

Interreligious Education for Sustainable Development (irESD)

The irESD approach (Interreligious Education for Sustainable Development; German: irBND interreligiöse Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) was developed as a result of the Erasmus+ project 'Facing Global Challenges' (<https://religions4ecology.org>) under the project leadership of the University of Augsburg (Prof. Dr Elisabeth Naurath, Amina Boumaaiz; Prof. Dr Imran Schröter) and represents an innovative and forward-looking paradigm for sustainability education.

'Facing Global Challenges. Environmental and Peace Education in Interreligious Cooperation for Teacher Training' is an Erasmus+ project (Cooperation Partnerships; 2023–2026) involving partner universities from Germany (University of Augsburg; project lead), Austria (KPH Vienna), Spain (Universitat de Catalunya), Albania (Beder University) and Malaysia (International Islamic University). The aim is to equip trainee teachers with the skills to develop interreligious competence from the perspective of environmental ethics and peace education – using the topic of water/water ethics as an example, which links ecological, social and peace policy dimensions (including climate resilience, climate justice, SDGs 4, 5, 6, 16, 17).

Development of the irESD (interreligious Education for Sustainable Development) approach

- **Starting point:** Religious Education for Sustainable Development (rESD) is understood as a religiously motivated perspective within general ESD – with the aim of harnessing the potential of religious traditions for sustainability at individual, social and global levels.
- **New focus:** Expanding religion-specific Education for Sustainable Development (rESD) into interreligious Education for Sustainable Development (irESD). This concept is understood less as a 'theology of difference' approach and more as a cooperative approach with a local, national and, at the same time, international focus.
- The **'Different faiths – common action' programme** focuses on an action-oriented approach that takes different religion-specific perspectives seriously and respects them, whilst at the same time aiming to foster cooperative value formation in the spirit of a **sense of 'we'** (inter-intentionality).

- **Urgency:** The background to this is a situational analysis which, considering global crises, calls for a strategy grounded in religious and spiritual values. Based on the realisation that the climate and environmental crisis cannot be tackled by technical means alone, but also requires changes in cultural attitudes and behaviour, ethical solutions are being developed through interfaith education and cooperation.
- **IrESD is an integrative educational programme aimed at all trainee teachers and teaching staff**, designed to address global sustainability issues through the lens of justice (particularly climate justice), peace education, compassion, empathy and solidarity, with a view to raising awareness of these issues and strengthening a sense of community.
- **IrESD can be introduced as interfaith basic education** for all pupils, demonstrating that different religious traditions share common ethical values and a responsibility towards creation, nature and the wider world, without relativising one's own identity or giving it dominant priority. It is therefore not a question of diluting or establishing a hierarchy of one's own position, but rather of highlighting common ethical foundations that transcend religious boundaries.
- **Interreligious Education for Sustainable Development (IrESD) can also serve as a forward-looking model to promote interreligious cooperation at the socio-political level** in local authorities and cities. It should become clearer than ever before that social cohesion in democratic societies also requires joint cooperation for the common good of all (in terms of social recognition, environmental protection and nature conservation, etc.). In this regard, religious communities have a paramount responsibility and significance based on interreligious networking. Global interconnections cannot be ignored at the local level either: Think globally – act locally!

Please see the project film here: [Religions for Ecology | Official Erasmus+ Project Film](#)

Click here for the vision statement: [Our vision – Religions for Ecology](#)

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