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EcoMinds Mobile Game - Trainer Guide

1. Introduction

EcoMinds is an educational mobile game designed to help young people develop sustainability awareness and decision-making skills in the context of the green transition.

Players take the role of a company manager and must balance:

- Environmental impact
- Employee wellbeing
- Financial resources

The game simulates real-world workplace challenges, where every decision involves trade-offs between economic and environmental priorities.

The game supports the development of key sustainability competences in line with European frameworks.

2. Target Audience

This guide is intended for:

- Youth workers, trainers, and educators
- Teachers and facilitators working with young people (18–30)

No prior knowledge of sustainability or gaming is required.

3. Trainer Preparation

Before the session, the trainer should:

- Familiarize themselves with the game mechanics by playing at least once
- Ensure that all participants have access to a device (smartphone or tablet) and internet connection



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- Test the game in advance to avoid technical issues
- Prepare key discussion and reflection questions
- Review the learning objectives and plan how to guide the session

4. Learning Objectives

Knowledge

- Explain how energy, waste, water, and transport affect sustainability performance
- Describe at least three practical ways to reduce environmental impact in a workplace context

Skills

- Apply strategic decision-making by balancing short-term actions and long-term investments
- Analyse trade-offs between financial cost and environmental impact during gameplay

Attitudes

- Reflect on their role in the green transition and future green jobs
- Demonstrate increased awareness of sustainable behaviour in professional contexts

5. How to Play the Game

This section supports trainers in explaining the game rules and guiding participants during gameplay.

Game Duration: The game lasts **5 weeks (rounds)**

Weekly Game Flow: Each week includes 3 phases:

1. Event Phase (choose 1 option)
2. Planning Phase (2 actions: upgrades or tasks)
3. End of Week (results)

Trainers should briefly explain this cycle before gameplay begins.

1. Event Phase

- A random situation appears
- You must choose **1 of 2 options**
- Each option leads to different consequences



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Trainer Tip: Encourage participants to think about trade-offs and possible risks before making a decision.

2. Planning Phase

Each week, participants have: **2 ACTIONS**. They can use them in two ways:

Upgrades (Long-term strategy)

- Cost money
- Have a permanent effect
- Create strong impact

Represent sustainable investments.

Trainer Tip: Explain that upgrades are important for long-term improvement, but require careful budget management.

Tasks (Short-term solutions)

- Free
- Last 1 week
- **2 tasks = 1 action**

Represent temporary operational decisions.

Trainer Tip: Highlight that tasks help manage short-term problems, especially when resources are limited.

3. End of Week

- Results are calculated automatically
- Participants receive feedback on their performance
- The next week begins

Trainer Tip: Encourage participants to observe changes in environmental impact, morale, budget and reflect on how their decisions influenced the results.

6. Game System Explained

This section helps trainers explain the core game systems and highlight key learning points during gameplay.



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K Score (Environmental Impact)

- Measures overall sustainability performance
- Lower values indicate better environmental outcomes

Main factors:

- Energy
- Water
- Waste
- Transport

Trainer Tip: Explain that not all factors have the same impact (e.g., waste has a higher influence). Encourage participants to identify which actions are most effective.

Learning Focus: Participants understand how different operational areas contribute to environmental impact and how reducing them improves sustainability.

Employee Morale

- Affects performance and available actions
- If morale decreases:
 - Participants lose actions
 - Below 40 → **Game Over**

Trainer Tip: Highlight that sustainability decisions also affect people, not just the environment.

Learning Focus: Participants explore the importance of balancing organisational performance with employee wellbeing, reflecting real workplace dynamics.

Budget

- Used to purchase upgrades
- Earned based on performance

Trainer Tip: Encourage participants to think carefully about how they allocate resources and avoid overspending early in the game.



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Learning Focus: Participants develop resource management and strategic planning skills, understanding that sustainability requires financial decision-making.

7. Winning & Losing

This section helps trainers explain the success criteria of the game and use them as a basis for reflection and discussion.

Winning Condition	Participants win the game if they successfully complete all 5 weeks (rounds).
Losing Condition	Participants lose the game if employee morale drops below 40, resulting in game over.

8. Strategy & Learning Through Gameplay

This section supports trainers in highlighting the key learning elements that emerge during gameplay. The game encourages participants to:

- Balance short-term solutions (tasks) with long-term investments (upgrades)
- Manage limited financial resources effectively
- Prioritize high-impact areas (e.g., waste reduction)
- Maintain employee morale while improving sustainability performance

Trainer Tip: Encourage participants to:

- Explain the reasoning behind their decisions
- Compare different strategies with others
- Reflect on how their choices affected outcomes

9. Training Session Guide

Suggested Session Structure

Phase	Duration	Trainer Role	Purpose
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Introduction	10-15 min	Present the game, explain sustainability context, and outline learning objectives	Prepare participants and activate prior knowledge
Gameplay	30-40 min	Observe participants, provide support when needed, encourage reflection during play	Allow participants to experience decision-making and strategy
Debrief	20-30 min	Facilitate discussion, ask guiding questions, connect experience to real life	Transform gameplay into learning

Facilitation Guidance

Introduction Phase

Briefly explain the concept of sustainability and the objective of the game. Clarify that the focus is on learning, not winning.

Gameplay Phase

- Allow participants to play independently or in small groups
- Avoid interrupting unless necessary
- Encourage participants to think before making decisions and observe how their choices affect outcomes

Debrief Phase

- Lead a structured discussion using guiding questions
- Encourage all participants to contribute
- Help participants connect game experience → real-life situations

10. Activities

Activity 1: Before Playing (Warm-up)

Duration: 5–10 minutes

Objective: Activate prior knowledge and connect sustainability to real-life experiences.



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Instructions for Trainer:

- Ask participants the questions below
- Facilitate a short group discussion
- Encourage multiple perspectives
- Optionally, write key ideas on a board

Questions:

- What does sustainability mean in everyday life?
- What actions can reduce environmental impact?
- How do companies influence climate change?

Expected Outcome:

Participants begin to reflect on sustainability and are better prepared to engage with the game.

Activity 2: During Gameplay (Observation)

Duration: Throughout gameplay

Objective: Encourage reflective and strategic thinking during the game.

Instructions for Trainer:

- Observe participants without interrupting gameplay
- Provide support only when necessary
- Encourage participants to explain their decisions if appropriate

Encourage participants to:

- Think about short-term vs long-term decisions
- Observe how budget, morale, and sustainability interact
- Identify trade-offs in each choice

Expected Outcome: Participants become more aware of their decision-making process and the consequences of their actions.



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Activity 3: After Gameplay (Debrief & Reflection)

Duration: 15–20 minutes

Objective: Transform gameplay experience into meaningful learning.

Instructions for Trainer:

- Facilitate a structured discussion
- Ensure all participants have the opportunity to contribute
- Encourage reflection rather than “correct answers”

Discussion Questions:

- What strategy did you follow and why?
- What was your most difficult decision?
- Did you prioritize environment, budget, or morale?
- What would you change if you played again?

Expected Outcome: Participants connect their gameplay experience with real-world sustainability challenges and reflect on their decision-making.

Facilitation Tip

Encourage participants to:

- Compare their strategies with others
- Reflect on different approaches
- Recognize that there is no single “correct” solution

11. Extended Reflection Questions

These questions support trainers in facilitating deeper reflection and connecting gameplay experience with real-life situations. Use these questions during the **debrief phase**, selecting them based on the available time and the group’s level. Encourage open discussion by making it clear that there are no right or wrong answers, and allow participants to build on each other’s ideas to deepen reflection.



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Level 1: Understanding the Experience

- What strategy did you follow during the game?
- What was your most difficult decision?
- What surprised you most during gameplay?

Purpose: Help participants reflect on their immediate experience

Level 2: Analysing Decisions

- What trade-offs did you experience?
- Did you prioritize environment, budget, or morale? Why?
- How did your decisions affect the final outcome?

Purpose: Develop critical thinking and analysis

Level 3: Connecting to Real Life

- How is this game similar to real workplaces?
- Why is it difficult to balance economic and environmental priorities?
- What challenges do organisations face in becoming more sustainable?

Purpose: Link game experience to real-world contexts

Level 4: Future Thinking & Impact

- How can young people contribute to sustainability?
- What skills are needed for green jobs?
- What would you do differently in a real-life situation?

Purpose: Encourage forward-thinking and personal reflection

Facilitation Tip

Encourage participants to:

- Justify their answers
- Listen to different perspectives
- Reflect on how their thinking evolved during the activity



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12. Learning Outcomes (for reporting)

The following learning outcomes can be used by trainers to assess participant progress and support reporting of learning impact. Participants will be able to:

- Describe key sustainability factors (energy, waste, water, transport) and their role in environmental impact
- Explain how different decisions influence sustainability performance within a workplace context
- Demonstrate strategic thinking by selecting and adapting actions based on available resources
- Identify and analyse trade-offs between environmental, social, and economic factors
- Reflect on their decision-making process and its relevance to real-life sustainability challenges
- Express increased awareness of their role in the green transition and future professional contexts

These outcomes contribute to the development of sustainability competences aligned with the European GreenComp framework, including systems thinking, critical thinking, and responsibility for sustainability.

13. Evaluation Tool

This tool supports trainers in assessing participant learning and collecting feedback at the end of the session. Conduct this activity during the final debrief phase, allowing participants to respond either orally through group discussion or in written form as a short reflection. Trainers may take notes or collect responses to support evaluation and reporting purposes.

Ask participants:

- What was your best decision in the game and why?
- What was your biggest mistake, and what did you learn from it?
- What did you learn about sustainability and decision-making?
- What would you apply in real life or a professional context?

14. Facilitator Tips

The following tips support trainers in effectively facilitating the session and maximizing learning outcomes.



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- Keep explanations simple and clear to ensure all participants understand the game and its objectives
- Encourage open discussion rather than focusing on “right” or “wrong” answers
- Allow participants to learn through experimentation and mistakes as part of the learning process
- Prompt participants to explain and justify their decisions during or after gameplay
- Connect the game experience to real-life situations and workplace contexts
- Support participants with less experience to ensure inclusive participation
- Encourage participants to listen to different perspectives and share their ideas
- Maintain focus on learning and reflection rather than on winning the game

