



Project no. 2023-1-AT01-KA210-VET-000153976

***GreenCert for VET: Development of criteria for the Certification of
Green Education Centers in Europe***

Erasmus+ Programme

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**Report with the findings of focus groups regarding
the formulation of the UNESCO-UNEVOC criteria
EVBB**



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Data Collection Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**

- **Belgium:**

- Suggested including fields to specify the type of organization (e.g., university, vocational school, training centre) to better categorize participating institutions.
- Recommended that all contact information fields adhere to GDPR compliance, marking optional fields to ensure institutions don't feel pressured to disclose unnecessary data.

- **Austria:**

- Emphasized the importance of adding a secondary contact person field to ensure continuity if the main contact leaves the institution.
- Suggested adding a field for international certifications, such as ISO or EMAS, as this could enhance global recognition of GreenCert's standards and credibility.

- **Greece:**

- Recommended adding a brief project summary to the website link, allowing external visitors and evaluators to gain a quick understanding of the institution's commitment to sustainability.

- **Recommendations:**

- Type of Organization: Add a required field for the type of organization (university, vocational school, training centre, etc.) to categorize institution types effectively.
- Primary and Secondary Contacts: Include fields for both a primary and secondary contact to ensure smooth communication if staff changes occur.
- GDPR Compliance: Mark fields like phone numbers and email addresses as optional to ensure institutions comply with GDPR while providing essential details.
- Website Link with Project Summary: Encourage institutions to include a link to their website with a brief project summary to enhance transparency for external audiences.

- International Certification Status: Add an optional field for international certifications, like ISO or EMAS, to support institutions interested in aligning with global sustainability standards.

Motivation Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**

- **Belgium:**

- Suggested keeping the mission statement simple and clearly aligned with sustainability goals.
- Emphasized that the statement should genuinely reflect the institution's sustainability focus and be easy to interpret for all stakeholders.

- **Austria:**

- Recommended that institutions include examples of previous successful green projects or initiatives within the mission statement or motivation criteria. This addition would provide tangible evidence of the institution's experience and active involvement in sustainability efforts.

- **Greece:**

- Recommended adding a brief project summary to the website link, allowing external visitors and evaluators to gain a quick understanding of the institution's commitment to sustainability.

- **Recommendations:**

- Simple and Aligned Mission Statement: Ensure the mission statement is straightforward, easily interpretable, and clearly aligned with the institution's sustainability objectives.
- Management Endorsement: Make explicit that the mission statement should be endorsed by the institution's leadership to reinforce its commitment to sustainability.
- Alignment with International Standards: Include a section for institutions to indicate alignment with frameworks like the SDGs, GreenComp, or similar international standards.
- Examples of Past Projects: Allow institutions to reference examples of past green projects or initiatives, providing tangible evidence of their commitment to green practices.

Project Description Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**

- **Belgium:**

- Emphasized keeping criteria clear and focused on capturing core aspects of green skills training, without adding unnecessary complexity.
- Recommended assessing scalability and sustainability to ensure projects have long-term viability and can be replicated or expanded in other contexts.

- **Austria:**

- Suggested that including examples of common greening practices (e.g., greening the campus or curriculum) would provide clear guidelines and expectations for institutions.
- Emphasized the need for long-term environmental impact assessment methods to measure the project's lasting benefits, including specific sustainability metrics.
- Proposed including an element of gender inclusivity in green skills training, as certain institutions had observed lower female participation in green-related programs.

- **Greece:**

- Recommended adding an evaluation method to assess the long-term environmental benefits of projects, such as reductions in energy consumption, waste, or carbon footprint.
- Proposed an option for third-party audits or external validation of green credentials to strengthen credibility and objectivity.
- Suggested that institutions partner with local environmental organizations to build stronger community connections and support project success.
- Emphasized creating opportunities for student involvement in the project to foster engagement and skill-building.

- **Recommendations:**

- Greening Practices Examples: Provide examples of greening practices (e.g., greening the campus, workplace, or curriculum) to clarify project expectations.
- Scalability and Sustainability: Require institutions to describe the scalability and sustainability of their projects, indicating potential for future replication.
- Long-term Impact Evaluation: Add a criterion for assessing long-term environmental impact with specific sustainability metrics (e.g., reductions in waste, energy consumption).
- Gender Inclusivity in Green Skills: Include an optional field for institutions to detail gender representation and measures taken to encourage female participation in green skills training.
- Third-Party Audit Option: Allow institutions to choose third-party audits or external validation for added credibility.
- Local Environmental Partnerships: Encourage partnerships with local environmental organizations to reinforce community support and impact.
- Student Engagement: Create opportunities within the project description for institutions to detail student involvement in eco-friendly practices and skill-building activities.

Target Groups Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**
 - **Belgium:**
 - Suggested clarifying the term “partners” to encompass regional stakeholders and educational partners involved in supporting green initiatives.
 - **Austria:**
 - Recommended adding school administrators as a target group, as they play a critical role in implementing and overseeing green initiatives.
 - Suggested including external certification providers to support the GreenCert certification process and bring expertise.
 - **Greece:**

- Proposed expanding target groups to include government bodies and environmental NGOs to foster a broader range of partnerships.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Clarify “Partners” as “Partners/Stakeholders”: Use the term “partners/stakeholders” to ensure inclusivity, covering a range of collaborators such as regional stakeholders and educational partners.
 - School Administrators: Add school administrators to the target groups as they oversee project execution and implementation.
 - Certification Providers: Include external certification providers who may assist in validating green credentials.
 - Government Bodies and Environmental NGOs: Expand target groups to include government bodies and environmental NGOs to foster broader collaborations.

1. Team & Cooperation Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**
 - **Belgium:**
 - Stressed the need for a dedicated green skills coordinator and a structured team to ensure organized management of green initiatives.
 - **Austria:**
 - Emphasized that the green skills coordinator should ideally have knowledge of frameworks like GreenComp, SDGs, and related policy areas to effectively lead green efforts.
 - Recommended a deputy or alternate coordinator to ensure continuity if the primary coordinator is unavailable.
 - When ranking cooperation criteria, participants prioritized regional partner collaboration, followed by the importance of a green skills coordinator and networking events.
 - **Greece:**

- Highlighted the importance of having a green skills coordinator skilled in networking, policy knowledge, and partnership building to maximize collaboration opportunities.
- Prioritized regional partnerships and emphasized the importance of hosting events that foster collaboration and the sharing of green knowledge.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Green Skills Coordinator Role: The green skills coordinator should ideally have expertise in sustainability frameworks (e.g., GreenComp, SDGs) and experience in building partnerships.
 - Deputy Coordinator: Include a deputy coordinator or alternate to ensure continuity in green initiatives.
 - Team Expertise and Organization: Provide details on team qualifications and organizational structure to support efficient project execution.
 - Regional Partnerships and Networking Events: Highlight the importance of regional partnerships and networking events to strengthen cooperation.
 - Public Relations Efforts: Encourage institutions to conduct public relations activities that promote green skills awareness within and outside the institution.

Project Development & Strategic Goals Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**
 - **Belgium:**
 - Suggested setting strategic priorities around increasing green skills and sustainability awareness among educators and students.
 - **Austria:**
 - Emphasized the importance of strategic goals focused on climate change awareness, building green skills, and fostering a strong stakeholder ecosystem.
 - **Greece:**

- Recommended developing partnerships with green businesses and tech companies, expanding green job training, and creating sustainability-focused courses to support long-term goals.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Strategic Priorities for 2023-2026: Define strategic goals that focus on green skills training, sustainability awareness, and creating a network of supportive stakeholders.
 - Action Plan: Include an action plan outlining how these goals will be achieved over the specified period.
 - Grant Development Goals:
 - €25,000 Grant: Specify development goals and cost centres if this funding amount is awarded.
 - €50,000 Grant: Outline expanded goals and cost centres for a larger funding amount.
 - Climate Change and Sustainability Awareness: Include climate change awareness and sustainability practices as essential components of strategic goals.

Success & Impact Criteria

- **Feedback Overview:**
 - **Belgium:**
 - Recommended using objective metrics, such as the number of green projects and regional community engagement, and incorporating regular polls to measure ongoing impact.
 - **Austria:**
 - Suggested metrics like the number of individuals trained in green skills, partnerships formed, and an award or recognition system to celebrate achievements.
 - **Greece:**

- Proposed measuring reductions in campus energy consumption and waste, tracking student engagement, and pursuing recognition from green accreditation bodies.

- **Recommendations:**
 - Objective Metrics: Define quantifiable success indicators, including the number of green projects, partnerships, students trained, and reductions in energy and waste.
 - Community and Regional Engagement: Use polls and surveys to track community and regional engagement levels.
 - Recognition and Awards: Organize events or awards to recognize institutions that excel in green initiatives.
 - Student Engagement: Track student involvement in green projects as a critical measure of impact and success.
 - Conclusion & Next Steps
 - The combined feedback from the Belgian, Austrian, and Greek Focus Groups provided a thorough foundation for updating the GreenCert Certification Criteria. This review emphasizes key areas such as institutional transparency, inclusivity in training, strategic partnerships, and the alignment of local initiatives with international standards. Based on this comprehensive input, the criteria will undergo a final validation process to ensure they effectively support the certification of sustainable educational institutions.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The combined feedback from the Belgian, Austrian, and Greek Focus Groups provided a thorough foundation for updating the GreenCert Certification Criteria. This review emphasizes key areas such as institutional transparency, inclusivity in training, strategic partnerships, and the alignment of local initiatives with international standards. Based on this comprehensive input, the criteria will undergo a final validation process to ensure they effectively support the certification of sustainable educational institutions.