

Environmental Literacy Networking Project

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Methodology Guide for Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Trainings

Yuva Association

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1. Introduction

In 2020, we launched the Environmental Literacy Networking Project in partnership with YUVA and Kyoto Club (Italy). Within the scope of the project funded by the European Union, we established the Environmental Literacy Network (ELN) with the participation of non-governmental organizations and local governments from Türkiye and the European Union. ELN has 80 members and is still recruiting new members.

The aim of ELN is to strengthen the cooperation of non-governmental organizations and local governments from Türkiye and the European Union in the field of environmental education and thus contribute to the increase of "globally literate" individuals who can look critically at nature and human relations, develop ideas for solving these problems and exhibit responsible behavior and understanding within this framework.

This document presents good practices in environmental sustainability and climate change education based on the information gathered during our study visits to Rome, Italy, on 23-27 January 2023, Bologna, Italy, on 3-7 April 2023, and Brussels, Belgium, on 10-14 July 2023 as representatives of ELN member organizations within the scope of the Environmental Literacy Networking Project

During the first study visit to Rome, we met with ECCO (Italian Climate Change Think Tank), Legambiente, Greenpeace Italy, ISPRA (Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), WWF Italy, FREE (Coordination of Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency), ASviS (Association for Sustainable Development) and AzzeroCO2. During the study visit to Bologna, we visited Scambi Europei, Camilla Food Cooperative, Kilowatt, CEFA Onlus, DumBo (Bologna's Multifunctional Event Space), Centro Antartide, Emilia-Romagna Regional Parliament, Municipality of Bologna, FIU (City Innovation Foundation), Caracò, Hayat Onlus, Bologna Climate Assembly, Legacoop Bologna and Piazza Grande Social Cooperative. In the last study visit in Brussels, we met with EU-ASE (European Alliance to Save Energy), EEAS (European External Action Service of the European Commission), European Commission Directorate General for Environment, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults), European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and ECF (European Climate Foundation). In all three visits, we learned in detail about good practices and approaches in the field of environmental education across the European Union.

The purpose of this guide, which we developed as one of the outputs of the study visits, is to provide educators and training organizations with an approach to environmental sustainability and climate change education. It is intended to serve as a resource that summarizes recommended models, methods, and good practices for designing and delivering training programs.

This guidance also needs to be placed in a broader context. Environmental sustainability education should be supported and promoted not only through educators and educational institutions but also by national policymakers, local governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. Therefore, this guide should be considered in conjunction with the "[Environmental Sustainability Education Advocacy and Policy Document](#)," another document developed under the Environmental Literacy Networking Project together with representatives of the Environmental Literacy Network. The guidelines help those working in the field of environmental sustainability education to design and deliver training programs more effectively. At the same time, the policy document provides strategic guidance to support and guide these efforts. Used together, these two documents help to put environmental sustainability education efforts in a broader perspective and implement them more effectively.

2. Basic Review and Importance of Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Education

GreenComp¹, a reference framework for environmental sustainability qualifications, defines sustainability as prioritizing the needs of all life forms and the planet itself and ensuring that human activities do not exceed the limits of the planet.

Environmental sustainability aims to improve the quality of human life without placing undue burden on the world's supporting ecosystems. It is about creating a balance between consumer human culture and our living planet earth. We can do this by living in a way that does not waste or unnecessarily deplete natural resources.²

Since the 1960s, environmental concerns have become increasingly visible in policy-making at the international level. Following the publication of Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring," people became aware that the unlimited use of chemicals and technologies, unlimited waste generation, and use of natural resources were unhealthy and unsustainable. At the international level, the first visible action was the UN General Assembly meeting at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. Attended by 113 countries and representatives of more than 400 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, this conference is considered to be the beginning of modern political and public awareness of global environmental problems.³ Many people argue that this conference, and more importantly the scientific conferences that preceded it, had a real impact on European environmental policy.⁴

Human activities affect the Earth's climate by adding enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to the naturally occurring greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These extra greenhouse gases come mainly from burning fossil fuels to produce energy but also from other human activities such as rainforest clearing, agriculture, livestock farming, and chemical production. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the greenhouse gas most commonly produced by human activities. These extra gases strengthen the greenhouse effect in our planet's atmosphere, causing the Earth's temperature to rise at an extraordinary rate and causing major changes in the climate.⁵

Since tons of CO₂ released into the atmosphere contribute to climate change, all emissions reductions contribute to slowing it down. CO₂ emissions need to reach net zero worldwide. Reducing emissions of other greenhouse gases, such as methane, can also have a strong impact on slowing global warming, especially in the short term.⁶

Environmental sustainability and climate change education is of great importance because it contributes to forming a sustainable culture by raising global citizens who are competent, aware, knowledgeable, responsible, and involved in decision-making processes to respond to the urgent and priority environmental and social problems of our time.

3. Target Audience

Lifelong learning refers to the continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge, skill enhancement, and personal development throughout one's life beyond formal education. It is a

¹ [GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework](#)

² [What is Environmental Sustainability: Definition & Examples](#)

³ [Stockholm Deklarasyonu](#)

⁴ Reforming Europe Towards Sustainability, EEB, s.6

⁵ [European Climate Pact](#)

⁶ [Causes of Climate Change](#)

proactive approach to personal and professional development that recognizes that learning does not stop. It can take place at any stage of life and is continuous.

Based on lifelong learning, the target audience for environmental sustainability and climate change education as a component of global citizenship education should be school-age children and youth, adults of all ages, and local and national decision-makers.

Global Citizenship Education is an educational philosophy and framework that aims to develop in individuals a sense of belonging to a wider community and a commitment to tackling global challenges. This approach aims to foster a sense of responsibility and awareness of the interconnectedness of the world and the complex global issues that affect us all. These issues include environmental sustainability and climate change.

4. Learning Objectives of Education Programs

Environmental sustainability and climate change education programs are based on the following learning objectives and can be adapted to suit different target audiences. Achieving these objectives promotes the awareness and action necessary for a more sustainable future. The common learning objectives of the Environmental Sustainability Education Program for different target audiences are as follows.

Main Objective:

Ensure citizens of all ages have access to inclusive education and training on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability, focusing on the interdependence of ecological, social, and economic systems, and encouraging their participation in decision-making processes.

Sub-targets:

The sub-objectives of the training focus on providing the target group with accurate and sufficient information on environmental sustainability, raising awareness, encouraging critical thinking, and inspiring responsibility and action. The learning objectives may vary depending on the target group and the depth of the training program.

The learning objectives are as follows:

1. To understand and evaluate the current situation, to have and use critical thinking skills in problem-solving.
2. Be open to working efficiently and effectively with individuals or groups from different disciplines.
3. To be able to cope with local, national, and international environmental and cultural challenges and issues of the 21st century.
4. To be able to see how sustainability affects their immediate social, economic, and political environment.
5. Recognize and advocate for inclusive practices for the application of sustainability principles to local and national problems.
6. Know the ethical principles of sustainability and how they relate to practical issues such as social justice and environmental-economic equity.

7. Be able to find and use reliable data and documents on sustainability.⁷

These learning objectives provide a comprehensive framework for environmental sustainability education, enabling participants to make informed decisions and contribute to a more sustainable future. Training programs can prioritize specific objectives according to the needs and goals of the target audience.

The common learning objectives of the Climate Change Education Program for different target groups are as follows.

Main Objective:

To build a resilient society that understands climate change, anticipates its impacts, and takes action to address them. Climate change education aims to foster collective action and responsibility around the world.

Sub-targets:

1. To know climate change, its causes and consequences.
2. To know climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.
3. To be able to analyze the acquired or presented information and sources with critical thinking and to be able to look at the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective.
4. To be able to see how climate change affects their immediate social, economic, and political environment.
5. Recognize and advocate for climate change practices and policies. Promote active participation, community engagement, and advocacy.
6. Know how climate change is linked to practical issues of social justice and environmental-economic equity.
7. To have an idea that climate change is global in nature and that international cooperation is necessary to find solutions.

5. Pedagogical Approach

GreenComp, the European Sustainability Competence Framework⁸, refers to a set of skills, knowledge, and abilities that individuals or organizations should possess in order to effectively address environmental sustainability issues. These competencies generally cover a wide range of areas related to environmental sustainability, such as understanding environmental systems, implementing sustainable practices, and promoting environmental stewardship.

The relationship between Greencomp and the pedagogical approach to environmental sustainability and climate change education is that the Framework can serve as a guiding tool for the design and

⁷ [Sustainability Learning Outcomes](#)

⁸ [GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework](#)

delivery of effective education programs. GreenComp identifies four distinct areas of competence that one should possess for sustainability education. These are,

- 1- Embrace the values of sustainability, advocate for equality and justice for future generations, and support the view that humans are part of nature.
- 2- Embrace the complex and interconnected nature of sustainability with other disciplines.
- 3- Envisioning a sustainable future.
- 4- Taking action for sustainability at the individual or collective level.⁹

Another document that shares a common goal with the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Education pedagogy is UNESCO's "Learning to be with the Earth"¹⁰. Taking a holistic approach to education, this document emphasizes global citizenship, interdisciplinary learning, ethics, and lifelong learning, and contributes to a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment. Declaring the need for a fundamental break with the humanist approach to education, the document calls for a series of interrelated changes. Practicing an ecological consciousness rather than promoting humanism, working for ecological justice rather than social justice, defining the human being as an ecological rather than a social being, recognizing agent relations rather than human rather than a privileged human agency, encouraging collective tendencies rather than promoting the individual, understanding teaching and learning as a purely human activity rather than a purely human activity, approaching worldly relations as inherently pedagogical, learning with others in our shared worlds rather than teaching students (as subjects) about the world (as objects), considering pluralistic perspectives rather than assuming universal positions and standards, understanding beyond human cosmopolitanism rather than promoting human cosmopolitanism, participating in a collective healing ethic beyond the human rather than promoting human management of the environment. He underlines the necessity of an approach in education that invites us to learn how to be with the world instead of learning how to better manage and control it.

The pedagogical approach is determined by the audience, the subject matter, the learning objectives, and the kind of environment in which they work. They are approaches that enable educators to create an effective learning space. For environmental sustainability and climate change education, there are different approaches that serve the goals outlined in both documents. Today, many educators prefer to use a blended approach, bringing these different approaches together and using them as a guide to design effective educational programs and teaching methods to develop these competencies in students. This synergy ensures that the training developed is comprehensive, effective, and aligned with recognized standards and objectives. It also responds to the different learning styles within the target audience.

Inquiry-Based Learning

John Dewey said that learning begins with the curiosity of the learner. Participants should ask questions, generate information and data, apply knowledge in new ways, synthesize their findings and draw supported conclusions. By adopting a research-based approach, educators develop habits of inquiry that will help participants in their lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

⁹ [GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework](#)

¹⁰ [Learning to Become with the World: Education for Future Survival](#)

While there can be challenges in inquiry-based learning, such as a lack of resources, there are also many benefits for students to experience this style of learning to help them stay connected to the content.¹¹

Inquiry or research-based learning can be done at any level and in any subject area. Inquiry and research-based learning projects can be an effective way to incorporate collaboration into the learning environment and encourage interaction between youth and adult participants. One example is the orchards in some neighborhoods, which are a communal spaces open to the use of the people living in that area.

Experiential Learning

David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory is a powerful foundational approach to all forms of learning, development, and change. Experiential learning defines the ideal learning process, invites the participant to understand themselves, and allows them to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

The way one learns is the way one approaches life in general. It is also the way to solve problems, make decisions, and face life's challenges. Learning takes place in any environment and continues throughout life. The experiential learning process supports the improvement of learning performance, learning, and development.

"There are two goals in the experiential learning process. One is to learn the subtleties of a particular subject and the other is to learn one's own learning process." David A. Kolb

David Kolb's work on the experiential learning cycle is among the most effective approaches to learning. The experiential learning cycle is a four-step learning process that is applied multiple times in each interaction and experience: Experience, Reflect, Think, Act. This is a learning process that is initiated with a concrete experience, which requires thinking about the experience, reviewing the experience, and taking perspective. Later, abstract reflection to reach conclusions and conceptualize the meaning of the experience leads to the decision to take action, to engage in active experimentation, or to experiment with what you have learned. This cycle is so natural and organic that people enter it without realizing that they are learning. It almost always happens effortlessly and is constantly transforming our lives. Most people have preferences in the way they use this learning cycle and focus on some steps more than others.¹²

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning involves students designing, developing, and implementing hands-on solutions to a problem. Its educational value is that it aims to develop the creative capacity of learners to work on difficult or poorly structured problems, often in small teams. The project-based learning approach takes students through the following stages: i) Defining a problem, ii) Agreeing on or designing a potential solution to a problem (e.g. how to achieve the solution), iii) Designing and developing a prototype of the solution, iv) Improvement of the solution based on feedback from experts, trainers and/or colleagues. In project-based learning, the size and scope of the project may vary depending on the objectives of the training.¹³

¹¹ Kuykendall, M. (2022, September 14). [4 Common Obstacles to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning—and How to Overcome Them](#). Edutopia. Erişim: 17 Temmuz 2023.

¹² Institute for Experiential Learning, [What is experiential learning?](#)

¹³ Boston University, Center for Teaching and Learning, [Project-Based Learning: Teaching Guide](#)

Interdisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary approaches in environmental sustainability and climate change education refer to educational methods and curricula that argue that a single discipline is insufficient to address these issues and that different disciplines should be utilized. It argues that environmental problems and climate change should be addressed by presenting information and views from different fields and that all these disciplines are interrelated and affected by each other. It is an approach that recognizes that they cannot be addressed and solved by a single discipline.

6. Methods

The following methods can be used in training carried out to raise awareness in the society, to support the capacities of individuals or organizations on environmental sustainability and climate change, or to encourage them to take action. These methods are determined by the person or persons carrying out the training, taking into account variables such as the need and number of participants, the learning objectives of the training, or the area in which it is carried out. The use of various methods within a training program increases the interest of the participant and, therefore, the impact of the training.

The training program should be designed with a holistic approach in such as Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change training. The place where the training takes place (e.g., an ecological farm), the nature-friendly materials used, the local and natural food eaten, and the simplification of the participants' life practices during the training are all part of the training program and have a great impact on learning.

Methods that can be used when designing a program:

- Role plays
- Small group work
- Large group discussions
- Station
- Simulation
- Case studies
- Online education (synchronous and asynchronous programs)
- Workshops
- Seminars
- Conferences
- Field visits
- Learning in Nature
- Outdoor activities
- Gamification
- Practical (Experiential) activities (e.g., composting)
- Storytelling
- Brainstorming
- Citizen science activities (e.g., energy efficiency monitoring)
- Certificate programs offering expertise
- Behavioural psychology techniques in long-term programs (e.g. reminder emails, messages or online community building to support behavioral changes, etc.).

7. Impact Assessment

The impact assessment process of environmental sustainability and climate change training includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudinal changes targeted to be realized in the participant. In the longer term and in a broader perspective, the change created in the organization and society can be addressed.

The impact assessment process is carried out in the following steps.

- Determining the main objective of the training
- Carrying out a situation analysis and identifying the current situation, i.e. the need
- Determining the learning objectives of the training
- Holistic design of the training program in line with the learning objectives (content, venue, transport, accommodation, etc.)
- Realisation of the training
- Assessment of post-training knowledge and skills objectives and statement of intent regarding attitude
- Analysing and reporting comparative pre-training and baseline assessment data
- Sharing the impact assessment report with all stakeholders
- Determining the areas to be improved or changed in the training program as a result of the report and revising the program
- If the training was carried out with the aim of developing institutional capacity, monitoring and evaluation can be carried out on the principles, mainstreaming areas, strategy development, etc. within the organization.

If it is aimed to measure the behavioral change in the participants, they can be contacted again after a period of time that will be sufficient for this change, and information about the behavioral change can be obtained. It is not a correct and realistic goal to achieve behavioral changes from the beginning to the end of the training program. However, an increase in the intention to change behavior has been observed, especially when the participant is given the opportunity to experience the information presented in the training program within the same process. For example, there is a significant difference between the impact of a trainer training in an ecological farm and a trainer training in a standard hotel. When the participant has the chance to experience what they have learned in the training and when learning about sustainable living practices continues in their living spaces outside the training sessions, it has a positive effect on behavior change. As mentioned in the method section, the holistic design of environmental sustainability and climate change training programs increases their impact.

8. Good Examples

Some practices and resources that can be considered as good examples for environmental sustainability and climate change education are as follows:

[Education for Climate](#): The European Union's education for sustainability. It supports teaching and learning for green transformation and sustainable development. Managers from the European Commission's Directorates-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and the Joint Research Centre work together as a team of process facilitators and training experts. They support education and educator capacity in Europe in the context of climate change.

[Italian University Network for Sustainable Development \(RUS\)](#): The Italian University Network for Sustainable Development (RUS) is an important initiative promoting cooperation and knowledge sharing among Italian universities on environmental sustainability and social responsibility. RUS

promotes knowledge sharing on environmental sustainability and social responsibility among Italian universities. The exchange of best practices and experiences between universities helps to develop more effective environmental and social actions. RUS also aims to promote a culture of sustainability inside and outside universities. This means raising sustainability awareness for students, faculty and university staff. One of the main objectives of RUS is to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. These goals aim to increase sustainability and social well-being at a global level. RUS aims to promote at an international level the positive actions taken by Italian universities in the environmental, ethical, social, and economic fields. In this way, it shares Italy's sustainability experience with other countries and increases opportunities for international cooperation.

[Yuva Association - Environmental Literacy Network \(ELN\)](#): Environmental Literacy Network (ELN), established by Yuva Association, is a network that plays an important role in the field of environmental education and strengthens cooperation between non-governmental organizations and local governments. The main goal of ELN is to increase the number of "globally literate" individuals who can develop a critical view of nature and human relations, gain sensitivity to environmental problems, and generate ideas that can contribute to solving these problems. ELN offers environmental sustainability and climate literacy training across Türkiye. This training helps individuals understand environmental problems, generate solutions, and develop responsible behaviors. ELN has 80 members as of 2023 and still encourages new members to join. In 2023, ELN was awarded the Grundtvig Incentive Award for Adult Education and Green Transformation by EAEA¹⁴ (European Association for the Education of Adults).

[The Green Schools Alliance](#): The Green Schools Alliance is a major initiative promoting integrating sustainability and environmental education into the school curriculum and encouraging schools to adopt sustainable practices. The Alliance helps schools to integrate sustainability and environmental education into their curricula. This gives students the skills to learn about environmental issues and find solutions to these problems. It also encourages schools to reduce their ecological footprint, including practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and water conservation. The Alliance encourages schools to adopt sustainable practices and implement environmentally friendly initiatives such as the use of green energy, recycling programs, etc. so that schools cause less damage to the environment. It encourages students to engage in hands-on projects related to sustainability, through which students gain awareness of sustainability issues, organize environmentally friendly activities, and contribute to their communities. The Green Schools Alliance encourages different schools and organizations to collaborate in the field of sustainability, thereby sharing best practices and increasing leadership on sustainability.

[Climate Change Education at NASA](#): NASA offers a variety of educational resources and programs for students and citizens to teach about climate change and earth science. These educational resources aim to explain complex scientific concepts in an understandable way. NASA provides interactive websites for understanding climate change and earth science topics. These sites present information to visitors in a visual and interactive way, making complex topics easier to understand. It offers various tools and graphics to visualize important observations and data related to climate change. These visualizations help us better understand climate change processes. NASA also provides visualizations for teachers and educators.

[Centre for Ecoliteracy](#): Develops resources for schools on sustainability and healthy food. Shares information on sustainability and healthy food through research reports, books, articles, and other publications. Organises conferences and training programs, enabling schools and educators to develop themselves on sustainability and healthy food issues. Provides strategic consultancy services

¹⁴ <https://eaea.org/>

to schools. In 2021, California became the first state to adopt universal school meals as a co-sponsor and coalition member of the Free School Meals for All Act. They have helped transform school meals and recognized the important role of school nutritionists.

[Ten Strands](#): Ten Strands is an organization that aims to increase environmental literacy in public schools. It collaborates with the state government, local education agencies, environmental education providers, community-based organizations, and funders to provide teachers with access to high-quality teaching materials. It also supports integrating environmental education into core programs and encourages teachers to use the environment as a learning tool inside and outside the classroom. It also provides professional development opportunities to support and strengthen teachers' professional development. Ten Strands contributes to increasing environmental literacy in public schools by emphasizing the importance of environmental awareness and education.

[The Climate Reality Project](#): Initiated by Al Gore, the Climate Reality Project offers a comprehensive climate change education program aimed at raising awareness and taking action against climate change. The project has trained thousands of Climate Reality Leaders worldwide, empowering them to educate in their communities. The Climate Reality Project plays an important role in the fight against climate change by raising public awareness and encouraging individuals to participate in climate issues actively. The project is an important initiative that promotes environmental sustainability by raising awareness of climate change.

[The Story of Stuff Project](#): An initiative that aims to raise awareness about consumerism and the environmental impacts of overconsumption. Through videos, articles, and educational resources, it encourages people to make more informed choices in their daily lives. By explaining the impact of consumption habits on the environment, the project aims to encourage people to use resources more sustainably and adopt environmentally friendly behaviors. The Story of Stuff Project is important in sustainability and environmental responsibility by raising social awareness.

[Action for the Climate Emergency \(Formerly: Alliance for Climate Education\) \(ACE\)](#): An initiative that provides engaging presentations, videos, and interactive activities to educate high school students about climate change. ACE aims to raise young people's awareness of climate change and, at the same time, promote active change in their communities. This project aims to train young people as leaders sensitive to environmental issues and encourages them to take action in their communities. ACE provides an important platform for young people to make their voices heard on climate change and contribute to social change. ace.org/

[UNESCO Learning to become with the world: Education for future survival](#): "Learning to become with the world" is a UNESCO document outlining a holistic vision of education for the 21st century. It emphasizes promoting global citizenship, interdisciplinary learning, and ethical values. It promotes lifelong learning and recognizes the importance of cultural diversity and local contexts in education. Overall, the document treats education as a transformative force that prepares individuals to participate responsibly in a complex and interconnected world.

[GreenComp European Sustainability Competence Framework](#): The GreenComp European Sustainability Competence Framework is a reference framework that defines sustainability competencies. This framework offers a consensus-based definition to identify which competencies are required in the field of sustainability. This provides a common basis for sustainability for learners and guidance for educators. GreenComp is an important tool to promote sustainability awareness and practice, contributing to developing sustainability education in Europe.

[Women's economic empowerment project in Shirak and Gegharkunik Marzes](#): An initiative to increase women's economic empowerment by introducing environmentally friendly solar cooking in

adult education centers in Georgia. The project's main objective is to support the adoption of environmentally friendly solar cooking in Georgia by promoting the use of solar energy as a sustainable natural resource. To this end, solar cookers were distributed to five Adult Education Centres in Georgia, and ecological counseling services were provided in these centers. The project was a significant achievement, which was recognized by EAEA with the Grundtvig Award¹⁵ for Adult Education and Green Transformation for 2023. This project has made a valuable contribution in the field of sustainability and education to increase women's economic empowerment and promote environmentally friendly technologies.

Documentaries and Films: Documentaries such as "An Inconvenient Truth", "Chasing Ice," and "Before the Flood" are powerful tools to raise awareness of climate change and emphasize the urgency of the issue. By combining scientific evidence with compelling stories, these documentaries offer viewers the opportunity to better understand and grasp the seriousness of the climate change problem.

¹⁵ [EAEA Grundtvig Award 2023 highlights best practices in the green transition](#)