# Addressing the challenges of climate change through food networks

NGO “Kultūros dirbtuvė” has successfully developed a 10-session training program titled "Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change through Food Networks".

This initiative represents a transformative approach to engaging communities in understanding food systems and their connection to climate change.

## Context

This program was developed as part of the LIFE program and the Lithuanian Ministry of Environment-funded project "Improving Energy Efficiency in Lithuania" (No. LIFE20 IPC/LT/000002). Recognized as the best initiative of the "Teach4Climate: Lessons on Climate Change" hackathon, it serves as an exemplary educational tool for addressing climate-related challenges.

## Vision and mission

The program is designed to empower communities—students, educators, and families alike—to reduce their environmental impact while cultivating curiosity and creativity.

By fostering an interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals, the program seeks to go beyond mere knowledge dissemination. It provides meaningful experiences and practical skills by nurturing curiosity, encouraging reflection, and fostering active participation.

The thematic focus on biodiversity, food webs, and climate change is tailored to specific local contexts, ensuring the program resonates deeply with participants.

# Structure and methodology

Spanning ten months, the program consists of monthly sessions, each lasting 2.5–5 hours. It integrates systems thinking with hands-on activities, promoting healthy eating, outdoor exploration, and collaboration. Participants delve into complex environmental themes through reflection, individual and group work, and leadership development exercises.

The program employs structured tasks and exploratory activities that naturally assimilate the content, enhancing understanding of participants' roles in the ecosystem. An emphasis on emotional intelligence further enriches the learning experience.

The programme can include the installation of an outdoor learning space, choosing from 3 concepts that we will adapt to your existing outdoor environment:

Outdoor Learning Space
Urban Garden
Biodiversity Oasis.

**Main themes:** Biodiversity, climate change and food webs.

**Location:** Indoor and outdoor spaces belonging to the organisation.

**Period:** February–November

**Number of facilitators per session:** 2–5

**Participants per session:** up to 30

**Number of sessions:** 10

**Duration:** 1 session 2.5–5 hours, 10 sessions 26–35 hours.

# Examples of lessons from the program

### 1 example

In Workshop No. 3, "The Human Habitat," students are given a brief presentation with slides, which discusses the trends of globalization, economic development, and the increasing demand for energy that accompanies these processes. These trends are presented as an essential part of modern life and urban development, which accelerates climate change due to human activities rather than natural processes. The presentation emphasizes understanding that nature and humans cannot exist independently—every human action has an impact, and the decisions we make can either worsen, stabilize, or improve the situation. One of the many proposed solutions introduced is green/blue infrastructure in cities, which represents a comprehensive approach that people of all ages can contribute to implementing.

The outdoor classroom, which we will begin setting up today, is presented as an example of green/blue infrastructure. It helps slow water runoff and protect the area from flooding. This outdoor learning space can provide a more comfortable environment for studying during heat waves, while the use of wood and the cultivation of perennial plants purify the air and sequester carbon dioxide in their structure and the soil. Building a connection with food and the living world helps foster a long-term interest and willingness to address the challenges posed by climate change.

### 2 example

In Workshop No. 9, "Climate Change," students create a systemic map of the causes and effects of climate change. After completing the task, students identify their own logical errors and share what they already knew and what was new to them. During this activity, the students themselves noted that they learned about greenhouse gases, that there are different types of these gases, and that they originate from various sources. The students understood how everything is interconnected and realized that their daily choices related to food, travel, and lifestyle have long-term consequences.

# Examples of lessons from the program

### 3 example

In Workshop No. 9, "Climate Change," a short presentation is delivered, briefly explaining the differences between the concepts of weather, climate, and climate change. It is emphasized that climate refers to the expected weather conditions in a region during a specific time of year, and when climate change occurs, we all become less able to predict what to expect in the future. This complicates planning and creates unpredictable extreme situations because we, as well as the infrastructure in our cities, are adapted to the climate that existed 30 or more years ago. As everything changes, we must be much more vigilant and better prepared for uncertainties. For all these reasons, it is now necessary to work in parallel on both climate change mitigation—reducing the use of natural resources—and climate change adaptation—adjusting to unexpected and extreme climate events and their impacts.

# Impact on Student Perceptions and Behavioral Change

The project has been pivotal in shifting students' perspectives on climate change and sustainability. By engaging in experiential learning and discussions, participants develop a deeper understanding of climate change and its local and global implications.

Crucially, this newfound knowledge fosters tangible behavioral changes. Students are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives — reducing waste, conserving energy, and making environmentally conscious choices. These shifts demonstrate the transformative power of education in cultivating responsible and proactive citizens equipped to address climate challenges.

Lietuvos Respublikos aplinkos ministerija
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KULTŪROS DIRBTUVĖ
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