

# Collective Competences for Sustainability

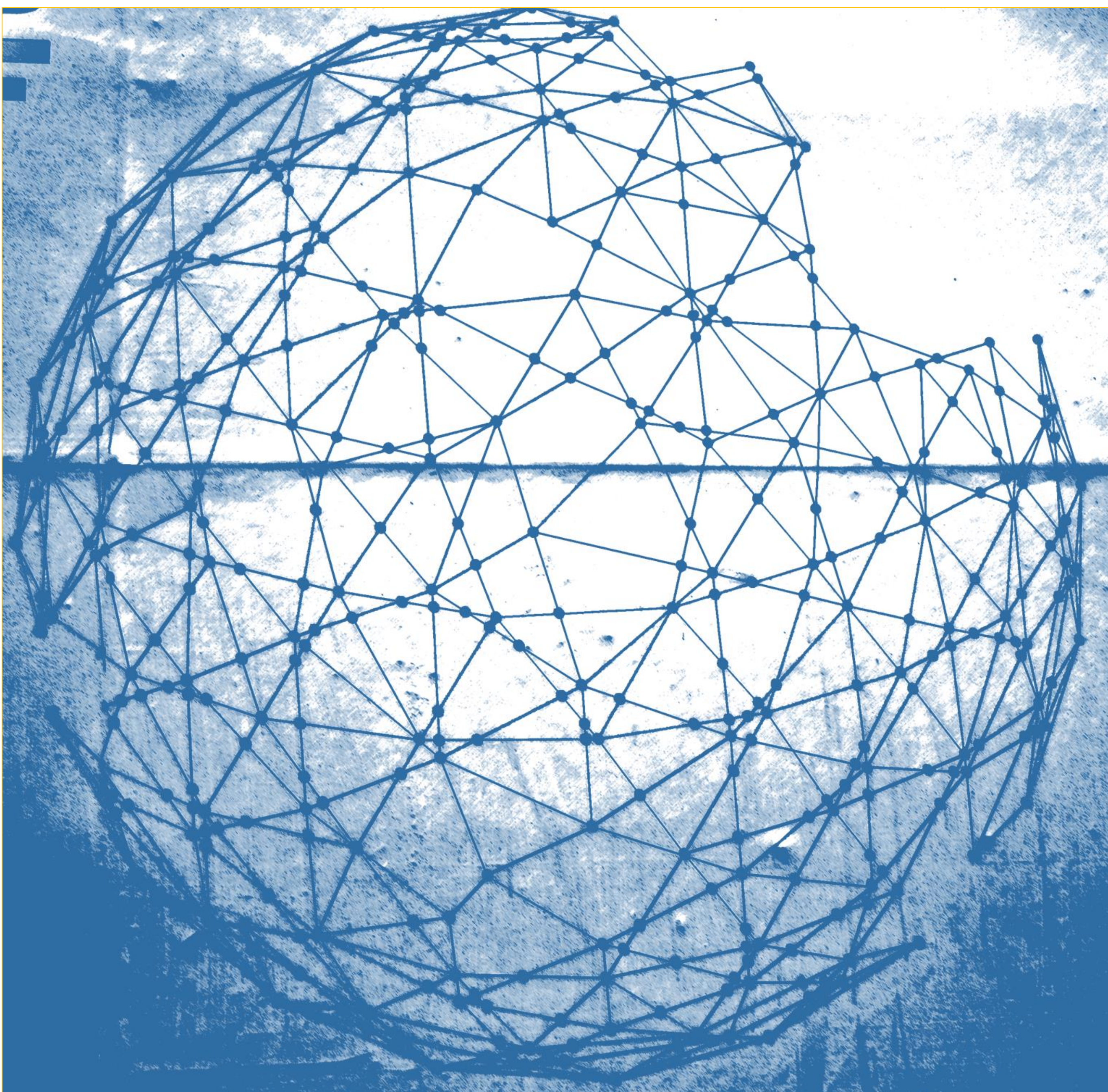
UAB & JYU

**Collective competences** can be defined as the set of enabling and constraining features that condition the capacity of a community or an organisation to function in a manner that fosters sustainable development and to prepare younger generations for behaviours that advance such an objective.

The baseline for collective competences has been established through a **documentary analysis**, complemented by **interviews** and **workshops** with selected key actors, at the twelve ECF4CLIM demonstration sites in four countries.

## Types of collective competences:

- **Regulative competences:** Deriving from written rules (laws, regulations) that stipulate on the ways in which sustainable development is to be considered and promoted – and by whom.
- **Normative competences:** Norms and values reflected and institutionalised in the organisation's own strategies, programmes of action, plans, guidelines, result agreements concluded with authorities at different levels of governance, etc.
- **Cultural-cognitive competences:** related to the internalisation of the regulative and normative competences as taken-for-granted social norms of normal and acceptable behaviours; translation of regulative and normative competences into the organisation's operating culture, daily routines, habits, and practices.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Could the provision of mandatory or optional courses on the topic (e.g., on citizenship and environmental education) be useful to foster sustainability competences? Or would it be better to choose introducing sustainability topics in a cross-cutting transversal manner?**
- **Can sustainability competences remain on the shoulders of teachers who voluntarily decide to dedicate (scarce) time and resources to teach this type of subject?**
- **How can the inconsistencies between what is taught about sustainability and the practices that educational institutions carry out (and the prevailing consumerist social values) be dealt with?**

## MAIN RESULTS

A clear **tension** between the **regulatory and normative competences** on the one hand and the **cultural-cognitive competences** on the other has been detected.

### Similarities between the four countries:

- There is a significant **gap** between the bold ambitions set out in legislation as well as the school/university-level plans and strategies on the one hand, and their implementation in practice, on the other.
- There is a significant **autonomy** that the teachers have in deciding whether and how to introduce sustainability topics in their teaching. (At the university level, autonomy reaches beyond the individual teachers, and key decisions are made by the university itself – not municipal, regional, or national authorities).
- The experience-based conviction that without firm **commitment** by the **leadership** of the organisation, efforts at integrating sustainability in the daily educational practices cannot succeed.
- Students and teachers at the demonstration sites of all countries (but Finland) pointed at the poor quality of **infrastructures** (green spaces, poor energy efficiency, waste containers, public transport, bike lanes, quality of buildings) as a major constraint to improving the environmental performance of their school/university.
- The schools and universities have often **limited** possibilities to improve their environmental performance through better management of facilities and services:
  - Due to the prominent role of **municipal authorities** (in Spain, also regional) in decisions concerning services such as energy and water supply, waste collection and recycling.
  - Due to the common practice of **outsourcing services** such as catering, cleaning, and procurement of material.
- The **economic dimension** of sustainability receives little attention in the curricula and teaching in all four countries.
- The national curricula and inspection systems act as a barrier by imposing curricular and evaluation frameworks still relying on established **disciplinary divisions**.
- The university students in all countries tended to blame the predominant societal **values**, individualism, consumerism, and the profit- and growth-oriented societal development model as a major obstacle to sustainability.

**Finland** appeared as an outlier in many respects – mostly in a positive sense. This was seen in:

- The arrangements in the JYU university for addressing sustainability in a holistic, **multidimensional** manner, integrating also its social and cultural “pillars”; and its “Sustainable and responsible development team” formed by professors and experts from various faculties to advise the university on sustainability matters;
- The allocation of dedicated **working hours** enabling school teachers to participate in the work of the school’s “Sustainable future team”.
- The fact that, unlike in the other three countries, neither students nor teachers complained about the quality of the **school premises and infrastructure**.