

# NEWSLETTER

News and Updates on the Erasmus+ Project



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DISCOVERING A SUSTAINABLE MINDSET

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## Editorial

The joint work on the Erasmus+ project SysMind is developing dynamically. Online meetings are held regularly. The individual partners report on their pedagogical experiences and developments in the area of sustainability in connection with spirituality. International meetings also take place in person. In Spain, Fundación Monte Mediterraneo organized the 3rd Transnational Meeting in conjunction with the LTT1 workshop. A wonderful location, good organization and interesting topics awaited the participants in Dehesa San Francisco. Eight months later, partners from various countries attended the LTT meeting in Vienna. This time the organizer was the Hochschule für Agrar- und Umweltpädagogik in Vienna. The participants were able to experience, among others outdoor pedagogy, green pedagogy, and PILGRIM pedagogy from a spiritual perspective in a dense and interesting program. Within this newsletter, some LTT participants share their personal experiences and reflections.

An important part of the work was completed - the creation of the curriculum for SysMind. We report on the results of the curriculum in this newsletter. The last six months of intensive work on the MOOC program are lying ahead of us. Some inspirations to start working with the MOOC and for creating the articles for this program was compiled for us here.

We wish all our partners and your stakeholders an enjoyable and inspiring lecture.

Your **Newsletter-Team**

of the University College of Christian Churches of Teacher Education in Vienna

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Transnational Meeting in Spain

### A valuable conference venue close to the desert

The meeting in Spain consisted of two parts: the Transnational Meeting and the LTT workshop. It was organized by the "Fundación Monte Mediterráneo" at their Dehesa. The dehesa is a cultural landscape that is developed from the Mediterranean hard-leaved forest through human use. Cultivation and livestock farming has created a park-like landscape consisting mainly of sprawling cork and holm oaks, meadows, and pastures. Today, the traditional use of the dehesa is severely threatened by increasing globalization, the intensification of agriculture, ongoing rural exodus and climate change. All these aspects lead to a massive decline of this site-adapted agricultural use. The Fundación Monte Mediterráneo manages the Dehesa San Francisco ecologically and sustainably according to traditional cultivation. In addition to traditional organic animal husbandry of native breeds, sustainable forestry is practiced.

The Fundación Monte Mediterráneo has a training center and invites all interested school classes to spend valuable time at the Dehesa and to deepen and personally experience the above-mentioned topics.



## The program in Spain



### The program of the Transnational Meeting in Spain

During our meeting, which took place from 27 to 28 March 2023, we finalized our work on the curriculum, and elaborated competencies and contents for LTT2 and LTT3. Further on, we dealt with highlighting different perceptions, diversity of sensory perceptions (as an example of diversity) and accessibility in teaching sustainability and systemic thinking. Finally, the digital education tool MOOC was introduced and the participants discussed about possibilities, limitations and quality of MOOCs.

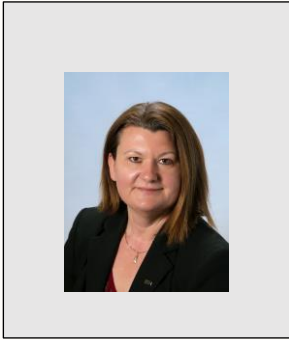
### The main topics of the LTT 1 workshop in Spain

The LTT 1 workshop in Spain was held from 30 March – 1 April, 2023. The main topics of this meeting were, among others: sustainability and systemic thinking, highlighting different perceptions and the diversity of sensory perception (as an example of diversity of cultural or religious backgrounds). The participants themselves were actively involved: teachers from Vienna, for example, presented a blended learning concept called *SUS-MIND Experts*. The limitations and possibilities for implementing the *ecological footprint* into teaching were also discussed. The next important topic was: *Where do our values come from?* The participants reflected on their own value development with focus on religious/cultural (/family) background. During the workshop, teaching-learning settings were elaborated in groups or individually, already considering the learnt aspects. In the post-Online Session of LTT1, these results were presented – a great variety of fantastic ideas how to address sustainability in different settings!

## LTT Workshop in Spain - Highlights



## LTT in Spain: A participant's reflection



The workshop at the Dehesa San Francisco in Spain on the topic of sustainability - a question of technology, economy or values? Efficiency and consistency or justice, solidarity, tolerance - was an inspiring experience...

a) Our insights were diverse. We learned that sustainability depends not only on technological advances or economic measures, but also on our individual values and attitudes. It is important that we take our actions and decisions in line with our values in order to create a sustainable future.

b) The workshop made us think intensively about the topic of sustainability. We realized that it is not just about efficiency and consistency, but also about justice, solidarity and tolerance. These values are crucial to building a sustainable society in which everyone has equal opportunities and no one is excluded.

c) The methods used during the workshop were very effective. Through discussions, group work and practical exercises, we were able to share our thoughts and ideas and learn from each other. The diversity of the participants allowed us to look at different perspectives and develop new approaches to solutions.

d) The workshops definitely contributed to the main goal of developing a sustainable mindset. By thinking deeply about the topic and reflecting on our own values, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainability. The practical exercises helped us to put our findings into practice and plan concrete steps for a more sustainable future.

e) As further suggestions, regular follow-up meetings or online platforms could be set up to maintain the exchange and cooperation between the participants. In addition, more workshops on specific topics related to sustainability could be offered to further deepen knowledge and awareness.

Overall, the project so far has been an enriching experience that has inspired me to rethink my mindset and actions in relation to sustainability. It has become clear that sustainability is not just a question of technology or economics, but also depends heavily on our values and our willingness to work together. Only through a holistic understanding and action can we create a sustainable future for generations to come.

Sigrid Bittner

Vienna Business School Akademiestraße



## LTT2 Workshop in Vienna - program

The LTT 2 (Learning-Teaching-Training-Activity) took place in Vienna from November 15 to 17, 2023. The main topic of this meeting was:

*Diversity Management for a Sustainable Lifestyle - Intercultural Competence: Professional Culture, Interreligiousness and Sustainability.*

The organizer was the University of Agricultural and Environmental Pedagogy in Vienna.

The days of joint work were filled with the following content:

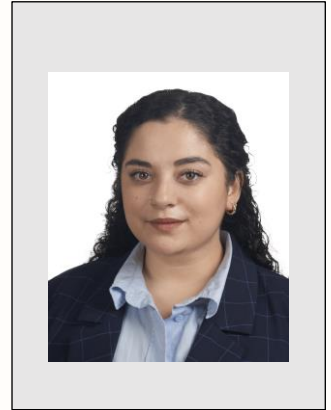
- *Green Pedagogy* – introduction, inputs and working on own settings (Willi Linder),
- *Outdoor Pedagogy* - Possibilities and limitations of using nature/outdoor for building a group, inputs and working on own settings (Klaus Karpf)
- *The pedagogy of PILGRIM* - Presentation by PILGRIM founder Dr. Johann Hisch, Practical examples based on Projects from the schools BRG Purkersdorf and Vienna Business School, inputs and working on own settings, presentation in plenum
- *Globalization, ecological crisis and Eastern Christian Responses* – experiences from the Ukrainian Catholic University (Oleh Kindii)
- *Sharing and caring: one common home – the earth* - Getting inspiration from the experiences of Indian Jesuit, Dr. Lumnesh Joseph, SJ, regarding constructive dealing with cultural and religious diversity when teaching ecology: philosophical background and potential pedagogical tools,
- *Diversity Management* - Introduction to the topic and some tools (Sabrina Luimpöck)

## LTT2 Workshop in Vienna - Highlights



## LTT 2 in Vienna: A participant's reflection

In the world of education and professional development, fostering a sustainable mindset is essential, especially at a time when the link between climate change, economic activities, and lifestyles is undeniable. As part of the ERASMUS+ Project "SysMind – Developing a Sustainable Mind-Set," I had the privilege of participating in the second module of the international blended learning course, which tackles the challenge of engaging educators in the development of a more sustainable way of thinking. The course commenced with an inspiring workshop on outdoor education led by Klaus Karpf, emphasizing the importance of nature experiences in developing social and personal competencies.



This practical approach laid a solid foundation for the subsequent days, during which the intricate aspects of sustainability were explored from various angles. Our second day included a visit to a member school of the PILGRIM Network, BRG Purkersdorf, a foray into the realm of applied sustainability. Here, student projects impressively demonstrated how sustainability concepts can be implemented in education, highlighting the competencies gained from these projects. Lumnesh Joseph's workshop on managing cultural and religious diversity in the context of ecology revealed to me that everyone has their own, often spiritually influenced, approach to sustainability. This perspective broadened my understanding of the importance of considering diverse viewpoints and backgrounds in education.

The theoretical insights, complemented by practical examples and framework lectures like those on diversity management, proved immensely valuable for our work in the educational sector. They illustrated how various cultures, spiritualities, and backgrounds can serve as a common denominator in teaching sustainability, fostering strengths in the classroom and promoting mutual respect. The international composition of our group added dynamic layers to our discussions and group activities. Although there were occasional language challenges, the exchange with participants from different countries was incredibly enriching. I even found myself wishing for more opportunities for such international interactions.

Overall, the module was a valuable experience that provided me not only with new knowledge but also with practical approaches for integrating sustainability into the educational field. It broadened my perspective and made me look forward to our next module in 2024.

Sarah Ramkissoon

Oikokredit

## Getting started with the MOOC

### The Sustainable Mindset – MOOC

The project team has entered the phase of MOOC preparation – but what is a MOOC?

(M)assive (O)pen (O)nline (C)ourses are an internet-based learning tool for self-directed learning and are usually accessible without any restrictions like limited participant numbers or admission requirements. MOOCs can mostly be classified as cMOOCs (didactic principles based on connectivism with many design options through participants) and xMOOCs. The SustainableMindset-MOOC of the SysMind project will belong to the second classification. Typical elements of xMOOCs are clear learning objectives and a given structure. The content will be prepared in the form of short videos, tasks, documents, and quizzes. Exchange with other course participants will be possible by the use of forums. xMOOCs are usually accompanied by the course creator for a couple of weeks. Afterward, communication only happens with other course participants via forums, e.g. sharing experiences or giving feedback on tasks that were fulfilled. The learning process is self-directed, which means that the participants themselves decide on the frequency and extent of learning, as there are no deadlines given by the MOOC.

A MOOC is an appropriate and well-suitable tool to spread the findings of the SysMind project, because:

1. As MOOCs usually are within the format of (O)pen (E)ducational (R)esources, they perfectly fulfill and support the Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 to ensure access to quality education for all ([Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)). Any interested person with internet access can log in and participate at no cost. The publication language will be English, but with translations in the languages of the specific partner countries, so it is usable for a broad community.
2. The unit structure allows for an individual choice of work topic by the participants. The possibility to work on single units chosen from the whole MOOC allows for additional target groups as it will be easy to integrate (units of) the MOOC in more versatile teaching/training settings. Knowledge-based institutions for example could focus on the unit(s) dealing with values, approaches, and cultural/philosophical content to complete their understanding of sustainable mindset development.
3. The option for providing different languages at the same time (at least for the videos) addresses also persons who are not very familiar with the English language. Additionally, units of the MOOC might be used within English courses and lessons (also apart from the context of vocational training, e.g. in secondary schools within the context of personality development, ethics, geography, and biology of regular language learning) and then be accompanied by the teaching persons.
4. It is a modern e-learning tool, based on well-proven techniques and programs – in the case of the SustainableMindset-MOOC, it will be published on a Moodle-based platform. Moodle is used by many educational institutions and universities in different countries for learning and exchange activities.

We are really looking forward to summing up and preparing the findings and experiences of the SysMind project within this great tool and making them available to all interested persons regardless of borders regarding countries, cultures, values, subject fields, and religions!

Silke Schaumberger

Project Management

Massive Open Online Course

## Curriculum - results

### The SysMind Curriculum – current status

The aim of the SysMind project is to help teachers and trainers in vocational training by giving them support and ideas of how to find a common and appreciative way with their diverse learning groups for more understanding and acting towards sustainability. But it is not only to focus on “how to teach sustainability issues best?” – the specific SysMind approach includes also the spiritual, religious, and cultural spheres, because we as humans often do not only take decisions due to pure facts. In contrary, we are massively influenced by our personal experiences as well as the values we were taught or inspired to by family, friends and society. Therefore, it is important for sustainability teaching persons to also consider this – it plays a crucial role in the ability of learners to open their mind for sustainability issues. Getting to know their own mind-set helps teachers and trainers to better understand their trainees and support them to become aware of their values and approaches, which might oppose sustainable activities.

Based on the analysis of already existing pedagogic approaches, methods and tools, the SysMind partners elaborated a curriculum together, trying to cover all the necessities to address the aspects mentioned before. The SysMind Curriculum is divided into three modules (Learning-Teaching-Training (LTT) activities):

#### **Module/LTT 1: Sustainability - a question of technology, economy or values? Efficiency and consistency or justice, solidarity, tolerance**

Contents of this module are e.g. the ecological footprint, Sustainable development goals, fact-based economy and ecology versus values, and awareness training to reflect the own approach.

#### **Module/LTT 2: Diversity Management for a sustainable lifestyle – Intercultural competence: professional culture, interreligiousness and sustainability**

As a next step different inter-and intrapersonal attitudes as well as the spiritual, religious, philosophical and cultural dimensions of mind-set development were thematised. Pedagogic concepts like Green Pedagogy and the connection of sustainability with spirituality (e.g. PILGRIM) are introduced. Another very important topic in this module is Diversity Management.

#### **Module/LTT3: Evaluation of sustainability strategies in vocational education and training - Assessment of learning processes for sustainability.**

Contemporary assessment and evaluation methods complete the curriculum.

The SysMind Curriculum is currently implemented as a Blended Learning Course. Every partner was asked to designate up to three participants to this course. Every module consists of a pre- and post-online session and a three-day workshop. The first two workshops were already held (please see the articles written by participants within this Newsletter), the post-online session of Module 2 and Module 3 are yet to come.

After the participation in this Blended Learning Course the trainees will have gained a bundle of specific competences like e.g.:

- Review their own approach/cultural, religious or spiritual background and deduce actions towards sustainability, education on sustainable development as well as professional behavior



## Curriculum results...

- Identify cultural/religious diversity in learning groups and work with diversity based on diversity management in an appreciative way;
- Support students to become aware of their own mindset;
- Develop analytical sensitivity regarding students' mindsets and cultural, religious or spiritual backgrounds and apply settings to support sustainable thinking;
- Detect and implement appropriate evaluation methods and techniques;
- Assess students' sustainable development competences and learning outcomes;

The SysMind Curriculum and its implementation as a Blended Learning Course form the base for the development of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The experiences gained by the implementation and also the feedback of the participants will be used to update the curriculum before designing the MOOC, if necessary.

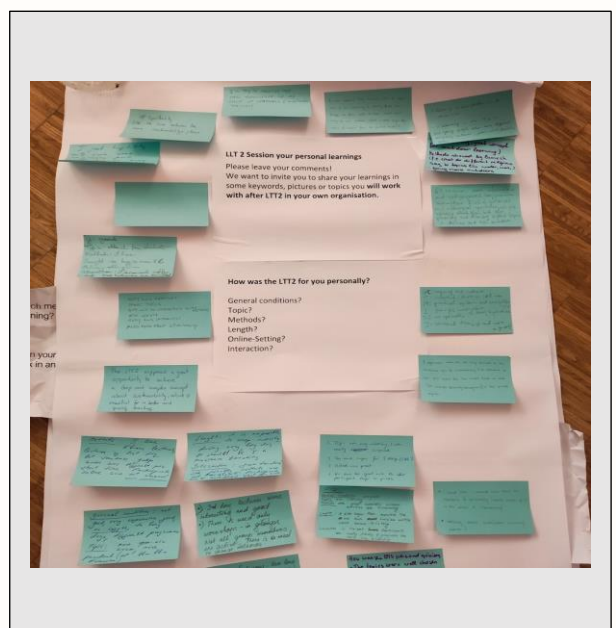
Silke Schaumberger,  
Project Management



## Quality Management (QM)

Following the end of the Covid pandemic and the possibility of no longer working together exclusively online - even on international projects - quality assurance has been adapted a little in the last six months. The highlight for QUA was the evaluation of LTT2, which took place in Vienna in November. The evaluation took place on site in order to address the participants directly and actively involvethem. The questions were based on the online survey methods and focused on knowledge buildingduring the LLT, the learning environments and the methods chosen by the lecturers as well as the possible transfer to the Mooc, which will be implemented as a project result. Anonymized feedback was obtained using sticky notes and a flipchart. The picture illustrates the wealth of helpful feedback.

Elke Szalaj, QM, SysMind



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