

YOUR ideas YOUR initiatives

Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment



2

Teacher Guidelines

Action Competence in Road Safety and Mobility



The YOUR **ideas** YOUR **initiatives** project has been designed and developed by P.A.U. Education and Renault in coordination with authors B. Bruun Jensen, J. Magne Jensen, N. Larsen, V. Simovska from the educational project [©]*RoSaCe Road Safety Cities in Europe* and developed with the support of the Directorate-General for Energy and Transport of the European Commission.

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Action Competence in Safety and Mobility

YOUR **ideas** YOUR **initiatives** suggests how important it is that children and young people explore and reflect upon the ways in which living conditions, transportation choices, their surrounding environment, and society affect their safety, mobility and lifestyle choices. Moreover, the project aims to enhance young people's awareness and capacity to change these conditions.

The primary learning objective is **action competence**. "Action competence" is the ability to act, initiate and bring about positive changes¹. YOUR **ideas** YOUR **initiatives** focuses on elaborating actions to address and bring about positive collective changes, and to influence the overall quality of life, in the environments where children live, play and learn.

Action oriented education is the key to increased awareness and competency, and serves to reinforce children's sense of **ownership** of the issues at hand and of the overall change process.



An action should be directed at solving a problem and it should be decided upon by those carrying out the action. Therefore, adults should not coerce, manipulate or push young people to act on what adults want – in that case it is the adults who are taking action while young people are being acted upon or educated passively.

¹ Jensen, B.B. & Schnack, K. (1997), The Action Competence Approach Environmental Education in Environmental Education Research, 1997, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 163 - 178

Genuine involvement implies that young people are encouraged, guided and supported by adults to have real (as opposed to token) influence over the project's content and process. Genuine participation is considered both a prerequisite for the development of action.

Action competence is a key concept in safety education. The **overall purpose of safety education is to educate pupils to be active, democratic citizens who are able to take action collectively and individually for a safer life.**

Action competence in safety and mobility education can be developed at different levels. Specifically, four different target areas can be identified when looking at pupil safety actions:

- directed towards **own behavior**
- directed towards **conditions at school**
- directed towards **conditions at home**
- directed towards **conditions in the local community or society as a whole**



Careful cycling, crossing streets safely, and tolerance of other people are examples of the first category. Trying to improve the social climate in school by reducing bullying is an example of the second category. Approaching politicians to raise funds to expand and improve existing bike lanes is an example of the fourth category.

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Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment



Habits and routines versus actions

Our daily life is a combination of a lot of habits and routines combined with a number of real actions where we decide to do something of smaller or bigger importance. This project aims to promote real actions amongst students, directed towards changing something in their own life, school or community.

On the roads there are official regulations that are enforced by law, which are needed to make the traffic safe. It is mandatory that children in all countries learn these rules and follow them. These regulations have to be incorporated as part of a child's learning process.

At the same time, the world is changing rapidly; due to more traffic there is an immediate increase in risks to health, the environment and an impact on the climate in general. This means that children and youngsters will benefit from more than just having good routines and habits concerning traffic and mobility systems. They should be able to think for themselves and act according to what they would like to see for the future.

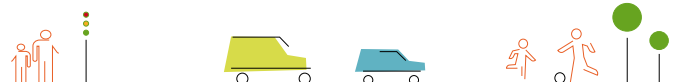
Strengthening the action competence in relation to sustainable development means that learners become more engaged in development from a wider perspective, they are more knowledgeable about the issues and are able to make up their mind and to take an active role in forming opinions on what they would like to see happening in the future.

All people have some level of action competence and all people can develop their action competence further. As such it can be seen as a valuable goal in schools and other educational settings to make use of mechanisms that support the development of the learners' action competence.

We might think that looking at action competence development is only relevant for older children, but that isn't true. The support needed to develop the action competence is relevant starting in the preschool years, but of course it should be adapted to the age groups at hand.

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Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment



Action Competence and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Sustainable development isn't a final stage, but a process where as many people as possible become involved in searching for solutions that are helpful for the present generations and do not harm the coming generations. To take part in this never ending process, we should all be as knowledgeable and engaged as possible to add our points of view to the process of shaping the future and when we find it, support it in a democratic and respectful manner.

As part of action competence, critical thinking is an important quality, but also the ability and willingness to engage in questions, problems and issues that are very complex and controversial. Having an open mind and listening to people's points of view help us decide what to do. The idea is to be able to have as much insight as possible on a given issue, while still capable of acting on incomplete knowledge.



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Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment



How can action competence be supported?

Many different ways of teaching can support the development of action competence, but these strategies often share some similarities with what we can call genuine participation:

- The learners' ideas, arguments and points of view are taken seriously, although they may not always be followed.
- The learners get opportunities to investigate and reflect on issues that are more or less outside their normal conscious concern.
- The teaching begins from real concerns of the learners, i.e. what are they afraid of? What would they like to see happening?
- The learners encounter different points of view on the same issue, expressed by different people, both from inside and outside the school.
- The learners work with alternative ideas rather than a simple projection of the present situation, to identify visions for solutions and directions they would like to see happen instead of what is merely expected to happen.
- The learners gain experience in acting on concrete issues and problems together (or alone), to achieve something they would like to see happen. The teacher supports their reflections beforehand on possible outcomes, obstacles and opportunities, and supports their reflections on their learning experience from their concrete actions.

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Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment

Support the development of ownership

Most activities that support the learners' feeling of ownership in the investigation, community issue, intervention or other activities are very helpful for their future engagement and action competence.

The more ownership that students develop on traffic and mobility issues during the school project, the more successful the participatory approach.

All the mentioned aspects that support the development of action competence will help support the feeling of ownership of the issue among the students. Other aspects that contribute to the feeling of ownership include:

- They fully understand the issue.
- They are treated as equal partners in the process (planning, conducting, acting and reflecting).
- They can see their 'fingerprint' in the final outcome.
- They get some kind of social recognition for their efforts.

The action competence approach will only work if we create an open-minded and trustful atmosphere in the class without fixed solutions to the issues of sustainable development.

This means that current safety problems are rooted in our daily lives and the social structure. If these problems are to be solved in the long term, teaching is needed that contributes to the development of pupils' abilities to influence their own lives and the society in which they grow up.

The action competence approach has been developed within the European Network of Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS), particularly through the work of the Danish Network of Health Promoting Schools and collaboration with other networks within the ENHPS, such as the Macedonian Health Promoting Schools Network. It has also been used in a wider international context, for instance, in the SHAPE-UP project undertaken across Europe.

YOUR ideas YOUR initiatives

Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment

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Road Safety Actions for a Better Environment

