

# **SCHOOL AGENDA 2030: DRIVING THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY FROM THE CLASSROOMS**

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Almost a decade has passed since the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) were adopted within the framework of the United Nations. They replaced the Millennium Development Goals, and from 2015 to the present day they have permeated all administrative levels with a range of 17 colours, one per goal.

**At the municipal level**, the introduction of a new framework **meant moving** from a thematic agenda (Local Agenda 21), focused on the environment, **to start talking about issues such as equality** between men and women, ending hunger, **innovation, education and health and well-being**.

The environmental agenda became a **cross-cutting agenda**, where social and economic issues were added to environmental ones, holistically covering the three legs of sustainability.

**In the field of education**, the School Agenda 21, **the environmental education tool** par excellence in the Basque educational context, and within the field of formal education, has also been replaced by the so-called School Agenda 2030.



The schools continue to work on the continuous improvement of their centres, maintaining this environmental perspective. They continue to organise themselves by cycles in working groups and have leaders for each year and class. These take on the responsibility of promoting different environmental activities in the centre for the rest of their classmates. In some centres there is also the figure of those responsible for ensuring that the habits of pupils and teachers are sustainable.

In addition to the dynamics of each school, where pupils take on responsibilities and are able to address their concerns while generating and transmitting environmental awareness, there are other dynamics promoted by local councils.

**Local governments** finance activities and **promote** the elaboration of **thematic diagnoses** in the municipality, all within the methodological framework promoted by the Basque Government's Department of Education.

With the introduction of the School Agendas 2030 and the Local Agendas 2030, **a methodological change has been made**, where the **theme** that all the schools in the municipality work on together is related to **an SDG**, and for the first time this can be a social issue, moving away from the

environmental issues that were dealt with in these spaces. Another substantial change is the **biannual** nature of the process, where the theme is maintained for two years, allowing a diagnosis to be made during the first school year and an action to be taken during the second year.

At the educational level, where the most relevant aspect of the 2030 School Agendas lies, it goes beyond the global framework of the SDGs, the annual or biannual methodology established at the regional level or the local implementation theme chosen each year. What is remarkable is the **centrality** of **students** in the whole process.

It is important, as in any participatory process, to ensure that the subject is the **active part of the whole process**, where decisions and proposals are taken in a collaborative and consensual manner ([good practices in child participation](#)).

If this premise is guaranteed, during the process, pupils organise themselves, propose and decide collaboratively what needs to be improved in their schools. They realistically consider their own and the school's capacities to implement improvements.

With this same premise, Roger Hart created a ladder that takes his name where the degree of participation of children and adolescents in the activities that are carried out can be measured. This scale goes from manipulation, where the pupils do not know and do not understand what they are participating in, to the eighth step, corresponding to the initiatives initiated by the children and where decision-making is done in a collaborative manner with the adults who accompany them in the process.



Up to now, they have been asking for recycling bins or flanges on the water dispensers or to change the lights in the centre to LEDs. From now on, they also address other issues, such as mental health, healthy eating or active living.

Moreover, their diagnoses and demands for improvement are not limited to their schools; in collaboration with other schools in the municipality, they analyse the municipal situation with respect to the chosen theme and build an action plan to carry out improvement actions.

The needs identified for both the school and the municipality are transmitted to the municipal governing body. The latter takes on the commitment to respond to some of them.

In this way, the classrooms contribute to the improvement of the municipality and throughout the whole process. The pupils, the future citizens, acquire a **critical vision of the reality** that surrounds them, being able to **propose alternatives and solutions** within their capacity for intervention.

Moreover, they acquire **habits of participation** in decision-making and thus become citizens who will be more aware and more demanding of participation both in the private sphere and with regard to public administrations.

With all this, students also reinforce the **practices of collaboration** between people and organisations. This implies better capacities for social interaction where dialogue and consensus of ideas are put at the centre of decision-making.

In this way, beyond the framework of the 2030 School Agenda, a twofold task is carried out in schools.

On the one hand, in the medium term there will be a critical, empowered **citizenry** with skills for agreement, capable of promoting common projects for social improvement while at the same time demanding transparency and participation in public decision-making. On the other hand, the municipality receives a valuable contribution from the **perspective of children and adolescents** for the improvement of different socio-environmental issues.

