

LEVEL	1
LEARNING OUTCOME	LO2 Students can follow the principles of sustainable development and environmental system management
SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOME	Students can explain the principles of sustainable development
KEYWORDS	Sustainable Development, footprint calculator, people, profit & planet
INTRODUCTION	In this unit you will learn the history of sustainable development and the process that led to today's awareness on sustainability, but also the principle of sustainable development and how you can apply sustainability in daily life.
HOW TO WORK WITH THIS MATERIAL	Read the text and follow the instructions
TIMING	approx. 2 hours



1. Why do we need sustainable development?

Question: In your opinion, are planet Earth's resources infinite?

Discuss about this topic and then take this test about your consumption habits. Go to this link: <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/>

Question: **What did you find out from the test?**

Probably, you've found out that planet Earth's resources are limited and that human beings consume more than the resources produced by the planet.

To better understand this idea, we can resort to the concept of **the Ecological Footprint**. The

Ecological Footprint measures an individual demand for the Earth's resources.

This allows us to calculate the **Earth Overshoot Day**, indicating the day in which the humanity consumes entirely the resources produced by the planet in the whole year. In 2020, the Earth Overshoot Day was on August 22th!

By taking the test about your own ecological footprint, you find out your personal Earth Overshoot Day, meaning the day in which the humanity would consume entirely the planet resources if everyone consumed as many resources as you.



Most of you will probably find out that **more than one planet Earth** would be needed to fulfil all your consumption needs!

Question: **When is your Earth Overshoot Day?**
How do you feel about your results?



The reason why we need sustainable development lies just here: Earth's resources are finite and human production and consumption exceed them. Fortunately, with sustainable development we have the chance to change our perspectives and habits and start considering both environment and people needs.

2. History of sustainable development

Activity 1: read the following text and create a timeline of the following events. Use this online tool: <https://www.tiki-toki.com/>

The question of the planet's finite and limited resources is quite recent, as human beings began questioning indiscriminate resource consumption **in the 1970s** when, following the rise in the cost of oil, a series of chain reactions were triggered in many economically important Countries, leading to a rise in the price of every commodity. The resulting financial crisis led everyone to reflect on the **close relationship between the economic system and the limited resources available to our planet.**

Worrying data came to light, such as the exponential growth of the world's population over time and with it, **industrialisation, pollution, food production and resource consumption.**



Thus, in the 1980s, a complex search began for an economic model capable of **guaranteeing the planet's resources in the future**. The term *sustainability* was coined in the global scientific and economic community. Many tried to give it a precise definition and to circumscribe the thematic areas of influence in which this new way of conceiving development should operate.

In 1983, following a resolution of the UN General Assembly, the World Commission on Environment and Development was established, with the aim of drawing up a 'global agenda for change'. The Commission was chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Norwegian Prime Minister, and in 1987 it published a report, the **Brundtland Report** (also known as *Our Common Future*), which introduced the fundamental theory of sustainable development.

The definition contained in the Brundtland Report, still valid today, is the following:

"Sustainable Development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

It was not until **1992**, however, that major world leaders recognised sustainable development as a **global challenge** it remains today. It was attended by over 100

Heads of State and representatives from 178 national governments. The Summit was also attended by representatives from a range of other organisations representing civil society, as NGOs.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in **1992** has been the first attempt to draw up **action plans and strategies for moving towards a more sustainable pattern of development**. Indeed, it set up the **Agenda 21**, meaning an action programme with the sustainable development objectives to reach in XXI century.

OUR COMMON FUTURE

THE WORLD COMMISSION
ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT



From the Rio Conference (also called *Earth Summit*) we received another strong message, meaning the close connection between global and local aspects as expressed in the slogan "Think global - Act local".

Ten years later, in 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, attended by 191 national governments, UN agencies, multilateral financial institutions and other major groups to assess progress since Rio. As well as continuing the global commitment to sustainable development, this summit is also important as it stated as **priority education on sustainability**.



Activity: create, copy and paste here your timeline with the history of sustainable development.



Activity: "Think globally, act locally" urges people to consider the health of the entire planet and to take action in their own communities and cities. What does this slogan mean to you? List 5 actions that need to be done in the area you live.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



3. Definition and principles of sustainability

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V8oFI4GYMY>

As we were saying, the definition contained in the Brundtland Report, still valid today, is the following:

"Sustainable Development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

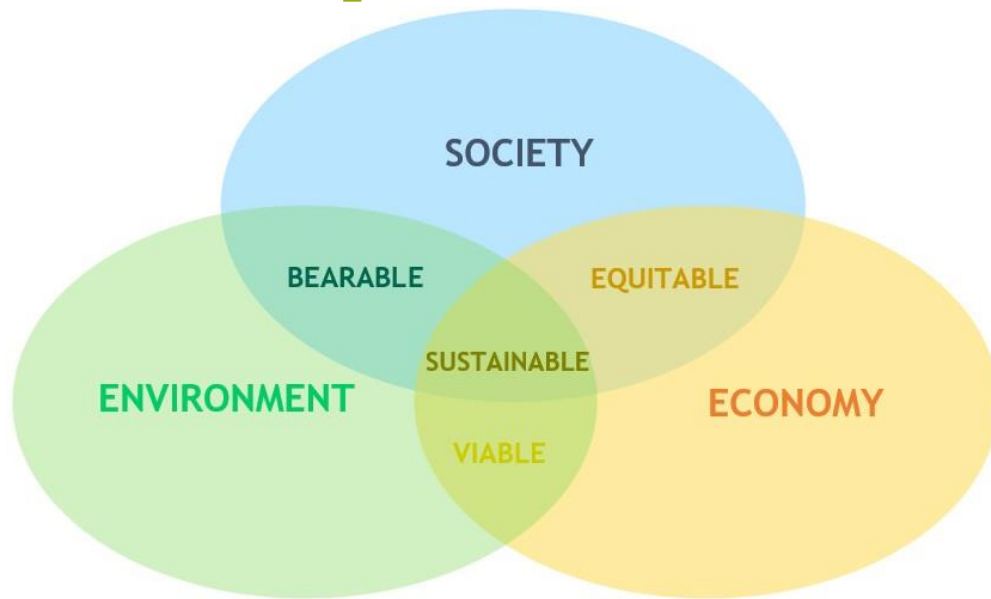
In other words, sustainable development means to make the world a better place for everyone now without destroying the possibilities for the next generations.

This definition shows that the concept of Sustainable Development encompasses **three different areas**:

1. **Economy**, which in order to be sustainable must guarantee a job and therefore an income for the entire world population.
2. **Society**: development is sustainable from a social point of view if it guarantees democracy, health, education, justice and security in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. In other words, the rule of law is grounded in the respect of fundamental rights.
3. **Environment**: Environmental resources must be protected and understood as an asset of all present and future humanity. Their quality and reproducibility for future generations must be protected.

Human development is defined as sustainable if it meets simultaneously economic, social and environmental requirements.





These three fundamental pillars are interconnected, so much that the actions in one area can reinforce the goals of another. Thus, this indicates the importance and overall goal of achieving integration and a balance between the three pillars of Sustainable Development. Accordingly, in striving for a balance between the pillars, we are in essence trying to achieve sustainability, endeavouring to be:

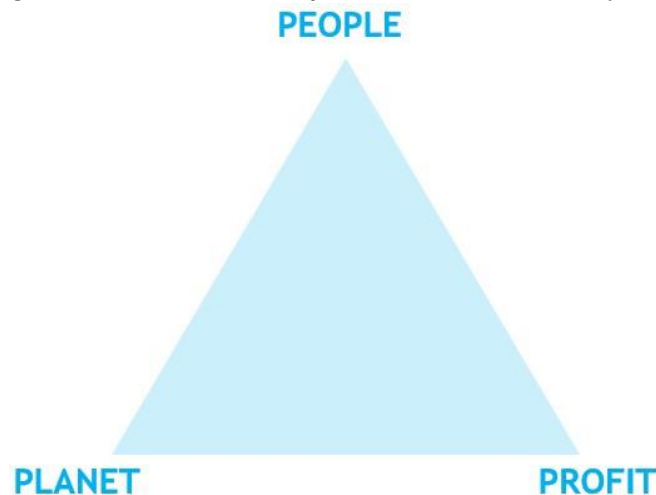
- **Bearable** (Society + Environment = Bearable), whereby society works towards lifestyle adjustments. In that, we are aware of our impact and thereafter contribute towards a healthier environment and well-being.
- **Equitable** (Society + Economic = Equitable), to fully attain an equal and fair share of a Nation's resources to its people. Thus, by having equitable distribution, we help to eradicate poverty, social inequality and raise the standard of living of the society.
- **Viable** (Economic + Environment = Viable), where a Nation strives to meet economic growth and development, while operations are pursued with environmental protection in mind. Therefore, investments must be feasible to sustain itself, create jobs, contribute to the GDP, and protect the environment from harm.



Thus, to achieve sustainability, we must find a balance between the three pillars in relation to being viable, equitable, and bearable. Thereby fostering through Sustainable Development Poverty alleviation, Gender equality, Capacity building, Clean technology, Clear institutional framework, Economic growth and development, Sustained biodiversity (protection & conservation of ecological services). This in turn helps a Nation to develop and meet short-term horizons, with long-term Vision.

Remember! When it comes to business, we usually refer to the three pillars of sustainable development as to the Ps or to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). The Ps refer to:

- **People**, meaning the social pillar of sustainability
- **Profit**, meaning the economic pillar of sustainability
- **Planet**, meaning the environmental pillar of sustainability.



As you will be able to discover later on SdE study unit, sustainability has the role of protecting and maximising the benefit of the 3Ps of a business. In other words, for sustainable enterprises **Profit** (economic dimension) is as important as **People** (social dimension) and **Planet** (environmental dimension).



Activity: Read the business case of Atelier Riforma (Annex 1). Evidence 3 key elements of Atelier Riforma: one related to economy, one to environment and one to society.

1. Economy: _____
2. Environment: _____
3. Society: _____



Question: What do you think about Atelier Riforma business? Do you think their activity is important or useful?

Question 5: Would you ever buy vintage/second-hand clothes or do you prefer brand new clothes?

4. Sustainable development in everyday life

Being sustainable is a way of thinking, a way of being, a way of feeling useful, but above all it is the only way to be a protagonist of change towards a better future. We all can be sustainable at various levels. From choices involving several nations on Earth, such as how to trade, whether or not to use nuclear power or oil to produce electricity, to the small choices that each of us must make.

These small choices are likely to be the most relevant, as the individual is at the base of society, and to change behaviour at higher levels of organisation, change must come from the grass roots. **A sustainable individual consciousness is essential.**

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZlrIQdf1nQ>



Questions:

Do you implement any of the sustainable actions described in the video?

If yes, which one?

What do you think it is the most difficult sustainable action to implement and why?

