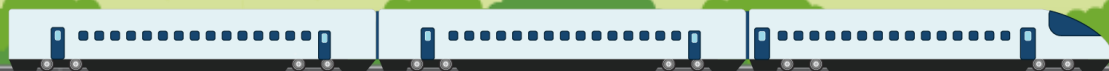


# The Finnish national curriculum from the GreenComp perspective

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@hsuomela



**“Sustainability means different things to different groups of people at different times”**  
-Bianchi, G., 2020



# The SDGs wedding cake



Credit: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University CC BY-ND 3.0.

Future education

Sustainability education

Climate education

Environmental education

Forestry education

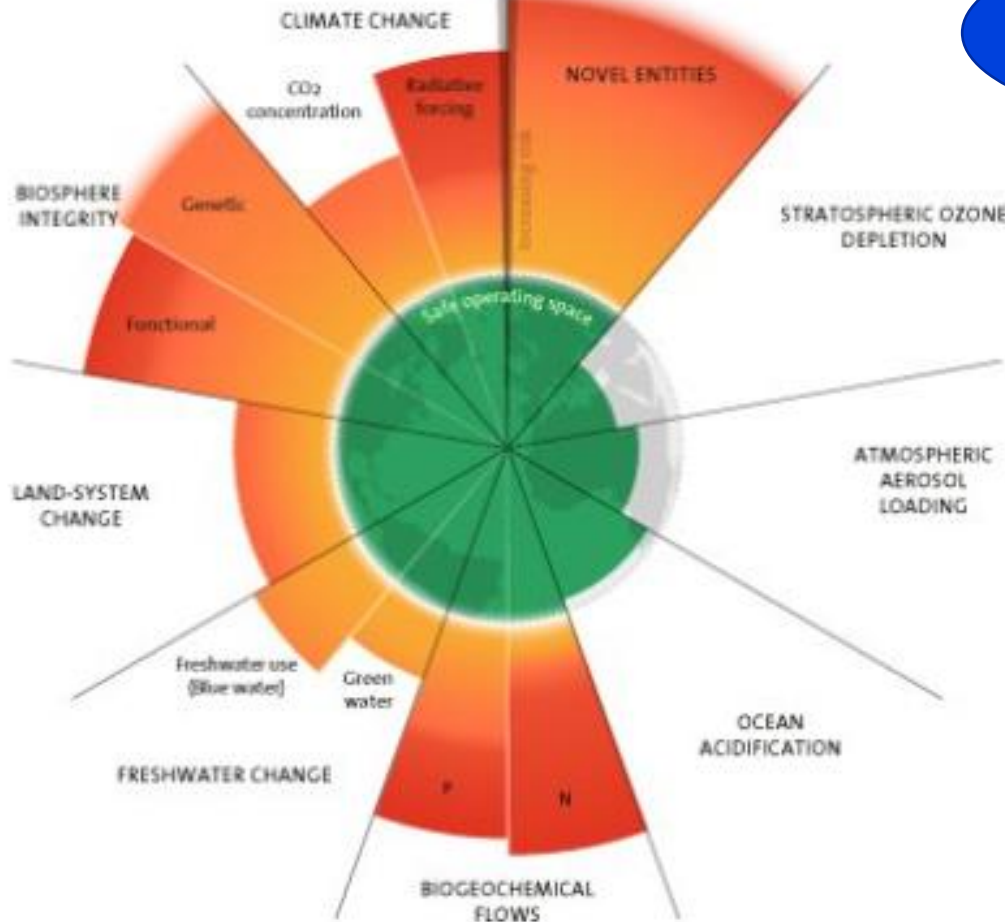
Global education

Energy education

Sustainable development education

Circular economy education

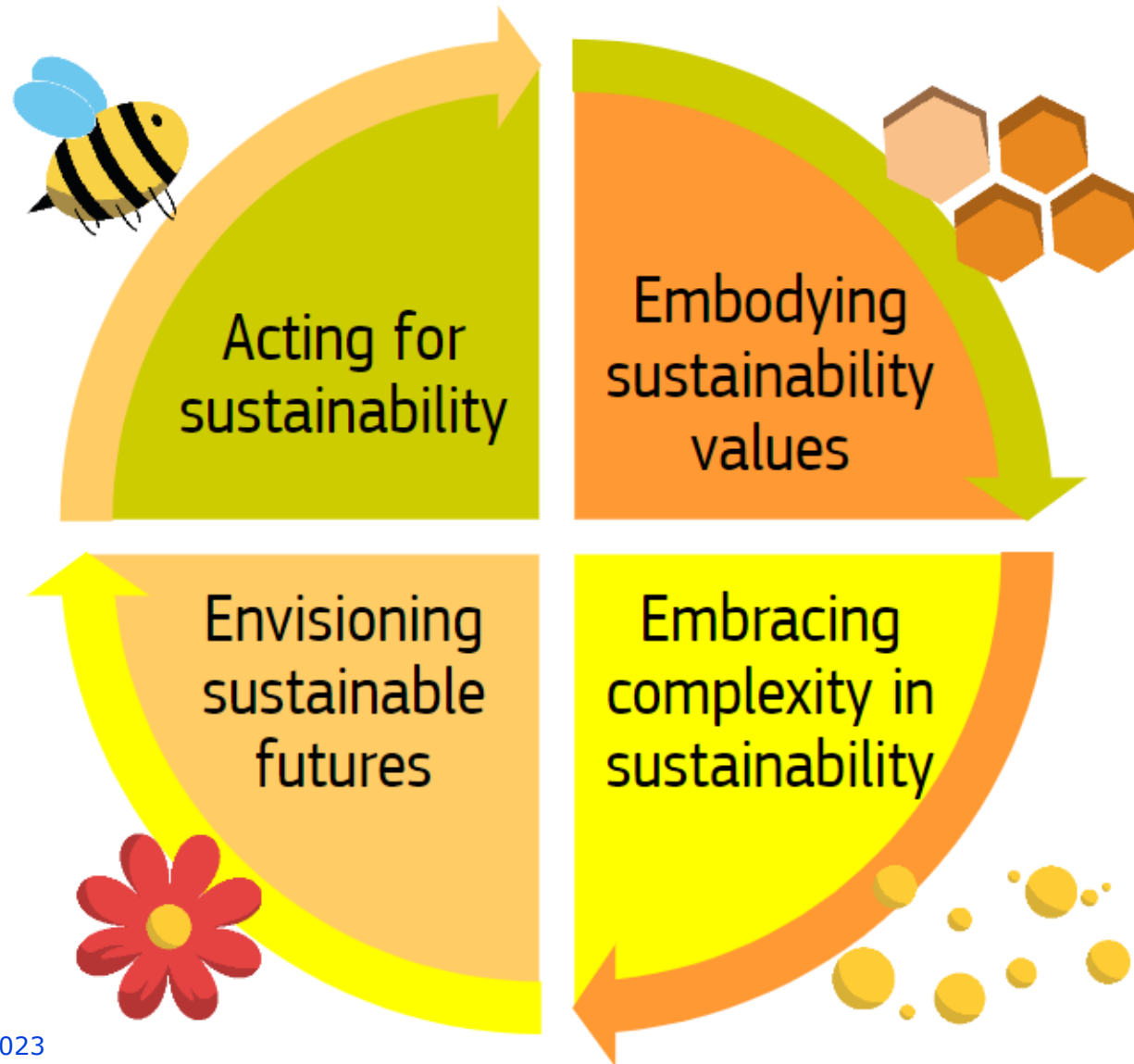
Biodiversity education



Ecosocial Civilization

6 boundaries crossed

# Competence areas - GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework



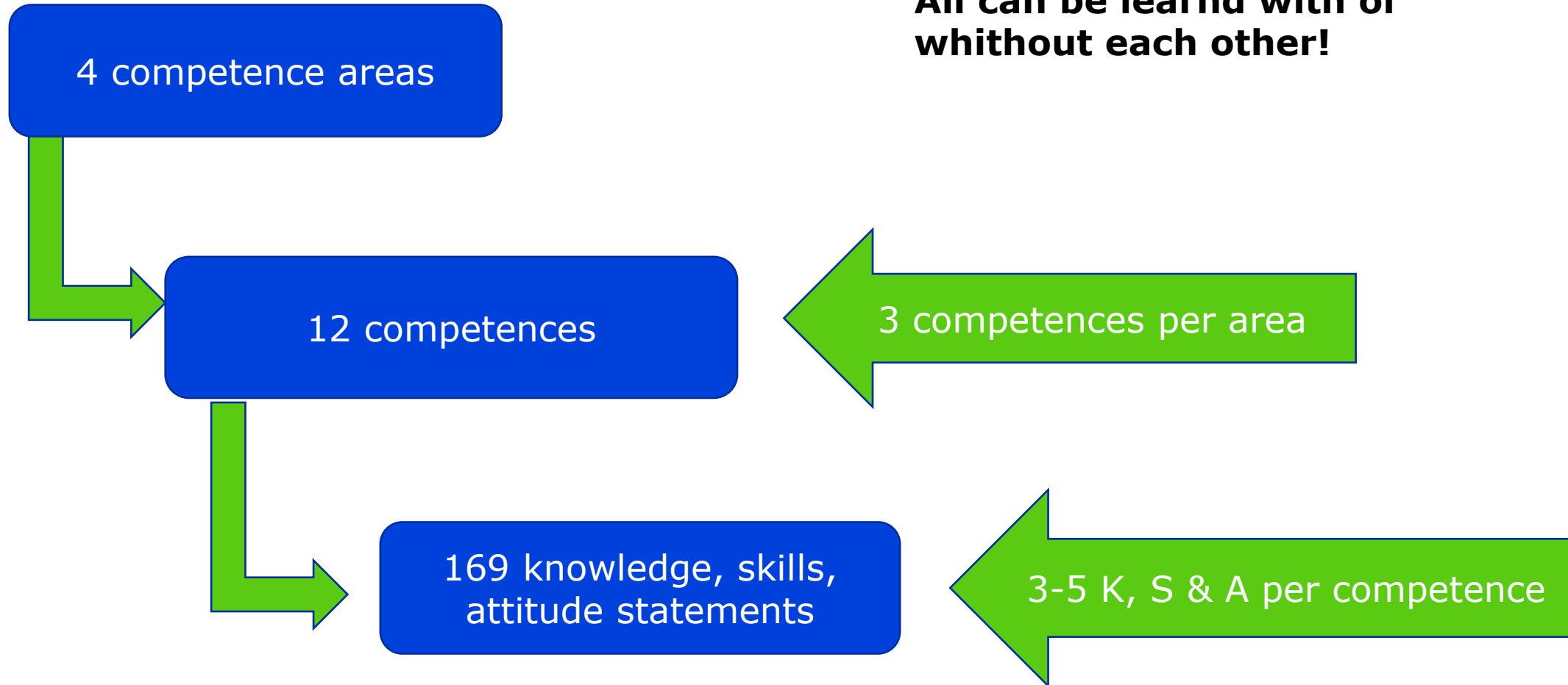
# SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCES





**Figure 3.** Visual representation of *GreenComp*.

**All can be learned with or without each other!**

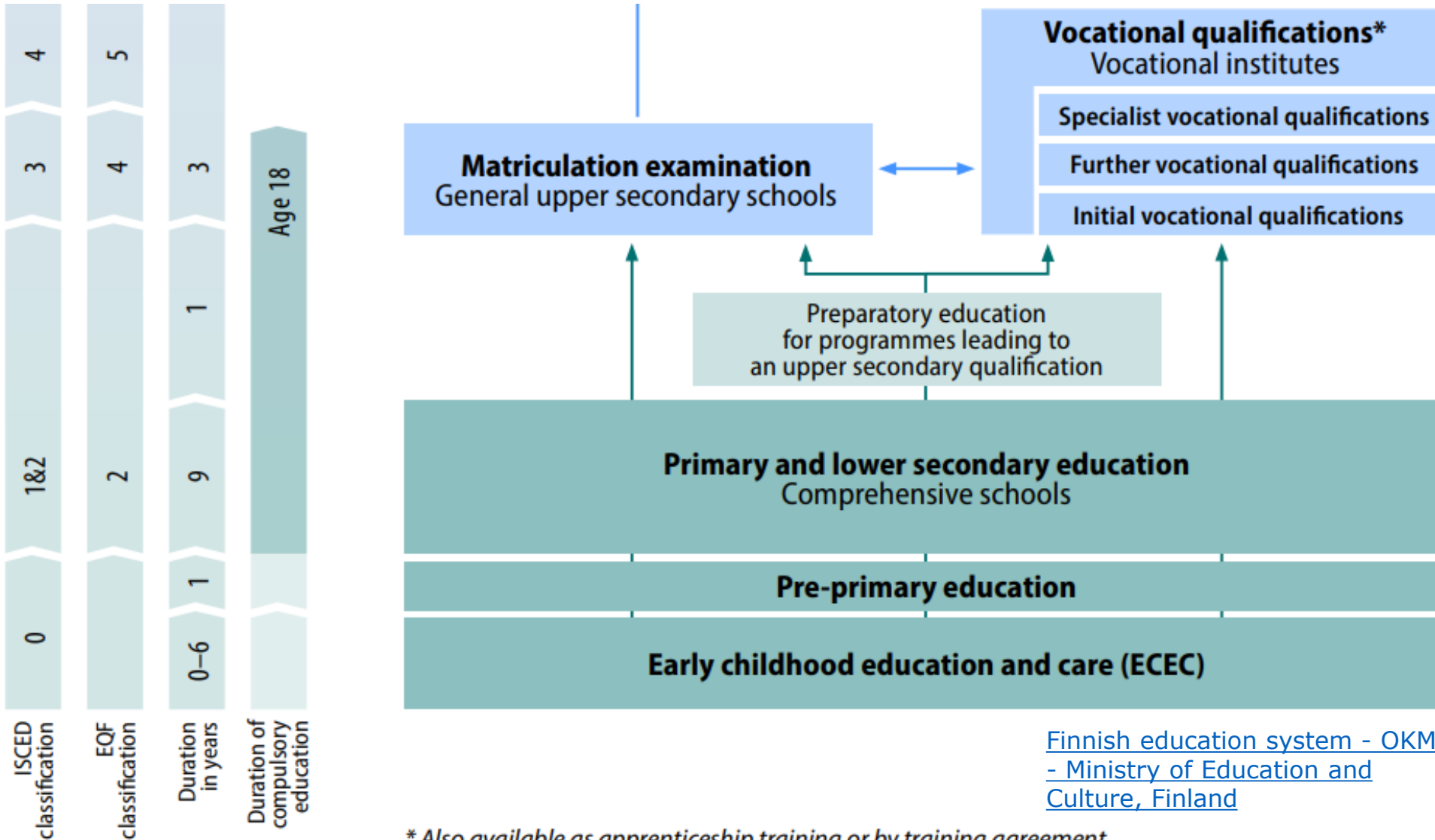




# How is ecological sustainability in Finnish education system?



# Finnish education system- compulsory education starts with comprehensive school and ends at the age of 18



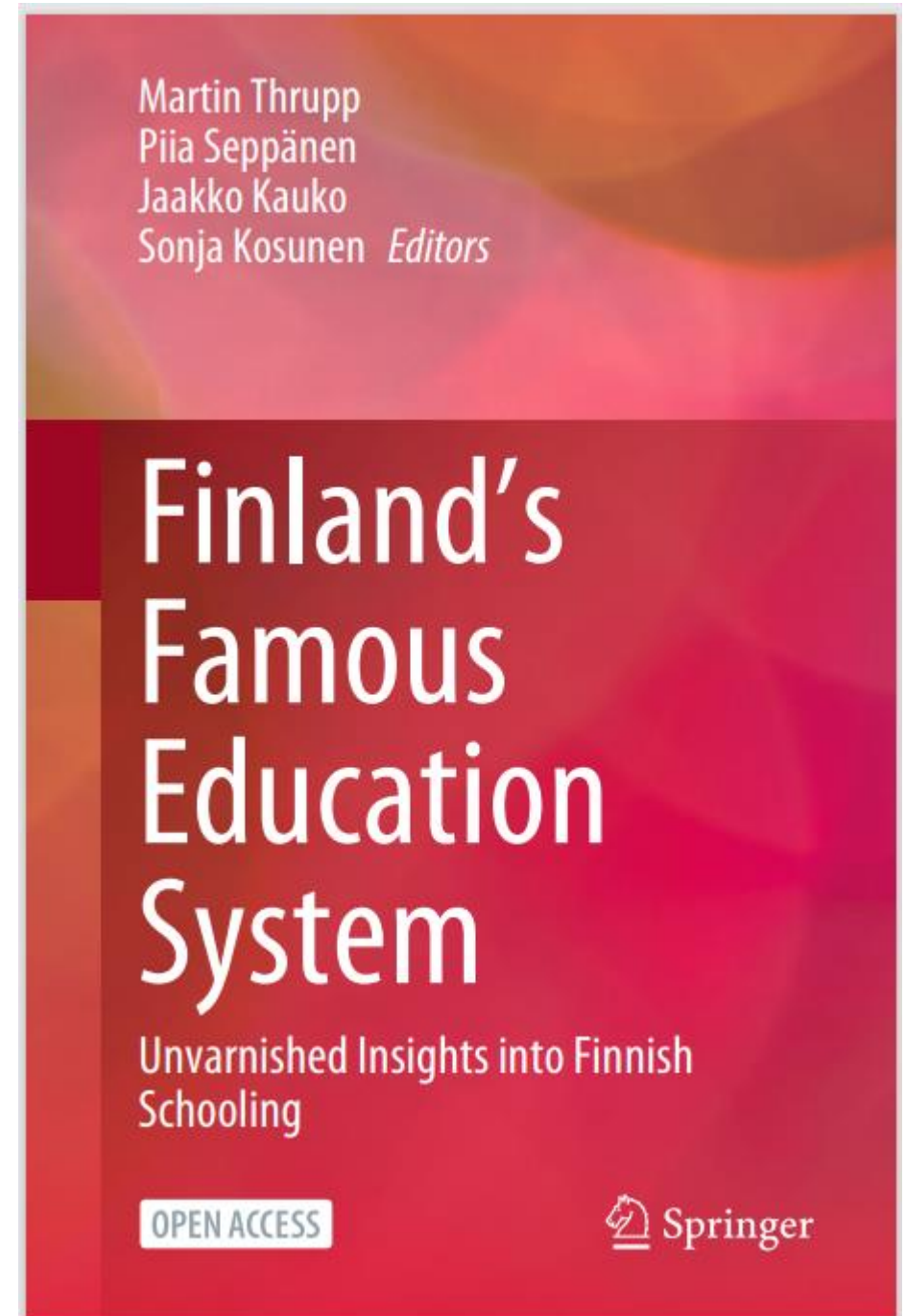
[Finnish education system - OKM - Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland](#)

\* Also available as apprenticeship training or by training agreement.

# Finnish education system – famous?

- Over recent decades, the Finnish education system has become regarded by many as the best in the world.
- Generating international fascination.
- An obvious manifestation of this has been the rise of 'PISA tourism.'
- Finland also just acts as the exotic 'other'
  - The Finnish education system has remained largely organised according to the equality idea.

25/09/2023 |



# Ecological sustainability education in Finland

- The main international document related to sustainable development is Agenda 2030.
  - It is at the heart of in Finnish environmental policy as well.
- The most important goal for sustainability education is subgoal 4.7:

“By 2030, ensure that **all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed** to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles (...)”



[Sustainable Development Goal 4 \(SDG 4\) | SDG4 Education 2030 - Global Education Cooperation Mechanism](#)

# Finnish education system – National Core Curriculum and good teachers.

- **Most recent National Core Curriculum** for basic education in **2014**, and it was required in municipalities and schools in **2016**. The main means of **national steering take place via the core curriculum**.
- In the primary phase children generally study with the **same class teacher throughout their school week whereas** in lower secondary there are **subject-specific teachers** in all disciplines.
- Teachers are **highly educated** and strongly committed to their work.
- The **relationship between the state and its 309 municipalities** (in 2022) forms the basic frame for the education system in Finland.
  - Due to the municipal autonomy **the state cannot interfere with municipal autonomy** through decrees and thus its statutory power is limited in relation to implementation. Also, **teachers have considerable autonomy**.





Finnish education has long been renowned for its innovative approach to teaching and learning, and sustainability is an important part of the Finnish education system. Here are some things that can be said about Finnish education regarding sustainability:

1. Sustainable development is included in the national core curriculum for basic education in Finland. This means that sustainability is an integral part of teaching and learning across all subject areas.
2. Environmental education is an important part of Finnish education, and schools are encouraged to incorporate sustainability into their daily practices. For example, many schools in Finland have implemented recycling programs, energy-efficient lighting systems, and sustainable food choices.
3. The Finnish education system emphasizes the importance of experiential learning, which includes hands-on learning experiences related to sustainability. For example, students may participate in outdoor education programs, environmental projects, and field trips that focus on sustainability.
4. Finnish schools also prioritize student well-being, and this includes a focus on physical and mental health. This is important for sustainability because healthy students are more likely to be engaged in their learning and motivated to make positive changes in their communities.
5. Finally, Finnish education places a strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork. This is important for sustainability because solving complex environmental problems requires cooperation across different sectors and disciplines. Finnish students are encouraged to work together to find creative solutions to challenges.

Regenerate response

# National curriculum and sustainability / GreenComp

- All subjects include an ecological dimension and learning sustainability skills somehow at some point.
- The subject-specific curricula also include sustainability competences knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g. critical and investigative thinking).
- Terminology related to environmental sustainability varies between subjects.
- Ecological sustainability competences are reflected in different ways in different subjects.
  - At lower secondary level, all 12 sustainability competences are visible in biology and geography curricula.
  - At upper secondary school level, all 12 sustainability competences are only visible in the geography in the geography curriculum.



Embodying  
sustainability  
values



Embracing  
complexity  
in sustainability



Envisioning  
sustainable  
futures



Acting  
for  
sustainability

# National curriculum and sustainability / GreenComp

- The main concepts used in the curriculum are
  - **sustainable development, sustainable future, and sustainable way of living.**



- 
- The curriculum uses also the concepts **environment, environmental awareness, and relationship with nature.**



- 
- One impressive section about underlying **values points** to the necessity of a sustainable way of living:

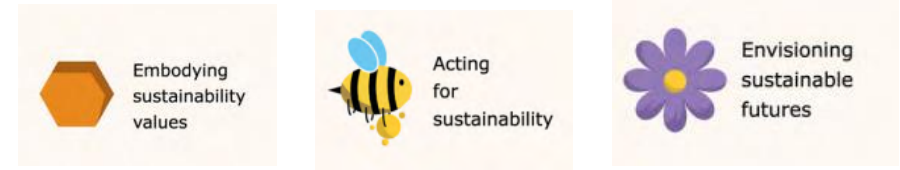
**“Humans are part of nature and completely dependent on the vitality of ecosystems. Understanding this plays a key role in growth as a human being”**





# National curriculum and sustainability/GreenComp

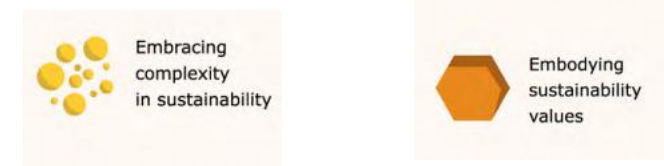
- One of the **seven transversal competencies** in the basic education curriculum is : “Participation, involvement and **building a sustainable future.**”



- **Working methods** include methods familiar from environmental education: outdoor learning, experiential pedagogy, exploration and multidisciplinary learning.
- The curriculum takes into account **central competencies for sustainability**, like responsibility, critical thinking, participation and cooperation.



- Phenomenon learning enables a systemic approach.



# Conclusion: National curriculum and sustainability/GreenComp

- Environmental sustainability knowledge could be integrated naturally more in the curricula of all subjects.
- Sustainability competence could be reflected more comprehensively in subject-specific curricula, including in the values and attitudes objectives and assessment objectives.
- Clear boundaries between sustainability competences in different subjects should be drawn so that the curricula do not overlap but complement each other.
- In upper secondary education, the so-called integration courses provide an opportunity for a systemic approach among with geography and the development of interdisciplinary sustainability skills.
- In addition to the GreenComp approach, thematic entities (= planetary boundaries) and key aspects of environmental education should be taken into account in the design of the next national curricula.

# SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCES



Embodying sustainability values

Valuing sustainability

Promoting nature

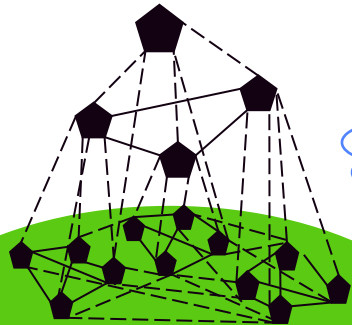
**What do we need definitely more?**

Futures literacy

Adaptability



Envisioning sustainable futures



Embracing complexity in sustainability

Systems thinking

Problem framing

Political agency

Collective action

Individual initiative



Acting for sustainability

# Sustainability in schools in Finland?



# Sustainability in schools in Finland

- Everyday activity in Finnish school has many faces.
- Teachers **considerable autonomy affects**
  - Some teachers **are afraid that talking about environmental matters** would bring negative emotions to the fore, and sensitive matters of this kind are better left undiscussed.
- Every day small acts -> **fundamental transformation and transformative learning is needed.**
- Some municipalities have **natureschools!**
- social sustainability is more integrated into the curriculum and activities than ecological sustainability and is even seen as the opposite. -> **Ecological sustainability is core and it is not made opposite social sustainability.**
- **Administrative steering and leadership is needed.**

**Through personal nature experiences and our relationship with nature, we learn to understand the importance of natural diversity and human responsibility for the preservation of diversity.**



**Break discussion:  
ask your neighbour how  
is ecological  
sustainability in their  
curricula?**



**Thank you!**

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@hsuomela

