolidate and extend their learning beyond the face-to-face sessions. This approach supports continuous learning, fosters learner autonomy and promotes the effective integration of digital resources into the Green Youth Lab methodology.



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### Local Resources and Community Partnerships

Green Youth Labs are strengthened when they connect learning with the local community. Facilitators are encouraged to make use of locally available resources, including environmental organisations, municipalities, businesses, social enterprises, universities, vocational education providers, youth organisations, and community initiatives. Guest speakers, study visits, volunteering opportunities, local sustainability projects, and collaboration with professionals working in green sectors help participants understand how sustainability is applied in practice while strengthening links between learning and employment opportunities.

### Digital and Multimedia Resources

A wide range of digital resources can also support Green Youth Labs by providing additional information, inspiration, and opportunities for independent exploration. Videos, podcasts, online articles, interactive platforms, digital collaboration tools, and multimedia case studies can all contribute to enriching the learning experience.

The choice of digital resources should always reflect the educational objectives of the workshop and be appropriate to the participants' age, interests, digital competences, and learning preferences.

### Building an Integrated Learning Experience

**The strength of the Green Youth Labs methodology lies not in the use of any single educational resource, but in the thoughtful combination of multiple learning opportunities.**

Facilitators are encouraged to design learning experiences that connect workshops with complementary resources whenever these add value to the participants' learning journey.



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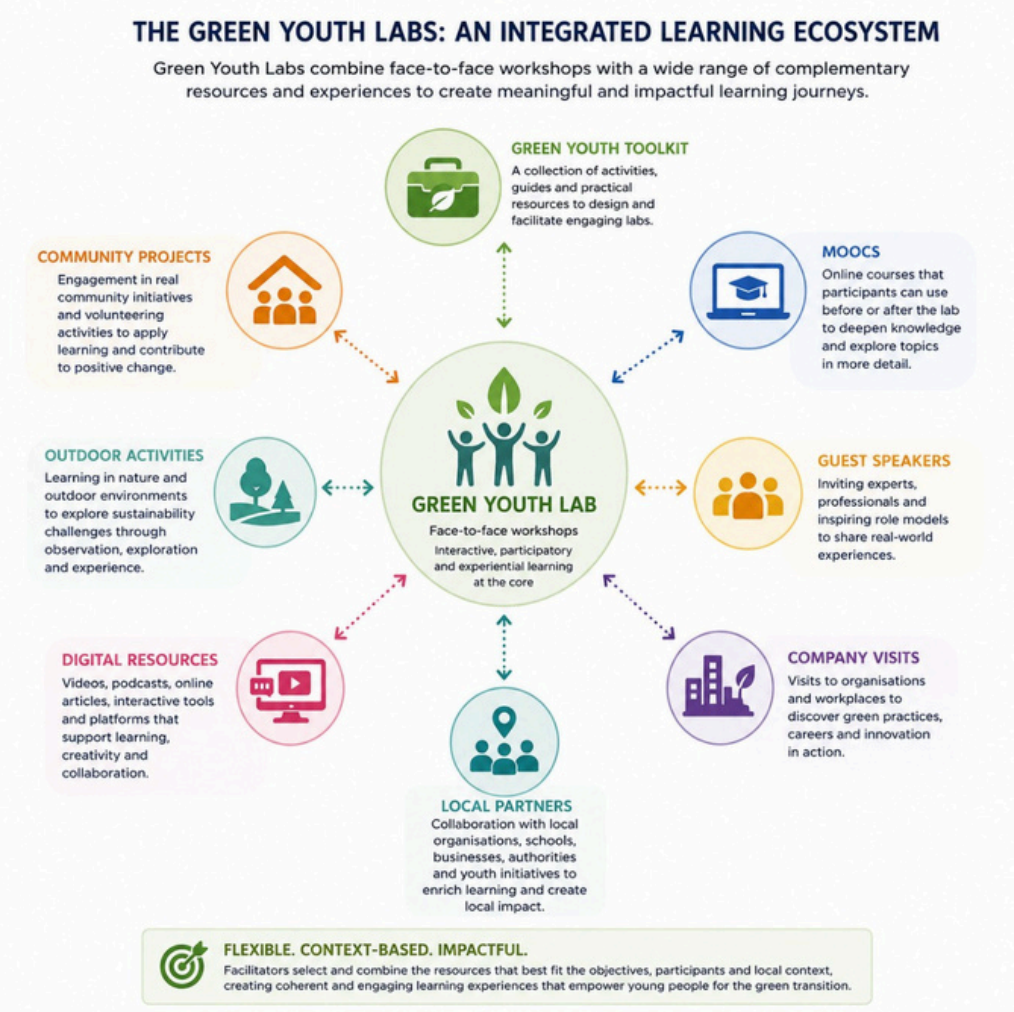
# Chapter 1. Pedagogical Framework of the Green Youth Labs

By integrating practical activities, community experiences, digital tools, and opportunities for self-directed learning, Green Youth Labs create flexible educational pathways that support competence development beyond the duration of individual workshops.

This integrated approach allows organisations to adapt the methodology to diverse contexts while ensuring that participants experience coherent, engaging, and meaningful learning processes that contribute to their green competences, employability, and personal development.



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CHAPTER 2

# Designing and Implementing Green Youth Labs

# Chapter 2. Designing and Implementing Green Youth Labs

The pedagogical framework presented in the previous chapter provides the educational foundations of the Green Youth Lab methodology. The next step is to translate these principles into practice by designing **learning experiences that are engaging, relevant, and responsive to the needs of young people and the context in which they are delivered.**

Green Youth Lab methodology doesn't intend to follow a single implementation model. Their strength lies in the flexibility of the methodology, which allows organisations **to adapt workshops to different participant profiles, organisational capacities, local priorities, and available learning opportunities while remaining faithful to the core educational objectives and pedagogical principles** described in Chapter 1.

This flexibility was a defining feature of the pilot implementation carried out within the Green Youth Employability project. Over a five-month period, each consortium partner delivered a programme of 20 sessions, adapting the structure, duration, thematic focus, learning environments, and educational resources to its own context, sharing the same educational vision and contributing to validate the methodology in diverse settings.

The experience gained during the pilot phase demonstrated that there is no single way to implement Green Youth Labs successfully. Instead, effective implementation depends on making informed pedagogical decisions that respond to the characteristics of participants, the objectives of each learning experience, and the opportunities offered by the local environment.

For this reason, the guidance presented in this chapter should be understood as a practical implementation framework rather than a prescriptive set of instructions. Throughout the chapter, methodological recommendations are complemented by examples from the pilot phase, highlighting successful practices, adaptations, and lessons learned by the partner organisations.

# Chapter 2. Designing and Implementing Green Youth Labs

By combining practical guidance with evidence gathered during the pilot implementation, this chapter aims to support organisations in designing and delivering high-quality Green Youth Lab sessions that promote green competences, strengthen employability, and empower young people to actively contribute to the green transition.

## 2.1. Training of Trainers: Building the Green Youth Lab Methodology

The Green Youth Lab methodology did not emerge out of nowhere. It was the result of a collaborative process that began in Alzira, Spain, where 12 youth workers and 2 project managers from the Green Youth Employability consortium came together to jointly develop the methodological principles and content of the Green Youth Lab pilot to be implemented in each participating country.

During the Training of Trainers, held from 13 to 17 april 2026, participants worked together to establish a common methodological framework, defining the principles, quality standards and overall approach that would guide the implementation of the Green Youth Labs across the different national contexts. The aim was to ensure a shared vision and a consistent level of quality while allowing enough flexibility to adapt the activities to local needs and realities.

In addition to agreeing on the methodological and quality principles, the consortium established a set of minimum requirements for each national pilot:

- At least 30 participants involved in the Green Youth Lab.
- At least 3 sessions involving local external organisations or stakeholders.
- At least 1 session introducing and presenting the MOOC.
- At least 3 sessions making use of the project toolkit.



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These requirements provided a common structure for all national pilots, ensuring that participants had access to a meaningful learning experience combining local stakeholder engagement, digital learning resources and practical educational tools.

The consortium also agreed on the evaluation, reporting and monitoring mechanisms that would accompany the implementation of the Green Youth Labs over the following five months. After each session, participants were required to sign an attendance sheet and complete a digital questionnaire to evaluate the session and reflect on their learning outcomes. In addition, each session was documented in a report summarising its development, key learning points, challenges, obstacles and lessons learned. These reports were shared with the rest of the consortium to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge across countries.

To support the implementation process and ensure continuous improvement, the consortium and the youth workers responsible for delivering the activities at local level held three monitoring meetings throughout the five-month pilot period. These meetings provided an opportunity to review the workshops delivered, discuss progress, exchange experiences, share ideas for new sessions, and reflect on both successes and difficulties. This collaborative monitoring process allowed the teams to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments to the development of the Green Youth Labs as the pilots progressed.

All these elements formed an integrated process of implementation, evaluation and mutual learning.

The session reports, participant feedback, lessons learned and monitoring meetings generated valuable evidence about how the methodology worked in practice, the challenges encountered and the improvements needed.

This collective body of evidence has served as the foundation for the development of the present handbook, ensuring that its conclusions and recommendations are grounded not only in the initial methodological design, but also in the real experiences of the youth workers and participants involved in the national Green Youth Lab pilots.

**Training of Trainers in Alzira. 13-17 april 2026**



2 youth workers and 2 project managers from the Green Youth Employability consortium came together to jointly develop the methodological principles and content of the Green Youth Lab pilot to be implemented in each participating country.



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## 2.2. Quality Principles of Green Youth Labs

Green Youth Lab sessions are designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing organisations to tailor workshops to different participant profiles, local priorities, and learning environments. As a result, no two Green Youth Lab are expected to be identical. Topics, duration, activities, resources, and delivery formats may vary considerably depending on the objectives of each programme and the context in which it is implemented.

Despite this flexibility, all Green Youth Lab sessions should reflect a common set of quality principles that define the educational identity of the methodology. These principles provide a shared reference for facilitators and organisations, ensuring that every session contributes to the project's overarching aim of developing green competences, strengthening employability, and empowering young people through meaningful non-formal learning experiences.

The quality principles presented below should not be understood as a rigid checklist or a set of mandatory requirements. Instead, they serve as guiding criteria to support the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of Green Youth Lab. When considered together, they help ensure that learning experiences remain coherent with the pedagogical framework described in the previous chapter while allowing sufficient flexibility for innovation and adaptation.

The following table summarises the core quality principles that should be considered when planning and implementing a Green Youth Lab.



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| Key characteristic | How it is reflected in practice |
|---|---|
| Purpose-driven | Each Lab has clearly defined educational objectives. |
| Learner-centred | Participants actively shape the learning process. |
| Participatory | Activities encourage interaction, dialogue and collaboration. |
| Experiential | Learning is based on doing, experiencing and reflecting. |
| Green employability-oriented | Sustainability is linked to careers and labour market opportunities. |
| Competence-based | The focus is on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes rather than transmitting information. |
| Flexible | Activities and resources are adapted to participants and local contexts. |
| Inclusive | Every participant can actively contribute regardless of their background or abilities. |
| Reflective | Time is allocated for debriefing, feedback and personal reflection. |
| Action- oriented | Participants leave with ideas or commitments for future action. |



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The following sections of this chapter build upon these quality principles, providing practical guidance on how they can be translated into the planning and facilitation in a variety of educational and community settings.

## 2.3. Planning a Green Youth Lab

Effective Green Youth Labs begin long before participants enter the learning space. **Careful planning enables facilitators to create meaningful learning experiences that are aligned with the educational objectives of the methodology while remaining responsive to participants' needs and local opportunities.**

Planning should not be understood as developing a rigid programme to be followed step by step. Instead, it is a process of making informed pedagogical decisions that provide structure while leaving sufficient room for flexibility, participant contributions, and emerging learning opportunities.

The following elements should be considered:

- **Define the Learning Objectives**
- **Understand Your Participant Profile**
- **Select the Topic and Learning Focus**
- **Design a Balanced Learning Experience**
- **Select Appropriate Learning Resources**
- **Plan Logistics and Learning Environment**
- **Prepare for Flexibility**
- **Plan Reflection and Evaluation**



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### Define the Learning Objectives

The first step in planning is to identify what participants should achieve by the end of the workshop. Learning objectives should be realistic, clearly defined, and linked to the broader aims of the Green Youth Labs methodology.

**Depending on the focus of the session, objectives may relate to:**

- developing green competences;
- strengthening employability skills;
- increasing awareness of sustainability challenges;
- exploring green career opportunities;
- fostering transversal competences such as teamwork, communication, creativity, or critical thinking.

Clearly defined objectives provide a foundation for selecting appropriate activities, learning resources, and evaluation methods.

### Understand Your Participant Profile

Green Youth Labs are learner-centred by design. Whether facilitators work with an established group or with participants they meet for the first time, it is important to **consider the likely characteristics of the audience to design an appropriate learning experience.**

Whenever possible, facilitators should gather information before the workshop. This may include participants' age range, educational background, previous exposure to sustainability topics, interests, language needs, accessibility requirements, or professional aspirations. Such information can be collected through registration forms, collaborating organisations, or previous contact with the group.



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In other situations, particularly when Green Youth Labs are delivered as open activities or public events, detailed information about participants may not be available in advance. In these cases, facilitators should begin the session with short icebreakers, introductory discussions, or diagnostic activities that help them understand participants' expectations, prior knowledge and interests. This information can then be used to adapt examples, adjust the level of complexity, or modify activities during the workshop.

The flexibility to respond to different participant profiles is one of the defining strengths of the Green Youth Labs methodology and supports the creation of inclusive and meaningful learning experiences.

Simple needs assessment activities at the beginning of the workshop—such as expectation mapping, brainstorming exercises, quick polls, or introductory discussions—can provide valuable information that helps facilitators tailor the learning experience to the participants present.

### Select the Topic and Learning Focus

Green Youth Lab's sessions can address a wide variety of themes connected to sustainability, green jobs, and future employability. Topics should respond both to participants' interests and to opportunities within the local context.

Examples include:

- circular economy;
- sustainable consumption;
- biodiversity and nature conservation;
- renewable energy;
- climate action;
- green entrepreneurship;
- sustainable tourism;
- waste management;
- sustainable cities;
- future green professions.



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### Design a Balanced Learning Experience

Each session of the Green Youth Lab should combine different types of learning activities that maintain participants' engagement while supporting different learning styles.

**A balanced workshop typically includes:**

- introductory activities that activate prior knowledge;
- experiential or collaborative learning activities;
- opportunities for discussion and peer exchange;
- practical application or problem-solving exercises;
- structured reflection and debriefing.

Rather than focusing on the quantity of activities, facilitators should prioritise coherence and ensure that every activity contributes to the intended learning objectives.

### Select Appropriate Learning Resources

Facilitators should identify the resources that best support the objectives of the workshop.

**Depending on the topic, these may include:**

- activities from the Green Youth Toolkit;
- MOOCs developed within the project;
- videos or digital resources;
- guest speakers;
- local businesses or organisations;
- outdoor learning spaces;
- case studies;
- practical materials and equipment.



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The objective is not to use as many resources as possible, but to combine them in ways that enrich participants' learning experience.

### Plan Logistics and Learning Environment

Successful implementation also depends on careful organisational preparation.

Before the workshop, facilitators should confirm:

- venue and room layout;
- materials and equipment;
- digital tools or internet access;
- accessibility arrangements;
- health and safety considerations;
- timing of activities;
- transport or permissions for visits and outdoor learning, where relevant.

Well-organised logistics allow facilitators to focus their attention on participants and the learning process rather than operational issues.

### Prepare for Flexibility

No Green Youth Lab unfolds exactly as planned. Participants may ask unexpected questions, discussions may develop in unforeseen directions, or activities may require more or less time than anticipated.

Facilitators should therefore view the session plan as a guide rather than a script. Being prepared to adapt activities, modify timing, or respond to participants' interests is an important element of high-quality facilitation and reflects the learner-centred nature of the methodology.

### Plan Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is a fundamental element of every Green Youth Lab and should be planned from the outset rather than added only if time allows.



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Participants should have opportunities to:

- discuss what they experienced;
- identify what they have learned;
- connect learning with their personal, educational, or professional lives;
- consider possible future actions.

Similarly, facilitators should plan how feedback will be collected to evaluate both participants' learning and the effectiveness of the workshop. Evaluation not only supports quality assurance but also contributes to the continuous improvement of future Green Youth Labs.

**Implementation Tip**

During the pilot phase, partner organisations consistently reported that workshops where sufficient time was allocated for reflection generated deeper discussions and stronger connections between sustainability concepts and participants' career aspirations. Planning at least 20–30 minutes for debriefing proved to be a valuable investment in the overall learning process.

Careful planning provides the foundation for successful Green Youth Labs. However, effective implementation depends not only on preparation but also on the ability to facilitate learning in an engaging, participatory, and responsive manner. The following section therefore explores how Green Youth Labs can be structured to create coherent and meaningful learning experiences.

## 2.4 Structuring a Green Youth Lab

Although Green Youth Labs can differ significantly in terms of topic, duration, participants, and learning environment, experience from the pilot implementation demonstrated that successful workshops generally follow a coherent learning sequence.

Rather than prescribing a fixed agenda, the methodology recommends organising each Green Youth Lab around a series of complementary phases that support participants' engagement, learning, and reflection.

Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the duration and content of each phase according to the objectives of the workshop and the needs of the participants. Some sessions may devote more time to practical activities, while others may prioritise discussion, field visits, or project work. Regardless of these variations, maintaining a clear learning progression helps participants connect ideas, actively engage in the process, and consolidate their learning.

### Welcome and Group Engagement

The opening of the workshop sets the tone for the learning experience. This phase aims to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, clarify expectations, and encourage participants to engage from the outset.

Depending on the context, facilitators may use icebreakers, introductory activities, expectation mapping, or short discussions to understand participants' previous experiences and interests. For open workshops, this stage also provides valuable information that can help facilitators adjust the session to the profile of the group.

### Introducing the Topic

Once the group is engaged, participants should be introduced to the main theme of the Green Youth Lab. Rather than delivering a lengthy presentation, facilitators are encouraged to use interactive methods that stimulate curiosity and connect the topic to participants' everyday lives.

Short videos, case studies, images, real-life examples, quizzes, or problem scenarios can all help establish the context and encourage participants to explore the sustainability challenge addressed during the workshop.

### Experiential Learning Activities

This phase represents the core of the Green Youth Lab. Participants engage in activities that encourage active learning through experience, collaboration, experimentation, and problem-solving.

Depending on the objectives of the workshop, activities may include **simulations, debates, design challenges, outdoor exploration, group projects, role-playing, case analysis, practical exercises, or visits to organisations** working in green sectors. The facilitator's role is to guide the learning process, encourage participation, and create opportunities for dialogue rather than simply transmitting information.

### Reflection and Debriefing

Reflection transforms experience into learning. After completing the main activity, participants should be given time to analyse what happened, identify key learning points, and share different perspectives.

Facilitators can support reflection through guided questions, small-group discussions, individual reflection exercises, or visual methods that encourage participants to connect the activity with broader sustainability issues and their own experiences.

### Connecting Learning with Employability

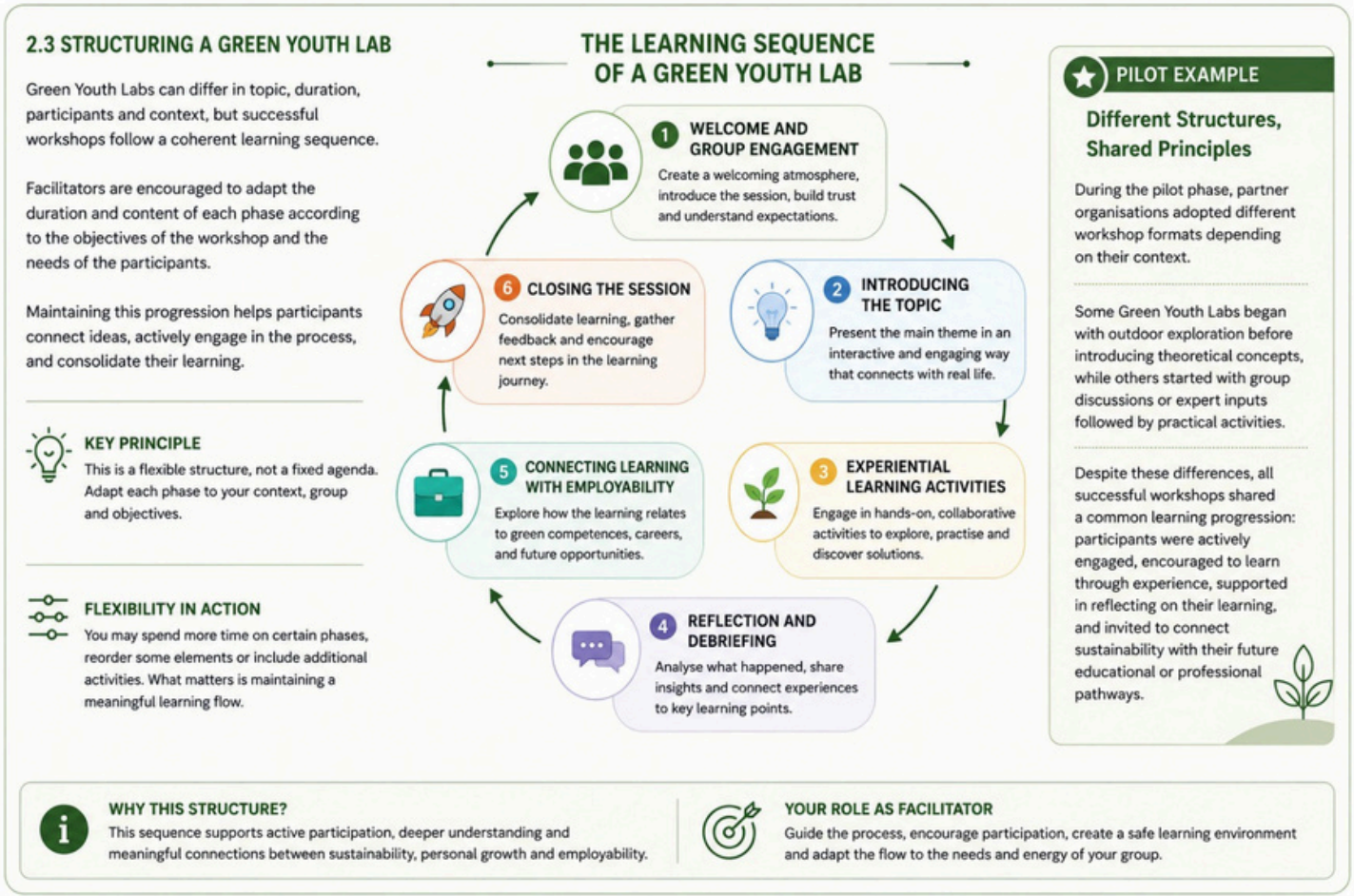
A distinctive feature of the GreenYouth Labs methodology is the explicit connection between sustainability and employability. For this reason, **facilitators should encourage participants to reflect on how the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed during the workshop relates to education, careers, entrepreneurship, and future labour market opportunities**.Depending on the topic, this may include discussing emerging green jobs, analysing how traditional professions are becoming more sustainable, identifying the green competences valued by employers, or exploring local employment optunities.

## Closing the Session

The final stage provides an opportunity to consolidate learning, evaluate the workshop, and encourage participants to continue their learning journey.

Closing activities may include personal action planning, feedback questionnaires, group summaries, commitments for future action, or recommendations for additional learning opportunities such as the project's MOOCs, local initiatives, or complementary Green Youth Labs.

Ending each workshop with a clear conclusion helps participants recognise their progress and reinforce the continuity of the learning process.



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## 2.5 The Role of the Facilitator

In the Green Youth Lab methodology, the facilitator plays a central role in creating meaningful learning experiences. Rather than acting as a lecturer or subject expert whose primary responsibility is to transmit information, the facilitator guides participants through a process of exploration, collaboration, reflection, and personal development.

Facilitators create conditions in which participants can actively engage with sustainability challenges, exchange ideas, develop competences, and connect their learning with future educational and professional opportunities. This requires flexibility, active listening, and the ability to adapt to the needs and dynamics of each group.

| Traditional Trainer | Green Youth Lab Facilitator |
|---|---|
| **Delivers information** | **Facilitates learning** |
| **Provides answers** | **Encourages questions** |
| **Leads the session** | Guides the learning process |
| **Focuses on content** | Focuses on competence development |
| **Evaluates participants** | Supports reflection and self-assessment |
| **Follows a fixed plan** | Adapts to participants and context |

### Before the Green Youth Lab

Preparation is essential for effective facilitation. Before each workshop, facilitators should ensure that they are familiar with the learning objectives, planned activities, learning resources, and practical arrangements. They should



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also consider the expected participant profile and identify any adaptations that may be required to promote inclusion and participation.

Whenever possible, facilitators should anticipate potential challenges and prepare alternative activities or adjustments that can be introduced if circumstances change during the session.

### During the Green Youth Lab

During the workshop, **the facilitator's primary responsibility is to support the learning process** rather than control it. This **involves encouraging participation, creating opportunities for dialogue, asking open-ended questions, and helping participants connect their experiences with broader sustainability and employability concepts.**

Facilitators should remain attentive to group dynamics, ensuring that all participants have opportunities to contribute and that different perspectives are respected. They should also be prepared to adapt the pace or sequence of activities if this better supports participants' learning.

### Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

Green Youth Labs seek to provide learning opportunities that are accessible, respectful, and welcoming to all participants. Facilitators should therefore **foster an atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable** expressing ideas, asking questions, and participating actively.

Inclusive facilitation involves recognising the diversity of participants' backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and learning preferences. Activities should be adapted where necessary to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that every participant can contribute meaningfully.

### Encouraging Reflection

Reflection is one of the facilitator's most important responsibilities. Learning does not occur simply because participants complete an activity; it develops when they have opportunities to analyse their experiences, identify key learning points, and relate these to their own lives.

Facilitators should use questioning techniques that encourage participants to explore not only *what* happened during an activity, but also *why* it happened, *what* they learned, and *how* they might apply this learning in future educational, personal, or professional contexts.

### Connecting Sustainability with Employability

A distinctive feature of Green Youth Labs is the integration of sustainability and employability. Facilitators therefore play an important role in helping participants recognise how green competences and transversal skills are increasingly relevant across different sectors of the labour market.

This may involve introducing examples of emerging green occupations, discussing how traditional professions are evolving in response to sustainability challenges, or encouraging participants to reflect on how the competences developed during the workshop can support their future career pathways.

### Supporting Continuous Learning

Facilitators should encourage participants to view each Green Youth Lab as part of a broader learning journey. Where appropriate, they may recommend additional learning opportunities, including the project's MOOCs, local initiatives, volunteering opportunities, community projects, or further Green Youth Labs.

Supporting continuous learning reinforces the idea that developing green competences is an ongoing process that extends beyond individual workshops.

#### Implementation Tip

During the pilot implementation, facilitators consistently reported that adopting a flexible and responsive approach generated higher levels of participation than closely following a predefined lesson plan. Allowing space for participants' questions, experiences, and discussions often resulted in richer learning outcomes and stronger engagement.

Ultimately, the facilitator's role is not to provide all the answers but to create the conditions in which participants can explore, question, collaborate, and develop the competences needed to navigate an increasingly sustainable and rapidly changing world.

# CHAPTER 3
# From Methodology to Practice

# Chapter 3. From Methodology to Practice

The pilot phase was designed not simply as a series of sessions, but as a process of methodological validation and learning. Across the consortium, partners tested how the common framework could be translated into different contexts, identifying both the principles that needed to remain consistent and the elements that could be adapted locally. This chapter examines the outcomes of this process, focusing on the different implementation pathways adopted by partners, and the lessons that can inform future implementation of Green Youth Labs.

As explained in 2.1. the implementation phase was preceded by a collaborative design process aimed at establishing a shared pedagogical understanding across the project consortium. The Training of Trainers combined methodological input with practical activities, allowing facilitators to experience first-hand the approaches they would later use with participants. Attention was given to non-formal education, experiential learning, outdoor and nature-based learning, collaborative learning, and learner-centred facilitation. The practical format enabled facilitators to reflect on how these approaches could be adapted to different participant profiles, organisational environments, and local realities.

The outcome of this co-design process was therefore not a standardised programme, but a shared methodological foundation. **The pilot phase consequently provided an opportunity to test this framework across different contexts.** The diversity of approaches that emerged demonstrated the capacity of the Green Youth Lab methodology to adapt to different organisations, learners, and local ecosystems while maintaining its core pedagogical principles.

# Chapter 3. From Methodology to Practice

## 3.1. Pilot Implementation Across Four European Contexts

Following the Training for Trainers, each partner organisation designed and implemented its own Green Youth Lab programme. The pilot implementation was carried out over a five-month period by the four organisations participating in the Green Youth Employability project.

Each partner delivered a programme of 20 sessions, resulting in a rich and diverse body of practical experience across different educational and organisational settings. While all partners shared the same overall objective of strengthening young people's green competences and employability, they were encouraged to adapt the content, learning environments, participant profiles, and implementation strategies according to local needs and opportunities.

This flexibility resulted in a wide variety of learning experiences**. Green Youth Labs were implemented with vocational education students, young people participating in community initiatives, international learners, and professionals involved in organisational sustainability. Activities took place in classrooms, training centres, outdoor environments, local businesses, community spaces, and natural settings, demonstrating the versatility of the methodology across multiple contexts.**

Rather than evaluating whether partners implemented identical activities, **the pilot phase sought to explore how the methodology performed under different conditions**. This approach generated valuable evidence on its adaptability, transferability, and potential for application across a broad range of educational and organisational environments.



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### Green Youth Lab – IDEA Alzira (Spain)

In Spain, the Green Youth Labs were implemented in Alzira, in the province of Valencia, a medium-sized municipality and capital of the Ribera Alta region. The local context combines urban development with a strong agricultural tradition, extensive citrus-growing areas and a close relationship with the Xúquer (Júcar) River and surrounding natural areas. These characteristics make issues such as water management, biodiversity, agriculture, food systems, energy and sustainable consumption particularly relevant to the local community.

The activities were developed within IDEA, the City Council's local development and employment service, which has been working since 1995 in employment, vocational training, entrepreneurship and local economic development. Its focus on improving professional skills and access to the labour market provided an appropriate framework for integrating sustainability and green employability into vocational education.

Around 50 young people aged 18–30 participated in the Green Youth Labs. They were studying vocational training in cooking, bar and café services, electricity and gardening. The Labs were designed as complementary and transversal training, helping participants connect sustainability with the professional skills they were already developing. The activities were also aligned with IDEA's work on green employment, including the Emplea Verde+ “Alzira + Talento” project, which promotes training and employability linked to the green transition.



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# Chapter 3. From Methodology to Practice

A key feature of the Green Youth Labs was the combination of a common sustainability framework with profession-specific learning. All participants were introduced to sustainability, green skills, the MOOC, the NFE Toolkit and transversal competences. Practical activities and educational visits were then adapted to the specific vocational profiles of each group. This approach helped participants move beyond understanding sustainability as a general or theoretical concept and recognise its direct relevance to their future professions and workplaces.

For the electricity and gardening group, activities addressed energy production and transition, water management, biodiversity, natural resources and the sustainable management of green spaces. The visit to the Cofrentes area provided an opportunity to reflect on energy production, water resources and the future of local energy systems. Gardening-related activities connected these topics with biodiversity, responsible water use and the sustainable maintenance of green areas.

For the hospitality group, the focus was on sustainable food systems, local and seasonal products, responsible consumption and the relationship between gastronomy, local producers and cultural heritage. Visits to the Cabanyal Market and the Rice Museum or to the Cheese Factory Hoya de la Iglesia helped participants explore how purchasing and consumption decisions in the hospitality sector can support local producers, traditional food systems and more sustainable business practices.

The Green Youth Labs combined presentations, discussions, practical activities, educational visits and non-formal learning methods. The MOOC and NFE Toolkit provided resources for developing transversal green competences and encouraging participants to continue learning independently.

The activities strengthened competences such as environmental awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, responsibility and decision-making, while also helping participants identify sustainable practices relevant to their occupation.

The vocational approach was especially important because it enabled participants to connect environmental challenges with concrete professional decisions: how energy and water are managed, how green spaces are maintained, how food is purchased and used, how waste can be reduced and how local and seasonal products can contribute to more sustainable services.

### Good practices and lessons learned from Alzira

- **Connecting sustainability with vocational education:** Green skills become more relevant when they are directly linked to the occupations and professional environments of learners.
- **Combining transversal and profession-specific learning**: A common sustainability framework can be complemented by activities tailored to different vocational profiles.
- **Using local examples and learning environments:** Energy facilities, agricultural landscapes, markets, museums and natural resources provided concrete contexts for understanding sustainability.
- **Linking green skills with employability:** Participants were encouraged to recognise how environmental changes are affecting existing professions and creating new expectations and opportunities in the labour market.
- **Learning through experience:** Educational visits and practical activities helped transform abstract sustainability concepts into situations that participants could relate to their future working lives.
- **Integrating sustainability into existing training structures:** Working within IDEA's vocational education and employment framework allowed green competences to be incorporated into professional training without treating sustainability as a separate or isolated subject.



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# Chapter 3. From Methodology to Practice

The Green Youth Labs at IDEA Alzira helped participants understand that the **green transition is directly connected to their future professions**. Electricity, gardening, hospitality and food-related occupations all face changes linked to energy efficiency, water management, biodiversity, resource use, sustainable consumption and changing customer expectations.

By combining vocational education, local learning environments, Non-Formal Education and green employability, the Lab provided participants with practical knowledge and transversal competences that can **support more sustainable** professional practices and improve their capacity to adapt to the **changing** labour market.

The main goal of this Culinary Engineering and Sustainability Lab was to introduce cooking students to sustainable, plant-based gastronomy as a growing area of green employment in the hospitality sector. Through the preparation of vegan recipes using professional culinary techniques, participants learned how sustainability and innovation can go hand in hand, demonstrating that plant-based cuisine offers high gastronomic quality while reducing environmental impact.

The session also aimed to develop technical cooking skills while raising awareness of the environmental benefits of reducing animal-based ingredients, including lower carbon emissions, reduced water consumption, and more efficient use of natural resources.



Vegetarian diet and its benefits.
IDEA. 17 June 2026.



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### Green Youth Lab – Scambieuropei (Italy)

In Italy, young people continue to face significant labour market challenges, while the green transition is creating new opportunities for sustainable careers. Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna region provide a particularly supportive context, combining strong civic engagement, cooperative traditions and a growing ecosystem of local sustainability initiatives.
Community-based activities such as clothing swaps, repair cafés and upcycling workshops help translate environmental awareness into practical green skills, promoting circular economy practices, waste reduction and sustainable consumption while strengthening creativity and community participation.

**The Green Youth Lab activities in Bologna showed the value of connecting sustainability with real-life experiences and potential career pathways**. The visit to Arvaia Cooperative introduced participants to the Community Supported Agriculture model and demonstrated alternative approaches to food production, cooperative governance and sustainable livelihoods.

Pasto Nomade, a culinary and food-design laboratory, offered an interactive exploration of circular gastronomy, food recovery and zero-waste practices, while Calanchi Trekking combined environmental learning, outdoor activity and well-being, strengthening participants' connection with the local territory.

The strongest impact came from the hands-on experiences at Arvaia and Pasto Nomade, which helped participants move beyond theoretical environmental awareness and recognise concrete opportunities in sustainable food systems, social entrepreneurship and cooperative models.

Overall, the Bologna experience confirmed the importance of experiential and participatory learning, with practical, outdoor and community-based activities proving particularly effective. Working with established local organisations and grassroots initiatives also strengthened the connection between learning, employability and the wider local sustainability ecosystem.

The visit to Arvaia in Bologna gave young adults an opportunity to explore sustainable agriculture and green career pathways through direct exposure to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model.



Visit to Arvaia. Scambieuropei.
23 July. 2026

Participants learned how environmental sustainability, social inclusion, fair labour practices and cooperative decision-making can work together in practice. The visit combined an interactive introduction to Arvaia's history and cooperative model with a guided tour of its fields and greenhouses, where participants explored soil health, crop rotation, biodiversity and sustainable infrastructure. The session concluded with hands-on fieldwork, including planting chicory and learning about sustainable irrigation systems.

This combination of dialogue, observation and learning-by-doing enabled participants to move beyond theoretical knowledge and gain a realistic understanding of sustainable farming, alternative business models and potential employment opportunities in the green economy.

## Green Practices and Lessons Learnt from Italy

- **Learning through practice:** Hands-on activities, field visits and outdoor experiences were more engaging and effective than traditional classroom-based learning.
- **Authentic learning environments:** Using real settings such as farms, cooperatives, kitchens and natural areas helped participants connect sustainability with everyday practices and potential career pathways.
- **Connecting sustainability with employability:** Activities such as the Arvaia visit demonstrated that green transition can create opportunities in sustainable agriculture, social entrepreneurship, cooperative models and the circular economy.
- **Learning by doing:** Practical tasks, such as planting crops at Arvaia or experimenting with food recovery and zero-waste cooking at Pasto Nomade, helped participants develop tangible green skills.
- **Professional exposure:** Direct contact with practitioners and local organisations gave participants a realistic understanding of green professions, alternative business models and sustainable enterprises.
- **Community-based learning:** Collaborating with established local initiatives and grassroots organisations strengthened local networks and connected participants with real sustainability projects.
- **Participatory approaches:** Interactive dialogue, collaborative activities and shared experiences encouraged active participation and allowed participants to exchange knowledge and perspectives.
- **Place-based learning:** Activities rooted in the local territory, such as the Calanchi trekking experience, strengthened participants' connection with their environment and highlighted the value of local natural and community resources.

### Green Youth Lab – VŠ Grm Novo mesto (Slovenia)

In Slovenia, the Green Youth Labs were implemented mainly in Novo mesto and the surrounding region, with additional activities in Ptuj, Otočec and Črnomelj, as well as an international online workshop. The diverse and international participation encouraged intercultural exchange and the sharing of perspectives on sustainability, green skills and employment.

The Lab combined Non-Formal Education (NFE), experiential learning and multi-stakeholder cooperation, connecting participants with educational institutions, researchers, farms, agricultural environments and local organisations. Activities linked green skills to real-life contexts and demonstrated connections between education, sustainable agriculture, research, technology, entrepreneurship and rural development.

Key activities included green soft skills, teamwork, creative thinking, digital learning and practical horticulture in Novo mesto; exposure to research and innovation through the Rudolfovo Institute; exploration of agrorobotics and digital technologies in sustainable agriculture in Ptuj; hands-on learning about organic farming, soil management, biodiversity, composting and food waste at an organic farm in Otočec; and activities connecting herbalism, natural resources and green entrepreneurship in Črnomelj.

Digital learning was also an important component, with participants using the Green Youth Employability platform, MOOCs and the NFE Toolkit on Green Soft Skills. These activities strengthened digital literacy, autonomous learning and awareness of resources for lifelong learning.



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## Good practices and lessons learned from Slovenia

- **Combining theory with practice:** Sustainability concepts became more meaningful when experienced through farms, orchards, gardens, research environments and digital platforms.
- **Using real local environments:** Farms, research institutions, educational organisations and local stakeholders made green skills and career opportunities more tangible.
- **Adapting activities to participants:** Small groups, peer learning, facilitator support and flexible tasks enabled inclusive participation despite different backgrounds and experience levels.
- **Connecting learning with local contexts:** Farming, horticulture, composting, herbalism, research and agricultural technologies provided relevant examples that could be adapted to other regions.
- **Supporting digital learning:** Guided demonstrations and facilitator assistance helped participants use online resources independently. The experience also showed the importance of technical preparation and, when necessary, staggered registration.
- **Promoting international exchange:** Participants from different countries enriched discussions and demonstrated how digital formats can extend learning beyond the local environment.

The Green Youth Lab created practical links between education, research, agriculture, technology, digitalisation, innovation, entrepreneurship and employability. It's main added value was turning green-transition concepts into concrete, locally relevant learning experiences.



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Building Green Skills through Research and Innovation. Rudolfovo Institute in Novo mesto.

15 June 2026.

The study visit introduced participants to the institute's research projects, laboratories and innovative technologies supporting the green transition and regional development. Through guided visits, expert presentations, interactive discussions, observation and experiential learning, participants engaged directly with researchers and explored research careers, innovation processes and interdisciplinary approaches to environmental challenges.



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The activity strengthened participants' green awareness, critical thinking, communication skills, understanding of research and innovation, and career awareness in green sectors. Participants particularly valued the opportunity to experience a real research environment and discuss future education and employment opportunities with professionals.

The activity was successfully implemented without major challenges. Facilitators adapted explanations to different educational backgrounds and allowed additional discussion time to encourage active participation. The experience demonstrated that cooperation with research institutions, universities and innovation hubs can provide an effective and transferable model for developing green skills and employability through real-world professional exposure.



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### Green Youth Lab – Topcoach (Slovakia)

Slovakia's green transition is marked by strong regional disparities. While Bratislava and western regions offer more dynamic labour markets, peripheral areas such as Zamagurie and Pieniny rely heavily on seasonal tourism and provide fewer stable opportunities for young people. Green skills remain insufficiently integrated into education and career guidance, while teachers and youth workers often lack ready-to-use Slovak materials. For many young people, especially NEETs, green skills are still perceived as an abstract environmental topic rather than a pathway to employment.

Topcoach delivered 20 Green Youth Labs in Bratislava, the Pieniny/Zamagurie region and online, reaching NEETs, students, young adults, teachers, youth workers, private-sector representatives and other groups.

The best-received activities shared a practical, participatory and experiential approach. The sustainable gastronomy lab at Colette connected participants with a professional chef and real-world zero-waste practices, while the Bee Community lab used an outdoor herb garden to develop practical skills through plant identification, composting and herb tasting. EcoCreative used collaborative drawing in an informal outdoor setting to promote motivation rather than guilt, and the Regional E-tourism lab offered first-hand experience of sustainable mobility through e-biking in protected areas. The Green Skills for Teaching Staff session similarly focused on practical ideas that educators could apply directly.



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Overall, the Slovak experience shows that green learning is most effective when it moves beyond traditional lectures and connects participants with authentic environments, practitioners, hands-on activities and concrete employment opportunities. Such approaches make sustainability more accessible, increase motivation and confidence, and help participants translate environmental awareness into practical action and green career pathways.

### Lessons Learnt from Slovakia

- **Use authentic learning environments:** Kitchens, community gardens, courtyards and natural areas can make green skills more tangible, credible and relevant than traditional classroom settings

.

- **Prioritise practice over theory:** Short theoretical inputs followed by hands-on activities and concrete next steps are particularly effective for engaging NEETs and other target groups.

- **Present sustainability as an opportunity:** Framing green skills around career, employment and business opportunities creates a more positive and motivating learning experience than focusing on guilt or compliance.

- **Provide practical take-home materials:** Method cards, short recaps and information about local green jobs, organisations and internships help participants continue learning after the activity. Materials should ideally be available in Slovak and adapted to the local labour market.



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- **Adapt evaluation methods to target groups:** Standard feedback tools may not suit all participants. Evaluation should be adjusted to different age groups and learning contexts, including observation-based approaches where appropriate.
- **Tailor delivery to participants' needs:** Flexible pacing, target-group breakout sessions and scheduling adapted to participants' circumstances can improve accessibility and engagement.
- **Plan for outdoor activities: Outdoor** labs should include alternative arrangements for poor weather to ensure continuity and minimise disruption.
- **Strengthen follow-up: Short follow-up** sessions can maintain motivation, support participants in taking concrete next steps and increase the longer-term impact of one-off Green Youth Labs.

The main objective was to present the importance of creativity as a green skill, connecting drawing, reuse, storytelling, sustainable events and community design with climate awareness and potential green career path- ways. Using a non-formal, hands-on approach, participants worked collaboratively around a shared table, creating drawings and discussing sustainability. The activity encouraged creativity, collaboration and participation while demonstrating how a small, low-impact community event can model sustainable practices. **Key lessons included clearer initial instructions, recycled materials, flexible participation, additional facilitation and practical follow-up materials.**



EcoCreative Lab. TopCoach. Slovakia. 21 August 2026.



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## 3.2. Emerging Implementation Pathways

The following section presents the four implementation pathways that emerged from the pilot, illustrating how a shared pedagogical framework can be translated into diverse yet equally valid learning experiences.

The analysis of the pilot implementation revealed four complementary implementation pathways. These pathways were not predefined during the design phase; rather, they emerged naturally from the different ways in which partner organisations translated the shared methodology into practice. Each pathway reflects the strengths, expertise, and local ecosystem of the implementing organisation, while remaining fully aligned with the Green Youth Lab framework.

The four pathways should therefore be understood as examples of adaptation rather than models to be replicated. Future organisations implementing Green Youth Labs may identify with one of these approaches, combine elements from several of them, or develop new pathways that better suit their own context. What remains constant is not the format of the activities, but the educational philosophy that underpins them.

Before examining each implementation pathway in detail, it is important to recognise that the diversity observed during the pilot phase reflects more than different organisational contexts. Collectively, the four pathways reveal complementary perspectives on how green youth employability can be fostered through non-formal education.



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Some approaches placed greater emphasis on preparing young people for an evolving labour market through vocational education and career guidance. Others prioritised community engagement, place-based learning, or the exploration of local sustainability initiatives. Additional pathways highlighted the role of digital innovation, emerging technologies, and organisational transformation in supporting the green transition. Together, these experiences demonstrate that green employability is a multidimensional concept that can be addressed through different educational lenses while pursuing the same overarching objective: empowering young people with the competences needed to contribute to a more sustainable society and labour market.

The implementation pathways presented in the following sections should therefore be understood not only as examples of methodological adaptation, but also as complementary interpretations of how Green Youth Labs can respond to the diverse challenges and opportunities created by the green transition.

## Green Employability in Vocational Education

***Case Example: IDEA Alzira (Spain)***

One of the implementation pathways that emerged during the pilot phase placed vocational education and career development at the centre of the learning experience. Developed by IDEA Alzira, this approach demonstrated how Green Youth Labs can be successfully integrated into vocational training programmes, enabling young people to connect sustainability with their future professional pathways.



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The programme engaged learners from different vocational fields, including gardening, cooking, bar service and electricity. Rather than presenting sustainability as a stand-alone topic, the Green Youth Labs encouraged participants to explore how environmental challenges are transforming traditional occupations and creating new opportunities for innovation, responsible production, and green employment.

A distinctive characteristic of this pathway was its strong connection with the local labour market. Learning extended beyond the training environment through visits to businesses and organisations implementing sustainable practices. These experiences enabled participants to observe how environmental principles are applied in real workplaces, identify the green competences required in different sectors, and reflect on the evolving demands of employers in the context of the green transition.

Outdoor and experiential learning also played an important role throughout the programme. Activities in natural environments encouraged participants to explore biodiversity, sustainable resource management, and responsible consumption while strengthening transversal competences such as teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and systems thinking. These experiences complemented classroom-based workshops and helped participants establish meaningful connections between environmental sustainability and everyday life.

Employability was addressed explicitly through activities designed to help participants recognise and articulate the competences they were developing. Workshops on green jobs encouraged learners to analyse how conventional professions can evolve towards more sustainable practices, while career guidance sessions supported them in identifying their own strengths, preparing application materials, and reflecting on future employment opportunities.



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In this way, green competences were linked directly to participants' career aspirations rather than being treated as isolated environmental knowledge.

The pathway also illustrated the benefits of combining face-to-face learning with digital resources. Participants were introduced to the Green Youth Employability MOOCs and encouraged to use them as a complementary learning resource, allowing them to deepen specific topics, reinforce the competences developed during the workshops, and continue learning independently beyond the duration of the programme.

Overall, this implementation pathway demonstrates how Green Youth Labs can support vocational education by embedding sustainability within professional learning rather than adding it as an additional subject. By combining practical experiences, workplace engagement, competence development, and career guidance, the approach helps young people understand that the transition towards a greener economy is not limited to emerging green occupations but is reshaping skills and practices across virtually every profession.

### Contribution to the Green Youth Labs methodology

This implementation pathway highlights the potential of Green Youth Labs to strengthen the relationship between sustainability education and employability. It demonstrates that green competences become more meaningful when participants can connect them with real occupations, local businesses, and their own career aspirations. The pilot also confirmed the value of integrating vocational education, experiential learning, workplace exposure, and blended learning into a coherent educational journey that prepares young people for an evolving labour market.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Learning Green Employability through a Living Landscape

**Location: L'Albarda Garden – FUNDEM Foundation (Spain)**

One of the most representative Green Youth Labs implemented by IDEA Alzira was an outdoor learning experience at **L'Albarda Garden,** a renowned Mediterranean botanical garden managed by the FUNDEM Foundation for the Conservation of Mediterranean Fauna and Flora. The activity was designed for vocational education students specialising in gardening and aimed to connect biodiversity conservation with future employment opportunities in the green economy.



Rather than approaching sustainability through classroom instruction, participants explored a real example of ecological land management. During a guided visit, they discovered how native Mediter-ranean plant species, water-efficient gardening, and



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biodiversity conservation contribute to more resilient ecosystems. Discussions also highlighted the growing demand for professionals in fields such as ecological restoration, sustainable landscaping, environmental education, and nature conservation.

The learning experience concluded with a facilitated reflection linking participants' observations to the concept of green employability. Students were encouraged to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to work in sustainability-related professions and to reflect on how their own vocational training could contribute to the green transition.

### Why this practice matters

This activity illustrates how authentic learning environments can transform sustainability from an abstract concept into a tangible professional reality. By combining outdoor learning, collaboration with a local environmental organisation, and structured reflection, participants not only strengthened their environmental awareness but also recognised how green competences can create future career opportunities within their own vocational field.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Outdoor and place-based learning.
- Learning through authentic professional environments.
- Partnerships with local sustainability stakeholders.
- Reflection connecting experience with employability.
- Development of GreenComp competences through experiential learning.



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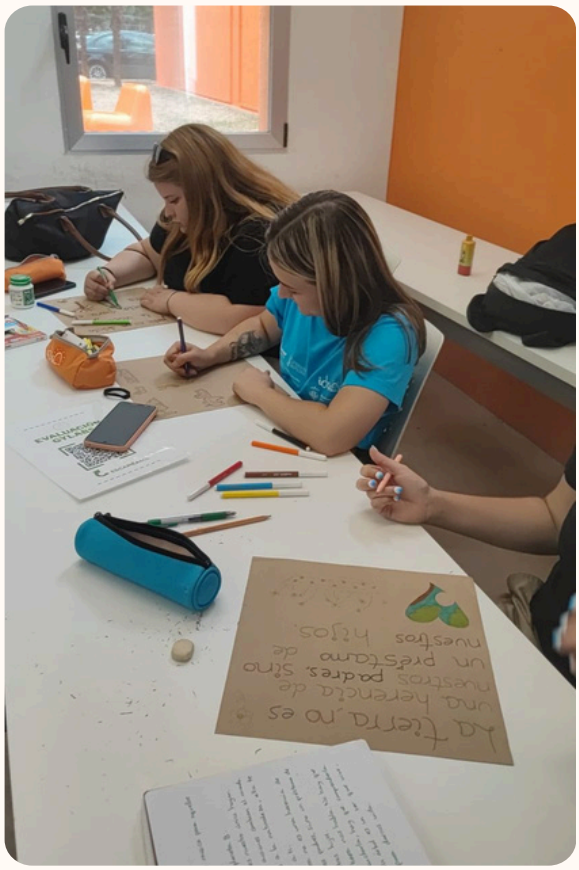
## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Raising Awareness through Collaborative Campaigns

**Location: L'Albarda Garden – FUNDEM Foundation (Spain)**



This Green Youth Lab was organised as a three-session learning journey that encouraged participants to transform their understanding of sustainability into awareness-raising actions. Rather than focusing on theoretical learning alone, participants worked collaboratively to create communication materials designed to promote more sustainable behaviours within their educational community.

The first session introduced the sustainability topic through non-formal learning activities, group discussions, and reflection exercises. Participants explored key environmental challenges and analysed how communication can influence attitudes and everyday practices.

During the second session, small groups designed and developed awareness-raising materials, such as posters, murals, and visual campaigns. Facilitators supported the creative process while encouraging participants to communicate complex sustainability messages in clear, engaging, and accessible ways.



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The learning journey concluded with a presentation session in which each group showcased its work to the rest of the participants. Beyond explaining the final materials, students reflected on the messages they wished to communicate, the creative decisions they had made, and the potential impact of their campaigns on raising environmental awareness among their peers.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how Green Youth Labs can combine environmental education with creativity, teamwork, and communication. Developing awareness-raising materials encouraged participants not only to deepen their own understanding of sustainability but also to become active communicators capable of engaging others in the green transition. The final presentation reinforced reflection, peer learning, and participants' confidence in communicating sustainability issues to different audiences.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Project-based learning.
- Collaborative creativity.
- Sustainability communication.
- Peer learning and public presentation.
- Reflection through action.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

### Green Cooking – Connecting Sustainability with Future Careers

**Location: IDEA Alzira (Spain)**




This Green Youth Lab was designed as a practical learning experience that connected sustainability with the future professional careers of students in cooking and hospitality. Through a combination of case study analysis, group discussion, and personal reflection, participants explored how everyday decisions in professional kitchens can contribute to the green transition.

The session began with an introduction to the concepts of sustainability and green jobs in the culinary and hospitality sector. Participants then worked with two versions of the same professional cooking scenario: one representing conventional practices and another incorporating more sustainable solutions. By comparing both cases, students identified how choices related to food waste, ingredient sourcing, resource efficiency, and cooking practices can influence environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

The second part of the session focused on personal reflection through an adapted **Wheel of Life** methodology. Participants explored the role of sustainability in different areas of their personal and professional lives, reflecting on their own values, strengths, areas for improvement, and future aspirations. The activity helped them connect sustainability with employability and with their future responsibilities as culinary professionals.



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The session concluded with a group reflection in which participants shared key insights and identified practical actions that could be implemented in professional kitchens. Discussions were enriched by students' own experiences from internships and practical training, allowing them to connect the learning activities with real-life situations they had encountered in the workplace.students to understand it as a professional competence that can influence the way kitchens operate and contribute to more responsible practices in the hospitality sector.

The combination of practical case studies and personal reflection encouraged participants to develop both green competences and transversal skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and self-awareness. It also showed the value of using participants' own professional experiences as a starting point for peer learning and discussion.

A key strength of the practice is its transferability. The methodology can be adapted to different vocational sectors by replacing the cooking scenarios with profession-specific cases and sustainability challenges. In this way, learners can explore how green competences are relevant to their own future careers and identify realistic actions that they can apply in professional contexts.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Learning through real-life professional scenarios.
- Case study and comparative analysis.
- Collaborative discussion and peer learning.
- Connection between sustainability and employability.
- Personal reflection through the Wheel of Life.
- Development of green and transversal competences.
- Learning connected to participants' professional experiences.
- Action-oriented reflection and identification of practical solutions.
- Adaptability to different vocational and educational contexts.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Exploring Water, Energy and the Future of the Territory

Location: Cofrentes (Spain)



This Green Youth Lab took participants outside the classroom to explore the relationship between water management, energy production, biodiversity, and territorial development through a real-life local case. The external visit to Cofrentes combined a river route with a visit to the Nuclear Power Plant Information Centre, creating an opportunity for young people to observe, question, and critically reflect on the current energy model and the future of the territory.

The learning experience began with an introduction to the local context and the



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relationship between the Júcar River, the surrounding ecosystem, and energy production. During the river route, participants observed the landscape, water resources, biodiversity, and human infrastructure, reflecting on how different human activities influence the environment and the territory.

The group then visited the Nuclear Power Plant Information Centre, where participants learned about the operation of the facility, its relationship with water resources, and its role in the local area. The visit provided first-hand information and encouraged participants to ask questions and consider different environmental, social, and economic perspectives related to energy production.

The final part of the activity focused on future-thinking and collaborative scenario building. Working in groups, participants imagined possible futures for Cofrentes following the planned closure of the nuclear power plant. They explored alternatives related to renewable energy, environmental protection, sustainable employment, and opportunities for young people, before sharing their ideas with the wider group.

Throughout the session, facilitators acted as guides and moderators rather than imposing a particular conclusion. Open-ended questions, observation, dialogue, and group reflection encouraged participants to develop their own perspectives and engage respectfully with different opinions about nuclear energy and the energy transition.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates the value of taking sustainability education into real-world environments. By experiencing the relationship between a river, an ecosystem, energy infrastructure, and a local community directly, participants were able to connect broader sustainability challenges with a specific territory and its people.

The session also created a valuable space for critical thinking. Participants held

different views about nuclear energy and the future of the power plant, which initially made discussion more challenging but ultimately created an opportunity to practise active listening, respectful dialogue, and consideration of different perspectives.

Rather than focusing on producing a physical output, the activity prioritised experiential learning, questioning, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving. Participants developed a deeper understanding of the connections between water, biodiversity, energy, employment, and territorial development, while considering how young people can contribute to conversations about the future of their communities.

The practice is highly transferable to other contexts. A local river, ecosystem, energy facility, or environmental challenge can become the starting point for a similar learning experience, allowing young people to connect local realities with wider European challenges such as the energy transition, climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable territorial development.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Experiential and outdoor learning.
- Learning through direct observation of the local environment.
- Connection between local realities and global sustainability challenges.
- Critical thinking and exploration of different perspectives.
- Open dialogue and active listening.
- Future-thinking and scenario building.
- Collaborative problem-solving.
- Learning through real-life environmental challenges.
- Youth participation in discussions about territorial development.
- Facilitation that encourages independent thinking rather than predetermined conclusions.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Community and Place-Based Learning

**Case Example: Scambieuropei (Italy)**

A second implementation pathway that emerged during the pilot phase centred on the relationship between sustainability, local communities, and experiential learning. Developed by Scambieuropei, this approach demonstrated how Green Youth Labs can become a platform for exploring environmental challenges through direct engagement with places, local initiatives, and community actors.

Rather than focusing primarily on future career pathways, the programme encouraged participants to experience sustainability as a reality that was lived within their own environment. Learning activities were designed to connect young people with local ecosystems, community organisations, and initiatives promoting environmental responsibility, social participation, and circular economy practices.

A defining characteristic of this pathway was the extensive use of outdoor and place-based learning. Workshops frequently took place beyond conventional learning spaces, allowing participants to explore sustainability through direct observation, practical action, and interaction with the local environment. Activities such as creating seed bombs from recycled materials, participating in guided walks, and visiting community initiatives enabled participants to experience sustainability through hands-on engagement rather than theoretical discussion alone.

Partnerships with local organisations played a central role in enriching the learning experience. Community groups, environmental initiatives, and social organisations contributed practical perspectives that helped participants understand how sustainability is addressed through collective action. These collaborations also illustrated the value of local networks in creating opportunities for civic participation and community engagement.



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Throughout the programme, facilitators encouraged participants to reflect on the relationship between environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and active citizenship. Sustainability was presented not only as an environmental objective but also as a shared responsibility requiring collaboration, creativity, and participation at community level.

Although employability remained an underlying objective of the Green Youth Labs, this pathway approached it from the perspective of civic engagement and community involvement. By developing teamwork, communication, problem-solving, initiative, and environmental awareness through authentic local experiences, participants strengthened competences that are increasingly valued in both the labour market and wider society.

### Contribution to the Green Youth Labs methodology

This implementation pathway demonstrates the educational value of connecting Green Youth Labs with local communities and real-life sustainability initiatives. It highlights how place-based and experiential learning can strengthen participant engagement, make sustainability more tangible, and encourage young people to recognise their potential role as active contributors to local environmental and social change. The experience also confirms that community partnerships can significantly enrich non-formal learning by providing authentic contexts in which green competences can be developed and applied.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Creating Natural Insect Repellents through Learning by Doing

Location: Bologna (Italy) – Scambieuropei



This Green Youth Lab introduced participants to natural alternatives to conventional chemical insect repellents through a practical and collaborative learning experience. The activity combined environmental awareness, basic knowledge of essential oils, and hands-on experimentation, allowing participants to explore how everyday products can be approached from a more sustainable perspective.

The session began by exploring the characteristics and potential environmental and health impacts of conventional chemical insect repellents. Participants then learned about different essential oils and their properties, discussing which ones could be suitable for developing a natural alternative.

Working in teams, participants selected and combined different oils and experimented with several mixtures. Through this hands-on process, they observed the results, exchanged ideas, and adapted their formulations based on their findings and group decisions. The activity concluded with the creation of handmade natural insect repellents using essential oils.



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### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how sustainability education can become more engaging when participants are given the opportunity to learn by doing. Instead of simply receiving information about natural alternatives, participants actively explored the topic, compared different options, experimented with combinations, and created a tangible product themselves.

The workshop also encouraged participants to think critically about the information available on natural products. Identifying reliable information about the effectiveness and potential side effects of different essential oils proved challenging, creating an opportunity to practise information comparison, discussion, and collaborative decision-making.

Beyond the final products, the activity helped participants develop transversal skills such as teamwork, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and environmental awareness. The practical nature of the workshop also made it easier for participants to connect sustainability with everyday choices and personal behaviour.

The methodology can be transferred to other contexts by selecting an accessible sustainability-related topic and combining basic knowledge with a practical creation challenge. The key is to provide participants with enough information to make informed choices while giving them space to experiment, collaborate, and learn from the process.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Learning by doing and hands-on experimentation.
- Co-creation and collaborative problem-solving.
- Teamwork and peer learning.
- Critical evaluation of information and alternatives.
- Environmental and health awareness.
- Creativity and practical experimentation.
- Learning through trial, observation, and adaptation.
- Connecting sustainability with everyday choices.

## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

### Discovering Local Biodiversity through Outdoor Learning

**Location: Bologna (Italy) – Scambieuropei**



This session invited participants to discover the biodiversity and natural heritage surrounding Bologna through a guided study visit to the Parco dei Gessi Bolognesi e Calanchi dell'Abbadessa. The activity aimed to move beyond classroom-based environmental education by allowing participants to explore a protected natural area directly, while also highlighting the importance of ecosystem conservation and potential career pathways in environmental protection and biodiversity management.



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The activity began with a short introduction to the park and the characteristics of the area visited. Participants then followed a guided walk through the natural environment, observing plants, ecosystems and other features of local biodiversity. The guide from Ente Parchi Emilia Orientale combined explanations with questions, curiosities and interactive dialogue, encouraging participants to connect the information provided with what they could observe around them.

Experiential and visual learning were strengthened through the use of natural materials, including animal horns and other specimens, which provided a tangible way to understand local wildlife and biodiversity. Participants were encouraged to ask questions, share observations and reflect on the importance of protecting natural areas and the role of protected-area management.

The activity also provided an informal introduction to green career pathways related to biodiversity conservation, environmental protection, environmental education and the management of protected natural areas. The engaging role of the guide demonstrated how environmental knowledge can be communicated through observation, interaction and direct experience.

An important strength of the activity was its openness to a diverse audience. The visit attracted not only people already involved in NGOs or sustainability-related activities, but also external participants who were curious about local biodiversity and the Green Youth Employability project. Participants particularly valued the guide's engaging approach and the opportunity to discover new information about the natural environment surrounding Bologna.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates the value of learning through direct contact with nature. By combining guided observation, interactive dialogue, visual materials and outdoor exploration, participants developed a more tangible understanding of local ecosystems and environmental protection. The visit also connected environmental awareness with professional opportunities, showing how biodiversity conservation, environmental education and protected-area management can contribute to the green economy.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Place-based and outdoor learning.
- Learning through direct observation of nature.
- Experiential and visual learning.
- Interactive dialogue and guided discovery.
- Environmental awareness linked to green career pathways.
- Learning about local biodiversity and environmental stewardship.
- Engagement with local environmental professionals and organisations.



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## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Learning Sustainable Food Practices through Vegan Cooking

Location: Bologna (Italy) – Scambieuropei



This Green Youth Lab, organised in collaboration with **Pasto Nomade**, a local initiative specialised in vegan cuisine, invited participants to explore sustainable food choices through practical cooking experience. The activity aimed to introduce the principles of vegan nutrition while demonstrating how plant-based ingredients and cooking practices can contribute to more sustainable food systems.

The session began with an introduction by Pina, the owner of Pasto Nomade, who explained the basics of vegan cooking and introduced the ingredients used during the activity, highlighting their characteristics and properties. Participants then selected the meal to prepare and were guided through the different preparation techniques. Rather than simply observing, they actively prepared the ingredients and cooked the meal together, sharing tasks and learning through collaboration. The session concluded by sharing the meal prepared collectively.



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The activity followed a learning-by-doing and experiential approach, combining practical demonstrations, active participation and collaborative learning. The facilitator guided participants throughout the cooking process, providing explanations and support while allowing them to develop practical skills independently. The GYE team supported the organisation and logistics and introduced participants to the wider Green Youth Employability project.

The workshop resulted in a vegan meal prepared collectively by the participants, while also strengthening their knowledge of plant-based ingredients, vegan cooking techniques and sustainable food choices. It additionally developed teamwork, collaboration and practical problem-solving skills. Participants showed strong interest in the topic and several maintained contact with Pasto Nomade to learn about future activities.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how sustainable food practices can be learned through direct experience. By combining short theoretical explanations with hands-on cooking, participants were able to immediately apply new knowledge and understand sustainable nutrition in a practical and accessible way. The collaboration with a local food initiative also connected learning with the local community and provided opportunities for participants to discover existing sustainable practices and initiatives.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Learning by doing and experiential learning.
- Hands-on development of practical green skills.
- Collaborative and participatory learning.
- Connecting sustainability with everyday food choices.
- Learning from local practitioners and initiatives.
- Combining knowledge, practical skills and community engagement.



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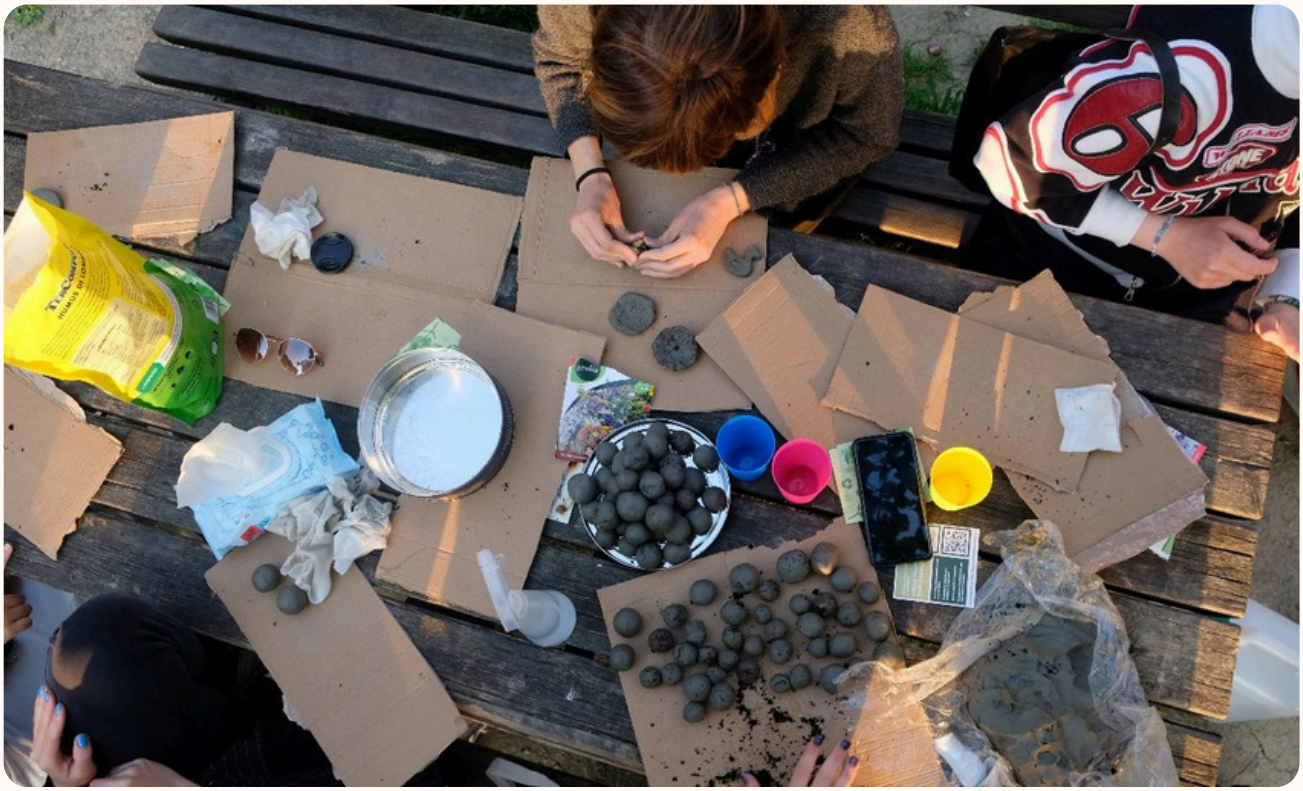
## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
### Reintroducing Urban Biodiversity through Guerrilla Gardening

Location: Bologna (Italy) – Scambieuropei



This Green Youth Lab engaged participants in a hands-on activity aimed at promoting urban biodiversity through the creation of seed bombs—small balls made from soil, clay, and native plant seeds that can later be placed in suitable green spaces to encourage spontaneous vegetation growth.

The session began with an interactive introduction to the concept of seed bombs, exploring their ecological purpose and the importance of native plant species for supporting local biodiversity. Facilitators explained the characteristics of different seeds, their environmental benefits, and the role that small community actions can play in improving urban ecosystems.



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The activity followed a learning-by-doing and outdoor education approach, combining ecological knowledge with direct action in public spaces. Community mapping helped participants identify areas with potential for ecological improvement, while guerrilla gardening provided a practical and participatory way to engage with urban environmental challenges. The facilitator guided the route, ensured safety during the walk and encouraged reflection on how small-scale interventions can contribute to greener cities and inspire discussions about public space management and green employability.

The session resulted in the creation of a localised urban biodiversity map identifying intervention areas that could be monitored over the following spring and summer months. Participants dispersed seed bombs containing native plant species intended to support local biodiversity and pollinators, including bees and butterflies. They also strengthened their understanding of seed germination, the differences between native and invasive species, plant requirements and urban ecological mapping. In addition, the activity fostered spatial awareness, analytical thinking and a stronger sense of civic responsibility. An unexpected outcome was the interest shown by local residents during the walk, giving participants the opportunity to introduce the Erasmus+ Green Youth Labs project and explain the purpose of their intervention, turning the activity into an informal environmental awareness campaign.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how environmental education can move beyond theoretical knowledge and encourage young people to become active contributors to urban sustainability. By combining ecological mapping, seed preparation and direct intervention in neglected spaces, participants were able to connect biodiversity concepts with the realities of their own city. The activity also highlighted the importance of adapting environmental actions to local conditions, as participants responded to compacted soil and litter by identifying more suitable



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planting spots and carrying out quick clean-ups where possible. Beyond its ecological aims, the practice encouraged civic engagement, dialogue with residents and a sense of ownership over shared public spaces.

Participants then worked collaboratively to prepare their own seed bombs, following a guided step-by-step process.Throughout the activity, facilitators encouraged discussion about biodiversity, environmental stewardship, and the importance of selecting appropriate locations and plant species according to the local ecological context. The session concluded with a reflection on how simple individual actions can contribute to broader sustainability goals and strengthen participants' sense of environmental responsibility.

An important lesson learned during the preparation of the activity was the need to adapt the materials to local ecological conditions. Before implementation, facilitators reviewed the sowing periods of different plant species to ensure that the selected seeds were appropriate for the season and compatible with local biodiversity.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how simple, low-cost, and highly participatory experiences can make sustainability tangible and accessible. By combining practical action with environmental education and community engagement, participants not only acquired knowledge about biodiversity but also experienced how individual initiatives can contribute to greener and more resilient communities.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Experiential and learning-by-doing approaches.
- Outdoor and place-based learning.
- Community engagement through environmental action.
- Collaborative learning and peer interaction.
- Connecting local biodiversity with everyday sustainability practices.



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## Digital Learning and Green Innovation

### *Case Example: VŠ Grm Novo mesto (Slovenia)*

A third implementation pathway demonstrated how Green Youth Labs can integrate digital learning with practical exploration of sustainability and innovation.

Developed by VŠ Grm Novo mesto, this approach combined face-to-face workshops with online learning opportunities, enabling participants to engage with green competences through a blended educational experience.

The programme brought together learners from different educational and cultural backgrounds, including vocational students and international participants. This diversity created opportunities for collaborative learning and intercultural exchange, enriching discussions on sustainability and allowing participants to compare environ- mental challenges and solutions from different perspectives.

A distinctive feature of this pathway was the systematic integration of the Green Youth Employability MOOCs into the learning process. Rather than treating online learning as a separate activity, facilitators introduced participants to the platform, guided them through the available courses, and supported them in completing learning modules, quizzes, and reflection activities. This embedded learning approach encouraged participants to extend their learning beyond the workshops and to engage with digital educational resources at their own pace.

Innovation also played an important role throughout the programme. Alongside topics such as sustainability, circular economy, and green soft skills, participants explored how emerging technologies can contribute to environmental protection and more sustainable production systems. Practical activities, including workshops on agrorobotics, encouraged learners to reflect on the relationship between techno-



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logical innovation, resource efficiency, and future employment opportunities in the green economy.

The learning process relied on a wide range of non-formal education methods, including interactive presentations, collaborative learning, brainstorming, guided discussions, experiential activities, and structured reflection. These approaches enabled participants to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications while strengthening transversal competences such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, digital literacy, and problem-solving.

### Contribution to the Green Youth Labs methodology

This implementation pathway demonstrate sthe potential of combining face-to-face facilitation with digital learning environments to create flexible and continuous learning experiences. It also highlights how innovation and emerging technologies can be incorporated into Green Youth Labs as practical examples of the green transition, helping participants understand that digital transformation and sustainability are increasingly interconnected. The pilot confirms that blended learning can reinforce competence development while making Green Youth Labs more accessible, scalable, and adaptable to diverse learner profiles.

**PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

**Green Science Lab – Practical Skills for Sustainability**

**Location: VŠ Grm Novo mesto, Slovenia**



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The Green Science Lab provided participants with practical and interactive learning experience in a real laboratory environment. The activity demonstrated how scientific knowledge, technical skills and laboratory practice can contribute to sustainable solutions and future green employment.

Using Non-Formal Education (NFE), experiential learning and learning-by-doing, participants were introduced to the laboratory setting, observed practical demonstrations and explored the materials, equipment and procedures used during the session. Guided discussion, observation and peer exchange helped them connect scientific concepts with concrete examples of sustainability.



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The main strength of the activity was its combination of scientific knowledge with direct practical experience. Instead of addressing green skills only through theoretical content, participants were able to observe and engage with real laboratory processes.

The activity also created a supportive learning environment in which participants could ask questions, exchange ideas and reflect on how scientific and technical competences can be applied beyond the laboratory, including in everyday life and future professional contexts.

The activity contributed to the development of both practical and transversal green competences, including: environmental awareness, observation and analytical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork and some technical skills.

The practice is particularly relevant for connecting STEM education, vocational learning and green employability, showing young people that scientific and technical competences can contribute to solving environmental challenges and responding to emerging green jobs.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Learning by doing and experiential learning.
- Hands-on development of practical green skills.
- Active and collaborative participation.
- Connecting sustainability with everyday practices.
- Learning from local practitioners and community initiatives.
- Combining theoretical knowledge with practical application.
- Development of teamwork and problem-solving skills.
- Place-based and community-connected learning.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

## Exploring Green Innovation through Agrorobotics

**Location: Ptuj (Slovenia)**



This Green Youth Lab introduced participants to agrorobotics as an emerging field at the intersection of digital innovation, sustainable agriculture, and green employment. Rather than focusing solely on technological knowledge, the workshop encouraged participants to explore how robotics and digital solutions can contribute to more sustainable food production while creating new opportunities for future careers.



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The session began with an interactive introduction to agrorobotics, presenting examples of how robotic technologies are being used to improve resource efficiency, reduce environmental impacts, and support sustainable agricultural practices. Participants then worked in small groups to discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with technological innovation in the green economy.

Using collaborative learning methods drawn from the Green Youth Employability Non-Formal Education Toolkit, participants engaged in brainstorming, group discussions, and guided reflection activities. Together, they explored how technological developments can support environmental protection, increase productivity, and transform traditional occupations into new green career pathways. The workshop concluded with a collective reflection on the competences required for future jobs in sustainable agriculture and the role that innovation can play in the green transition. Throughout the session, the emphasis remained on active participation and peer learning rather than content transmission. Participants were encouraged to question assumptions, exchange ideas, and connect technological innovation with environmental responsibility and employability.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how Green Youth Labs can integrate emerging technologies into sustainability education without losing their learner-centred and experiential character. By combining technological awareness with collaborative reflection and non-formal education methods, participants developed a deeper understanding of how digital innovation can support environmental sustainability while opening new pathways for green employment.



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**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Green innovation and future-oriented learning.
- Non-formal education methods for technology-related topics.
- Collaborative learning and peer discussion.
- Reflection linking technology, sustainability, and employability.
- Critical thinking about emerging green professions.
- Connecting digital transformation with the green transition.

## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT
**Learning from Innovation Ecosystems**

**Location: Rudolfovo Institute, Novo Mesto (Slovenia)**






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This Green Youth Lab demonstrated how collaboration with external organisations can enrich non-formal learning by bringing participants into direct contact with real-world innovation environments. Hosted at the Rudolfovo Institute, the workshop enabled young people to explore how research, technology, and interdisciplinary collaboration contribute to sustainable development and the emergence of new green professions.

The session opened with an introduction to the institute's mission and its role in supporting digital transformation, research, and environmental innovation. Participants then visited laboratories and research facilities where experts presented ongoing projects and demonstrated how technological solutions are being developed to address sustainability challenges across different sectors.

Throughout the visit, participants engaged in discussions with researchers, asking questions about innovation processes, interdisciplinary collaboration, and career pathways in research and green technologies. Rather than observing passively, they were encouraged to connect the examples presented with the competences explored throughout the Green Youth Employability programme and to reflect on the skills required for future employment in the green economy.

The workshop concluded with a facilitated reflection linking the experience to participants' own educational and professional aspirations. The opportunity to interact directly with researchers helped participants better understand how sustainability, innovation, and employability intersect within authentic professional contexts.

### Why this practice matters

This activity illustrates how Green Youth Labs can extend learning beyond the classroom by building partnerships with research centres, universities, and innovation hubs. Immersion in authentic professional environments enables partici-

pants to connect theoretical concepts with real applications, broadens their awareness of emerging green careers, and strengthens the relevance of non-formal learning for future employability.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Embedded learning in authentic professional environments.
- Partnerships with research and innovation organisations.
- Experiential learning through direct observation and dialogue.
- Connecting sustainability, research, and employability.
- Career exploration through interaction with professionals.
- Reflection linking learning experiences with future pathways.

## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

**Developing Green Skills through Sustainable Growing and Composting**

**Location: Novo mesto (Slovenia)**





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This Green Youth Lab introduced participants to practical green skills through hands-on activities in an outdoor growing environment. The activity focused on sustainable cultivation, composting and responsible management of organic materials, helping participants understand how everyday practices can contribute to environmental sustainability and the green transition.

The workshop began with a short introduction to the growing area, sustainable cultivation practices and the role of composting in managing organic materials. Participants then explored the growing infrastructure and took part in practical activities around the wooden composting system. Through observation, guided discussion and learning by doing, they connected environmental concepts with concrete examples from a real working environment.

The activity followed a Non-Formal Education and experiential learning approach, combining practical outdoor work, peer exchange, collaborative learning and reflection. Participants were encouraged to share observations, discuss sustainable practices and consider how the skills developed could be transferred to their everyday lives and future employment opportunities.

The workshop strengthened participants' understanding of sustainable growing and organic-material management while developing green soft skills such as teamwork, responsibility, communication, observation, problem-solving and environmental awareness. The small-group format also created an accessible environment for active participation and peer learning.

### Why this practice matters

This activity demonstrates how practical outdoor learning can connect environmental awareness with concrete green skills and employability. By working directly with plants, growing infrastructure and composting systems, participants were able to transform sustainability concepts into practical knowledge.The activity also sho-

articipants to examine how sustainability influences organisations, workplaces, and economic activities. Through practical exercises and collaborative discussions, participants reflected on how businesses, institutions, and communities can adapt to emerging environmental expectations while creating new opportunities for innovation and responsible development.

A distinctive characteristic of this pathway was its emphasis on systems thinking and real-world decision-making. Participants explored topics such as European sustainability policies, green employer branding, organisational sustainability strategies, and carbon footprint management through practical activities based on authentic scenarios. Exercises such as carbon touchpoint mapping encouraged participants to identify where environmental impacts occur within organisations and to consider practical actions that could contribute to more sustainable operations.

Experiential and discussion-based learning remained central throughout the programme. Facilitators combined short thematic inputs with peer learning, case-study analysis, role-play activities, and structured group discussions, creating opportunities for participants to compare perspectives, debate alternative solutions, and reflect **on economic priorities must often be balanced when making decisions that affect.** Activities addressing sustainable tourism and territorial development further illustrate how environmental, social, and the complexity of sustainability challenges communities and ecosystems.

Another important feature of this pathway was the diversity of participant profiles and learning contexts. By bringing together learners with different professional experiences and organisational backgrounds, the workshops encouraged knowledge exchange and demonstrated that green competences are relevant not only for young people entering the labour market but also for organisations seeking to strengthen their sustainability practices and future resilience.

Throughout the implementation, facilitators acted less as instructors and more as moderators of dialogue and critical reflection. Their role was to create a collaborative learning environment in which participants could openly share experiences, challenge assumptions, and collectively explore practical responses to complex sustainability issues.

### Contribution to the Green Youth Labs methodology

This implementation pathway demonstrates the value of approaching sustainability through systems thinking and organisational learning. It shows that Green Youth Labs can successfully move beyond individual behaviour change by helping participants understand the relationships between environmental challenges, public policy, organisational practices, and labour market transformation. The experience also highlights the importance of dialogue, critical reflection, and authentic problem-solving in preparing learners to contribute to the green transition as informed professionals, active citizens, and future decision-makers.

## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

**The Manifesto of the Sustainable Visitor**

### Location: Pieniny Mountains, Slovakia





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This practice engaged young people living around the Pieniny National Park in a participatory role-play focused on the future of tourism in a sensitive natural area. The session explored a planned increase in tourism by 2035, including potential developments such as a hotel, cable car, new parking facilities and increased promotion of the area. Participants were invited to examine both the potential benefits and environmental and social risks of these developments from different stakeholder perspectives.

The activity began with a discussion on whether doubling the number of visitors could represent an opportunity or a risk for the region. Participants then worked in groups representing different stakeholders, including conservationists, tourism entrepreneurs, local residents and local government. Through role-play, brainstorming and moderated discussion, each group assessed the proposed developments, identified benefits and risks, and formulated conditions for sustainable tourism development.

The different positions were subsequently presented and discussed collectively. A flipchart was used to map the main arguments and identify areas of agreement. Interestingly, despite their different roles, participants identified several common solutions, including better public transport, regulation of visitor numbers and stronger cooperation between tourism businesses and conservation organisations. The session concluded with the co-creation of The Manifesto of the Sustainable Visitor to the Pieniny Mountains, containing practical recommendations such as using public transport, supporting local businesses, staying on marked trails, reducing single-use plastics and respecting protected areas.

### Why this practice matters

The practice demonstrates how role-play can transform a complex sustainability issue into an accessible and participatory learning experience. Rather than simply learning about sustainable tourism, participants had to negotiate between economic, social and environmental interests and work towards a shared solution.

This strengthened communication, critical thinking, argumentation and teamwork while also increasing participants' understanding of the challenges involved in balancing tourism development with nature conservation.

Its strong local focus is particularly important: participants were already familiar with the area and its seasonal tourism economy, allowing the activity to connect sustainability with issues directly affecting their community. The approach is also highly transferable, as the local case study, stakeholder roles and final recommendations can be adapted to different regions and environmental challenges.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Role-play and simulation as tools for exploring complex sustainability dilemmas.
- Stakeholder perspective-taking to understand different interests and priorities.
- Participatory and collaborative decision-making through discussion and consensus-building.
- Critical thinking and argumentation based on a real-life local challenge.
- Place-based learning connected to the participants' own community and environment.
- Learning through dialogue and negotiation rather than one-way information delivery.
- Co-creation of tangible outputs, turning discussion into a practical sustainability manifesto.
- Connecting environmental awareness with active citizenship and community responsibility.

- Non-formal education through group work, brainstorming, moderated discussion and reflection.
- Transferability through local adaptation, allowing the same methodology to address tourism, biodiversity or other sustainability challenges in different regions.

## PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

**The Human Ecosystem – Connecting Well-being and Sustainability**

**Location: Červený Kláštor, Pieniny Region (Slovakia)**





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This Green Youth Lab encouraged participants to explore sustainability from a holistic perspective by recognising the interconnections between personal well-being, social relationships, and the natural environment. Rather than treating sustainability as an environmental issue alone, the workshop invited participants to reflect on how everyday choices related to health, technology, consumption, and lifestyle form part of a broader human ecosystem.

The session opened with a collaborative Human Ecosystem Scan, in which participants worked in small groups to map the relationships between physical activity, nutrition, sleep, stress, technology use, social connections, and nature. Through discussion and visual mapping, they discovered how changes in one aspect of life can influence the entire system.

Participants then took part in the Human Web activity, using a network of strings to visualise the interconnectedness of healthy habits and sustainable lifestyles. As different life scenarios were introduced, the group reflected on how individual behaviours can have wider consequences for personal well-being, communities, and the environment. This systems-thinking approach was followed by the Green Question Basket, where participants explored open-ended questions about sustainability, health, and everyday decision-making, encouraging dialogue rather than seeking predetermined answers.

The workshop concluded with the Seed of Change activity, in which each participant identified one realistic action they wished to adopt in their daily life. These personal commitments were collectively displayed on a shared "Tree of Change", reinforcing the idea that meaningful societal transformation begins with small but consistent individual actions.

Throughout the workshop, participants naturally connected the themes to their own experiences, sharing practical examples related to stress management, physical activity, technology use, and daily routines. These spontaneous exchan-

ges enriched the learning process and demonstrated the value of peer learning and self-reflection within non-formal education.

### Why this practice matters

This activity illustrates how Green Youth Labs can broaden the concept of sustainability by connecting environmental responsibility with personal well-being and everyday decision-making. Through systems thinking, collaborative reflection, and experiential learning, participants developed a deeper understanding of how individual choices influence wider social and environmental systems while strengthening competences such as critical thinking, self-reflection, communication, and responsible action.

**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Systems thinking and holistic learning.
- Experiential learning through visualisation and reflection.
- Learner-centred dialogue and peer learning.
- Critical thinking through open-ended questions.
- Personal commitment as a pathway to behavioural change.
- Connecting sustainability with health and well-being.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

**Discovering Protected Areas through Sustainable Mobility**

**Location: Pieniny and High Tatras, Slovakia**



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This practice explored the potential of eco-friendly tourism in the protected landscapes of the Pieniny and High Tatras regions, using sustainable mobility as a practical entry point .



The session brought together nine young participants from a local SME and connected environmental responsibility with personal health, active mobility and responsible tourism. Rather than approaching sustainability only as a theoretical topic, participants were encouraged to experience how slower and lower-impact forms of travel can change the way people interact with nature and local communities.

The session began with an introduction to the natural value and environmental sensitivity of the High Tatras and Pieniny protected areas.

Participants then discussed the relationship between tourism, mobility choices and environmental impact. The focus moved towards e-bike mobility and slow tourism, exploring how travelling at a slower pace can reduce environmental pressure while creating a closer connection with the landscape and supporting physical and mental well-being.

The activity combined facilitated discussion, brainstorming, peer learning and outdoor experiential learning. Participants explored sustainable mobility options and reflected on practical opportunities for making tourism in the region more responsible. Digital route and navigation tools were also used where relevant to support orientation and exploration. Facilitators acted primarily as guides, encouraging questions, sharing experiences and helping participants connect their local experience with broader sustainability challenges.



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The main outcomes were a shared collection of ideas and recommendations for sustainable tourism and mobility in the region, together with first-hand experience of e-bike travel as a practical alternative to more intensive forms of tourism. Participants developed environmental awareness, critical and sustainable thinking, teamwork, communication, problem-solving and responsible decision-making. An important additional outcome was the recognition that sustainable mobility can simultaneously benefit the environment, local communities and individual health and well-being.

### Why this practice matters

The practice demonstrates the value of learning through direct experience. By actually using an active and low-impact form of mobility, participants could understand the benefits and challenges of sustainable tourism in a much more concrete way than through a classroom-based discussion alone. The protected landscape became the learning environment, while the e-bike served as both a practical tool and a starting point for discussing wider questions about tourism, environmental protection and healthy lifestyles.

The approach is highly transferable to other European regions. Any environmentally valuable area can become a setting for exploring sustainable mobility, provided that the route is safe and accessible and that the activity is adapted to local conditions. Flexibility is particularly important, as weather, terrain and participants' previous experience can influence the delivery.

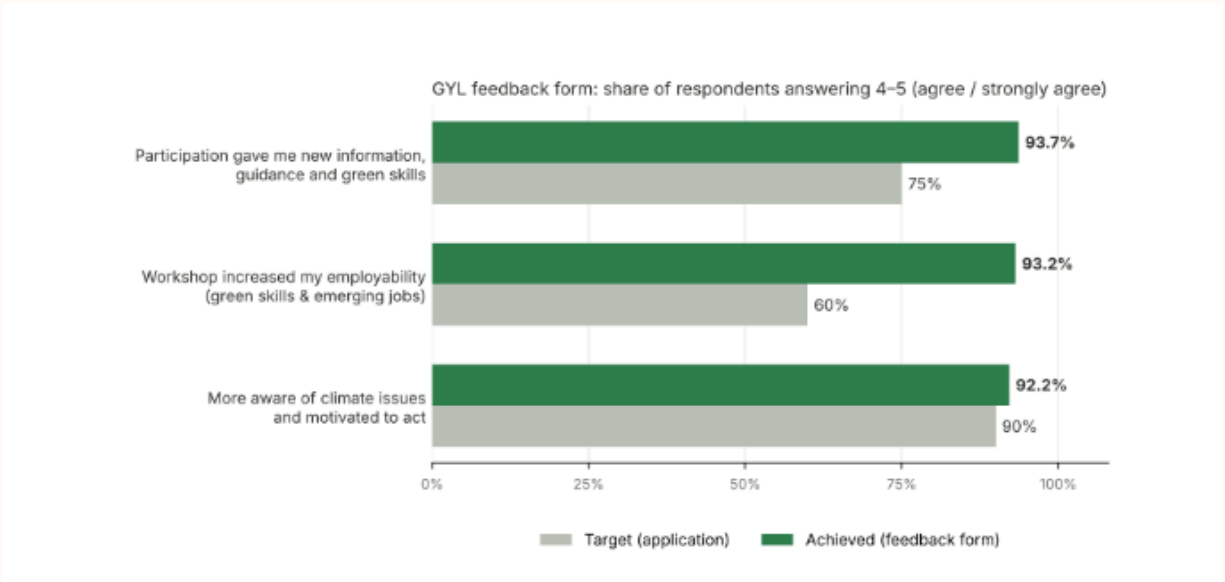
**Key methodological principles illustrated**

- Learning by doing and experiential learning through direct use of sustainable mobility.
- Outdoor and place-based learning, using the protected landscape as a real learning environment.
- Connecting environmental responsibility with personal well-being and active lifestyles.
- Slow tourism as a practical approach to reducing environmental impact and strengthening connections with local places.
- Active and low-impact mobility as a gateway to green skills and sustainable behaviour.
- Peer learning and knowledge sharing through discussion and exchange of experiences.
- Reflection and critical thinking linking individual travel choices with wider environmental challenges.
- Digital learning tools through route planning and navigation applications.
- Flexible, participant-centred facilitation, adapting activities to weather, terrain and group dynamics.
- Connecting sustainability with real-life choices, making green practices tangible and accessible.

## 3.3. Main Results and impact from the Green Youth Labs

A total of 80 sessions of the Green Youth Lab method, each lasting at least three hours, were delivered as part of the pilot phase held between May and September 2026 in Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain, 20 sessions in each country. One session was organised each week, providing a regular and structured learning experience for participants. Each country engaged at least 30 young people aged between 18 and 30, offering them opportunities to develop green skills, strengthen their environmental awareness and explore sustainable practices through participatory and experiential learning activities.

At the end of each Green Youth Lab session, participants were invited to complete an online feedback questionnaire to share their opinions about the activity and contribute to the continuous improvement of the methodology. The questionnaires included rating-scale and open-ended questions addressing overall satisfaction, the usefulness of the activities, learning outcomes, the development of green skills, employability, climate awareness and motivation to act. Participants could also provide comments and suggestions on how future activities could be improved. The perceived outcomes for young people and were measured through the GYL feedback form, completed at the end of each workshop on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Following the common convention, answers of 4 and 5 are counted as agreement. The form collected 447 valid responses across the partner countries, in English, Italian, Spanish, Slovenian and Slovak.




93.7% of respondents stated that taking part in the workshop gave them new information, guidance and green skills (target: 75%). 93.2% of those who answered the employability question felt that the workshop increased their employability through green skills development and knowledge of emerging green jobs (target: 60%). Finally, 92.2% reported being more aware of climate issues and motivated to take action after the activities, against a target of 90% for climate awareness and 70% for the intention to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. Overall satisfaction with the sessions was also very high, with 96.6% rating their experience 4 or 5.

The main findings point to a generally positive participant experience, with practical and experiential learning emerging as a key strength. Participants particularly appreciated hands-on workshops, outdoor activities, teamwork, group discussions and opportunities to explore sustainability through concrete examples.



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Activities involving natural materials, biodiversity and sustainable everyday practices helped make environmental topics accessible and relevant to participants' lives. The feedback also suggests that these experiences encouraged reflection on environmental responsibility and provided opportunities to develop transversal competencies such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving and critical thinking.

Overall, the feedback provides valuable insights into the strengths of the Green Youth Lab methodology and areas for further improvement. It supports the continued use of participatory, practice-based learning while highlighting the need to make learning outcomes more visible and to help participants connect their experiences with personal development, environmental action and future employment opportunities.

One of the strongest recurring themes is the value of learning by doing. Participants particularly appreciated hands-on activities, outdoor experiences, practical workshops and opportunities to work collaboratively. Examples from the Italian activities included preparing seed bombs, discovering native plants, exploring natural ingredients and producing essential-oil-based products. Feedback from the Spanish activities also highlighted teamwork, outdoor learning, group coordination and the practical relevance of the sessions.

The feedback also points to the potential of Green Youth Lab activities to strengthen participants' awareness of environmental and climate-related issues. Participants highlighted learning about biodiversity, native seeds, sustainable practices and the environmental implications of everyday choices. Outdoor and community-based activities were particularly valuable in helping participants understand the relationship between individual actions, local environments and collective responsibility.

The responses suggest that **direct engagement with sustainability can encourage participants to reflect on their own behaviour and recognise practical opportunities for change.** Activities that involve improving local spaces, exploring environmentally responsible alternatives or working with natural materials can make environmental responsibility feel more immediate and achievable.

However, increased awareness should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of lasting behavioural change. Follow-up activities and opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge would help establish whether participants maintain their motivation and translate their learning into sustained environmental action.

A key objective of Green Youth Lab is to connect sustainability education with the development of green skills and future employment opportunities. The feedback indicates **that participants gained new information about sustainable practices and appreciated opportunities to discuss green skills and their relevance to everyday life and work.**

At the same time, the responses suggest that the relationship between participating in an activity and recognising its employability benefits could be made more explicit. Future activities could therefore include a more structured reflection on the competencies developed during each session.

The feedback highlights the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. **Participants valued opportunities to exchange ideas, work in groups and learn from one another**. Collaborative activities and discussions helped connect individual experiences with shared sustainability challenges, reinforcing the social dimension of environmental responsibility. Some participants also expressed interest in more challenging workshops, additional examples and follow-up activities that would allow them to build on what they had learned.

These comments suggest that effective facilitation requires a balance between providing information, allowing sufficient time for practical engagement and creating space for reflection. Activities should be adapted to participants' existing knowledge, interests and needs, while maintaining a clear structure and achievable learning objectives.

## 3.4 Shared Insights from the Pilot Phase

The pilot implementation provided an opportunity not only to test the Green Youth Labs methodology in different contexts, but also to identify the elements that consistently contributed to meaningful learning experiences. Despite the diversity of participants, learning environments, and thematic focuses, several common patterns emerged across the four implementation pathways.

### Flexibility within a Shared Framework

One of the strongest findings was that the Green Youth Labs methodology proved highly adaptable without losing its pedagogical coherence. Rather than following a fixed sequence of activities, partner organisations interpreted the methodology according to their own expertise, local opportunities, and participant profiles. This flexibility enabled each organisation to create relevant and engaging learning experiences while maintaining the shared educational principles established during the co-design process.

### Learning through Real-World Experiences

Across all implementation pathways, authentic learning contexts played a central role. Whether through outdoor activities, visits to local businesses, engagement with community initiatives, exploration of natural environments, or analysis of organisational practices, participants learned by interacting with real situations rather than hypothetical examples. These experiences helped make sustainability tangible and strengthened the connection between learning and everyday life.

### Active Participation and Reflection

The pilot confirmed the value of learner-centred, non-formal education approaches. Participants were encouraged to collaborate, discuss, experiment, solve problems, and reflect on their experiences instead of passively receiving information. Structured reflection, carried out throughout and at the end of activities, proved particularly important in helping participants consolidate learning, connect theory with practice, and recognise the competences they had developed.

### Green Employability as a Cross-Cutting Theme

Although each implementation pathway approached sustainability from a different perspective, all programmes maintained a clear focus on employability. Rather than limiting discussions to emerging green professions, the Green Youth Labs encouraged participants to explore how sustainability is reshaping existing occupations, creating new professional opportunities, and increasing the importance of green and transversal competences across all sectors of the labour market.

### Partnerships Enrich the Learning Experience

Collaboration with external stake holders significantly strengthened the educational value of the Green Youth Labs. Local businesses, community organisations, environmental initiatives, educational institutions, and sustainability practitioners provided authentic learning opportunities that complemented workshop activities and exposed participants to real examples of the green transition in action.

### Blended Learning Extends the Educational Journey

The integration of the GreenYouth Employability MOOCs demonstrated the potential of embedded learning approaches. While face-to-face workshops remained the core learning environment, the online courses enabled participants to deepen specific topics, continue learning independently, and reinforce the competences developed during practical activities. The combination of both formats contributed to a more flexible and continuous learning experience.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of the Green Youth Labs does not depend on implementing identical activities across different contexts. Instead, their success lies in the consistent application of shared pedagogical principles, combined with the flexibility to adapt content, methodologies, and learning environments to local realities and participant needs.

## 3.5. Recommendations for Facilitators

The Green Youth Labs pilots demonstrated that meaningful learning experiences emerge not from following a fixed programme but from applying a shared set of pedagogical principles in ways that respond to local contexts and participants' needs. The following recommendations summarise the key lessons learned throughout the project .



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### 1. Start with the learners, not with the content

Design activities around participants' interests, experiences, and aspirations. Green competences develop more effectively when learners can connect sustainability challenges with their own lives, communities, and future professional pathways.

### 2. Use real-world sustainability challenges

Whenever possible, work with authentic local issues rather than hypothetical examples. Community spaces, local businesses, protected areas, research centres, and environmental organisations provide rich learning environments that make sustainability tangible and relevant.

### 3. Prioritise experience before explanation

Allow participants to observe, explore, experiment, and discuss before introducing theoretical concepts. Experiential learning helps learners build deeper understanding and retain knowledge more effectively than information-led approaches.

### 4. Create opportunities for reflection

Learning does notend whenan activity finishes. Structured reflection—through dialogue, peer feedback, journals, or group discussions—helps participants connect experiences with broader sustainability concepts and recognise the competences they have developed.

### 5. Encourage collaboration rather than competition

Most sustainabilitychallengesrequire collectivesolutions. Design activities that promote teamwork, dialogue, shared decision-making, and mutual learning, enabling participants to value different perspectives and co-create solutions.

### 6. Build partnerships beyond the classroom

Collaboratingwith companies, NGOs,researchinstitutions, public authorities, or community organisations enriches learning by exposing participants to authentic professional environments and diverse examples of sustainable practice.

### 7. Connect sustainability with employability

Help participants recognise how green competences relate to future education, careers, and entrepreneurship. Sustainability should be presented not only as an environmental responsibility but also as a growing area of professional opportunity.

### 8. Adapt activities to your context

The examples presented in this Handbook are intended as inspiration rather than templates. Activities should always be adapted to local realities, available resources, participant profiles, and cultural contexts while preserving the core methodological principles.

### 9. Embrace flexibility

Unexpected discussions, participant initiatives, and emerging local opportunities often become the most valuable learning moments. Facilitators should be prepared to adjust activities while maintaining clear learning objectives.

### 10. Focus on developing competences, not simply delivering content

The ultimate purpose of GreenYouthLabs is not to transmit information about sustainability but to empower young people to think critically, collaborate effectively, take responsible action, and contribute confidently to the green transition in their communities and future workplaces.



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# CONCLUSION

The Green Youth Labs presented in this Handbook demonstrate that there is no single way to educate young people for the green transition. Instead, what makes the methodology effective is not a fixed sequence of activities, but a shared set of pedagogical principles that can be adapted to different educational settings, learner profiles, and local realities.

Throughout the project, the partner organisations implemented the Green Youth Labs in diverse contexts: vocational education centres, community organisations, research institutions, natural environments, local businesses, and protected areas. Each pilot followed its own pathway, responding to local opportunities and participants' needs while remaining grounded in the same methodological foundations: learner-centred non-formal education, experiential and outdoor learning, systems thinking, collaboration with local stakeholders, reflection, and the development of green competences linked to employability.

The pilot experiences confirm that Green Youth Labs are not intended to be replicated as predefined programmes. Rather, they should be understood as a flexible methodological framework that educators, youth workers, trainers, and organisations can adapt, expand, and continuously improve according to their own contexts. The Practice Spotlights included in this Handbook are therefore not recipes to follow, but examples illustrating how common principles can lead to different yet equally meaningful learning experiences.

Another important lesson emerging from the project is the value of connecting learning with authentic environments. Whether through collaboration with companies, research centres, community organisations, or natural spaces, participants engaged with real sustainability challenges that made learning more relevant, motivating, and transferable. This embedded approach helped bridge the gap between education, active citizenship, and future employment opportunities.

# CONCLUSION

Finally, the Green Youth Labs reinforce the idea that preparing young people for the green transition is not simply about acquiring environmental knowledge. It also requires developing the capacity to think systemically, collaborate across disciplines, communicate effectively, make responsible decisions, and translate ideas into action. These competences are increasingly essential for participating in sustainable societies and navigating rapidly changing labour markets.

The Green Youth Labs methodology therefore offers more than a collection of educational activities. It provides a practical and adaptable framework for empowering young people to become active learners, responsible citizens, and future professionals capable of contributing to a fairer, greener, and more sustainable Europe.



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GYE

GREEN YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY: EMERGING SKILLS AND JOBS FOR A FAIR AND GREEN SOCIETY



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