



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Whole-institutional ESD kindergarten network

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Hungary

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

sustainability
formal education
network
whole-institutional approach
self-reflection
learning organisation
kindergarten as school community
early childhood education

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Initiated as a bottom-up approach then mainstreamed in public education, this 16-year-old network has lessons of transformation, self-reflection and a story of growing from the idea of a few experts, teacher educators and kindergartens to a national network. It is completely voluntary, building on school communities' ownership, dedication to become learning organisations for sustainability at a local level, and supporting them by providing opportunities for sharing and building knowledge at national level. The ministry coordination aims to bring international trends and knowledge to schools and provide rather tools for growing locally and regionally on a long term than direct short-term project sources.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

The Green Kindergarten Network, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary consists of a network of almost 1100 kindergartens throughout Hungary. This means that approximately one-third of kindergartens in Hungary have joined the network since 2006, resulting in every third child attending a green kindergarten in Hungary.

The Ministry of Agriculture supports the network by operating a website, organising special events and an inner network of pillar kindergartens.

The original aim was to create a twin network to the Hungarian Eco-School Network, with the same aims: establishing an excellence network with the strong traits of a supportive peer community with own value set, criteria and award system. Nowadays a strong aim is to promote the whole-institutional model of operation (thus transforming the learning environment and approach) as well as to support local collaboration with a variety of actors (from local communities to regional up to international partners) and to provide a strong knowledge building platform. Another aim is to recognise kindergartens' and the teachers' achievements and efforts and to encourage a continuing learning journey of the kindergarten communities towards sustainability.

Like the Hungarian Eco-School Network, the Green Kindergarten Network also defines itself as a learning community for sustainability where knowledge building and peer support outscore other benefits from being members. Honest self-reflection and trust are core values in both the awarding system and the daily operation of green kindergartens.

Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Green kindergartens operate with an ESD-focused local curriculum and a whole-institutional approach. Kindergartens are requested to showcase their ESD activities on their own website, while regional green kindergarten meetings provide opportunities for them to share and exchange experiences. Peer mentoring is also coordinated and is available through the pillar kindergarten inner network. The Network has ongoing activities since 2006.

The curriculum of green kindergartens includes dedication towards ESD, promotes recognition, protection and preservation of local heritage and places special emphasis on environmental and health education, building developmental activities on this while also reflecting these value choices in the infrastructure and operation. They aim to empower children as change agents and as collaborative actors in learning and acting for sustainability. Children are engaged in tangible activities such as gardening, often take part in outdoor activities (even forest kindergarten events) and observe through collaboration in operation and daily practice how sustainability ideas can be put in practice. Besides, the educational resources used by green kindergarten also reflect sustainability values and topics.

Green kindergartens work with a whole-institutional approach. Their distinguished inner network called pillar kindergartens support other kindergartens preparing or possibly willing to join the network by mentoring, organising teaching open sessions and other programmes or recommending supportive materials. Each year, kindergartens are invited to undergo an application process to enter the framework. Those that apply successfully, are eligible to use the title Green Kindergarten and those that have gained the title three consecutive times might apply for the title Permanent Green Kindergarten. In the application process, kindergartens undertake a reflective cycle of reviewing and forming challenges, taking actions and reflecting on results as a community.

Green kindergartens collaborate with a variety of other stakeholders, from other educational institutions to local service providers, industries, NGOs, sports clubs, churches etc.

Resources are needed to organise knowledge building (such as e-platform, regional meetings, school visits to peer members), to coordinate the award application and for monitoring and mentoring schools. Besides, each year publications such as collections of good practices on ESD from green kindergartens, didactical thematic brochures (such as working with SDGs in kindergartens), digital and paper-based stories to support kindergarten teaching are also created and published by the Ministry as a coordinator.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

According to research, the whole-institutional approach has impact on the kindergartens' ethos, atmosphere, organisation, management processes, but also on children's engagement and place attachment. Teachers are more motivated in green kindergartens to engage in educational innovation, more open to share their practices and to collaborate with local community actors. The application process that builds on honest reflection and trust also has beneficial effects on the whole network. It can be assumed that the practice is transformative in terms of personal and community value sets, attitudes and in developing ESD-related competences.

In the past 16 years the Network has grown to over 1100 kindergartens all over Hungary, representing about 33% of kindergartens in the country. These kindergartens engage in a yearly reflective self-evaluation cycle along shared values and indicators on sustainability and establish and revise their local aims, criteria and indicators for 3-year cycles.

There has been a number of research projects, and findings support the notions mentioned above. New research initiatives are also planned.

The fact that it is a network that is constantly growing for 16 years supports that the network has a transformative effect to the entirety of the public educational system in the country.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The key triggers for transformation are the shift towards becoming learning communities, the power of peer support and recognition and the access to shared knowledge.

The most powerful result is that the network shares values and aims, constantly builds knowledge on pedagogical approaches in ESD and is flexible enough to adapt to changes, even by revising its own criteria. This latter point however is what also implies challenges: reflection to changed approaches and developing new answers and approaches to them are demanding tasks for members and for the entire network. Secondly, the shift from environmental education to ESD imposed challenges on members, by adopting new practices, opening to new attitudes, embracing other values, extending learning to other fields. This is an ongoing challenge though, as emerging topics and solutions are present. Thirdly, it is a challenge is to find or keep motivation for members on the long-term. The Network coordination is constantly seeking solutions – and in many cases finds meaningful answers, such as changing roles for the most experienced or oldest members of the Network as hosting regional meetings, collaborating in research and development activities, supporting other members – however, it is an ongoing task.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

In Hungary, the Green Kindergarten Network with its respective self-assessment and award system is an efficient representative of the whole-institutional approach of ESD. Every third child is educated in these institutions and more than 30% of the overall population of Hungarian kindergarten teachers are involved into this challenging task. The Network has been operating since 2006, and in itself is a valuable example of a learning organisation building on honest self-reflection, trust and knowledge-building. Central coordination allows extension from local to national levels and channels in information form international organisations, frameworks and trends, while directly supporting the operation of the network. Guidelines are updated every year and available as awarding scheme.

The network is adaptable, but enough time and space should be allowed for bottom-up growing and horizontal knowledge sharing and building within the network. Additionally, time, support and trust should be dedicated to participating schools to establish their own vision, aims and criteria.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://zoldovoda.hu/>
<https://zoldovoda.hu/hu/szakirodalom>