

## The four Priority Areas of the *Whole Institution Approach* in Adult Education

### “Live what we teach” – making educational institutions more sustainable with the Whole Institution Approach

Education for Sustainable Development is becoming increasingly important – and this also applies in adult education. Ever since the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda, it has been clear that everyone must help achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Numerous educational institutions offer opportunities for individuals to learn about sustainability subjects (e.g. workshops, excursions), which teach us how to live more sustainably and/or how to call on politicians to act sustainably. The question on how entire educational institutions can however align their human resources and decision-making structures, their procurement practices, their working methods, etc., with sustainability criteria is the subject of the *Whole Institution Approach*.

### Potentials of the *Whole Institution Approach*

It is (educational) institutions in particular that play a central role in developing a sustainable society. UNESCO’s Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development states as follows: “Places of learning develop their full innovative power when they work on a holistic basis – i.e. when they take an all-round view of sustainability.” Institutions develop a special potential by making their actions ecologically, economically, socially and politically just in all areas. They themselves become agents of social change and make a decisive contribution to the development of sustainable (economic) structures. Sustainable institutions are perceived by their employees and participants as authentic and as positive role models. At the same time, they open up a testing ground for sustainable working methods. Transparency concerning institutional actions, as well as participation and action orientation, come together here, providing motivation and inspiration. This makes them more convincing for all those involved – for the addressees of educational opportunities, for staff, for management, and for cooperation partners – to act in a sustainable manner.

## **On the implementation of the Whole Institution Approach**

If we take a look at institutions' everyday work, we can see that sustainable action is already being taken here and there, e.g. by using recycled paper or by taking public transport to get to work or to go on business trips. That said, few organisations have so far systematically expanded WIA to all areas of work.

In order for the WIA to be implemented successfully, an institution should consciously opt for this further development process, and begin by developing a first sub-area. It is advisable to look at the areas of work together with all employees of an institution in order to verify where sustainability criteria are already being taken as an orientation, and where there is still room for improvement. If staff members are involved in development processes, and are convinced of what they are doing, they will do more to help achieve the goals that have been set. Regular reflection and evaluation are also important for implementing the WIA in order to recognise successes or to make adjustments where necessary. The Guidebook and Workbook SustainabALE support you with this.

## **Reflexion**

The following shall guide you in your preparatory phase. It provides an overview of potential implementation areas of a sustainable development process. To structure this process, we have defined four priority areas: 1) Educational Program, 2) Organisation & Management, 3) Learning and Working Environment 4) Networks.

The four priority areas are divided into subcategories which aid in your orientation on where to start your individual process. This list does however not claim to be complete and other aspects might arise during your organizational development process. Some of these subcategories are interconnected and appear in more than one area. Descriptions are offered on each subcategory and guiding questions are provided which you might find helpful during your preparatory meetings and discussions.

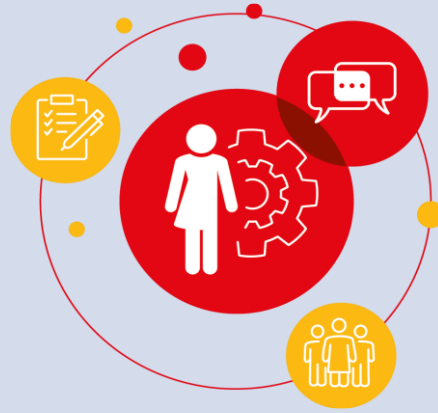
This structure should act as a supporting tool for you and your institution in the upcoming phase to implement the Whole Institution Approach and serves an orientation purpose. The subcategories are each aligned with the according UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to facilitate associating your individual development process within the context of sustainability.

## Priority Areas



### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM:

- Diversity of Topics
- ESD in other educational areas
- Diversity of methods
- Didactics
- Diversity of participants
- Participation
- Cooperations



### ORGANIZATION / MANAGEMENT:

- Values
- Mission statement
- Decision-making structures
- Participation
- Diversity
- Staff Development
- Quality development
- Communication
- Finances



### LEARNING/WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

- Procurement /Purchase
- Events
- Facility management
- Renovation
- Mobility/Accessibility
- Learning Spaces
- Workplaces
- Digital infrastructure
- Outdoor areas





### NETWORK:



- Local/Municipal networks
- Adult Education networks
- ESD networks
- Public relations
- Advocacy work



## Educational Program


Subcategory	Description	Questions to guide us in this process
<b>Diversity of topics in program</b>  <i>All SDGs possible</i>	<p>ESD encompasses different aspects of societal development which can be incorporated as educational activities in the various areas of the educational program.</p> <p>The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a basis for this process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do we offer specific events or activities on the SDGs subjects?</i></li> <li>- <i>At which points are sustainability subjects incorporated in our programmatic areas or activities?</i></li> <li>- <i>Which SDGs do we cover with our program? Which do we want to increase working on in the future?</i></li> <li>- <i>Examples of subjects:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <i>Supply chains and fair trade (SDG 8)</i></li> <li>o <i>Innovative forms of housing and „green“ traffic (SDG 11)</i></li> <li>o <i>Animal welfare or regional activities, e.g. bee-keeping (SDG 15)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>- <i>Do we offer online programs to reach different target groups?</i></li> </ul>
<b>ESD in other educational areas</b>  	<p>Alongside specific events or activities on ESD subjects, aspects of ESD and sustainability can be integrated in further educational areas and programs (e. g. language courses; health classes).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>In which programs/activities do we currently include sustainability subjects in our educational programs (explicitly/implicitly)?</i></li> <li>- <i>Where can we integrate sustainability subjects in the future?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we adapt curricula accordingly?</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Diversity of methods</b></p> 	<p>ESD programs allow for the usage of a number of methods to shape teaching and learning in various and relatable ways.</p> <p>Trainings on how to apply these methods open up opportunities for educators to diversify their educational approach and also design new forms of activities/programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which methods are currently used in the context of ESD?</li> <li>- Are our educators aware of these methods or does a need for trainings exist?</li> <li>- Which tools or materials are needed and which can we use for the integration of ESD methods?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Didactics</b></p> 	<p>The concept of ESD underlines certain didactic principles as key elements of teaching and learning in a sustainable manner (e.g. action orientation, self-efficacy, critical thinking).</p> <p>ESD programs and activities should involve these principles in best possible ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do we currently integrate the didactic principles in our teaching?</li> <li>- Are our educators aware of these principles and do they design their programs on that basis?</li> <li>- Does a need for training on this subject exist and how could we organise this?</li> <li>- How can we support our educators in (re-)designing their programs?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diversity of participants</b></p> 	<p>A central pillar of ESD is the involvement of as many different societal groups as possible to bring about transformation for society as a whole.</p> <p>By diversifying the educational program and offering a variety of ESD programs and subjects, a broad range of target groups can be addressed and brought together.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which target groups do we currently reach and which are missing?</li> <li>- How can we make our ESD activities and sustainability subjects more attractive for different target groups?</li> <li>- Do we offer programs covering different times and days of the week to address diverse needs?</li> <li>- Which subjects are most suited for our intended target groups?</li> <li>- Do we have programs which focus specifically on inter-generational exchange or could we design new ones? Which type of advertisement do we currently employ for our ESD programs and do they fit our target groups?</li> </ul>




<p><b>Participation</b></p> 	<p>To promote participation and integration and ensure suitability for all target groups, employees, participants as well as further citizens should be involved in the design of the educational program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do we have a dialogue forum for (potential) participants and employees to voice ideas or requests?</i></li> <li>- <i>Can we actively encourage the involvement of further people in the design of our education program?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who should be part of this process and which groups of people could we reach?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we offer possibilities for other people to get involved with our organisation (e.g. as educator or volunteer)?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Cooperations</b></p> 	<p>Many sustainability topics or activities can be realised in cooperation with other local organisations or associations.</p> <p>These cooperation partners can bring in further expertise on topics as well as broaden the range of the educational activities and draw different groups of learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do we currently cooperate with organisations?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who works on SDG subjects in our region?</i></li> <li>- <i>What kind of activities/events/programs could we design with these potential partners?</i></li> <li>- <i>Which target groups could we reach with this cooperation?</i></li> <li>- <i>What do we need to make this cooperation successful?</i></li> </ul>









## Organisation/Management

Subcategory	Description	Questions to guide us in this process
<b>Values</b> 	<p>Agreeing on common values and guidelines should form the basis for any sustainable organisational development processes.</p> <p>These common values are developed by means of an open and transparent process and are supported by the entirety of the staff. The values are the foundation for all subsequent development processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What are our common values and guidelines?</i></li> <li>- <i>Where do we see conflicts or different stances on matters? Where do our values and actions contradict each other?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we develop these values further and what kind of needs do we have for this process?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we ensure the involvement of all staff / levels in this process?</i></li> <li>- <i>How do we ensure a form of liability to our agreed values?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Mission Statement</b> 	<p>A mission statement in accordance to ESD principles serves different functions.</p> <p>A sustainable organisation can use the mission statement to transport the common values and principles internally and creates a common basis for working together. Furthermore, it serves a communicative purpose as it displays to the outside world that this organisation operates sustainably and therefore can act as a role model within the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Is sustainability anchored as principle in our mission statement?</i></li> <li>- <i>Can we (further) develop our mission statement and align it with sustainable principles?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can our mission statement reflect our common values and guidelines?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we align our work subsequently with our sustainable mission statement?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we reassess our mission statement regularly?</i></li> </ul>







<p><b>Decision-making Structure</b></p>  	<p>In a sustainable organisation, the decision-making structure is organized in a democratic and transparent way and is in alignment with the common values and principles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What does our decision-making structure look like? Who is involved in the processes?</i></li> <li>- <i>How is our internal communication structured?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do these structures reflect our common values and principles?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are our structures organized in a transparent and democratic way?</i></li> <li>- <i>How could we optimize our structures in this way?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who should be involved in the future?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation</b></p>  	<p>In a sustainable organisation, employees as well as further persons (e.g. participants, volunteers) are part of decision-making processes and can contribute to the development of the institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What kind of structures, forums for participation do we currently have in place?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we have certain frameworks (e. g. political/municipal requirement, legislation)?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do all staff and involved persons have opportunities to participate in development processes?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we enhance participation?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Diversity</b></p>  	<p>The diversity of staff reflects the values and principles of the organization, broadens perspectives within the institution and conveys openness and participation to all parts of society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Are we currently a diverse workforce and who is missing?</i></li> <li>- <i>How could we involve a broader variety of people in our organization?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who do we address with our job postings?</i></li> <li>- <i>Which processes do we need to change/adapt?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are we an attractive employer for currently underrepresented groups?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Personnel development</b></p>  	<p>A sustainable staff concept puts emphasis on lifelong learning and furthering training opportunities for all staff.</p> <p>Additionally, (inter-)personal competences and knowledge exchange are advanced and encouraged through open structures and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What kind of training possibilities do we offer our staff currently? Do all members of staff have access?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we support and encourage our staff further and how do we have to adapt/change our structures?</i></li> <li>- <i>Can we establish dialogue/exchange structures for collegial support/feedback?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we strengthen our knowledge exchange structures?</i></li> </ul>













<p><b>Quality Development</b></p>  	<p>Sustainability encompasses the regular review and adaptation of measures and processes.</p> <p>In a sustainable organisation, these steps follow in a transparent and pre-defined process. Changes or new actions are developed cooperatively and communicated openly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do we currently have a concept for measuring our development in place?</i></li> <li>- <i>Which role do criterias of sustainability play in this concept?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we collect data / measure indicators on a regular basis to check our processes?</i></li> <li>- <i>How do we collect feedback on the quality of our work?</i></li> <li>- <i>Did we determine structures for the development process?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication</b></p>  	<p>External communication provides a good opportunity to anchor ESD and sustainability as subjects within the organisation and contributes to further the debate within society.</p> <p>Internal communication should reflect the common values and principle of the organisation and take place in a transparent and participatory way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How is our internal communication structured? Does it reflect our common values and principles?</i></li> <li>- <i>Does our external communication reflect our mission statement and our values (e.g. diversity, inclusiveness)?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are ESD / sustainability subjects anchored in our communication or do we need to adapt?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Finances</b></p>  	<p>The decision, which credit institute administers the institutions' finances can be evaluated under sustainable aspects as well.</p> <p>Furthermore, funding and finances of the institution should be made transparent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Where are our finances administered?</i></li> <li>- <i>Could we switch to a more sustainable credit institute?</i></li> <li>- <i>How are we financed (funding, fees etc.)?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are our finances made public (internal/external)?</i></li> </ul>



## Learning / Working Environment





Subcategory	Description	Questions to guide us in this process
<b>Procurement/ Purchase</b>  	Sustainable procurement considers compliance with social and ecological (minimal) requirements. To implement this, the institution integrates sustainability aspects into its procurement and tender criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What criteria have been used for procurement so far?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there a catalogue of criteria for procurement that takes into account not only price but also ecological and social standards?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are criteria such as regional, fair, seasonal and ecological taken into account?</i></li> <li>- <i>What energy efficiency class should new appliances have?</i></li> <li>- <i>What materials are our consumer goods made of? Under what conditions and where are they produced?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Events</b>  	The planning and implementation of in-house events holds a lot of potential for alignment with sustainable criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do we consider sustainable options when planning events?</i></li> <li>- <i>Where do we source catering, do we consider environmental and social aspects?</i></li> <li>- <i>Off-site events: Do we consider sustainable venues in our search?</i></li> <li>- <i>Guests: Where do our guests stay? Do we consider sustainable hotels/accommodation?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we use sustainable materials for our event materials?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Facility Management</b>	The supply and disposal of a building offers numerous potentials for alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How efficiently is our energy and heating/cooling regulated? Do we use smart controls, are there clear instruc-</i></li> </ul>






  	<p>with sustainability criteria. In the center are efficient consumption of resources and the use of regenerative (energy) sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>tions for our employees/participants to take actions?</i></li> <li>- <i>How efficient are our appliances in terms of energy use?</i></li> <li>- <i>Can we use a more ecologically friendly heating/cooling system?</i></li> <li>- <i>What kind of electricity do we use and which supplier?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is it possible to make water use more efficient?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we use ecological cleaning and hygiene products?</i></li> <li>- <i>What does our sorting system for waste look like?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Construction / Renovation</b></p>  	<p>Social and ecological aspects should already be taken into account when building or renovating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Is the location accessible for my target groups?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there accessibility without barriers to the building (e.g. ramps, lifts, guidelines for the blind)?</i></li> <li>- <i>How efficient is the thermal insulation?</i></li> <li>- <i>What materials are used?</i></li> <li>- <i>What types of spaces do we want? (Meeting spaces, free learning spaces, gardens, etc.)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Mobility / Accessibility</b></p> 	<p>A diverse approach to mobility is essential to meet the multiple needs of employees and users. The use of public transport networks and sustainable transportation should be promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Is the access to all rooms handicapped-accessible? Have certain equipment been adapted for wheelchair users (operating systems, shelves, coat racks, tables, etc.)?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are signposts designed for people with visual impairments?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there information in easy or simplified language?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are there services/information in other languages?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there sufficient bicycle parking space?</i></li> <li>- <i>How convenient are the public transport services?</i></li> <li>- <i>What are the guidelines for the use of public transport on business trips?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are there charging stations for electric vehicles?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Design of learning spaces</b></p>	<p>Learning spaces themselves offer potential for integrating social and ecological aspects. They can be designed as meeting places or open learning environ-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How are our learning spaces designed?</i></li> <li>- <i>What form of learning is possible there, what is hindered by the premises?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who uses the facilities and who does not?</i></li> </ul>

	<p>ments. Materials should adhere to social and ecological standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How can we involve course leaders and participants in the (re)design of the learning spaces?</i></li> <li>- <i>What materials/instruments are needed for learning opportunities?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Design of workplaces</b></p> 	<p>Like learning spaces, workplaces of the employees should also be designed according to sustainable criteria. This includes furniture as well as accessibility and the design of communal areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What furniture do we use? While using rooms, do we pay attention to the economical use of resources?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we have wheelchair-accessible workplaces?</i></li> <li>- <i>What criteria do we use to purchase electronic work equipment?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are we provided with social rooms and rest areas?</i></li> <li>- <i>What opportunities does our workplace offer for healthy and balanced nutrition?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we involve our employees in the design of the workplaces?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Digital Infrastructure</b></p> 	<p>Flexible digital working options increase diversity in the employee base.</p> <p>Digital learning formats expand the portfolio.</p> <p>A good digital infrastructure makes it possible to reach target groups that are difficult to reach through "on-site offers" and enables the inclusion of diverse perspectives (e.g. from abroad).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Which provider do we use and in what way is there a concept for CO2 compensation?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is wi-fi available free of charge and without restriction for employees and learners?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are employees able to work from home?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we have online learning opportunities? Are ESD topics integrated in those?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are our digital services fully accessible?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is our course programme online bookable?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we communicate with our customers through the internet?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Design of outdoor areas</b></p> 	<p>Outdoor spaces provide many opportunities for a sustainable orientation, e.g. the creation of gardens as places of learning, bicycle parking or open meeting places.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How do we use our outdoor spaces up until now?</i></li> <li>- <i>Are they being used as learning spaces or do they offer potential for this?</i></li> <li>- <i>How "green" are our outdoor spaces?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who is using them until now?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do we integrate crops into our green spaces?</i></li> </ul>



## Networks

Subcategory	Description	Questions to guide us in this process
<b>Municipal and local Networks</b>  	<p>ESD is growing in importance inside the local communities. In politics as well as in administration, and along the municipal education sector. Here are opportunities for synergies, cooperation and support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Is there an ESD strategy at the local community level?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there an ESD officer?</i></li> <li>- <i>What role does ESD play in the educational sector (kindergarten, schools, adult education)?</i></li> <li>- <i>In which networks are we involved at local level and what role does the sustainability agenda have in these networks?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we provide training for ESD for municipal employees?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Networks of adult education stakeholders</b>  	<p>There are regional, national or international adult education networks. They enable an exchange among the stakeholders and provide a platform for specific advocacy of ALE institutions. ESD is increasing in importance in these networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>In which adult education networks do we participate?</i></li> <li>- <i>How is the topic of ESD discussed in these networks so far?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we strengthen the topic of ESD in these networks?</i></li> <li>- <i>Which allies do we have in relation to the topic of sustainability?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can we create synergies and make them beneficial for us?</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>ESD Networks</b></p>  	<p>Numerous ESD-specific networks exist that promote development of the ESD agenda and political strengthening of ESD. Adult education institutions contribute valuable perspectives to these networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- - Do we participate in ESD specific networks?</li> <li>- - Which networks exist in our region?</li> <li>- - What issues do these networks deal with and do they match our interests?</li> <li>- - Are these networks already represented in our institution (e.g. as teachers)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Relations</b></p>  	<p>Many institutions implement ESD activities in educational programmes and in the organisation. This requires transparent communication to the public, making ESD more appealing to the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do we promote our educational programmes on sustainability?</li> <li>- Do we use sustainable resources for public relations?</li> <li>- Who do we address (with sustainability issues) and who do we reach out to?</li> <li>- Are our efforts to promote sustainability visible to the public?</li> <li>- Is our communication language inclusive and anti-discriminatory?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advocacy Work</b></p> 	<p>ESD and sustainability are increasingly gaining attention in the political arena. As (municipal) representatives, ALE institutions can contribute to this process and strengthen the particular contribution of adult education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At which points are we already linked to the topics of ESD/sustainability in the political field?</li> <li>- Where could we get more involved and use contacts to anchor ESD?</li> <li>- In which committees can we introduce/strengthen sustainability?</li> </ul>