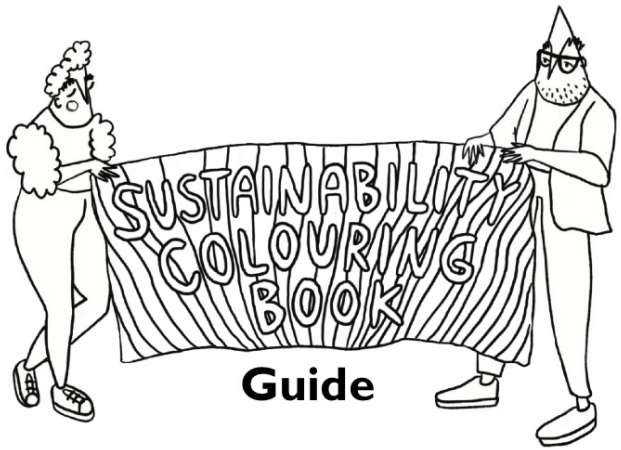

Guide

You are holding an unusual educational material on the topic of sustainability, a coloring book. This coloring book is far from being just about coloring. It offers playful and creative ways to talk with children and young people about what's happening around us and how our everyday choices affect nature, communities, and our future. Each double-page spread presents two views of the same area of life, one less nature-friendly and the other more sustainable. Through conversations, images, working with colors, and a bit of imagination, we can dive into exploring both.

How did it come to life?

The Sustainability Coloring Book was created as part of the Erasmus+ project EARTHgames4EyoUth, with the help of teachers, various educators working with youth, environmentalists, and young people from different corners of Europe. Our goal was to create an educational tool that is fun and easy to use in schools, after-school clubs, leisure centers, environmental and community centers, but also at home. A tool that naturally starts conversations about the environment and sustainability in a way that children and youth can understand, inspiring curiosity and interest in the topic.

Why a coloring book, why images?

Images help us see and understand things differently. And while coloring, we slow down, focus, and often remember more. It's a calming and practical way to start thinking about complex topics such as waste, food, fashion, or consumer behavior. When used with intention, a coloring book can help develop many different skills, like storytelling, critical thinking, building associations, identifying causes, drawing consequences, and many more.

Picture-based learning

Picture-based learning helps us notice details, ask questions, and practice drawing conclusions. Visual stimuli are processed quickly, and we often understand what they're communicating faster than written text. Books and materials rich in illustrations can help children and young people explore a wide range of topics—from brushing their teeth and understanding emotions to solving math problems and making sense of environmental issues. According to research (Chairilsyah, 2018; Ukar et al., 2020), image-based activities not only support children's creativity but also help to develop their motor and sensory skills. Picture-based learning also makes education more engaging and motivating.

How to work with the coloring book?

Tips for different age groups

We offer a few options for using the coloring book through activities suited for different age groups of children, young people, and even adults. The activities can be modified, adapted, and combined depending on the age group you're working with, your available conditions, and your goal with the material.

Enjoy working with our Sustainability Coloring Book, may it be an inspiration for you and your children, students, or youth to discover, create, and explore new ideas. Good luck!

Preschool and Early Elementary School Age

Focus: noticing details, storytelling, simple actions, psychomotoric development

The Story

Encourage children to imagine a story behind a pair of images they choose. Who lives there? What's happening? What happens next? What kind of life do the characters live? Name what you see in the pictures. Search for...

What can I do?

Discuss small changes we can make in our lives, inspired by the characters in the coloring book, like turning off lights, using fewer plastic packages, or walking to school. The pictures can be a great springboard for such discussions and easy everyday challenges.

Create your own

Children can act out the stories from the coloring book as short plays or create collages or 3D models of the two worlds - one chaotic and consumer-driven, the other green and sustainable, where life feels healthier and more joyful. You can end with a small exhibition for parents and the community to open these important topics together.

Upper Elementary and Lower Secondary School Age

Focus: storytelling, comparing, finding differences, hands-on learning

The Story

Encourage children to create a story based on one or both of the paired images. With this age group, we can go deeper: Who are these people? How do they live? What's their day like? How do they feel? What consequences might this lifestyle have on them and their surroundings?

Find the Differences

What's different in these two pictures? Can you find at least five differences? Which world would you and your family or friends want to live in? What would you change in

the images – and why? Modify the image so that both worlds are acceptable and welcoming for everyone.

Create your own

Children can create their own artistic (individual or group) version of both worlds - through collages, drawings, or even sculptures. Let them show what their ideal sustainable world might look like: a school with a permaculture garden, a package-free store, a household with a capsule wardrobe, clean rivers full of fish…

Mini-Project

Choose one topic from the coloring book and in pairs or groups, come up with a practical idea for addressing it in your school or community. For example: a zero-waste week at school, a swap corner, a community coat rack, a disposable-free school meal week, or creating a sensory path...

Creative Eco-Workshop

Based on the selected theme, organize a hands-on eco-workshop. You might start simply by sewing on buttons, repairing clothes, making a fabric bag, visiting a craftsman, building a school composter, or cooking a healthy meal together.

Youth and Adults

Focus: critical thinking, analysis and synthesis, hypothesis-making, role-play, experiential learning

The Story

Encourage young people to build a more complex narrative based on one pair of images. Who are these people? What's their past? What are their families and communities like? What is the quality of their lives? How do they spend their days? How do they feel? Are they healthy? What short- and long-term impacts might their lifestyle have on them and their environment? What might their future look like? Where do you see yourself? What kind of life would you like to live in 5–10 years? Which story would you choose to live - and why?

What's the Impact?

In this age group, we can take it one step further and continue the story toward broader connections. What will happen if we keep following what we see on the side of unsustainable reality? What will the world and your life look like if we continue living in a consumerist way? What would change if we moved toward a more sustainable way of living? What can we do to help make that happen?

Design Alternatives

Focus on strategic thinking. Try to work together to design better solutions for the individual scenarios, the ones that could work in your local context. If one of the topics from the coloring book connects with a real issue in your community, try to redesign it, to propose effective changes. For example: moving toward a green school or greener streets, opening a package-free shop in the neighborhood, supporting local sustainable fashion and other products, or building a community center with an environmental library and healthy food options.

From Story to Reality

Choose one double-page spread from the coloring book and, after creating the story and discussing possible changes, turn your ideas into a community challenge or school project. Let the young people choose a topic that makes sense to them and design specific activities. Cleaning up a public space, organizing a clothing swap, launching a poster campaign about local food, visiting a permaculture farm and starting a school garden, upcycling textile workshops, a slow fashion show, or a healthy food week at school – anything connected to sustainable living that feels relevant and close to them.

Civic engagement

If one of the classroom projects sparks real interest in change, you can go even further. Help those who are interested prepare a small campaign so they can find out how to get involved socially, reach out to local representatives, and understand what they as citizens can do to influence areas that affect them. Explain the fundamentals of running a campaign - from planning and implementation to evaluation. Focus especially on the impact and meaningfulness for our society, our community, and each of us individually.

Sources:

• *Chairilsyah, D. (2018). Mengidentifikasi Indikator Kognitif Dan Membuat Instrumen Perkembangan Kognitif Pada Aanak Usia Dini. Badan Penerbit Universitas Riau.*

• *Nur Fazria, M. (2023). Imaginative Image-Based Learning Media Innovation to Improve Creativity and Psychomotor Abilities in Elementary Schools. Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia.*

• *Ukar, D. S., Taib, B., & Alhadad, B. (2021). Analisis Kreativitas Menggambar Anak Melalui Kegiatan Menggambar. Jurnal Ilmiah Cahaya Paud, 3(1), 117–124.*

Further Reading:

• *https://www.eib.org/en/stories/learn-with-images*
• *https://osf.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Prirucka-ku-kampaniam.pdf*
• *https://globalnirozvojovevzdelavani.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/myslete-na-svet-jak-vytvorit-vlastni-kampan.pdf*
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