



INTRODUCTION

“Once we adopt a new view of the world (or any part of it), we immediately lose much of our ability to recall what we used to believe before our mind changed.”

Daniel Kahneman

This quote by Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman can be understood in two ways, at least. One is that by expanding our knowledge and understanding, these new views become an integral part of us. This gives us hope that once we adopt the zero waste mindset, it becomes hard for us to imagine a different way of managing resources. But the second side of it is that the more we become experts in something, paradoxically the harder it becomes for us to teach and explain it to those who don't yet understand it. Our system of knowledge (known also as mental models) becomes more and more complex, and at the same time it becomes compact, packed like a ZIP file, where details that are important for the beginner to make sense of things are faded in the background. The steps in our thinking process flow so smoothly that we ourselves do not notice it anymore. As experts we need to unpack our way of thinking in order to help beginners become experts more easily. We have attempted this when creating this handbook and the Zero Waste Ambassador and Trainer curricula.

The aim of this handbook is to support the implementation of the Zero Waste Ambassador and Trainer curricula, with the overall goal to strengthen and spread zero waste competences among changemakers across Europe, helping to empower them to support and drive their communities towards long term systemic change. Whereas the curricula describe the set up, structure and reasons for selecting certain topics and competences into the training courses, this handbook goes deeper into the topics themselves and offers some exercises and materials to anyone wanting to train Zero Waste Ambassadors and/or Trainers.

Since the teaching principles described in this handbook are quite universal, then this handbook can be useful also to anyone wishing to improve their teaching, especially in complex problems such as many environmental issues.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has two main parts: resources for the Zero Waste Ambassador curriculum and for the Zero Waste Trainer curriculum. In the beginning we have also added two chapters on more general principles that are important to both curricula. These chapters focus on the connection between values, wellbeing and zero waste, and on metacognition – the ability to analyse and plan one’s learning process.

Although we consider the Zero Waste Ambassador training course as the first level and the Zero Waste Trainer as more advanced – from understanding zero waste to being able to teach it, we have put the Zero Waste Trainer chapters first. This is to give the educators a better understanding of what are the main principles when creating training courses or workshops and how to shape learning activities. The Zero Waste Ambassador chapters provide a more in-depth view into the (zero) waste topics themselves. Whereas the Zero Waste Trainer chapters provide the “How?”, the Zero Waste Ambassador chapters provide the “What?”. It is important to note that not all the topics from both curricula are represented in this handbook – we have selected some of the most important ones and those which can serve as background or additional reading to the training course content. All the chapters can be seen as examples for creating similar documents on other zero waste topics for your own purposes.

The handbook can be read through from the first to the last chapter, or simply by focusing on specific topics. Each chapter is also available as a separate file, to make it easier to share in case there is a need to work with just one topic at a time. Here are some options how to use the chapters:

- Read them, answer the questions, do the exercises to learn more about the topic.
- Use the content (the questions and exercises) to set up your teaching sessions on the topic.
- Give them as basic/additional reading material to learners in your own Zero Waste Ambassador or Trainer training courses.



The chapters have been designed so they could also be used as training tools (e.g. home reading assignments). There are different types of questions in the chapters:

- **Opening questions** – to tune the reader’s thinking on the topic at hand and think about the existing pre-knowledge.
- **Ending questions** – what could be done with the information from the chapter, what to do next.
- **Questions within the text** – to pause and think about the possible answers, to maintain active thinking in providing their own answers before reading them from the text.
- **Frequently asked questions** – a collection of questions that are often raised by the audience when speaking about this topic.



Why we focus so much on asking questions can be read from the chapter *Why are questions important?*. We recommend taking the questions seriously, pause to think about them, even write them down, as this is the best way to maintain active thinking and focus on the material. Our aim is also not to give answers to all the questions we pose, but to cultivate the habit of asking questions, of trying to find answers, of thinking about things more deeply, of self-testing how much do we actually know about things and sometimes also realising we do not have the answers yet.

We do not have the answers to all the questions and this handbook can therefore also be seen as a way for setting goals for future research and discovery for the readers. If you do find some answers, do let us know as well.

AUTHORS AND THE CREATION OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has been created as part of the Erasmus+ funded project *“Building a European Zero Waste Academy”*. The authors are from five organisations, bringing together necessary experience and expertise in the field:

- Zero Waste Europe: the main umbrella organisation in Europe for zero waste related work and research
- Ekologi brez meja: civil society organisation with long experience in national and local zero waste work and advocacy
- Let’s Do It Foundation: civil society organisation with experience in active citizenship projects, environmental awareness and non-formal education
- Estonian University of Life Sciences, chair of rural building and water management: long term experience in teaching waste management and treatment
- Tallinn University, school of educational sciences: scientific knowledge of educational psychology

The back-bone for the structure and topics of the handbook were developed in parallel with the creation of the both Zero Waste Ambassador and Trainer curricula. The main ideas expressed in the handbook are based on the latest research done in the field of waste management and educational psychology. Additional input for the handbook was collected from the two pilot training courses in 2021. The feedback and questions from the test groups helped to form the focal questions for the handbook chapters. Some of the chapters were also tested in early 2022 as learning material in an online course and adjusted based on that. Altogether, the handbook has been shaped based on the feedback and thoughts of 45 people in the test groups, in addition to the authors.

DEFINITIONS



To avoid any confusion, this section includes definitions of key terms related to the process and design of the training courses. Topic-specific terminology is explained in respective chapters.

A **training course** is the implementation of a curriculum.

A **learner** is a participant of the training course (a person who is participating in the learning process) or a person who is in the situation of acquiring new knowledge.

An **educator** is a trainer or facilitator (a person who teaches, trains or facilitates people to help learners to acquire knowledge, competence or virtue).

Zero waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse and recovery of products, packaging and materials without burning, and with no discharges to land, water or air that threaten the environment or human health. This is the definition of Zero Waste as adopted by the Zero Waste International Alliance.

A **Zero Waste Ambassador** is a person who can argue, convince, advise local decision makers on zero waste policies and business models, with at least a medium level of zero waste expertise.

A **Zero Waste Trainer** is a person who can effectively develop and execute educational sessions (training, workshop) on different zero waste topics by taking into account the needs of the learners.

Competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. As described in “Key competences for lifelong learning” by the European Commission:¹

Knowledge is composed of the concepts, facts and figures, ideas and theories which are already established, and support the understanding of a certain area or subject.

Skills are defined as the ability to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results.

Attitudes are the disposition and mindset to act or react to ideas, persons or situations.



¹ [Key competences for lifelong learning](#), European Commission (2019)