



# Schools for Resilience

A short guide to adapt the SfR teaching plan





## SfR - linking schools with local communities

School for Resilience (SfR) is an interdisciplinary course related to the climate change challenges faced by the world today. The course focuses on the concept of resilience and its purpose is to develop pupils' and local areas' resilience to climate change. The course is based on the principles of place-based learning (PBL).

The course is developed as a competence-based project that is flexible and can be used in various ways by different teachers. The overall learning objective of the project is:

*"The pupils build up an understanding of the concept of resilience by investigating real 'resilience' challenges that are of significance to the local area, and via interaction with the local area the pupils must develop concrete and sustainable proposed solutions and point to how action can be taken."*

The project has the following overall learning outcomes:

- The pupil understands of the concept of community resilience.
- The pupil cooperates with others to identify and collect relevant knowledge.
- The pupil develops and discusses local responses to global challenges.
- The pupil actively engages in resilience initiatives in their community.





During 2016, schools from Denmark, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, Wales and the Basque Country tested the pilot methodology of the program. This document gathers useful tips and recommendations to guide teachers in the process of adapting the SfR module to their schools and communities. Before planning the SfR experience, the guide will orient you to build up a well-thought and innovative program that both fits on your national curriculum and has innovative aspects for environmental education.

Here are some positive outcomes that could be achieved:

- Possibility to adapt some aspects to the curriculum.
- Increase cooperation between students, teachers, different levels of school staff and local stakeholders.
- Develop cooperation and communication skills amongst students.
- The students' awareness of "what can I do" and a sense of responsibility to the nested systems they live in.
- Increasing the students 'pride of place' and awareness of the local area they live in.
- Helping students increase their sense of belonging and connection to the community.

## How can SfR be integrated in my school?

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In order to integrate the SfR module in your school, you can:

**1**

Try to identify key competencies related to sustainability and pupils' empowerment in your national curriculum. In Denmark for instance, it is relatively easy to adapt SfR method because students work on the basis of their own observations and studies and must develop responsibility towards nature, environment and health, so that they have confidence in their own potential for attitudes and action in relation to sustainable development and human interaction with nature. Remember that SfR is about empowerment and community values.

**2**

Link specific subjects to SfR's teaching plan. Some subjects may be more suitable to work with the concept of community resilience (natural sciences, social sciences) and can integrate Place-based learning (PBL) easily (geography, maths). A good option could be to spread the program between different subjects. Note that some materials from the teaching plan may be in English, so it could be a good chance to use English classes to work with videos, placecheck activities outside the class and collecting relevant data.



## 3

Some countries have specific platforms that are open to innovative and participative projects. In Latvia for instance, the so called “project week” was a good opportunity to run SfR. Furthermore, in Ireland the programme was delivered through a gap year for 15-16 year olds called Transition year, which gave freedom to pilot the teaching plan in a deeper way and a longer time. There are also alternatives such as eco-groups or extracurricular activities where SfR could be adapted easily, though participants must be really committed and interested in the methodology of the program. Try to find the most suitable framework that will ensure engagement and a minimum amount of weeks/hours in order to give students a real chance to reflect on the process.

In Denmark for example, the course could be run as a cross disciplinary project as an inspiration to the cross disciplinary exam in science where the students work problem based with scientific issues.

### Challenge

*Some countries may have a rigid, content-based curriculum which is not familiar with community action, resilience or PBL. This is the case of Spain, where the implementation of the project was initially constricted by a lack of teaching hours. If the lack of time is an issue during your adaptation, try to prioritise those activities that are focused on Place-based learning, as it is a successful tool to gain and strengthen various competences while working with values and new concepts. Also use this constriction for carrying out brief activities such as concept cartoons, short films and games for a higher level of student engagement.*





## How can SfR fit in the school organization and teachers' tasks?

Overall, in the six partner countries, teachers themselves decided how much time they would spend on the SfR project. More teaching lessons will result in a deeper understanding on community resilience, social values and sense of belonging. SfR is a good program to strengthen cooperation amongst teachers and help replicating good practices for both the school and the community where it is located. Activities from the activity bank may be easily integrated in everyday teaching routines, which could eventually lead to a fresher, more innovative and engaging learning process for teachers. Don't forget that SfR is much about stepping out of the school box and exploring the "real life" and the challenges of your community while teaching core values to your pupils.

We recommend that teachers get directly involved into fitting the teaching plan into school time. Success will be ensured by a strong cooperation between different teachers as SfR is a transversal program, which tackles issues that go outside the lines of one single subject. Teachers should design the overall implementation of the SfR teaching plan, which has an estimated duration of 22 lessons of 1 hour each. This framework can vary according to the schools' need, but keep in mind that fewer hours will affect negatively the understanding of the core concepts and the implementation phase of the module. Some activities such as the students' self-assessment and certain activities from the activity bank could be used in extracurricular time to reinforce the process.

The framework of SfR should always encourage a positive take on environmental issues and solutions that can contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Putting a huge emphasis on catastrophes and crisis can frighten students instead of inspiring them; avoid being negative and work with the hand model, a tool that may be useful to frame the program and set the goals of the school and the group of teachers.

- **Understanding**

This is the knowledge learners need to think and act resiliently.

- **Transferability**

Ensuring that activities explore a range of geographical and human contexts.

- **Experience**

The pedagogies used in delivering learning.

- **Empowerment**

The competences learners gain in order to take effective action.

- **Values**

The values which promote resilience.

- **Frame**

A familiar narrative that makes the learning meaningful to the learners and stimulates appropriate values.



## How can teachers understand the concept of community resilience in order to enhance a behavior change in their students?

Working with resilience requires a profound knowledge of global warming, greenhouse gasses, sustainability and the general problems our world faces today, and understanding its effects in our local communities. Indeed, Community Resilience is the ability of a community as a whole to cope effectively with, and learn from, adversity.

In order to deliver the SfR methodology, teachers will need to reflect and discuss on the concept of resilience and the options of community resilience in their own community. Organising a practical teacher training may help the staff to be more familiar to the core concepts of the program, and inviting sustainability organisations to be part of it and explain basic concepts could be a good starting point.



Find a group of motivated teachers to prepare the plan and select the activities that best suit the needs and expectations of the students. It is crucial to ensure the engagement of a group of teachers throughout the process that will facilitate and monitor the experience. For that, consider teacher training sessions before the implementation of the teaching plan and make sure that all the teachers have a strong knowledge of the territory and community you are going to work with. Walkabouts through the town or relevant places of the community may also serve as a warm up and inspiration for teachers. Use activities such as the Placecheck, the Place Standard Tool and the Values game to assess the willingness of the teachers to participate in the module.



Remember to keep the focus on a place oriented approach; to make good and feasible solutions - the innovative part of the project – takes a long time. Don't forget to link PBL activities with competences of your national curriculum.

It is important that teachers interiorize the main concepts of the SfR model in order to transmit them to students effectively. If necessary, keep reviewing the model throughout the whole process. This will also guide you if the outcomes of students deviate from the original objective of the program.

## How can local authorities and stakeholders join the SfR experience?

In order to engage local authorities and stakeholders, keep them in mind while designing the implementation of SfR. Try to transmit to students that there are innovative and fun ways of participating with the community through visits to local shops and enterprises, local authorities, neighbours...

Engaging your local community and involving its members to an educational program you are organizing, requires good communication, management, and psychology skills. Further, you must be prepared to overcome different obstacles which deal with emotions, attitudes and actions. In this context, all necessary information concerning the program and its processes should be provided from the beginning; during the teachers training make sure that you find allies that will eventually join students in taking action.

Try to send the information of the process to local newspapers and relevant community groups. If you make clear that they are relevant for the school program to be successful they may bring material, resources, or other participants to the program, informing other stakeholders or the media about the program, and the like.





## Duration:

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## If you want to learn more:

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