

## ESD FOR 2030

### LEARNING FOR AND IN RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

#### THE BIG TRANSFORMATION: SUSTAINABILITY DILEMMAS AND DEALING WITH VULNERABILITIES

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Ongoing

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## Description of the project

### Introduction

An active contribution of cities and municipalities to a successful sustainability transformation requires individual and societal learning processes of the actors involved, which enable them to make decisions in the context of sustainability dilemmas and to become active in shaping them. Learning processes for sustainable development, in which participatory competencies can be acquired and design options can be developed and tested, can be understood and organized as transdisciplinary learning. This includes learning processes of different actors at the interface and in the interplay of society and science.

Real-world laboratories provide the framework for individual and organizational teaching and learning concepts. They can be understood as a new form of cooperation between science and civil society that focuses on mutual learning in an experimental environment. As an experimental platform for innovation, they offer both individuals and societal groups an approach to dealing with uncertainties, dilemmas, and sustainability-related challenges.

Particularly in the context of communities, three relevant learning- and education-related aspects have received little attention so far:

- How can young people be even more actively involved in real-world labs activities to foster their development of sustainability skills and value their innovative ideas?
- How can the acquisition of skills and abilities by different actors be promoted and captured through active participation in real-world labs/experiments?
- How can real-world laboratory-like approaches be realized in different cultural contexts and how can learning processes between communities be realized in order to mutually benefit from the respective local experiences?

By specifically addressing these aspects within the framework of an international cooperation of four universities and various local partners in four cities, the project aims to contribute to making the potential of real laboratories and experiments - in the sense of education for sustainable development - usable for municipalities and cities.

### **Subject and aim of the project**

The project will create the basis for harnessing the potential of real laboratories and experiments as places of mutual learning processes for sustainable and resilient municipal and urban development and, above all, for strengthening the role of young people in these processes.

For this purpose, a specific focus is placed on individual learning processes of pupils and students in the sense of project- and experience-based learning as well as on joint collaborative and societal learning processes between pupils and students with different local actors, especially employees of local city administrations. Sustainability dilemmas offer exemplary learning opportunities for the development of competencies of the pupils and students and the experimenting with participatory formats for the design of municipal development processes.

With regard to learning and education-related aspects, the following goals will be pursued for this purpose:

- Explore the feasibility of real-world laboratory-like approaches in different (cultural) contexts to enable mutual learning processes with regard to dealing with uncertainties, dilemmas and challenges in the local implementation of the SDGs;
- Developing capacity mobilizing approaches for local actors to design and participate in real laboratories and experiments;
- Strengthening the role of young people in community and urban design and decision-making processes through active participation;
- Enabling learning processes between actors from different municipalities and cities in order to make experiences and insights mutually usable;
- Providing options for action and tools that enable municipalities to independently realize real laboratories and experiments as places of mutual learning.

On the one hand, the project will make concrete contributions to the implementation of the SDGs in the participating municipalities and to the development of skills and abilities of the actors involved to deal with uncertainties, dilemmas and challenges related to the realization of sustainable development in the long term. On the other hand, the findings from the project will be made available to other municipalities in Germany, the Baltic States and other countries within the framework of a digital WiKi platform, so that they are enabled to independently implement real-world lab or real-experiment-like approaches locally.

## **Innovation and exemplary nature of the project**

The project will consider innovative elements on at least three levels, which promise impulses for learning processes in the context of sustainability transformation and from which transferable findings for further projects as well as for the independent implementation of the developed approaches in other municipalities are expected. A specific focus is placed on the development of competencies of young people and their participation in municipal development and design processes:

- *Real-world labs as a format for transdisciplinary learning*  
With the explicit consideration of learning processes in real-world laboratory settings and the formative evaluation of such processes, the potential of this setting is systematically extended as well as a contribution is made to the discussion on formats of mutual learning in transdisciplinary settings, especially with regard to uncertainties, dilemmas and challenges in the local implementation of the SDGs.
- *Interweaving individual and organizational learning*  
The approach in this project allows for a systematic interweaving of individual learning processes for competence acquisition with processes of organizational and ultimately societal learning. In this way, the interdependencies, facilitating and hindering factors can be examined more closely and the interrelationship of these learning processes can be brought into focus.
- *Comparative approach in an East-West context*  
The design of the project as a comparative case study between municipalities in Eastern and Western Europe also promises to provide indications of contextual conditions and potentials or limitations of the transferability of findings with regard to the design of learning processes in different cities and municipalities in order to make experiences mutually usable.

This approach is expected to provide indications on the derivability of transferable success criteria for similar projects. The materials developed and published on the digital platform Wiki will enable direct local application in different municipal contexts.

## **International cooperation as an integral part of the project**

The project is being carried out in three Baltic partner cities and with Lüneburg as the "reference municipality" in Germany. Besides Lüneburg, the participating municipalities are Viljandi in Estonia, Valmiera in Latvia and Klaipeda in Lithuania. In addition to Leuphana University Lüneburg, the Estonian University of Life Sciences, the University of Latvia and the Klaipeda University of Lithuania are partners in the project.

The Baltic States and Germany are traditionally linked by a good and close cooperation, which also involves an intensive exchange at the scientific level. At the Institute for Sustainable Development and Learning (ISDL) of the Leuphana University of Lüneburg as well as at the participating partner institutes of the universities in the Baltic States, there is a broad expertise in transdisciplinary sustainability research with diverse experiences with real laboratories and experiments as well as in the field of education for sustainable development.

Basically, all countries face similar framework conditions for shaping municipal development processes, but they bring different experiences with regard to different historical and cultural developments and in terms of participation - especially of youth and young adults. This is a promising starting point for the project and the associated mutual learning processes.

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#### **Associated Project Partners**

##### **Municipalities**

Lüneburg, Germany (in cooperation with the RWL *Lüneburg 2030+*)  
Viljandi, Estonia  
Valmiera, Latvia  
Klaipeda, Lithuania

##### **Schools**

Viljandi Secondary School, Viljandi, Estonia  
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera, Latvia  
Gargzdai Krantas Progymnasium, Klaipeda, Lithuania

