

## **Introduction**

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Planet Earth, our 'common home', the place where human civilisation developed, is now under pressure, leading to changes that call into question the possibility of securing the resources needed for life. The quality of the environment is affected by human activity with complex environmental impacts, often unknown at the time or level at which the activity takes place.

Following the scale at which environmental issues are analysed (individual, local, regional or global), it can be noticed that as the scale becomes more comprehensive, the individual "loses" the sense of belonging to the group that constitutes the community at that level.

If at the micro-level we are talking about individual action, with the direct perception of control over behaviour and its consequences, at the higher levels (local, global), the quality of the environment is influenced but also controlled by the sum of individual behaviour, either directly or through authorities/representatives. Control of actions and decisions on environmental quality (preservation/management/ remediation) no longer belongs directly to the individual, but to the group, which is a sum of individuals with different knowledge, perceptions, feelings and attitudes.

At the micro level, the individual level, there is the issue of education, by influencing behaviours that generate "correct" actions in relation to the environment. These behaviours are based on making informed decisions based on knowledge of the concerned issues. At the local community level and even at the global level, policies based on the concept of sustainable development are being formulated and implemented to promote community activities that ensure socially, economically and environmentally harmonious living.

This module provides essential information for understanding fundamental concepts in sustainable community development. The information is presented concisely so that those interested have easy access to the subject matter. The module is built around two main themes:

(1) sustainable development of rural communities, comprising three learning units: What is sustainable development; What is a sustainable community; Sustainable community development.

(2) the development of communication skills, represented by a learning unit focusing on relevant aspects of communication as a key element in generating desirable changes in the human-environment relationship. The unit also presents information for the development of communication skills useful in the development of environmental education.

The module contains two case studies illustrating aspects of rural communities on the road to sustainable development in two European countries, different not only in terms of geographical location and natural environment, but also in terms of social and economic context: Romania and Iceland.

The mid-term and final tests are a first step in verifying understanding of the information presented. We are convinced that real understanding lies in applying the concepts presented in the community of which each of you are a part!

We wish you success in going through the module and especially in participating in activities that develop sustainable communities.