

ECOLE Project – Description (summary)

ECOLE – *Context and idea*

The ECOLE project originated in the Dutch Province of Friesland, where a group of teachers from different schools wanted to start building knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes on biodiversity through the incorporation of internationalization in education.

This initiative was embraced and supported by the regional Frisian government as an associated partner and several foreign partner organizations from other rural areas. All partner organizations, the so-called ECOLE partners, played an active role within the ECOLE project and endorse its objectives. ECOLE partner organizations from foreign regions have been selected through an assessment during a preparatory international ECOLE/Biodiversity conference in Leeuwarden (November 2019). This was done on the basis of their input and expertise. The conference was financed by the Province of Friesland.

In the schoolyears 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 the partners together organized small scale regional projects and worked on a continuous learning line from primary education to higher education in relation to biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and rural development. Due to COVID-19 most regional and international meetings between pupils, students, teachers and coordinators were organized online or hybrid.

ECOLE – *Restart*

During a November 2022 working conference in Zielona Góra ten ECOLE partners from the regions Lubuskie (Poland), Cottbus (Germany) and Friesland (Netherlands) have decided to continue the ECOLE project. They believe that international contacts between schools will have a positive effect on regional development in relation to biodiversity. Together they started writing an ECOLE project Erasmus+ 2023 application with two main objectives:

- Sustainable environment: develop a supra-regional (participating regions together) and specific regional focus topics on biodiversity,
- Sustainable education: embed these focus topics in a continuous learning line internationalization and as a result International Competences Set (ICS).

In her article 'Internationalization strategies and the development of competent teaching staff' Els van der Werf (Hanzehogeschool Groningen, 2012) suggests the use of international competences. International competences are meant to alert both teaching staff and their heads of department to the fact that working in an international environment requires new and additional competences and that training teaching staff in 'weak' competence areas may be necessary to make internationalization in education a success.

The continuous learning line internationalization had been also appointed by Robert Coelen (2013) and was included in Nuffic's strategies (2016).

Existing knowledge and Europe wide accepted sets of international competences will be used as basic ingredients of the ECOLE International Competences Set. The model of international competences, developed by Nuffic, will be used as a tool and starting point in the ECOLE project. Also for example CFEC EIO domain 3 and the International Competences Matrix about doing research in an international context will be applied in relation to biodiversity topics.

Robert Coelen actively participates in the ECOLE project. His recommendations for internationalisation in education are:

1. The development of a continuous learning line internationalization with the aim that all pupils and students leave education as competent citizens of the world, with the intermediate objectives are specified for the different levels of education,
2. The internationalization of education should be seen as a means of achieving the broader personal development that deals with the already naturally present diversity,
3. Focus on teacher professionalization in the field of internationalization, such as English language skills and diversity-related teaching,
4. Educating business on the benefits of embracing diversity and relevant international competencies of graduates.



Sustainable environment and education workshop during the November working conference in Zielona Góra

ECOLE – Study Skills

Sustainable education works through regional cooperation contacts with external associated partners, such as civil society organisations, companies and government agencies.

Think global, act local

In this context, the term glocalization is often used. Globalisation and localisation go hand in hand, 'think global, act local'. Education must be connected to current social issues as formulated in the Sustainable Development Goals, with the following examples: biodiversity, climate change and circular economy.

It is precisely because of the world as a global village that people get more attention for their immediate environment. Young people can benefit from this, because it is precisely regional challenges that inspire them to help build a sustainable society.

Study skills as a motor play an important role in this through real-life projects and assignments. The cooperation with external associated partners is central to this. Young people conduct research, enter into dialogue with experts, propose possible solutions and ideas and present findings to external partner organisations.

ECOLE – MATRIX Cooperation

Friesland	Lubuskie	Cottbus
Primary Education	P.E	P.E
S.E	Secondary Education	S.E
T.E	T.E	Tertiary education

Vertical regional cooperation and knowledge exchange between educational institutions from all school levels and sectors together with companies, governments and civil society organizations is necessary to start *horizontal international cooperation* and knowledge exchange between the three European ECOLE partner regions.



Bezoek aan IV Liceum in Zielona Gora

ECOLE – Desired impact

The ECOLE core partners want to incorporate internationalization in education as a positive tool on regional development in relation to biodiversity in all partner regions.

An important goal of the ECOLE project is that all pupils and students become internationally competent. The core partners believe that international contacts between educational and non-educational organizations will have a positive effect on regional development. Internationalization starts in the region.

The most desired impact would be the broader use of our:
Innovative products: biodiversity handbook, International Competences Set and the coordinators guide,
Innovative modus operandi: collaborating both vertically and horizontally via matrix cooperation. Education offers opportunities for children and young people to come into contact with international (cultural) diversity,
In order to develop international competences, it is advisable to start at primary school level, build on this in secondary education, and then further deepen this in higher (vocational) education.



Governmental representatives of Zielona Góra, Cottbus and Friesland talked about a supra-regional biodiversity assignment

ECOLE – Core and associated partners

Coordinating core partner: Stichting IVN, Netherlands

Name organisation	IVN
Title project	ECOLE – Establishing a COntinues LEarning line internationalization <i>Continues learning line about biodiversity</i>
Coordinators	Kees Siderius and Bert Colly
Coordinator Working meeting	Mateusz Ciepliński from Uniwersytet Zielonogórski

Regions and core partners involved:

Friesland, Netherlands

- 1 T.E. STICHTING VAN HALL LARENSTEIN,
- 2 S.E. Stichting OSG Singelland – Drachtster Lyceum,
- 3 P.E. 't Holdersnêst.

Lubuskie, Poland

- 4 T.E. UNIWERSYTET ZIELONOGORSKI,
- 5 S.E. IV Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. płk. pil. Eugeniusza Horbaczewskiego w Zielonej Gorze,
- 6 P.E. Szkoła Podstawowa nr 11 z Oddziałami Integracyjnymi.

Cottbus, Germany

- 7 T.E. BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg,
- 8 S.E. Evangelische Schule Cottbus – Gymnasium,
- 9 P.E. Europaschule Wilhelm-Nevoigt-Grundschule.

Regions and associated partners:

During the working conference, government representatives from the three regions were present. After the working conference, companies, civil society organizations and schools from all school levels will also be approached to participate in the ECOLE project as associated partners.