



# SDG 4: Quality Education

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# 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



**Interpretation of  
quality education**



## Main goal: to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

How can education contribute to a better society? The UN advocates access to good quality education for all around the world. According to the lifelong learning approach, not only primary and secondary education is meant, but also tertiary and adult education. Good education should be inclusive and enable all people to actively support and contribute to a culture of sustainability, peace and community and thus improve their own and social living conditions.



Source: [germanwatch.org](https://www.germanwatch.org)

# Dimensions for sustainability learning

## Cognitive:

...understanding sustainability challenges and their complex interlinkages, explore disruptive ideas, and alternative solutions

Source: [gcedclearinghouse.org](http://gcedclearinghouse.org)



Did you know that strong leadership by business can help unlock the necessary investments to ensure quality learning opportunities for all children and adults?

Source: [sdgcompass.org](http://sdgcompass.org)



*"I get really mad when I hear about stories from where girls, in particular, are prevented, directly and indirectly, from being educated in formal school settings—as is the case in some non-western countries. Schools should be a safe place, for everyone. Our future depends on it!"*



# Dimensions for sustainability learning

## Social and emotional:

...building core values and attitudes for sustainability, cultivate empathy and compassion for other people, and the planet, and motivate to lead the change

Source: [qcedclearinghouse.org](http://qcedclearinghouse.org)



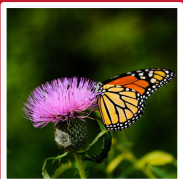
Did you know that Some 750 million adults – two thirds of them women – remained illiterate in 2016? Half of the global illiterate population lives in South Asia, and a quarter live in sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: [un.org](http://un.org)

*"I know that it is important to learn new things in an ever-changing world. I just wish I had more time to do so. Life is getting faster and faster for me, and I struggle to keep up."*



Photo by Duncan Shaffer on Unsplash



4

QUALITY  
EDUCATION



# Dimensions for sustainability learning

## Behavioral:

...taking practical action for sustainable transformations in the personal, societal and political spheres

Source: [gcedclearinghouse.org](http://gcedclearinghouse.org)



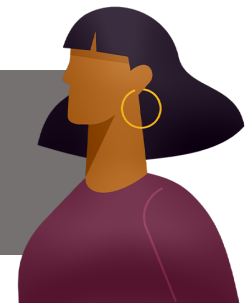
Did you know that humanity is currently experiencing an epic phase shift? To learn more about what this means, watch Daniel Schmachtenberger talk about it on [YouTube](#).



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*"On some days, I can see what we need to do and feel that we can build sustainable futures, and on other days I lose all hope that we will survive as a species."*



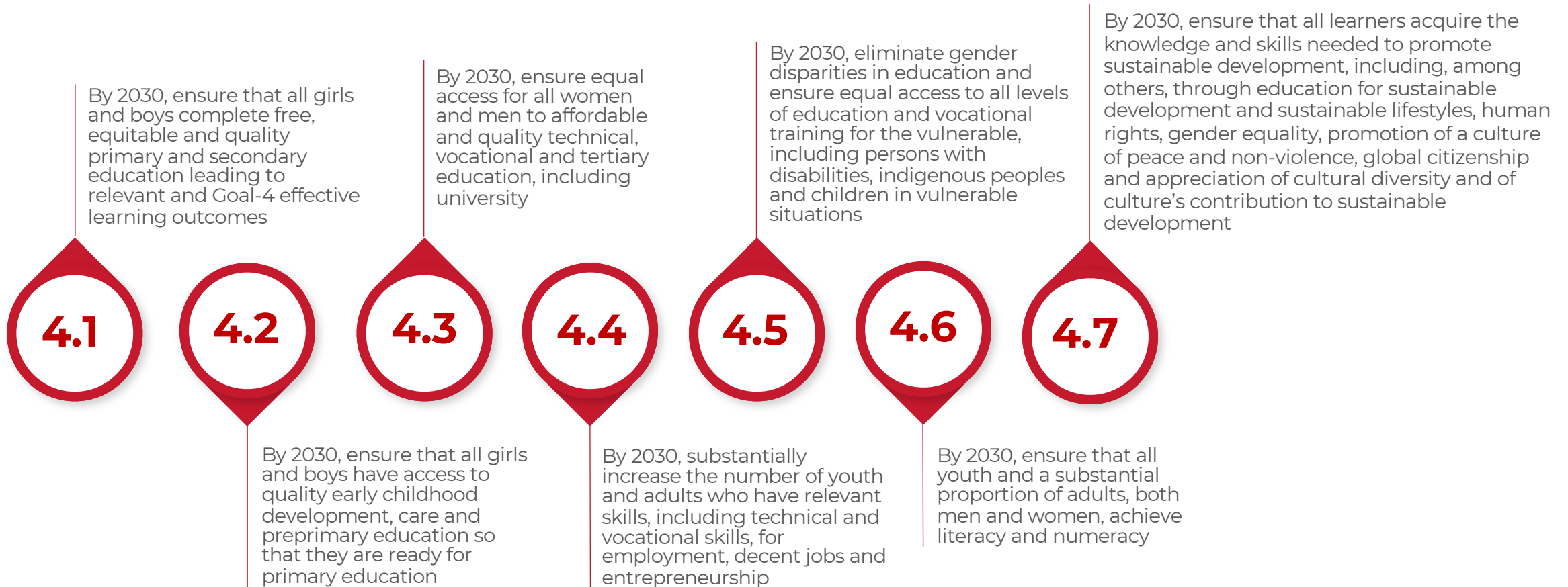
# Model: ESD for 2030



It is of the utmost importance that education, on all levels, includes and builds capacity for systems thinking so that the complexity of proposed sustainability solutions matches the complexity and creativity of nature and her way of creating conditions conducive to life – over and over again across the evolutionary timeline of life on this planet. As such, education plays „the“ key role in addressing the sustainability dilemma.



# Subgoals: targets and measures



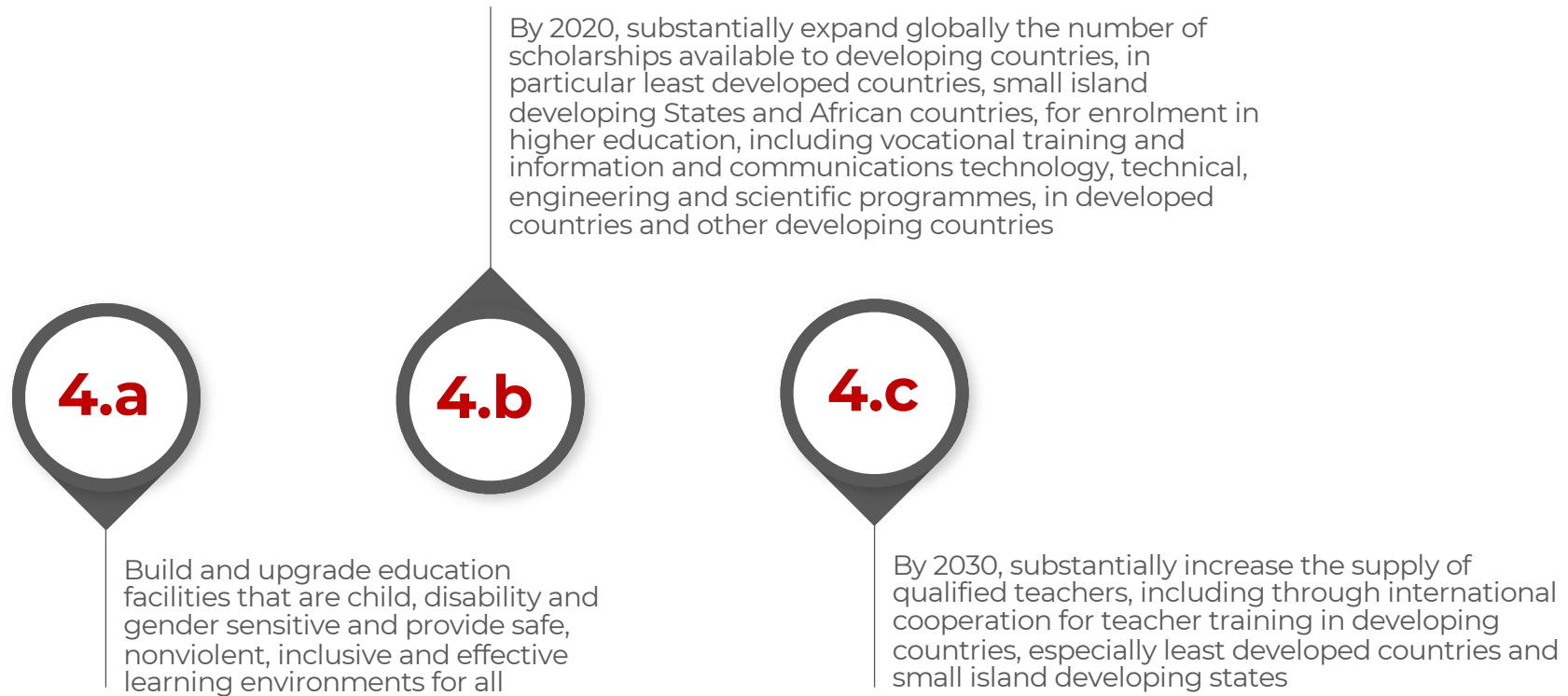
Source: [bundeskanzleramt.gv.at](https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at) and [un.org](https://www.un.org)

Targets = Numbers, Measures = Letters





# Subgoals: targets and measures



Source: [bundeskanzleramt.gv.at](https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at) and [un.org](https://un.org)

Targets = Numbers, Measures = Letters



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**Current state of  
quality of education**

# Report 2020

## The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020



Source: [un.org](https://un.org)

## The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021



Source: [un.org](https://un.org)



**ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

### BEFORE COVID-19

PROGRESS TOWARDS  
**INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION WAS TOO SLOW**



**OVER 200 MILLION CHILDREN WILL STILL BE OUT OF SCHOOL IN 2030**

### COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS



SCHOOL CLOSURES KEPT  
**90% OF ALL STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL**  
REVERSING YEARS OF PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

**INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION ARE EXACERBATED BY COVID-19**

IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES, CHILDREN'S SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE IS



**79%** IN RICHEST  
20% OF HOUSEHOLDS



**34%** IN POOREST  
20% OF HOUSEHOLDS

REMOTE LEARNING REMAINS  
**OUT OF REACH FOR**  
AT LEAST  
**500 MILLION STUDENTS**



**ONLY 65% OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS**  
HAVE BASIC HANDWASHING FACILITIES  
CRITICAL FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION

Source: [un.org](https://un.org)



# Some European statistics



Source: [ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu)

Did you know that graduating from at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3) leads to a 90% chance of immediately finding a job in Austria? Compare that to other countries in the EU.

Source: [ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu)

*"Yesterday, my colleague was complaining that he has to participate in a company development program that lasts for 3 hours outside of paid work time. What would you recommend to him?"*



# Implementation in Austria as of 2020

Target	Nationale Indikatoren (Auswahl)	Trend
4.2	Childcare rate for 3- to 5-year-olds	↗
	Childcare rate for 5-year-olds, including early school starters	✓
4.3	Lifelong learning – participation in vocational and general education and training	↑
	Tertiary educational qualifications (ISCED 5–8)	↑ TARGET
4.4	Employment rates of recent graduates (Employability Index)	↗
4.6	Level 1 proficiency in reading	⋮
	Level 1 proficiency in mathematics	⋮

Source: Statistics Austria. 8-year trend 2010–2018 (if figures missing, at least 7-year trend) in 4 categories (↑ ↗ ↘ ↓) if there is a clear target (quantitative/normative); ✓ (part of the) indicator target achieved; ⋮ calculation of trend not possible. More information about methodological questions can be found in the National Indicator Report 2020.

- > Austria has increased the proportion of 3- to 5-year-olds in childcare.
- > Around 98% of 5-year-olds attended childcare in 2018.
- > The educational level in Austria is continuing to rise: The tertiary rate increased to 40.7% (2018).
- > At 88.6%, the Employability Index in Austria in 2018 was above the EU-28 figure of 81.7%



Did you know that Austria lies well above the EU lifelong learning average of 11.1%? In 2018 in Austria, 15.1% of 25-to 64-year-olds participated in education and training.

# Main issues to solve in Austria as of 2020



Establishing a transformative teaching and learning practice across all levels



Inclusion of systemic sustainability topics across all curricula



Supporting a shift in consciousness towards „co-creating“ sustainable futures

Source: [uninetz.at](http://uninetz.at)



Did you know that practical education for sustainable development is a key education issue in Austria? And that around 600 schools by the ÖKOLOG Network, for instance (see 'ÖKOLOG Net-work') or initiative "Neustart" are providing a multi-stakeholder initiative for inclusive, equitable and quality education?

Source: [un.org](http://un.org)



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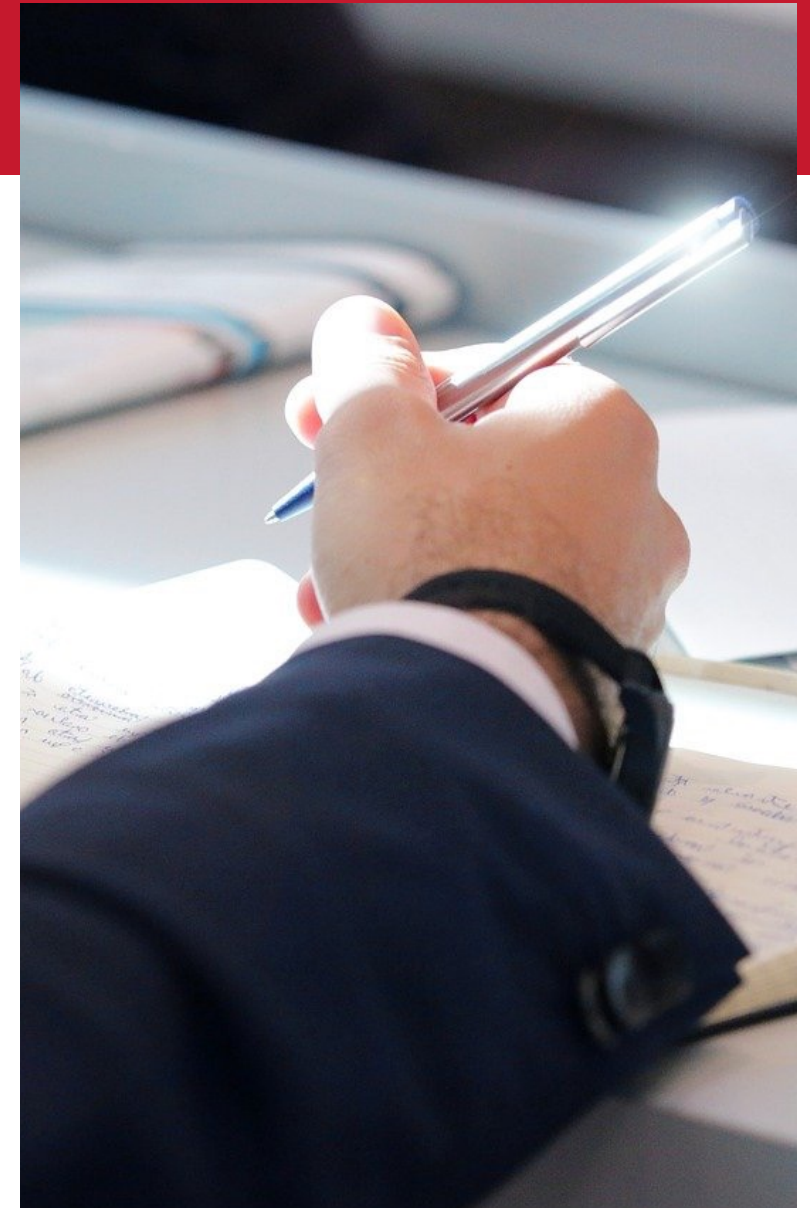
**Potential  
contributions  
Learning activity**

# Before thinking about potential contributions...

- Imagine an organization (business).  
What is the core purpose of this organization\*?
- Who are this organization's internal and external stakeholders?
- How does "education for sustainability" impact this organization (its purpose, its stakeholders, its operation, its viability)?
- What challenges and/or costs emerge from this "impact of education" upon this organization?
- On the other hand, what opportunities and/or benefits arise?
- With all this in mind, what contributions\*\* might this organization make to reach SDG 4 within its sphere of influence via inward and outward actions?

\* Meant here are all sizes, all types

\*\* Consider contributions inside the organization (referring to everything that is a resource to the organization and is directly or indirectly controlled by the organization, for instance, human resources, know how, monetary and material resources) and the outside of the organization (referring to everything outside of the organization that it can influence but lies outside of its control, for instance, policy change, partnering with other organizations, etc...)






# Potential contributions by educational institutions

The purpose of educational institutions is to educate and train for life and for particular professional interests.

In terms of SDG 4, the tasks lie in including sustainability studies across all levels and curricula, also in enabling learners to think systemically so that the sustainability dilemma can be understood holistically, and in encouraging them to become proactive in their own sphere of influence.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) allows everyone to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to actively take part in shaping a sustainable future. ESD means including key sustainable development wicked issues – e.g. climate change, poverty reduction, disaster risk, sustainable consumption, refugees and biodiversity – into teaching and learning.

Source: [swedesd.uu.se](http://swedesd.uu.se)



*"I came to systems thinking as an adult. Once I realized that everything connects to everything else in life, I could not understand how I could have missed this simple truth for so long. It's all right there for us to discover, and the earlier the better. I want my children to begin thinking in systems in Kindergarten and to apply that to the complex world they are growing into, so that they can actively participate in shaping a sustainable tomorrow. "*



# Potential contributions by educational institutions, cont.

## Potential inward actions:

- include systemic sustainability topics across curricula to enable knowledge-based decisions
- provide timely infos about sustainability data and learning resources to teachers and learners to create awareness
- organize sustainability training & practice opportunities for administrators and instructors to provide basic understanding

## Potential outward actions:

- partner with other institutions to share the learning curve and resources for sustainability teaching and learning
- partner with other institutions to develop data gathering and processing methods for accurate measuring of SDG progress that facilitates usable comparison between institutions
- partner with other institutions to collectively acquire and conduct sustainability-related funded research projects

# Potential contributions by municipalities

The purpose of municipalities is to plan, manage, and improve public work and services to the community. In terms of SDG 4, the tasks lie in organizing community-based learning about systemic sustainability and how to operate cities, towns, and villages from that perspective collectively; additionally, to expand the educational services the country provides to its citizens and residents with extra-curricular educational offers appropriate for the setting.

## Potential inward actions:

- organize community learning workshops to master the learning curve on sustainability together
- offer educational opportunities for connecting to nature to all age groups
- provide extra support to people in the community that may have learning challenges


## Potential outward actions:

- partner with local and regional governmental organizations to bring systemic sustainability learning to the forefront of community concerns (mastering the learning curve together and supporting each other's efforts)
- organize extra-curricular (eco-literacy) activities with other regional schools, so that children share, cross-fertilize and carry new learnings back home
- promote alternative knowledge transfer (repair cafes, gardening courses, etc.)



Do you know about the SDG-Portal? It lists examples of SDG measures taken by different municipalities.

Source: [sdg-portal.de](https://sdg-portal.de)



*"I love to explore the woods with my kids. Every summer our hometown is organizing a summer camp week with a naturalist. The kids love it, and they build really cool things from found objects in nature and then check them out in detail with small magnifying glasses."*

# Potential contributions by corporations and other organizations

The purpose of for-profit organizations (ie business) is to provide a service in exchange for resources (ie money). The purpose of non-profit organizations is to impact society in a certain way. Both need to generate and/or collect adequate resources to pay for their operations and activities and/or make profit.

In terms of SDG 4, the opportunities for contribution may vary greatly between different types or sizes of organizations, but their core contributions to society for reaching SDG 4 are to invest in their current and future employees by providing different types of professional educational opportunities and support for co-creating healthy, socially just, financially feasible, and environmentally safe organizations.



Did you know that in Austria 60% of organizations are searching for skilled workers (=everyone with a finished school or craftsman education)?

Sources: [news.wko.at](https://news.wko.at)

# Potential contributions by corporations and other organizations, cont.

## Potential inward actions:

- offer life-long learning opportunities for employees, both in the area of professional qualifications and in the areas of personal development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, the culture of peace and non-violence, as well as appreciation and cultural diversity
- promote equal educational opportunities for women and men across generations and abilities
- support life-stage appropriate working hours and sabbaticals

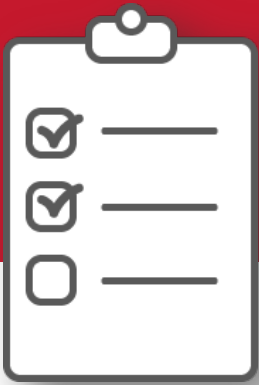
## Potential outward actions:

- co-operate blended learning opportunities for staff together with other companies and NGOs
- support the notion of community and volunteer work, maybe even within working hours as part of continuous learning and service expectations
- collaborate across the industry on sustainability-oriented projects and/or research opportunities that allow participating staff members to learn by doing



*"My neighbour is a local volunteer firefighter, and he told me how proud he was that recently he came late to work because there had been a car accident where he was helping on the scene. Upon arriving at work and telling his story, his boss said, "Thank you, Peter, we need guys like you in our company. Your time spent in service to the community counts as paid time, funded by the company."*

# Activity: potential contributions by an organization of your choice



The purpose of xyz organization is to...

In terms of SDG 4, potential contributions by xyz organization might be:

Potential inward actions:

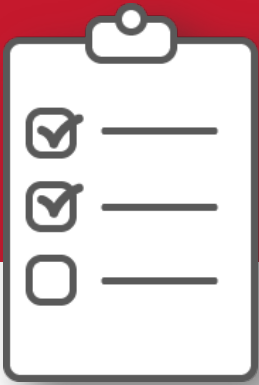
Potential outward actions:

How do inward and outward actions interact and impact each other?

Are partnerships necessary for the desired impact?



# Activity: checking design of potential contributions



Returning to the opening questions:

- In which ways do the designed actions support the core purpose of xyz organization?
- In which ways do the designed actions serve the internal and external stakeholders of xyz organization?
- What balance between costs vs. benefits (or challenge vs. opportunity) can be noticed for xyz organization in terms of “impact of education for sustainability” upon this type of organization?
- How do the designed inward and outward actions cohere and create synergy for xyz impact?



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**Reflection and  
resources  
Learning activity**



# Reflection and some resources

- What does quality education mean for you?
- How do you think sustainability should/could be embedded in an educational path?
- How much time are you willing to spend outside of working hours to continuously acquire new knowledge and hone new skills?
- Which class did you miss at school that you now wish for your kids to enjoy?
- How is the organization where you work (or spend a lot of time) involved in sustainability work? What would you like to tell them now?

## Further Infos:

- [SDG definition of the UN](#)
- [EC initiative: Environmental Sustainability — Education and training](#)
- [Stockholm Resilience Centre](#)
- [The circular economy in detail \(Ellen MacArthur Foundation\)](#)
- [Infos about ecological education](#)
- [Website of Linda Booth Sweeney](#)
- [Infos about transformative learning](#)
- [Practices of systemic sustainability \(Triple Pundit\)](#)
- [SDG Report 2021](#)

# Activity: SDG journey



- > Put your SDG glasses on and observe your environment under the SDG 4 umbrella for a week and find evidence for quality education that includes sustainability themes. Also notice when quality education is missing or when the learning offered keeps people in a place of not knowing.
- > If appropriate and allowed, take pictures of the found circumstances and catalogue the photos (begin making a scrapbook) — they will lead to a final assignment at the end of the series. Before you venture out, it might be a good idea to inform yourself about legal responsibilities when taking photos of people: [oesterreich.gv.at](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at) (If you are not in Austria, look for the regulations of the respective country!)

Possible resource for online scrapbook (free for classrooms and non-profits): [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)



*“Do you know some people in your circle of family, friends, colleagues who understand the challenges humanity is facing in the current phase shift?  
How are they walking through life in a different way?  
Here is the link again to Daniel Schmachtenberger talking about humanity’s  
phase shift. Watch it on [YouTube](#)”*



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# Sources

Slide 3:

- <https://germanwatch.org/en/node/14072> (download Arbeitsblätter)

Slide 4:

- <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/sdg-4/>
- <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/resources/education-sustainable-development-roadmap>

Slide 5:

- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>
- <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/resources/education-sustainable-development-roadmap>

Slide 6:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQRzxEobWco>
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Slide 7:

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Slides 8+9

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