



Case Report: Green Compass



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BEST PRACTICE: sTOP's Green Compass

Area(s):

- Green skills of trainers and staff

Description of the initiative

Background

The NGO Trainers Association (Stowarzyszenie Trenerskie Organizacji Pozarządowych, sTOP) in Poland is an organization that focuses on supporting and enhancing the development of trainers, educators, and facilitators working with adults by:

- Promoting high-quality training standards for NGO professionals by developing guidelines and standards for training delivery.
- Enhancing the skills, qualifications, and expertise of trainers. It offers a platform for trainers to share knowledge, improve their training methods, and adopt new practices.
- Creating a network of trainers who can collaborate, exchange experiences, and support each other in their professional roles.

The NGO Trainers Association also sees its role in developing and promoting green competencies, which include skills and knowledge related to environmental protection, sustainable development, and combating climate change. To this end, it organizes training sessions for trainers and social activists on sustainable development, environmental protection, the circular economy, and responsible use of natural resources.

However, to fulfil this role credibly and effectively, the association aims to follow the green path it encourages other organizations to take. It is implementing the changes it seeks to help others implement.

The tool for this transformation is the elaborated sTOP's Green Compass, a document that the association's members developed in a participatory manner. The Compass shows how sTOP's members (trainers, educators, and facilitators) can do their work with respect for the planet, respecting the local resources and thus shaping the eco-mindset of the participants in their educational activities and other stakeholders, regardless of their area of specialization or the training topic. It also describes how they want the educational activities carried out by the Association, of which they are members, to be organized and delivered.

Concrete measures and activities



- sTOP builds the Green Compass on the top of the Eco-codex, the output of the Eco Active for Planet project led by The NGO Trainers Association with partners: the Federation of Food Banks from Poland, the Czech Association of Experts in Andragogy, the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, the Permaculture Association from Latvia, and the Green Europe Foundation, which networks 'green' organizations across Europe.
- During the spring 2023 General Assembly of sTOP members, the sTOP Board announced the work on the Green Compass and invited all willing trainers, educators, and facilitators to co-create it.
- The General Assembly was held as part of a 3-day event under the theme 'Green sTOP'. In keeping with the theme of the meeting, all meals were prepared in a vegan kitchen and carpooling was a supported form of travel. The program included:
 - Playing a game embedded in permaculture principles, created within the framework of Eco-Active for Planet
 - Discussion on adjusting the Eco-codex to sTOP's context. It was the starting point for the more detailed and tailored sTOP's Green Compass.
 - Forest bathing near the Barycz Valley Landscape Park and the Stawy Milickie Nature Reserve.

The "Green sTOP" event was an essential step in showing that the organization has taken a direction towards ecology and manifests this in its strategic actions and everyday activities.

- The next step was evaluating sTOP's activities in the area of Green skills of trainers and Staff, which was carried out by the sTOP's Board and team using A Sustainability Matrix for ALE institutions developed within The SMALEI Erasmus+ project. This area was chosen as the core related to the organization's mission. The entire board and core team completed an evaluation questionnaire following questions prepared by the SMALEI project. The evaluation results were jointly analysed at sTOP's board and team meeting. Based on the conclusion of the evaluation, the management board and the team decided which areas should be included in the Green Compass.
- Over the following months, work on the Green Compass continued. This involved people from the sTOP Board, the permanent sTOP team, and members interested in the topic and working in other organizations dealing with environmental sustainability and education. The team met in person and worked virtually. The working group adopted the areas recommended by the Board and core teams based on the evaluation results using the A Sustainability Matrix for ALE institutions.



- Ultimately, a document was produced and presented to the General Assembly in June 2024. It will be voted on at the General Assembly in autumn 2024. The Green Compass is to be part of a code of ethics to which sTOP Association members commit themselves.

Target groups

The main target groups:

- Members of the sTOP Association,
- sTOP's core team organizing TOT Courses implemented by sTOP,
- Trainers employed by sTOP for various educational activities,
- Other trainers, educators, and adult education organizations inspired and influenced by sTOP's green activities,

Institutions/partners involved

The NGO Trainers Association (Stowarzyszenie Trenerskie Organizacji Pozarządowych, sTOP) in Poland

The Eco-Active project's partners are the Federation of Food Banks from Poland, the Czech Association of Experts in Andragogy, the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, the Permaculture Association from Latvia, and the Green Europe Foundation, which networks 'green' organizations across Europe.

Why is this initiative sustainable and innovative?

sTOP's Green Compass shows practically the directions in which ALE institutions should develop:

- follow the green path and act sustainably,
- implement specific solutions to trainers to make their educational activities sustainable,
- inspire others and be a role model to shape the eco-mindset among other ALE institutions.

The document was developed in a participatory manner. The sTOP Board initiated the process and then put it in the hands of the members to ensure that it was formally adopted and implemented at the final stage of the work.

sTOP's Green Compass was developed voluntarily by the ALE organization, its team, and its members. It was the bottom-up participatory process led by an ALE institution from the perspective of trainers and educators. sTOP's implementation signals to the adult educator community and the ALE organization that we are modelling the eco-mindset with our pro-environmental actions, regardless of the training/educational activity topic.

Resources and financial issues



The process has been implemented voluntarily by members of the association and the Board members.

Concluding remarks

sTOP's Green Compass supports professionals in doing their educational work with respect for the Planet on which we live. In doing so, sTOP wants to reinforce the ecological aspects of educational work and influence ALE professionals in daily educational practice to foster pro-environmental attitudes in our environment and among the people with whom we work.

sTOP's Green Compass encourages other ALE institutions to undertake activities that foster the reduction of negative impacts on the Planet and the development of environmental competence. The Green Compass is aimed at those conducting training, coaching, and other educational activities.

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