

Statement of intent for secondary schools – “Ecological and Social Security in Education” programme

Short version:

“Ecological and Social Security in Education” initiative

1. Context and challenges. Faced with the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and social inequalities, education in Luxembourg must integrate ecological and social transformation across its work. ESD is no longer simply an additional module, but an essential means of educating citizens who can understand the world’s complexity and act for a sustainable future.

2. Objectives and educational contributions

- Cross-curricular integration: embed sustainability issues in all subjects through interdisciplinary projects, active methods and real case studies.
- 21st-century competencies: develop students’ critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and civic engagement.
- Continuing teacher education: modular professional development pathways certified through micro-badges (Open Badges), jointly developed with IFEN and SCRIPT.
- Innovation and experimentation: methodological and financial support for pilot projects, such as educational gardens and a mobile fablab, to jointly create new teaching practices.

3. Benefits for secondary schools

- Recognition of staff through recognised microcredentials, strengthening teachers’ motivation and professional profiles.

- Student engagement and visibility through concrete projects, with awards and exhibitions of their achievements.
- Local connections through partnerships with NGOs, municipalities and national platforms such as BNE.lu, strengthening the school's role as a local sustainability actor.
- Institutional recognition: an "ESD pilot school" label, special mentions and media coverage recognising the school's work.

4. Ways to participate. Each school chooses its level of involvement from the following:

- Hosting events (training, forums, workshops)
- Leading innovative projects (educational experiments)
- Including staff in training cohorts
- Access to the network and collaborative platform for sharing resources and experience.

5. Alignment with national priorities. The programme is fully consistent with MENJE strategies for ESD, cross-curricular competencies and innovative teaching, the 2030 Agenda (SDG 4.7), and European initiatives such as Erasmus+ and microcredentials. It contributes to educational quality, social inclusion and a considered digital transition.

The initiative therefore offers a structured, flexible framework enabling schools, whether already active or just starting, to strengthen their educational plans, recognise their teams and involve students in meaningful learning with a future perspective.

Extended version

Introduction

In the current context, the 2025–2027 “Ecological and Social Security in Education” programme offers every Luxembourg secondary school a distinctive opportunity to strengthen its educational mission. This national programme aims to support secondary schools, whether already pioneering education for sustainable development (ESD) or considering taking this path, in jointly addressing the ecological and social challenges of the 21st century. Its ambition is to embed sustainable development more firmly at the heart of school life while mobilising the educational community around shared goals. This statement of intent explains the programme's relevance to school leadership, detailing its context and challenges, educational objectives, expected benefits and practical participation arrangements, in line with Luxembourg's national priorities.

Context: the educational challenges of ecological and social transformation

Our society faces an unprecedented ecological and social emergency. Climate change, resource depletion and biodiversity loss, together with the resulting economic and social inequalities, pose a major challenge. Ecological and social redirection, meaning a profound transformation towards a sustainable and mutually supportive development model, is now unavoidable. Education plays a decisive role: finding and implementing sustainable solutions depends on education and awareness among younger generations and the wider public alike.

Luxembourg's education system is fully aware of these issues. ESD has become an essential school responsibility, helping young people understand the complexity of social problems, encouraging changes in behaviour and responsible citizenship for present and future generations. As the ministry recently stated, environmental, economic and social challenges require us to “develop critical thinking among young people, and those who are older, so that they acquire the attitudes and competencies needed to engage actively as responsible citizens who show solidarity”. In other words, the aim is to educate agents of change who can understand the contemporary world's complexity and develop innovative, sustainable responses.

Students themselves have strong expectations in this area. A University of Luxembourg survey found that 84% of final-year students were very interested in ecological issues and that a clear majority wanted schools to address sustainable development through innovative methods, such as interdisciplinary projects, field visits and discussions with external stakeholders. The “Ecological and Social Security in Education” programme responds directly to this movement. It offers a structured framework to meet these expectations and give ecological and social transition a stronger place in each school's educational project.

The programme's educational objectives and contributions

The 2025–2027 programme has two objectives: to strengthen ecological and social security in education by ensuring schools prepare students effectively for sustainable development challenges, and to equip teachers and schools with the educational tools to do so. This is reflected in several complementary areas of action:

- **Integrating sustainable development into teaching:** the programme helps schools embed ecological and social themes across lessons and school projects. Rather than adding to the official syllabus, it integrates them across existing subjects. Climate, biodiversity, energy, international solidarity and social justice can all be addressed in science, economics, geography, philosophy or citizenship education in connection with the curricula. The approach prioritises active, innovative methods: project-based learning, concrete case studies, debate and real-world

problem-solving. This is consistent with developments in Luxembourg's school programmes, where "project-based teaching is encouraged and current topics such as digitalisation and sustainable development [...] will be strengthened in the curricula". Students thus benefit from motivating, contextualised teaching that develops both subject knowledge and civic awareness.

- **Developing student competencies:** the programme aims to equip students with 21st-century competencies. Beyond academic knowledge, it cultivates critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, initiative and civic engagement around sustainability goals. These cross-curricular competencies, including learning to learn, social and civic skills, initiative and cultural awareness, are now recognised as essential for young people to "thrive in a changing society and meet present and future challenges", especially ecological transition. ESD is a particularly effective means: by confronting students with complex, real problems, it enables them to "understand the complexity of the world in its economic, ecological and social dimensions and participate in the democratic process". The programme will provide teachers with educational resources to develop the attitudes and values needed for a sustainable future: responsibility, solidarity, respect for the environment, open-mindedness and initiative.
- **Teacher training and support:** a substantial professional development plan for educational teams lies at the heart of the programme. Teachers are the main drivers of educational change, so the programme provides continuing training focused on ESD, ecological transition and innovative teaching practices. In close cooperation with IFEN and the National Youth Service (SNJ), training sessions on sustainable development will be offered across the country. Led by experts and practitioners, they will help participants acquire scientific knowledge, for example on climate change, the circular economy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and discover practical teaching tools. Teachers will learn to design interdisciplinary sequences, lead student projects and work with external partners. They can also exchange experience with colleagues from other schools, creating an active community of practice. Over time, each school will be able to rely on one or more trained, motivated teachers capable of spreading good practice internally.
- **Educational innovation and experimentation:** the "Ecological and Social Security in Education" programme is intended as a laboratory for educational innovation. It will encourage participating schools to launch pilot projects or educational experiments linked to ESD. Projects such as an educational garden, a video journal about local ecological transition or an "eco-citizenship" week in the school calendar will receive technical and methodological support. SCRIPT will be a partner, extending its work supporting grassroots initiatives. The aim is to jointly develop approaches with educational teams that, if effective, can later be extended to other schools. This builds on Luxembourg's tradition of participatory projects: in 2017, the "Sustainable school – school of tomorrow" forum brought together leadership and teachers from different schools to define a shared framework for a more sustainable school. Similarly, the present programme encourages each school to help shape tomorrow's educational solutions.

The programme therefore offers several educational benefits. It will update teaching practices by integrating contemporary issues, motivate students through concrete, meaningful learning, and develop teachers' competencies. ESD is no longer a marginal option: it belongs at the heart of quality education for the future. The "Ecological and Social Security in Education" programme provides a structured, credible and ambitious framework for making this vision a reality in our secondary schools from the start of the 2025 school year.

Benefits for participating schools

Joining the programme will bring tangible benefits to your school. Beyond contributing to the common good, each participating school can benefit directly in terms of staff development, student experience and local visibility. The main strengths are:

- **Teachers' professional development:** participation offers your teaching staff a high-level continuing education opportunity. Training sessions and workshops will broaden their educational and subject-specific competencies. They will develop expertise on current issues such as climate, sustainable development and social inclusion, and on active methods such as project-based learning, competency assessment and debate facilitation. Microcredentials awarded to participants will formally recognise this development and enhance their professional pathways. Microcredentials attest to the learning outcomes of short courses, such as a specialist module, and offer a flexible way to recognise specific skills. Teachers can therefore obtain official recognition of their new abilities within the school and in their careers. It has also been shown that schools promoting wellbeing, resilience and cross-curricular skills through positive education improve individual student performance and overall school performance. Investing in teachers' ESD training therefore benefits motivation, results and the wider school climate.
- **Recognition of student projects:** the programme provides a framework for presenting and recognising student-led initiatives. Class projects, supervised individual work and extracurricular sustainability clubs can gain greater visibility. Dedicated events, such as forums, exhibitions and competitions within the programme network, will enable students to present their projects to a wider audience, meet other engaged young people and receive useful feedback. The strongest projects may receive official recognition through labels or specific microcertificates, for example a "Sustainability Ambassador" badge for particularly committed students. This recognition is highly motivating: it gives meaning to learning and encourages positive action. For the school, it highlights young people's creativity and commitment and enhances its image. It also fits the existing national movement in which many organisations offer activities that question ways of life and encourage the acquisition, from an early age, of competencies for a fairer, more sustainable world. By participating, your school will join those bringing ESD to life through inspiring student projects.

- **Local roots and partnerships:** another major benefit is stronger local engagement and the development of external partnerships. The programme facilitates cooperation with many civil-society and institutional stakeholders. Your school can build close relationships with sustainability organisations, including environmental NGOs, solidarity associations and local agencies, as well as relevant public administrations such as ministries and municipalities. Partners will contribute resources and expertise through classroom visits, educational trips, jointly organised events and short placements. Luxembourg already has a rich network of organisations engaged in ESD, as illustrated by the annual ESD Fair bringing together ministries, NGOs, schools, educational services, youth centres and others to exchange good practice. The programme connects your school directly with this network, particularly through the national BNE.lu platform, which bridges ESD organisations and the educational community. These collaborations both enrich the educational offer through outside contributions and local projects, and strengthen the school's role as a local sustainability actor. Teaching activities can have visibility and impact beyond school walls, connected to local communities and territorial issues. These relationships may also open access to additional support, such as municipal grants for ecological initiatives, and improve the school's reputation among families and the wider public.
- **Institutional recognition and visibility:** active participation in the 2025–2027 programme will bring recognition to your school. Particularly committed schools may receive “ESD pilot school” status or a special mention. This could take the form of a ministerial label or a certification the school can display, extending the “Sustainable School” label under development in Luxembourg. The programme will also highlight participating schools' good practices through national communications, such as MENJE website articles, conference presentations and experience-sharing in the ESD newsletter. Your school will gain national visibility as an example that can inspire others. This can strengthen the pride of staff, students and parents in belonging to an innovative, committed school. Leading on these themes also makes the school more attractive in an educational landscape where distinctive educational projects matter.

Joining the “Ecological and Social Security in Education” programme therefore adds concrete value to your school. It strengthens teachers' competencies and students' motivation, broadens partnerships and visibility, and contributes actively to sustainable development goals. It is an investment that benefits everyone, both today and in the future of your school community.

How a secondary school can participate

The programme is designed to be flexible enough to suit each school's situation and ambitions. All schools, whether already deeply engaged in ESD or just beginning, can choose the forms of participation that suit them. The main options are:

- **Host programme sessions:** interested schools can host key activities such as training, workshops and conferences. Your school might host an inter-school teacher training session, a regional meeting of student eco-representatives or a travelling exhibition on ecological transition. Hosting is a concrete way to participate: your own teachers and students can benefit without travelling, and you can showcase your initiatives. It also introduces the school and its projects to visiting educators, partners and, where appropriate, the public. The programme will provide logistical and methodological support. This option suits schools with appropriate facilities, such as meeting rooms and an auditorium, that wish to be open and share their resources. Distributing events across sites also strengthens the network by encouraging proximity and exchange between schools.
- **Take part in pilot projects:** your school can become a pilot school for one of the programme's themes or activities. This involves implementing a specific innovative project during 2025–2027, closely supported by the programme team and potentially transferable to other schools. Some pilot schools might develop an interdisciplinary “Ecological and Social Security” module within students' timetables, or test new forms of ecological school management, such as reducing canteen waste or creating a sustainable school mobility plan with students. Pilot schools receive enhanced support, including expert advice, start-up funding where needed and evaluation tools, and meet periodically to exchange with other pilots. This offers a chance to lead educational innovation. It requires commitment and a pioneering spirit, but the benefits in internal competencies and recognition are substantial. Luxembourg's experience demonstrates the value of working with pilot cohorts: the “Sustainable school – school of tomorrow” project brought together leadership and teachers from different schools in co-creation workshops to develop a shared framework. Likewise, joining the 2025–2027 pilots enables your school to develop new solutions alongside other innovative schools.
- **Include teachers in training cohorts:** even if your school does not wish to become an institutional pilot immediately, it can contribute substantially by sending staff to programme training. You can enrol one or more teachers and, where appropriate, educators or school leaders in the cohorts. Professionals from different schools will follow a progressive pathway together over two school years. Cohorts function as learning communities, combining in-person and online sessions, collaborative work and continuing support. Involving your teachers develops well-prepared ESD resource people who can then lead internal projects. A trained science teacher might create a new sustainability elective, or a trained educator coordinate a student environmental club. This flexible option particularly suits schools beginning in ESD: it gradually builds competencies and trained resource people without immediately reorganising the school. More experienced schools also benefit by widening their trained team or addressing new themes. Schools are expected to release participants for sessions, with ministerial support to facilitate cover if needed, and encourage them to apply their learning internally.

- **Networking and sharing through the platform:** regardless of the forms of involvement above, every participating school will have access to the collaborative platform and be invited to shared events, including launch days and annual reviews. Even without being a pilot or host, your school will be a full member of the network. You can share experience, learn from other schools and benefit from collective encouragement. The programme includes a digital space through the national ESD portal for resources, project sheets and peer discussion forums. This networking makes collective intelligence available to everyone: problems encountered and solutions developed will be shared to support mutual progress. Each school can contribute at its own scale by suggesting a project, asking a question or hosting peers to present an achievement. Cooperation between schools is the guiding principle, continuing the networking spirit that already makes the ESD Fair a successful gathering of Luxembourg's education-for-sustainable-development community.

In practice, a detailed schedule of participation opportunities will be shared at the start of the programme. Each school leadership team can then decide its level of involvement. Several options can be combined: a school might send two teachers for training, lead a concrete pilot project and host a thematic workshop in the second year. The programme team can help identify the combination best suited to your context and resources. What matters is that every school, small or large, general or technical, can find its place in this national initiative.

Compatibility with national and institutional priorities

The "Ecological and Social Security in Education" programme closely follows Luxembourg's strategic directions in education and sustainable development. Participation contributes to official priorities. The main areas of convergence are:

- **Education for sustainable development as a clear national priority:** Luxembourg's government has made ESD a major element of education policy for more than a decade. A national ESD strategy adopted in 2012 stated that education for sustainable development "has become an essential school responsibility". More recently, this commitment has been reflected in the annual BNE Fair (Bildung fir nohalteg Entwécklung), held since 2019 with support from the ministries responsible for education, environment and development cooperation, and in increasing integration of sustainability into school curricula. The Luxembourg 2030 National Sustainable Development Plan and commitments to the UN 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 4.7 on ESD, reinforce this requirement. Joining the programme contributes directly to these policies by embedding sustainable development goals in everyday education. Current curriculum modernisation explicitly calls for stronger sustainable development content in secondary education. The programme provides a practical means of achieving this by supporting school implementation. Activities carried out within this framework

will therefore be consistent with MENJE expectations and favourably recognised institutionally.

- **Cross-curricular competencies and innovative teaching:** national education priorities emphasise 21st-century competencies and educational innovation. The new government's 2023–2028 education programme, for example, calls for “further developing competencies as varied as creativity, collaboration and critical thinking [...] and encouraging teaching methods such as project-based learning”. This directly matches the approaches promoted by “Ecological and Social Security in Education”. ESD naturally develops cross-curricular competencies such as learning to learn, teamwork, solving complex problems, effective communication and civic initiative, all essential for future employment and responsible citizenship. The programme provides a framework to cultivate these competencies through concrete projects and active teaching methods. These approaches follow official guidance encouraging innovation, varied teaching methods and connections between schools and their surroundings. Participation therefore implements national recommendations for modern educational approaches and places your school among those driving the intended transformation.
- **Educational quality and student success:** engagement in sustainable development is not separate from schools' primary task of helping every student succeed. Many studies show that approaches centred on wellbeing, active participation and meaningful learning encourage engagement and ultimately academic success. MENJE promotes a comprehensive view of educational quality in which developing fulfilled, responsible citizens goes together with acquiring foundational knowledge. This initiative fully embraces that view. Developing critical thinking, engagement and a broad understanding strengthens young people's motivation and ability to learn across subjects. Students who understand real-world issues are more likely to engage in science or language lessons because they see their relevance to their lives and futures. Participation therefore invests in better teaching quality, consistent with the ministry's goal of “a more effective and equitable school”. The programme will also include scientific monitoring in partnership with the University of Luxembourg and SCRIPT to assess impact, following the national priority of grounding education policy in research and monitoring. Your initiatives can benefit from this external perspective and contribute to knowledge about good ESD practice.
- **Cross-cutting priorities:** inclusion and innovation. The programme also addresses Luxembourg's wider priorities, including social inclusion and digital transition. ESD has a strong social dimension: reducing inequality, respecting diversity, and promoting local and international solidarity. Projects strengthen school cohesion, offering meaningful roles to all students, including those less comfortable with conventional approaches, and raise awareness of social justice. This supports the government's aim of fair transitions that leave nobody behind. The programme will also use digital tools thoughtfully to connect stakeholders, share educational resources and potentially deliver projects such as virtual exchanges with other schools or online learning. This is consistent with the ongoing digital transition in

education. It also fits broader European initiatives such as Erasmus+ 2021–2027, which gives particular importance to ecological and digital transitions and democratic participation. Joining the programme therefore contributes simultaneously to ESD, educational innovation, inclusion and citizenship.

Conclusion

Dear school leadership team, joining the “Ecological and Social Security in Education” programme (2025–2027) offers an ambitious yet accessible opportunity to advance your school. It is ambitious because it places your school at the forefront of an educational movement essential to the future: preparing young people to build a sustainable, fair and mutually supportive society. It is accessible because the programme supports each school step by step, respecting its starting point and recognising its strengths. Whether already highly active in ESD or just beginning, your school can find a tailored pathway supported by a national network of partners and resources.

The encouraging tone of this note reflects the programme’s spirit: a collective endeavour supported at the highest institutional level, with established credibility. This engagement is a means of strengthening your school’s quality and visibility. Investing in teachers’ training, meaningful student projects and connections with the surrounding territory lays the foundations for lasting educational, human and civic success.

The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth strongly encourages you to take this opportunity. Further communication will provide practical details on joining the programme, including training registration and the activity schedule. We are already available to answer questions or discuss how best to involve your school.

Together, let us make Luxembourg’s secondary schools pillars of ecological and social security: exemplary places of learning where a viable, desirable future for coming generations is built today. Thank you for your interest in this initiative. We hope to welcome you among the committed participants from the start of the next school year.

Contact: tarik@aerdscheff.lu