



EcoLingua Curriculum

Digitally Enhanced Pedagogy for Integrating Environmental Issues into Language Teaching

COMPARATIVE REPORT ON PRIMARY LEVEL ELT CURRICULUM and MATERIAL ANALYSIS

(Work Package 2: EcoLingua Curriculum Analysis and Integration Strategies – EC-AIS)

This comparative report has been prepared within the framework of Work Package 2 of the EcoLingua project. It is based on national reports developed by project partners from Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Turkey to provide a cross-country analysis of English language teaching curricula and materials with respect to ecological and environmental content at the secondary education level.

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Comparative Report for English Language Teaching at Primary Level

Introduction

In recent years, the intersection of **language education and environmental literacy** has gained growing recognition across educational research, policy, and classroom practice. As climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainability challenges accelerate globally, there is an urgent need to equip learners not only with linguistic proficiency but also with the values, knowledge, and skills to engage critically and constructively with ecological issues. In this context, **English Language Teaching (ELT)**, as a widely taught and globally connected discipline, offers fertile ground for integrating sustainability education. The Erasmus+ funded **EcoLingua Project** responds to this need by promoting the integration of environmental issues into language teaching through digitally enhanced pedagogy, critical materials analysis, and international collaboration.

This comparative report focuses on the **primary education level (ages 6–11)** and aims to assess how ecology, climate change, and sustainability themes are currently reflected in the ELT curricula, materials, and pedagogical strategies of four European countries: **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye**. Each of these countries brings a unique educational tradition, curricular structure, and sociopolitical context, offering a diverse yet comparable field for investigating the presence, depth, and coherence of environmental content within English language instruction at the primary level.

The primary stage of education holds particular importance for embedding ecological awareness. At this developmental phase, students form foundational attitudes toward nature, society, and their role in the world. Language learning at this age is not only about acquiring vocabulary or grammar structures but also about **shaping worldviews** through interaction with content, stories, and communicative experiences. Thus, the integration of ecological themes in ELT has the potential to cultivate environmental responsibility and intercultural awareness simultaneously. However, such integration requires careful curriculum design, appropriate materials, and teacher support — areas in which countries vary significantly.



In the case of **Spain**, where textbook selection is decentralized and left to schools and teachers, opportunities for environmental integration depend largely on individual choices and the selected publishers’ orientations. The analysis of a representative textbook reveals promising instances of nature- and climate-related content embedded in communicative tasks, songs, and listening exercises, yet these instances remain scattered rather than systemic. In **Italy**, on the other hand, a national policy framework supports environmental education across disciplines, including ELT. The integration of ecological themes into civic education and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approaches creates a more structured context for sustainability in language teaching, though practical implementation may still be uneven.

Lithuania presents a hybrid model, characterized by a centralized curriculum that explicitly encourages interdisciplinary themes, including sustainability, and a flexible textbook market with a strong presence of UK-published ELT materials. The reviewed materials show a growing trend of including environmental content, especially through vocabulary development, speaking tasks, and project-based learning. Meanwhile, **Türkiye’s curriculum** aligns with CEFR and prioritizes communicative competence, but explicit environmental themes remain relatively marginal. While units on animals, weather, and nature exist, they tend to present content in decontextualized ways, often focusing on vocabulary memorization rather than fostering ecological awareness or behavioral reflection.

This comparative inquiry therefore seeks to go beyond mere identification of topics or units. It critically evaluates how environmental issues are **conceptualized, framed, and operationalized** in ELT at the primary level: Are students exposed to sustainability as a vocabulary set, a value system, a real-world problem, or an interdisciplinary practice? Are these themes delivered through isolated lexical items, or are they embedded in meaningful, age-appropriate contexts that allow learners to reflect, act, and communicate in environmentally responsible ways? To what extent do teaching materials support educators in addressing these topics meaningfully?

Through a cross-national lens, the report highlights both **convergences and divergences** among the four countries in curriculum policy, textbook content, and pedagogical approaches. It identifies **good practices**, such as the integration of values education in Türkiye, digital



support tools in Spain, structured civic education in Italy, and cross-curricular CLIL in Lithuania. Simultaneously, it draws attention to **gaps and challenges**, such as superficial treatment of ecological themes, lack of teacher training, or insufficient scaffolding for critical thinking.

By synthesizing these insights, this report aims to inform not only the next phases of the EcoLingua project but also a broader community of policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, and practitioners. Ultimately, it advocates for an **intentional, coherent, and pedagogically sound integration** of environmental themes into English language teaching — one that begins at the earliest stages of formal education and prepares students to become **linguistically proficient, ecologically literate, and globally responsible citizens**.

Methodology

This comparative analysis was conducted as part of the **EcoLingua Project (2024-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000245616)**, which aims to foster environmental awareness through language education by integrating ecology and sustainability themes into English Language Teaching (ELT) at various educational levels. The present report specifically focuses on **primary education** and draws on national reports submitted by partner institutions in **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye**. The objective of the methodology was to ensure **rigorous, consistent, and comparative analysis** of curricula, teaching materials, and textbook content related to ecological and climate-related themes in primary ELT.

1. Settings and National Contexts

The participating countries differ in their educational systems, curriculum structures, textbook adoption policies, and environmental education frameworks. These contextual variables shaped both the **form and focus** of the national reports and were carefully accounted for in the comparative methodology.

- In **Spain**, there is no nationally mandated textbook list for English instruction. Schools and teachers have full autonomy in selecting materials. The Spanish partner analyzed a widely used, officially recommended textbook for primary education: *Kid's Box New*



Generation 3 (Cambridge University Press, 2023), covering both the Teacher’s Book and the Pupil’s Book.

- In **Italy**, the national curriculum provides overarching guidelines, and schools select ELT textbooks aligned with these frameworks. The Italian report focused on a curriculum-level policy review and included content analysis across multiple textbooks commonly used at the primary level, although the analysis was not restricted to one title.
- In **Lithuania**, the national curriculum is centrally defined but allows for school-level autonomy in textbook choice. The Lithuanian report listed over 30 approved ELT textbooks from major international publishers (e.g., Oxford, Pearson, Express Publishing), with detailed analysis focusing on selected titles like *Early School English*, *Brighter Ideas*, and *Beehive*. Emphasis was placed on examining how these textbooks integrate environmental content across CEFR-aligned levels.
- In **Türkiye**, English is introduced in the 2nd grade and is governed by a national curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). The Turkish partner institution analyzed both MEB-approved textbooks and supplementary materials, including *Sunshine English 2*, *Student’s Book* by HECCE Publications, and the story-based workbook *Adventures of Zury*. Content was examined across 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade levels.

These differing national approaches required a flexible yet consistent methodology to extract meaningful comparative insights across educational systems with varying degrees of centralization and pedagogical freedom.

2. Sources of Data

The analysis was based on two primary sources per country:

1. **National ELT Curriculum Documents:** Including curriculum frameworks, teaching guidelines, civic education mandates, and sustainability directives issued by national or regional ministries of education.



2. **Teaching Materials and Textbooks:** A total of **over 40 textbook titles and teaching resources** were reviewed across the four countries, with detailed qualitative analysis focusing on those materials used at the **primary education level**. In particular:
- **Spain:** One core textbook (*Kid's Box 3*) analyzed in depth, with explicit mapping of environmental content across thematic units, listening tasks, speaking activities, songs, and values education.
 - **Italy:** Multiple commonly adopted primary-level ELT textbooks were reviewed for environmental themes, with examples drawn from reading sections, vocabulary units, project tasks, and CLIL-based exercises.
 - **Lithuania:** Dozens of approved textbook titles were surveyed, and a selected set was analyzed for environmental vocabulary coverage, inclusion of climate and nature themes, and task types encouraging ecological reflection.
 - **Türkiye:** Three core resources—*Sunshine English 2*, the *MEB Student's Book*, and *Adventures of Zury*—were subjected to thematic and linguistic content analysis, including sample dialogues, listening scripts, and illustrations.

Supplementary materials such as teacher's guides, flashcards, activity books, and civic education resources were also considered where relevant, especially in Türkiye and Spain.

3. Analytical Procedure

The methodology followed a **qualitative content analysis framework**, based on the principles of thematic coding, document analysis, and cross-case comparison.

The analysis was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1: Curriculum Mapping

Each national team provided an overview of the **official English curriculum at the primary level**, including:

- Stated language learning objectives
- References to environmental or sustainability education



- Integration of values education and cross-curricular learning
- Alignment with CEFR levels

Comparative attention was given to the **degree of curriculum-level support** for ecological integration. For instance, Italy’s civic education reform and Lithuania’s Mokykla 2030 policy demonstrate explicit commitments, whereas Türkiye and Spain emphasize values education and school-level discretion.

Phase 2: Textbook and Materials Review

A detailed matrix was created for each country to catalogue textbook features across several comparative categories:

- **Presence of ecological themes** (e.g., animals, nature, recycling, weather, climate)
- **Type of tasks** (e.g., reading texts, listening activities, speaking prompts, project work)
- **Use of green vocabulary** (e.g., sustainability, pollution, biodiversity, energy)
- **Skills focus** (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- **Pedagogical framing** (e.g., isolated lexical items vs. contextualized tasks)
- **Depth of treatment** (e.g., surface-level vocabulary vs. critical engagement with ecological issues)

This review paid attention to **repetition, consistency, and cognitive demand** of environmental content in relation to students’ age and language proficiency.

Phase 3: Cross-National Comparative Synthesis

The final stage involved synthesizing the findings to identify:

- **Convergences:** Common themes across countries, such as frequent inclusion of animal-related vocabulary, weather-related units, or nature-based imagery.
- **Divergences:** Differences in content depth, thematic framing, or integration strategies. For example, while Italian materials often included project-based tasks and explicit sustainability goals, Turkish textbooks tended to use more isolated lexical teaching without critical reflection on environmental issues.



- **Innovative practices:** Use of songs and values-based activities in Spain, digital support tools in Lithuania, or narrative-based ecological storytelling in Türkiye (*Adventures of Zury*).
- **Gaps and silences:** Lack of consistent reference to climate change, pollution, or biodiversity in most primary textbooks — even when environmental themes were superficially present.

4. Comparability and Limitations

To ensure methodological coherence despite national differences, the comparative lens remained focused strictly on **grades 2 to 4**, aligned approximately with **CEFR A1-A2 levels** across countries. All references to secondary or high school education found in national reports were **excluded from this analysis**, and the selection of materials was limited to those in active use or officially approved for the **2024–2025 academic year**.

One limitation concerns the **diversity of textbook ecosystems**. For example, Spain and Lithuania use a wide range of commercial international textbooks, while Türkiye and Italy rely more on nationally tailored materials. As a result, while some countries allowed for analysis of a single coherent set of textbooks, others required the synthesis of data across a broader, less uniform set of sources.

Nevertheless, the triangulation of curriculum documents, textbook content, and pedagogical framing enabled a robust comparative analysis of how environmental and climate themes are represented — or underrepresented — in primary-level English education across Europe.

Overview of National Curricula (per Country)

The national English language curricula for primary education across **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye** exhibit a shared commitment to communicative language teaching grounded in the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**. However, their approaches to incorporating **ecological and sustainability themes** vary considerably in terms of scope, depth, and pedagogical intent. This section provides a comparative overview of how each country’s curriculum situates environmental issues within English language education at



the primary level, focusing on stated learning objectives, cross-curricular connections, and institutional guidance.

Spain

Spain’s primary-level ELT curriculum is governed by national educational legislation, but **textbook and material selection is fully decentralized**, allowing schools and teachers to independently select resources that align with their local priorities and teaching strategies. As a result, the presence of environmental themes in English instruction **largely depends on the chosen textbooks** rather than on explicit curricular mandates.

While the national curriculum emphasizes **language competence, communicative skills, and intercultural awareness**, it does **not systematically reference ecology, sustainability, or environmental education** within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning outcomes. Environmental education is integrated more prominently in subjects like Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

This decentralization provides **flexibility** but also leads to **inconsistencies**, as schools that prioritize environmental literacy may adopt materials with rich ecological content, while others may bypass the theme entirely. In practice, as observed in the *Kid’s Box 3* textbook, some units introduce environmental vocabulary (e.g., weather, nature, animals), yet these are treated thematically rather than as part of a broader values or sustainability education framework.

Italy

Italy presents a **more structured and policy-driven approach** to integrating environmental themes into primary education. The **Indicazioni Nazionali per il Curricolo** (2012, updated in 2018) clearly defines learning goals for foreign languages at the primary level, targeting CEFR A1 proficiency by the end of the cycle. English is compulsory from the first year of primary school and is often taught with support from cross-curricular content.

What distinguishes the Italian model is the **strong institutional backing for environmental and civic education**, which includes transversal ecological themes embedded across all subject



areas. **Law No. 92 (2019)** introduced **civic education as a mandatory subject**, with ecology, sustainability, and environmental responsibility explicitly named among its key components. Civic education is meant to be **integrated into all subjects**, including English.

In practice, while the national curriculum does not prescribe environmental content specifically for English, it creates a **regulatory framework that encourages interdisciplinary approaches**. English lessons are thus encouraged to align with **civic, ecological, and global citizenship objectives**, especially through **CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)**, which is promoted in later stages but ideologically consistent with primary instruction.

Italy’s curriculum demonstrates a clear **top-down commitment** to sustainability and offers institutional incentives for schools to develop English lessons that are thematically aligned with environmental awareness. This **structural integration** stands in contrast to Spain’s more **localized and teacher-led implementations**.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, the **national curriculum is centrally regulated** but allows significant **school-level autonomy** in the implementation of subject content. English is introduced in Grade 2 and taught progressively across CEFR A1 to A2+ levels throughout the primary cycle. The **General Curriculum Framework** sets expectations for communication competence, while also encouraging **cross-disciplinary thematic learning**, including environmental and sustainability education.

The 2021 updates under the **Mokykla 2030 (School 2030)** reform explicitly advocate for integrating **interdisciplinary themes** into all subjects, including foreign languages. These themes include **environmental protection, circular economy, biodiversity, and sustainable cities**, making Lithuania’s curriculum the most **explicitly aligned** with global sustainability education goals at the primary level.

Moreover, environmental learning is framed as part of the **development of 21st-century skills**, such as collaboration, digital literacy, civic engagement, and critical thinking. In this context,



English lessons are expected not only to introduce ecological vocabulary but also to foster **active environmental thinking and student engagement** through projects and real-life connections.

Compared to Spain and Türkiye, Lithuania’s curriculum is **proactive and policy-supported**, offering schools the structural backing to treat environmental education as a **core value of language instruction**, not merely an optional theme.

Türkiye

Türkiye’s primary English language curriculum, updated most recently in 2018, is governed by the **Ministry of National Education (MEB)** and is fully aligned with CEFR. English becomes a compulsory subject starting from **Grade 2**, with a focus on **listening and speaking skills** in the early grades and gradual inclusion of reading and writing in later years.

The curriculum adopts a **communicative, student-centered approach**, emphasizing real-life communication, age-appropriate materials, and integration of values education. While values such as **friendship, responsibility, and honesty** are explicitly mentioned, the curriculum does **not include ecological or environmental values** as core components. There are **no learning outcomes or descriptors directly referencing sustainability, climate change, or ecological awareness**.

That said, the inclusion of units related to **weather, animals, and nature** offers **entry points** for integrating environmental themes. However, these are typically approached from a **lexical or functional language angle** (e.g., “Lions can run fast” or “It is raining today”) without further exploration of sustainability issues or environmental actions.

Unlike Italy and Lithuania, Türkiye lacks a **cross-curricular mandate** for integrating sustainability into foreign language instruction. Environmental themes, where present, arise from **teacher initiative or textbook design**, not from policy-driven frameworks. Thus, while the curriculum provides a **foundation for communicative competence**, it misses opportunities to embed **critical ecological consciousness** within the primary ELT framework.



Comparative Reflections

A cross-national comparison reveals **two key dividing lines** in the treatment of environmental issues in primary ELT curricula:

1. Policy-Driven Integration vs. Local Discretion

Italy and Lithuania represent systems with **top-down mandates** that institutionalize sustainability across subjects, including foreign languages. Civic education in Italy and interdisciplinary themes in Lithuania create clear entry points for ecological integration. In contrast, Spain and Türkiye leave the **implementation to schools and teachers**, resulting in more fragmented or incidental coverage of environmental themes in ELT.

2. From Vocabulary to Values

All countries include **environment-related vocabulary** (e.g., animals, weather, food, nature). However, only in **Lithuania and Italy** are these linguistic elements situated within broader **values-oriented or problem-based frameworks**. Spain and Türkiye tend to treat such vocabulary in **isolation**, missing the opportunity to connect language with real-world ecological understanding or action.

Thus, while all four countries operate within CEFR-aligned language education frameworks, their curricular commitments to **embedding environmental literacy in ELT** diverge in both intent and execution. These differences shape the subsequent availability of relevant content in teaching materials and the depth of student engagement with sustainability themes.

Analysis of Teaching Materials and Textbooks

Teaching materials and textbooks are essential instruments in the implementation of curricular goals. In the context of environmental education through ELT, they serve as primary vehicles for exposing learners to ecological themes and shaping their early perceptions of sustainability, nature, and human responsibility. This section provides a comparative analysis of the ELT textbooks and supplementary resources used in **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye** at the



primary level, focusing on **content coverage**, **task types**, **pedagogical framing**, and **green vocabulary integration**.

Spain

Spain’s decentralized textbook policy allows schools and teachers to choose their own materials. For the purpose of this report, the Spanish team analyzed *Kid’s Box New Generation 3* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), a widely used English textbook series.

The analysis reveals a **noteworthy presence of environmental content**, especially in Units 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. These units incorporate tasks that engage with nature, animals, countryside life, health and the environment, weather, and ecological sounds. Activities include:

- **Reading and listening tasks** about animals and their habitats (Unit 7),
- **Listening activities** about nature sounds and weather phenomena (Unit 8),
- **Speaking and values activities** encouraging environmental respect and action (Units 3–4 and 7–8),
- **Song-based learning** to introduce animal behavior and environmental observations.

Green vocabulary such as *climate*, *nature*, *animals*, *forest*, *weather*, *sustainability*, and *environment* is embedded across these units. Importantly, the material often **links vocabulary to contextualized situations** (e.g., a family in a garden, children in a park), which aids comprehension and relevance. Additionally, the series includes **Movers-level Cambridge practice materials** that cover themes like the natural world and environmental contexts.

However, while environmental topics are **frequent and thematically rich**, they are mostly **framed descriptively** rather than problematically — i.e., students learn about nature, but do not engage with ecological challenges like pollution or climate change. The absence of critical thinking tasks or project-based learning limits deeper reflection or action.

Digital resources, such as downloadable worksheets and interactive games on the Kid’s Box website, provide some reinforcement, but their ecological focus is minimal.



Italy

In Italy, textbook selection is guided by national standards and aligned with the civic education and environmental mandates embedded in the curriculum. Italian schools use a wide range of ELT materials, typically from major international publishers, but adapted to Italian classroom contexts.

Italian primary ELT textbooks demonstrate **moderate to strong inclusion of sustainability content**, especially in reading passages, vocabulary units, and project-based tasks. Sample features include:

- **Reading passages** about endangered animals, ecosystems, and pollution,
- **Speaking and writing tasks** asking students to describe eco-friendly behavior (e.g., "What can you do to save water?"),
- **CLIL-style inserts** on topics such as seasons, recycling, biodiversity, and natural resources,
- **Grammar activities** embedded within environmental contexts (e.g., conditionals about environmental outcomes: *If we recycle, we help the planet*).

The inclusion of **project-based and values-oriented tasks** sets Italian materials apart. Several series include end-of-unit projects such as poster-making, class debates, and school-wide campaigns related to sustainability or animal protection.

Moreover, materials draw clear connections between **language use and ecological responsibility**, moving beyond vocabulary acquisition to encourage **reflection and action**. The influence of Italy’s civic education mandate is clearly visible in how textbooks frame environmental themes as part of **social learning**.

Nevertheless, the depth and consistency of environmental coverage can vary across publishers. Some books present rich ecological content, while others treat it sporadically. The presence of **digital platforms and teacher training modules**, such as the Scuola2030 portal, further enhances implementation possibilities.



Lithuania

Lithuanian primary schools employ a wide array of internationally published ELT materials, including *Brighter Ideas*, *Beehive*, *Early School English*, and *Give Me Five!*, among others. The Lithuanian report analyzed both official textbook lists and specific content examples across CEFR A1 to A2 levels.

Environmental content is generally **well-represented** and spans a variety of linguistic and cognitive levels. Examples include:

- **Early School English 3:** “You Too Can Help to Protect the Environment” – introduces vocabulary like *reduce*, *reuse*, *recycle* and encourages classroom discussions.
- **Brighter Ideas 5:** Explores geographical features, sustainability concepts, and eco-inventions through texts and writing prompts.
- **Gold Experience (B1)** and **Harmonize:** Provide more advanced discussions on biodiversity, youth activism, and climate topics even at early stages, through adapted texts and scaffolded activities.

In terms of task types, Lithuanian-used textbooks are notably rich in:

- **Discussion tasks:** Encouraging students to express opinions about environmental responsibility.
- **Project and poster activities:** Students prepare short reports or campaigns.
- **Listening and reading comprehension:** Passages related to nature, weather, and green actions.

One standout feature is the **use of authentic material** (e.g., articles, infographics, interviews), even in early grades, to introduce ecological topics in **real-world contexts**. These materials, often embedded within cross-curricular frameworks, are consistent with the Mokykla 2030 goals and promote **interdisciplinary learning** through English.



Overall, Lithuanian textbooks show a **high degree of environmental integration**. Tasks are **age-appropriate, interactive, and linguistically scaffolded**, reflecting a pedagogically informed approach to combining language learning with ecological literacy.

Türkiye

In Türkiye, primary English instruction is structured around nationally approved textbooks prepared or authorized by the **Ministry of National Education (MEB)**. These include:

- *Sunshine English 2* (MEB Publications),
- *Student's Book* by HECCE Publications,
- *Adventures of Zury* and its associated teacher's guide.

Environmental content in these materials is **limited and primarily superficial**. Vocabulary related to animals, fruits, weather, and daily life appears in thematic units (e.g., Unit 8: Pets; Unit 9: Fruits; Unit 10: Animals). Tasks include:

- **Matching and sorting exercises** (e.g., fruits, animals, or places),
- **Drawing and coloring** tasks with animals or natural scenes,
- **Songs and chants** about pets or seasons (e.g., "I am a duck, I can swim"),
- **Basic listening activities** featuring animal sounds or names.

The supplementary storybook *Adventures of Zury* includes a slightly more **engaging narrative approach**, allowing for role play, storytelling, and classroom dramatization with ecological undertones. However, even here, **environmental issues are suggested but not explicitly explored**. The focus remains on **memorization-based vocabulary learning**, with **little connection to sustainability, conservation, or climate awareness**.

There is also an evident **lack of critical thinking, project-based work, or values-based reflection**, which are essential for building ecological consciousness. While the materials are visually appealing and age-appropriate, they fall short in transforming English learning into an opportunity for environmental education.



Comparative Reflections

Across the four countries, textbook analysis reveals a continuum of ecological integration in ELT materials:

Criterion	Spain	Italy	Lithuania	Türkiye
Thematic Coverage	Moderate, activity-driven	Strong, civics-linked	Strong, interdisciplinary	Weak, lexical and superficial
Pedagogical Framing	Descriptive and illustrative	Reflective and values-based	Project-oriented and authentic	Vocabulary-focused, minimal engagement
Critical Thinking	Limited	Present	Present	Lacking
Project-Based Tasks	Few	Frequent	Frequent	Absent
Use of Green Vocabulary	Integrated into lessons	Integrated and contextualized	Integrated and extended	Isolated, without values context

The most promising models—**Italy and Lithuania**—link environmental themes to **civic responsibility, real-world problem-solving, and interdisciplinary learning**, with English used as a medium to **explore, reflect, and communicate**. Spain offers a moderate example where ecology appears through thematic storytelling and listening but without critical depth. Türkiye illustrates the **greatest gap**, where environmental vocabulary is present but not connected to values, reflection, or action.

This disparity suggests the need for **teacher training, curricular revision, and material enhancement**—especially in contexts where environmental education is not yet systematically embedded into language teaching frameworks.



Pedagogical Approaches and Methodologies

While curricular mandates and textbook content provide the structural basis for English language education, the **actual implementation of ecological themes in the classroom** depends heavily on pedagogical approaches. This section examines how **environmental content is delivered, scaffolded, and pedagogically framed** within primary-level English language teaching in **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye**, with emphasis on **task design, cognitive demand, learner engagement, and integration of 21st-century skills**.

Spain

In Spain, where teachers and schools have considerable autonomy in textbook and material selection, the pedagogical approach to environmental themes is largely **activity-based** and **skills-integrated**, reflecting the communicative orientation of the national ELT curriculum.

In *Kid's Box 3*, environmental themes are taught through a **variety of interactive tasks**, including:

- **Listening comprehension** (e.g., children talking about animals or nature settings),
- **Songs and chants** (e.g., about animal behavior or weather conditions),
- **Reading passages** with visual support, focusing on scenes set in gardens, parks, or countryside areas,
- **Matching and labeling activities** using environmental vocabulary,
- **Values lessons**, embedded as end-of-unit sections, which prompt learners to think about environmental respect and care.

These tasks are designed to promote **vocabulary acquisition and receptive skills**, often in **pair or group settings**. However, the Spanish materials tend to emphasize **surface-level knowledge and everyday themes**, avoiding complex or controversial topics like climate change or pollution. The activities rarely invite critical thinking, debate, or creative production; instead, they aim to create **pleasant and familiar contexts** for language learning, with environmental content functioning as thematic decoration rather than a learning goal in itself.



Despite this, teachers in Spain who wish to extend textbook content have **access to supplementary digital platforms**, which can be used to introduce **eco-themed storytelling, role play, or mini-projects**. However, such extensions depend on **teacher initiative**, as they are not systematically embedded in the pedagogy.

Italy

Italy distinguishes itself with a **methodologically intentional and civics-driven approach**. Rooted in the national integration of civic education, including environmental responsibility, the teaching of English increasingly incorporates **cross-curricular, experiential, and values-based learning**.

Italian primary ELT classrooms utilize:

- **Project-Based Learning (PBL)**: Students work collaboratively on tasks like “Create a class recycling poster” or “Write and perform a green campaign.”
- **CLIL-style activities**: Simple science or geography topics (e.g., weather, habitats, seasons) are introduced in English with visual aids and realia.
- **Speaking tasks with reflection**: Learners are prompted to express opinions using basic structures (e.g., “I throw rubbish in the bin because...”).
- **Creative writing and role-play**: Students write short descriptions or stories involving animals or eco-characters.
- **Integrated grammar practice**: Environmental scenarios are used to teach conditionals and modals (e.g., “If we plant trees, we help the Earth”).

These methodologies support both **language learning and ecological consciousness**, enabling learners to **connect their linguistic performance to real-life values**. The pedagogy promotes not just comprehension but **responsible action** — a distinctive feature that elevates Italy’s approach from environmental awareness to **active citizenship education**.

Importantly, teacher professional development on civic and environmental education is supported by the Ministry through platforms like **Scuola2030**, ensuring consistency and confidence in implementation.



Lithuania

Lithuania also demonstrates **pedagogical richness and integration**, driven by the **Mokykla 2030 reform**, which promotes interdisciplinary, learner-centered instruction. ELT classrooms use **ecological content** to foster **communication, collaboration, and inquiry-based learning**, in line with the national emphasis on developing **21st-century competences**.

Observed methods include:

- **Debates and eco-dialogues:** Students discuss simple questions like “What can we do to save water?” using practiced vocabulary.
- **Eco-storytelling:** Learners create short tales featuring endangered animals or polluted cities, often using picture prompts.
- **Cross-subject mini-projects:** In collaboration with science or geography classes, students design posters or presentations in English (e.g., “Our Green School Plan”).
- **Technology integration:** Use of digital storytelling apps and interactive eco-quizzes in English, especially for vocabulary reinforcement.
- **Environmental simulations:** Role-playing situations such as “A day in a recycling center” or “Saving the rainforest.”

Lithuanian classrooms emphasize **meaningful contexts, critical thinking, and active engagement**, often building environmental content into both **language form and communicative function**. For example, grammar exercises are frequently contextualized in sustainability topics (e.g., using modals to discuss eco-rules: *We should recycle.*).

The **teacher's role** is often that of a facilitator or guide, supporting inquiry and language output, rather than delivering fixed input. This **learner-driven and exploratory approach** enables children to view English not only as a school subject but also as a medium for expressing ideas about the world.



Türkiye

In Türkiye, pedagogical strategies in primary English classrooms remain largely **traditional**, with a strong emphasis on **vocabulary memorization, oral drilling, and repetition**. The textbooks used, such as *Sunshine English 2* and *Adventures of Zury*, offer a visually engaging and age-appropriate structure, but environmental themes are **treated simplistically** and lack pedagogical innovation.

The dominant activities include:

- **Matching and labeling exercises** with fruit, animals, and weather icons,
- **Songs and chants** (e.g., “I am a duck, I can swim”) that promote pronunciation and rhythm,
- **Coloring and drawing** tasks related to natural elements,
- **Listening tasks** focused on identifying words or short phrases,
- **Dialogue memorization** in fixed structures (e.g., “Do you like cats?”).

While *Adventures of Zury* introduces a **story-based format** with potential for role play and dramatization, its ecological dimensions are underdeveloped. There are few if any tasks that **encourage reflection, problem-solving, or discussion** of environmental issues. Grammar instruction, where present, is not connected to environmental contexts.

Compared to Italy or Lithuania, **critical thinking, student voice, and cross-curricular collaboration are absent**. Tasks are often **mechanical** and designed for language accuracy rather than communicative fluency or conceptual depth.

This pedagogical model may ensure basic exposure to environmental vocabulary, but it does **not promote ecological awareness or values-based engagement**, nor does it foster learner autonomy or creativity.



Comparative Reflections

A comparative lens reveals four key pedagogical patterns:

Feature	Spain	Italy	Lithuania	Türkiye
Environmental Themes as Entry Point for Tasks	Yes (moderate)	Yes (strong)	Yes (strong)	Yes (minimal)
Use of PBL / CLIL	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Rarely
Critical Thinking / Reflection Tasks	Limited	Present and scaffolded	Frequent and age-adjusted	Absent
Integration with Values Education	Some (values units)	Strong (civic education)	Strong (competence-based)	Weak
Learner-Centered Approaches	Moderate	High	High	Low

Among the four countries, **Italy and Lithuania** stand out for using **project work, CLIL, reflective dialogue, and interdisciplinary connections** to teach environmental themes as part of English lessons. Spain shows **moderate integration** through engaging activities but lacks higher-order thinking and values connection. Türkiye demonstrates a **traditional, form-focused pedagogy**, where environmental content is **linguistically and cognitively underutilized**.

These pedagogical differences have direct implications for the EcoLingua project’s future outputs, particularly in designing **teacher training, digital learning scenarios, and adaptable lesson plans** that can bridge the gap between vocabulary exposure and true ecological engagement through English.



Assessment Strategies

Assessment plays a critical role in consolidating learning, guiding instructional planning, and validating curricular objectives. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) at the primary level, particularly when integrating ecological and sustainability themes, assessment practices reflect whether such content is treated as a **core educational aim** or as **supplementary exposure**. This section compares how **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye** approach the assessment of environmental content in primary ELT and to what extent ecological competence is linked with language performance evaluation.

Spain

In Spain, assessment of primary ELT is guided by national frameworks but **implemented at the school level**, reflecting the country’s decentralized approach to education. Teachers are responsible for designing their own assessment tools aligned with their selected textbooks and local curriculum objectives.

In the reviewed textbook (*Kid’s Box New Generation 3*), assessment practices are primarily **skills-based**, with a focus on:

- Listening and reading comprehension tasks (e.g., “Match the sentence to the picture”),
- Speaking performance (e.g., role plays or describing pictures),
- Vocabulary checks and grammar reviews,
- End-of-unit review sections with language-focused exercises.

Although the book includes **values-based content** and **environmentally themed units**, there is **no formal mechanism** for assessing environmental knowledge or values through English. For example, after a unit on animals or the countryside, learners may be asked to recall vocabulary or describe pictures, but **no assessment prompts them to reflect on environmental behavior, problem-solving, or sustainability concepts**.

Occasional end-of-term tests may incorporate vocabulary from ecological themes, but **formative or summative evaluation of environmental awareness** is largely absent unless



teachers choose to integrate it informally through observation or performance tasks. As such, environmental themes serve more as **content vehicles** for language evaluation, rather than as **assessment domains in their own right**.

Italy

Italy’s assessment approach in primary ELT reflects the broader educational system’s emphasis on **competence-based evaluation and civic responsibility**. The national curriculum encourages teachers to assess not only linguistic outcomes but also **transversal competences**, including collaboration, critical thinking, and citizenship — domains directly relevant to environmental education.

Within English classes, especially when linked to **civic education or CLIL**, assessment may include:

- Oral presentations or group projects (e.g., “What can we do to save water?”),
- Portfolio-based reflection (e.g., “My eco-friendly week” journal),
- Visual products (e.g., posters on endangered species),
- Integrated assessments across subjects (e.g., describing a green city in both English and science classes),
- Peer and self-assessment rubrics.

This broader framework enables teachers to evaluate **students’ language skills and ecological engagement simultaneously**. For instance, a CLIL lesson on recycling might end with a short group presentation, assessed for both vocabulary use (e.g., *plastic, paper, bin, reduce*) and awareness of recycling behaviors.

Although there is **no standardized national test** on environmental content in English, the Italian model promotes **formative, creative, and reflective assessment** strategies that align well with the EcoLingua goals. Teachers are trained to observe and document students’ growth in both language and citizenship skills, and environmental education is seen as part of holistic learner development.



Lithuania

Lithuania’s national curriculum is based on **competence-based education**, with a strong emphasis on **integrated assessment**. Environmental themes, particularly under the **Mokykla 2030** initiative, are considered key dimensions of students’ personal and social competences.

In ELT, assessment is typically carried out through:

- Continuous observation and informal assessment during communicative tasks,
- Performance-based tasks (e.g., presentations, poster sharing, eco-campaign simulation),
- Unit-based quizzes that include reading, listening, and writing components,
- Self-assessment checklists that include both linguistic and behavioral goals,
- Short reflective tasks such as “What did you learn about nature this week?” or “How can you help the planet?”

Textbooks like *Brighter Ideas*, *Beehive*, and *Give Me Five!* include **task-based rubrics** that support assessment of collaborative and creative work. Teachers use these tools to evaluate students’ **language use in context**, including their ability to express environmental concepts, share opinions, or propose green solutions.

Importantly, assessment practices are designed to encourage **student autonomy** and **metacognitive awareness**. For example, students may be asked to evaluate their group’s project or provide feedback to a classmate’s eco-presentation using simple English phrases.

Lithuania’s approach is notable for its emphasis on **integration, flexibility, and reflection**, allowing environmental education to be authentically assessed alongside language acquisition. This stands in contrast to more prescriptive systems that limit assessment to discrete linguistic skills.

Türkiye

In Türkiye, assessment of primary ELT remains **highly structured and linguistically focused**. The Ministry of National Education prescribes **achievement criteria based on skill acquisition** in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. At the primary level (grades 2–4),



emphasis is placed on **oral production and listening comprehension**, with assessments typically consisting of:

- Multiple-choice listening tasks,
- Vocabulary recognition and matching,
- Repetition or sentence completion drills,
- Oral responses to scripted questions.

While textbooks like *Sunshine English 2* and *Student’s Book* by HECCE include some nature-themed vocabulary, the **evaluation of ecological awareness is entirely absent**. For example, students may be tested on recognizing animals or naming fruits but are not prompted to demonstrate any understanding of environmental issues or sustainability practices.

The **lack of performance tasks or values-based assessment** limits the curriculum’s ability to measure students’ environmental engagement. Teachers who wish to integrate eco-assessment (e.g., drawing an “eco-dream school” or acting out a nature-saving scenario) must do so on their own initiative, as such tasks are neither guided nor rewarded within the formal system.

In addition, **report cards and progress indicators** focus almost exclusively on **language competence**, with no category for social or environmental learning. This model does not support the EcoLingua goal of integrating sustainability as a measurable learning outcome in language education.



Comparative Reflections

Assessment strategies across the four countries reflect their **underlying pedagogical priorities and policy commitments**:

Criterion	Spain	Italy	Lithuania	Türkiye
Type of Assessment	Skills-based, textbook-driven	Formative, competence-based	Integrated, reflective	Standardized, skills-focused
Assessment of Ecological Content	Rare and incidental	Frequent and structured	Regular and contextualized	Absent
Use of Projects/Portfolios	Rare	Frequent	Frequent	Very rare
Peer/Self-Assessment	Occasional	Encouraged	Systematic	Minimal
Eco-Themed Performance Tasks	Limited	Common	Common	Not present

In summary, **Italy and Lithuania** offer the most **comprehensive and meaningful assessment frameworks**, enabling teachers to evaluate students’ **linguistic development and environmental awareness** simultaneously. **Spain** allows for teacher creativity but lacks systemic support, while **Türkiye** adheres to a **traditional assessment paradigm** that prioritizes vocabulary accuracy and oral repetition, with **no inclusion of environmental learning outcomes**.

To achieve the EcoLingua project's vision of environmentally enriched ELT, there is a clear need to develop **alternative assessment tools**—such as project rubrics, checklists, and reflection templates—that help teachers assess both **language skills and ecological literacy** in developmentally appropriate and pedagogically meaningful ways.



Inclusion of Environmental and Sustainability Topics

The degree to which **environmental and sustainability topics** are embedded in primary-level English language education reflects both curricular intent and textbook design. While nearly all national curricula examined in this report acknowledge the importance of global citizenship and environmental awareness at a general level, the extent to which these values are **explicitly integrated into ELT content varies widely**. This section evaluates how such themes are addressed in **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye**, in terms of **content breadth, conceptual depth, alignment with age and language level, and pedagogical framing**.

Spain

In Spain, environmental topics are introduced **indirectly** through units thematically linked to daily life and nature. The selected textbook, *Kid's Box New Generation 3*, includes a range of units that present learners with vocabulary and situations related to:

- **Animals and habitats** (Unit 7: *World of animals*),
- **Countryside and natural spaces** (Unit 6: *In the countryside*),
- **Weather and seasons** (Unit 8: *Weather report*),
- **Healthy lifestyles and nature engagement** (Units 1, 3, and 5),
- **Values lessons** promoting respect for nature and caring for the environment.

These units embed environmental themes through **listening tasks, reading passages, songs, and matching activities**. The vocabulary is age-appropriate and includes terms like *forest, beach, tree, clean, rain, animal, recycle, and protect*.

However, these themes are presented in a **descriptive and observational mode**. Learners are exposed to natural settings and vocabulary but are **not prompted to explore environmental problems or solutions**. There is little mention of **climate change, pollution, endangered species, or sustainability behaviors**. The inclusion of environmental topics serves primarily as a **content backdrop for language practice**, rather than a tool for deeper ecological education.



The lack of conceptual progression across the textbook and the absence of critical environmental questions limit Spain’s overall contribution to sustainability education within primary ELT—unless extended creatively by the teacher.

Italy

Italy demonstrates a **strong and structured inclusion** of environmental and sustainability topics in primary-level ELT. This inclusion is driven by national mandates for **civic and environmental education** and supported by curriculum documents that encourage **interdisciplinary integration**.

Textbooks used in Italian schools incorporate ecological topics through:

- **Reading texts** on pollution, recycling, and wildlife protection,
- **Speaking prompts** that explore personal responsibility (e.g., “*What can we do to help the Earth?*”),
- **Project work** such as poster creation, eco-campaigns, or diary reflections on sustainable behaviors,
- **Cross-curricular CLIL lessons** connecting English with science or geography (e.g., ecosystems, climate zones),
- **Grammar activities** built around hypothetical environmental situations (e.g., conditionals: “*If we recycle, we save energy.*”).

The content includes both **factual and values-based dimensions**, encouraging students to discuss, act on, and reflect about sustainability from an early age. Topics include:

- **Water and energy conservation**
- **Biodiversity and ecosystems**
- **Recycling and reusing**
- **Climate-related vocabulary**
- **Food waste and ethical consumption**



Importantly, Italian ELT materials often position the student not just as a learner of English, but as a **young eco-citizen**. The language used serves communicative goals while simultaneously fostering **environmental responsibility and social awareness**. This pedagogical depth places Italy at the forefront of environmental integration in primary ELT among the four countries examined.

Lithuania

Lithuania demonstrates **exceptional breadth and conceptual coherence** in integrating environmental and sustainability content into primary ELT. The influence of the **Mokykla 2030** reform and the national emphasis on **interdisciplinary themes** is clearly reflected in textbook design and classroom implementation.

Thematic areas found in Lithuanian ELT materials include:

- **Ecological actions** (e.g., “reduce, reuse, recycle”),
- **Climate and weather phenomena** (e.g., *storms, drought, seasons*),
- **Natural disasters and environmental impact** (at B1– level),
- **Animal protection and endangered species**,
- **Responsible consumption and waste sorting**,
- **Urban vs. rural sustainability**,
- **Circular economy and eco-innovation**.

Textbooks such as *Early School English 3* and *Brighter Ideas* provide structured lessons in which students read, listen, speak, and write about sustainability-related topics using clear and engaging materials. These lessons are typically followed by:

- **Discussion questions**,
- **Group presentations**,
- **Creative writing tasks**,
- **Mini-projects** that connect classroom content to local community or home practices.



Unlike Spain, where ecological content is often anecdotal, or Türkiye, where it is fragmentary, Lithuania offers a **coherent and scaffolded exposure** to environmental themes across grades. Learners not only acquire vocabulary but are encouraged to engage in **critical thinking and behavioral reflection**. English is used as a **medium for ecological inquiry**, not just as a goal in itself.

Türkiye

Türkiye’s inclusion of environmental and sustainability themes in primary ELT is **the most limited** among the four countries. While the national English curriculum introduces **themes related to animals, weather, and food**, the presence of ecological or climate-related concepts is minimal and **non-systematic**.

In textbooks such as *Sunshine English 2* and *Adventures of Zury*, environmental themes appear in the following ways:

- **Vocabulary about pets, fruits, animals, and seasons,**
- **Basic reading passages** describing what animals do (“*Lions can run fast.*”),
- **Songs and chants** about weather or pets (“*I am a duck, I can swim.*”),
- **Drawing or coloring tasks** related to nature or the seasons.

However, there is **no explicit reference** to sustainability, climate change, conservation, pollution, or environmental activism. Green vocabulary is presented **without context or behavioral framing**. Furthermore, there are **no learning outcomes or tasks** requiring students to reflect on environmental actions or consequences.

The *Adventures of Zury* book offers some storytelling potential for integrating ecological content, but these possibilities are underutilized in practice and lack pedagogical support for sustainability education.

Thus, while Türkiye provides a **visually appealing and age-appropriate learning environment**, it fails to connect English instruction to environmental awareness, **missing a key opportunity** to leverage language learning for ecological engagement.



Comparative Reflections

Across the four countries, inclusion of environmental and sustainability topics in primary ELT ranges from **systematic and integrated** to **incidental and superficial**. The comparison reveals the following trends:

Criterion	Spain	Italy	Lithuania	Türkiye
Breadth of Environmental Topics	Moderate	Broad	Extensive	Narrow
Depth of Treatment	Thematic and illustrative	Values-based and action-oriented	Critical and reflective	Vocabulary-focused only
Presence of Climate Change Discourse	Absent	Emerging	Present in simplified form	Absent
Learner Role	Observer	Actor and thinker	Investigator and communicator	Passive user of language
Progressive Conceptual Development	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Absent

Italy and Lithuania show clear examples of how **language education can serve as a vehicle for ecological literacy**, aligning well with the goals of the EcoLingua project. Spain demonstrates **potential through flexible textbook use**, while Türkiye requires **substantial pedagogical revision and curriculum enrichment** to meaningfully integrate sustainability themes.

This analysis confirms that the inclusion of environmental content in primary ELT is **not merely a matter of vocabulary lists or topic units**, but of intentional design, policy support, and teacher empowerment to facilitate **language learning with a purpose** — a purpose that includes preparing children to become **responsible stewards of the planet**.



Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis of English Language Teaching (ELT) at the primary level in **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye** reveals significant variation in how environmental and sustainability topics are conceptualized, embedded, and delivered. While all countries officially align their ELT curricula with CEFR standards and prioritize communicative competence, their **commitment to ecological integration** diverges across four key dimensions:

1. Curriculum Intent and Systemic Integration

Italy and Lithuania stand out for embedding environmental education within **national educational strategies** and promoting **interdisciplinary teaching**. Italy’s civic education reform and Lithuania’s Mokykla 2030 initiative explicitly encourage schools to address sustainability themes across all subjects, including ELT. In contrast, Spain and Türkiye lack systemic mandates or curriculum-level objectives linking ELT with environmental education, leading to **fragmented or incidental implementation** at the discretion of individual schools or teachers.

2. Textbook Content and Conceptual Depth

Textbooks in Italy and Lithuania offer **broad thematic coverage and critical treatment** of ecological issues. These include vocabulary development, real-world scenarios, values-based activities, and project-based learning tasks. Spanish materials present environmental content **mainly as thematic input**, often through animals, weather, or countryside scenes, but **rarely encourage critical engagement**. Turkish textbooks, while colorful and accessible, treat environmental topics **superficially**, focusing on isolated vocabulary without contextual or reflective depth.

3. Pedagogical Practices and Methodologies

In Italy and Lithuania, environmental themes are taught through **learner-centered methodologies** such as CLIL, storytelling, simulations, and collaborative projects. These practices foster not only language development but also **ecological reasoning and agency**.



Spanish pedagogy remains mostly activity-based with limited reflection, while Türkiye leans heavily on **traditional vocabulary drills and oral repetition**, offering minimal opportunities for student-led inquiry or action.

4. Assessment Strategies and Learning Outcomes

Assessment in Italy and Lithuania supports **formative, competence-based evaluation**, often integrating ecological understanding into speaking, writing, and project tasks. Spain offers localized flexibility but lacks structured tools to assess environmental learning in ELT. In Türkiye, assessment remains **language-centered and mechanical**, with **no mechanisms** to measure environmental literacy or behavioral awareness in the English classroom.

Recommendations

Drawing from the comprehensive cross-country analysis, it is evident that integrating environmental and sustainability themes into English Language Teaching (ELT) at the primary level is both a **pedagogical opportunity** and a **strategic necessity**. To move from isolated vocabulary exposure toward **transformative environmental literacy through language education**, a multidimensional intervention is required. The following recommendations address core systemic, curricular, pedagogical, material-based, and assessment-related domains, all aligned with the overarching goals of the **EcoLingua project**.

1. Strengthen Curricular Alignment Between ELT and Environmental Education

Curricular foundations define both classroom priorities and textbook design. In countries like **Italy** and **Lithuania**, national frameworks already support cross-disciplinary environmental integration, while **Spain** and **Türkiye** exhibit fragmented or absent alignment. Ministries of Education and curriculum bodies should:

- Explicitly embed **sustainability themes** into the learning outcomes of primary ELT curricula. This can include communicative goals related to discussing environmental actions, describing climate-related phenomena, and expressing personal responsibility in ecological contexts.



- Incorporate **reference to global frameworks** such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU Green Deal into educational policy documents that inform English language education.
- Encourage curriculum developers to frame English not only as a linguistic tool but also as a **medium for shaping environmentally literate citizens**, capable of engaging in global conversations on ecology.

By formalizing this alignment, curriculum authorities ensure that environmental topics are not treated as optional add-ons, but as essential components of 21st-century communicative competence.

2. Enhance Textbook Development and Selection Criteria

Textbooks remain the **core resource** for many primary teachers, especially in more centralized systems like **Türkiye** and **Italy**. Yet environmental content in current ELT textbooks varies widely in depth and intentionality. To improve this:

- National and local education authorities should establish **environmental content benchmarks** for ELT textbooks. These benchmarks can define minimum expectations for coverage of key concepts such as biodiversity, pollution, climate change, and green behaviors.
- Textbook review panels should assess not only linguistic appropriateness but also **conceptual integration**, asking: Does this book promote ecological thinking? Are sustainability messages developmentally suitable and culturally relevant?
- Encourage publishers to include:
 - **Thematic units** focused on sustainability (e.g., “Our Planet,” “Green Choices,” “Eco-Heroes”),
 - **Illustrated stories** and dialogues with environmentally aware characters,
 - **CLIL inserts** that integrate simple science, geography, or civic content in English,
 - **Task chains** that move from vocabulary input to real-world action or reflection.



In countries like **Spain**, where schools can freely choose materials, providing curated lists of **eco-enriched textbook options** can empower educators to select with both language and sustainability in mind.

3. Invest in Teacher Training and Professional Development

The success of any curricular or material innovation depends on **teacher capacity and confidence**. Across the four countries, there is a clear need to support teachers—especially at the primary level—in developing **pedagogical strategies for green ELT**. Recommended actions include:

- Integrating environmental education modules into **pre-service teacher education** for primary English teachers, focusing on:
 - Interdisciplinary lesson planning,
 - CLIL strategies for teaching eco-content,
 - Age-appropriate language for complex issues like climate change.
- Providing **in-service workshops and online micro-courses**, with practical tools and model lesson plans to help teachers teach environmental topics through English. These could be housed on national teacher platforms (e.g., *Scuola2030* in Italy, *eTwinning* in all countries).
- Encouraging school-wide **eco-pedagogical communities of practice**, where ELT teachers collaborate with science or civic education colleagues to design integrated units.

Within the **EcoLingua project**, project-based digital training and transnational knowledge exchange sessions can play a vital role in **disseminating innovation** and building grassroots teacher leadership in green education.

4. Design Assessment Tools That Capture Environmental Learning

As shown in the comparative findings, only **Italy and Lithuania** employ assessment tools that meaningfully capture both **language skills and environmental understanding**. To encourage reflection, action, and deeper learning:



- Develop **formative assessment tools** tailored to green ELT tasks, including:
 - Oral reflection checklists (e.g., “Can the student explain what recycling means?”),
 - Writing rubrics that reward original thinking on ecological topics,
 - Visual portfolios documenting students’ participation in green classroom activities.
- Integrate **performance-based assessment** into environmental project work, allowing teachers to assess collaboration, vocabulary use, and solution-oriented thinking.
- Encourage **self- and peer-assessment tools** using simple English (e.g., “I helped my group talk about saving water” / “My friend used good eco-words”).

Assessment reform can motivate more **purposeful classroom activity**, reinforcing the idea that **what is evaluated is what is valued**.

5. Promote Digital and Gamified Eco-Learning Experiences

One of the unique strengths of the **EcoLingua project** is its focus on **digitally enhanced pedagogy**. Digital tools offer engaging, multimodal ways to combine ELT and environmental education:

- Develop interactive platforms with **eco-games**, digital storybooks, and vocabulary challenges centered on sustainability (e.g., “Recycling Race,” “Eco Detective,” “Save the Forest Adventure”).
- Use classroom-friendly apps for **collaborative storytelling**, where students co-create green stories or eco-news reports using basic English.
- Leverage Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Field Trips to **immerse students in nature-rich environments**, connecting them with endangered species, weather systems, or conservation projects in other countries.
- Integrate **interactive quizzes** that combine environmental content with grammar (e.g., conditionals for hypothetical eco-actions).

Such digital tools can ensure that ecological themes are not only **taught**, but also **experienced** through meaningful, exploratory, and enjoyable interaction.



Conclusion

The findings of this comparative report underscore both the **potential and the disparity** in how environmental and sustainability topics are incorporated into primary-level English Language Teaching (ELT) across **Spain, Italy, Lithuania, and Türkiye**. While all four countries are united in their commitment to CEFR-based language learning and communicative competence development, they differ substantially in their **curricular integration, pedagogical application, assessment practices, and conceptual framing** of ecological education within ELT.

In **Italy** and **Lithuania**, national education strategies, civic education reforms, and interdisciplinary mandates have created fertile ground for the **systematic inclusion of environmental themes** in English classrooms. Textbooks and materials in these countries move beyond lexical exposure to foster **critical thinking, learner reflection, and action-oriented learning**, supported by project-based pedagogy and formative assessment practices.

In contrast, **Spain** offers flexibility through localized decision-making, but this results in **inconsistent integration** of ecological content. While some textbook series address environmental themes through engaging and age-appropriate tasks, the depth and criticality of the content often depend on individual teacher initiative.

Türkiye, while making significant strides in communicative ELT through nationally produced textbooks and materials, currently **lacks a coherent framework** for embedding sustainability education into language instruction. Environmental content, where present, remains **surface-level, vocabulary-driven, and devoid of reflective or civic dimensions**, pointing to an urgent need for curricular and pedagogical enrichment.

Overall, the report highlights that **environmental education in primary ELT is not merely an optional thematic supplement**, but an essential component of **developing responsible, literate, and future-ready global citizens**. By learning to express ecological concepts, describe environmental problems, and communicate sustainable behaviors in English, young learners begin to **bridge linguistic development with global awareness and ethical responsibility**.



The *EcoLingua* project offers a timely and transformative response to this need. By promoting **digitally enhanced, cross-curricular pedagogy** and fostering collaboration among schools, educators, and researchers, the project is uniquely positioned to drive innovation in how environmental sustainability is taught through English.

Moving forward, it is critical that educational stakeholders across Europe recognize the strategic value of ELT in cultivating ecological literacy at an early age. With the right curriculum frameworks, teacher support, learning materials, and digital tools, primary ELT can become not only a site of language acquisition but a **launchpad for environmental stewardship** and **European solidarity** in the face of a global climate crisis.