

# SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITION IN EDUCATION, LÄÄNE-HARJU, ESTONIA



*The Lääne-Harju transition arena focused on making sustainability transition in local education system by addressing environmental responsibility, resource efficiency, student well-being and healthy learning environment. It was linked to the municipality's green school initiative and played a key role in shaping the Lääne-Harju Education Strategy 2025-2030. The process aimed to ensure that sustainability becomes a priority in local schools.*

## WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Around 33 participants took part in the workshops, representing a diverse group of stakeholders, including school and kindergarten principals, NGOs, local government employees, mental health specialists, young people and university representatives.

## IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

The arena process focused on three key questions:

1. How can schools reduce food and general waste, repurpose materials, and increase energy efficiency?
2. How can students gain better knowledge on environmental protection, local ecosystems, and nature?
3. How can learning environments be made more supportive for students' mental and physical health?

## ABOUT THE PROCESS

The planning phase began with focus group discussions and meetings with local government officials to identify the most pressing challenges. After selecting the main focus areas, the planning team invited stakeholders from various fields to the arena workshops. The arena process included three full-day workshops.

Each workshop followed a structured format, beginning with a shared understanding of the challenges, followed by discussions and brainstorming sessions. A tool to imagine and create a vision of a young person was used. During the process, it became clear that certain perspectives were missing. To address this, additional mental health professionals from NGOs and private sector were invited to later workshops, broadening the discussions.

The final workshop focused on refining ideas into concrete proposals. Throughout the process, a student-centered approach was emphasized, ensuring that the perspectives of young people remained in the focus.





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## RESULTS

As a result of the process, several proposals were integrated into the Lääne-Harju Education Strategy 2025-2030 including:

**Outdoor Learning and Active Lifestyles:** The municipality and educational organizations committed to build outdoor activity spaces and develop pedestrian and cycle path connections to promote both outdoor education and physical activity for students.

**Restructuring the Role of Class Teachers:** A key innovation was to redefine the role of class teachers as mentors acting as a trusted adult for students. A working group was established to further develop this idea.

**Mindful Eating Choices:** Schools and kindergartens agreed to introduce plant-based diets in schools and engage students in the decision-making of menus to promote mindful eating and food choices.

Furthermore, practical activities, such as repair workshops and excursions focused on local biodiversity, will be promoted. In addition to shaping policy, the arena process strengthened collaboration between different stakeholders, fostering long-term commitment to systemic sustainability initiatives in education.



*"One of the great strengths I see is that this kind of Transition Arena forces people out from their own bubble a little bit more... It helps to break down certain barriers, change attitudes or perceptions."*

*"It was amazing, people started to realize that we are one municipality, and we have one goal. If we want to achieve something, we have to do it together."*

## CONTACT

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