



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Zero Waste Schools: From Prevention to the Bin

EU law ranks prevention above recycling. Most schools start at the bin. Five days working down the hierarchy to a Zero Waste Day you can run.

DURATION 5 days · 25 hours	LANGUAGE English (B1+)	GROUP SIZE Max 20 participants
DAILY SCHEDULE 09:30–15:00 Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch	AUDIENCE All school levels No specific prerequisites — open to all teachers and school staff.	CERTIFICATE Attendance + Europass Mobility
COURSE CENTRES Antalya · İstanbul · İzmir · Mersin · Budapest · Bremen · Rome Dates and cities of the scheduled sessions are listed on the course page.		

01 Overview

EU waste law ranks recycling third out of five. Almost every school starts there — which is why the bin by the door fills up with the wrong things while the two steps above it, the ones the law puts first, never get tried at all.

- Monday — sort and weigh what this group has actually thrown away since the morning, and place your own school on the five-step hierarchy.
- Tuesday — work on the waste that never has to exist, starting with the two streams EU law began setting binding targets for in 2025: food and textiles.
- Wednesday — build one re-use system for your building, and answer the question that kills them: who runs it when you stop.
- Thursday — fix the bin itself, then turn the week into a Zero Waste Day plan with a date on it.
- Friday — decide what would count as proof it worked, and get honest about the waste that is left.

You go home with an audit you have run once with your own hands, one prevention measure and one re-use system designed for your building, and a Zero Waste Day plan with a task list, a date and a way to tell a few weeks later whether anything actually changed.

02 Course description

Article 4 of the EU Waste Framework Directive sets out five steps in a fixed order: prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, other recovery, and disposal. It is a legal priority order, not a menu — the further up the list a measure sits, the more the law wants it chosen. Now look at what a school does. It buys a recycling bin. That is step three. In most

schools nothing above step three has ever been attempted, and the two steps that were supposed to come first are simply missing from the building.

That is the actual reason the recycling bin next to the general-waste bin ends up holding the same mixed rubbish by three o'clock. Nobody is being careless. A bin is a step-three tool, and it is being asked to do the work of steps one and two as well, which it cannot.

This is not an abstract compliance point, because a school's bins are counted. Its paper, packaging, canteen and plastics waste falls under the Directive's definition of municipal waste, and that is the total the EU recycling targets are measured on: 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030, 65% by 2035 — national targets, not school ones, and the first has already passed. So have two collection deadlines: bio-waste by the end of 2023 and textiles by 1 January 2025. Most staffrooms have heard of neither, which is why the lost-property cupboard is still treated as a charity-bag problem rather than a waste stream.

In October 2025 the law moved again. Directive (EU) 2025/1892 added national food-waste reduction targets for 2030 and producer responsibility for textiles and footwear. Neither binds a school directly, but both reach into its canteen and its lost-property cupboard — and a canteen is one of the few places in a town where several hundred meals are served and thrown away in the same forty minutes, under one roof, with someone available to weigh them. If your school is outside the EU, these targets and deadlines do not bind your country, but the five-step hierarchy works the same way as a method, and Day 4 starts from what your own municipality actually collects.

So the week runs the hierarchy in the Directive's own order, one step a day from Tuesday, and the step that surprises people is Wednesday. Preparing for re-use is a distinct legal category above recycling — keeping an object as the object rather than as material — and it is the one schools skip entirely. It is also the one that fails most predictably: a uniform swap, a materials library, a repair table, each of them run brilliantly by one committed person and each of them gone the term after that person changes school. Wednesday is spent designing a system that names a role rather than a person, because that is the difference between a scheme and a habit.

Friday refuses the easy ending. The bottom two steps of the hierarchy are other recovery and disposal, and some of a school's waste genuinely belongs there. Saying so out loud is what separates a plan from a poster, and the session works on how to report a result honestly — including what was measured, what was not, and what should not be claimed.

What this course deliberately leaves alone is the machinery around the waste. Setting up a pupil Eco-Committee, writing a whole-school action plan and running it through an award scheme is the subject of *Sustainable Education: Climate Change and Eco-Schools*, and that course is the better place for it. Devices, screens and their environmental cost belong to *GreenComp in Practice*; carbon footprint teaching to *Teaching Climate Change: From the Green Deal to Your Carbon Footprint*; renewable energy and the compost build to *Green Energy, Clean Future*; comparing footprints and building general sustainability-teaching capacity to *Environmental Sustainability And Education*. This week stays on the material itself — what enters the building, what leaves it, and in which of the Directive's five categories it leaves.

The test the week is designed around is not the event. Anyone can run a good Zero Waste Day. The test is the ordinary Tuesday, weeks after the posters have come down, when nobody is watching the bin by the door — which is why Friday is spent on measurement rather than celebration.

03 Learning outcomes

- 01 Run a waste audit — sort, weigh, record — and read the result as a composition rather than a total.
- 02 Place your own school on the five steps of the EU waste hierarchy and name the steps it has never used.
- 03 Design one prevention measure and one re-use system for your own building, each with a running cost and a named role behind it.
- 04 Plan a Zero Waste Day end to end: date, tasks, materials, and the before-and-after measurement that shows whether it changed anything.

- 05 Explain what the 2025 revision of EU waste law added on food and textiles, and which parts of a school sit inside what it measures.

04 Methodology

Real waste, weighed on day one	the week's opening data does not come from a case study. Participants sort and weigh waste the group has produced together since the morning, so the audit method is learned on material that is physically present and can be argued about.
One step of the hierarchy a day	from Tuesday, each day takes a step of the EU waste hierarchy in the order the Directive sets it out (Friday takes the last two), and each day ends with one written output the next day builds on — so Friday is working on what Monday produced.
Tested against the school that has no budget	every measure designed during the week is checked for what it costs, who maintains it, and what happens to it when the person who started it leaves.

05 Daily programme

Day 1

What is actually in the bin

- **Icebreaker:** "One thing I threw away yesterday" — each participant names a single item and where it ended up; the group sorts the answers into five piles before anyone has been told what the five piles are
 - **The waste hierarchy of Article 4:** prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, other recovery, disposal — and why the order is a legal priority rather than a preference
 - Why a school's bins are counted as municipal waste, what the recycling targets are measured against, and which deadlines have already passed
 - **Practicum:** a real audit on real waste — sorted by stream, weighed, and written up as a composition rather than a total. What gets audited is the waste this group has actually produced since the morning, so the figures on the sheet are ours rather than a worked example
 - **Output:** a completed audit sheet, and the sort-weigh-record method written up so it can be repeated in your own building
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Day 2

Step one: prevention, and the two streams the law changed in 2025

- **Warm-up:** "Trace it back" — three items from yesterday's audit, worked backwards to the decision that brought each one into the building
- **What Directive (EU) 2025/1892 added in October 2025:** national food waste reduction targets for 2030 (10% in processing and manufacturing, 30% per capita across retail, food services and households, against the 2021–2023 average), and producer responsibility for textiles and footwear
- **Food waste across a school day:** the plate, the lunchbox, the unopened carton — how it is measured before anyone tries to reduce it, and what a canteen can change without a new contract
- **Textiles as a waste stream:** uniforms, PE kit and the lost-property cupboard, and the separate collection Member States were required to have in place by January 2025
- **Workshop:** each participant writes a prevention list for their own school, ranked by what an audit would actually find rather than by what feels virtuous

- **Output:** a ranked prevention list, with one measure marked as startable alone, this term
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Day 3

Step two: preparing for re-use, the step schools skip

- **Warm-up:** "Repair or replace" — five objects from a school store cupboard, and the honest cost of each decision
 - What separates re-use from recycling in the Directive, and why one sits above the other
 - **Systems that hold in a school building:** lost property that gets returned, a materials library for art and craft, uniform exchange, refill points, a repair table
 - **The failure mode, examined properly:** the scheme that lasted one term because one enthusiastic person was carrying it
 - **Workshop:** design one re-use system for your own building — where it physically sits, who runs it, what it costs to keep running, what happens when you are not there
 - **Output:** one re-use system on a single page, with a named role rather than a named person
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Day 4

Step three: recycling that survives a school, and the Zero Waste Day

- **Why the bin by the door fails:** placement, signage, lid shape, and contamination — what a single wrong item does to a whole container
 - What your municipality actually collects, and what happens to it after collection — reading that before designing a bin station, not after
 - **Workshop:** redesign one bin station in the training venue and test it on the group without explaining it first
 - **Building the Zero Waste Day:** date, audience, tasks, roles, materials, and which measures from Days 2 and 3 the day exists to launch
 - **Output:** a Zero Waste Day plan with a task list, named roles and a date
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Day 5

Proving it works

- **Opening session:** designing the before-and-after — re-running the Day 1 audit protocol as a comparison, choosing what to count, and deciding in advance what the result will not be allowed to claim
- **The bottom of the hierarchy:** other recovery and disposal, the waste that genuinely cannot be avoided, and how to report that honestly instead of quietly leaving it out
- **Peer review in small groups:** each Zero Waste Day plan is read by two other participants, who say what would stop it working; two plans are then worked through with the whole group
- **Output:** a Zero Waste Day plan revised after peer review, with its before-and-after measurement written down
- Course evaluation and discussion of acquired competences
- Certification ceremony

PLEASE NOTE

Sessions run from 09:30 to 15:00, Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch. Timings can shift a little to suit the venue and the group.

Course activities and content may vary depending on participants' needs and the trainer leading the session; any changes are at the trainer's discretion. If there is a specific topic you would like included, please let us know — content-related requests must reach us at least 3 weeks before the course start date so we can confirm them in time.

06 Materials

- Articles 4, 11 and 22 of the EU Waste Framework Directive and the 2025 amending Directive — freely published by the EU; the relevant articles are read together in class, a short passage at a time, from the original text
- The audit method: a sort-weigh-record sheet worked out on Day 1 and designed to be repeated unchanged in your own building
- A shared spreadsheet (any spreadsheet you already use) for recording the audit composition and the before-and-after comparison
- Your own building, described on Day 1 in rough terms, used as the test case for every workshop that follows

07 How to prepare

- There is nothing to count, collect or photograph before you come. The week's first set of figures is produced here, from the waste the group itself produces on the first day, and the week's working sheets are filled in during the sessions. It does help to have a rough mental picture of your own building — roughly how many bins, where they sit, whether there is a canteen and who empties it. If you do not know any of that, Monday gives you the questions to ask when you get back, which is a perfectly good place to start from.
- Bring a laptop or tablet if you have one; the audit sheet is easier on a screen than on paper, and any spreadsheet you already use will do. We have spare devices. The sorting is done on clean, dry streams. If any part of that would be difficult for you, tell us when you book; it changes how the session is run, not whether you take part.

08 After the course

- Participants will receive their Certificate of Attendance and the co-signed Europass Mobility document.
- Participants will complete a general course evaluation and event survey.
- Participants will receive course materials, videos, photos, and PDF documents in both digital and print formats.
- Follow-up support: self-evaluation materials are provided. Depending on the group, an email group may be set up so that participants can keep exchanging ideas.

09 Why this is Erasmus+ eligible

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide names environment and the fight against climate change as a horizontal priority, and asks specifically for practices that make learners and staff "true actors of change (e.g., save resources, reduce energy use, waste and carbon footprint, opt for sustainable food and mobility choices)" (Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2026, Part A — Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme, p. 9). This course works on the waste half of that sentence directly.

10 What the course fee covers

INCLUDED IN THE COURSE FEE

- 25 hours of training and course materials
- Certificate of Attendance + Europass support
- On-site local support throughout the week

ARRANGED SEPARATELY BY THE PARTICIPANT

- Travel to the host city — invitation letter on request
- Accommodation — we share recommended options
- Travel & health insurance

ISSUED BY

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COURSE PAGE

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ABOUT ERASMUS MOBILITY ACADEMY

Erasmus Mobility Academy (OID: E10304561) is an Erasmus+ training provider offering professional development courses for educators, school staff and youth workers across Europe. Our courses are designed for international mobility — open to participants travelling from a country other than the host country — and support schools in building lasting institutional capacity. We provide structured learning, logistical guidance and certification with Europass.