

## Concept of Sustainable Development in Local Philosophies of Scandinavian Countries

### Koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju w lokalnych filozofiach krajów skandynawskich

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**Abstract:** This article was inspired by the cooperation between two university teams implementing a Polish-Norwegian project *Green Schoolbag for the Earth Climate*. The project was aimed at preparing early school pedagogy teachers and students for the implementation of education for sustainable development (SD). A study trip to Norway and sharing experience gave rise to studying Norwegian curricula and educational literature. The study findings revealed that local educational philosophies and SD in the four Scandinavian countries differ in social, cultural and educational terms. The article presents the historical background to introducing SD into social and cultural habits in each of the countries and, consequently, lifestyles typical of the inhabitants of these countries. Four types of lifestyles are compared: Finish *sisu*, Norwegian *friluftsliv*, Danish *hygge* and Swedish *lagom*. The analysis proved that Scandinavian countries have similar climate and values as regards their attitudes to nature. However, differences in local philosophies are visible and their inhabitants present specific lifestyles, different behaviours and social and cultural principles behind their attitudes to the SD concept. The conclusion of the article puts an open question about Polish people's local philosophy, lifestyle and SD education.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, education, lifestyle, local philosophy

**Streszczenie:** Inspiracją do napisania artykułu była współpraca zespołów dwóch uczelni w realizacji polsko-norweskiego projektu pt. „Zielony plecak szkolny dla klimatu Ziemi”. Projekt dotyczył przygotowania nauczycieli i studentów pedagogiki wczesnoszkolnej do prowadzenia edukacji dla zrównoważonego rozwoju (ZR). Podróż studyjna do Norwegii i wymiana doświadczeń naukowo-dydaktycznych, stała się przyczynkiem do analizowania norweskich podstaw programowych i literatury pedagogicznej. W wyniku analizy okazało się, że lokalne filozofie edukacji i ZR w czterech krajach skandynawskich różnią się od siebie pod względem społeczno-kulturowym i edukacyjnym. W artykule przedstawiamy tło historyczne włączania koncepcji ZR do zwyczajów społeczno-kulturowych w poszczególnych krajach, a co za tym idzie charakterystyczny dla tych krajów styl życia mieszkańców. Porównane zostały cztery rodzaje stylów życia: fińskie – „sisu”, norweskie – „friluftsliv”, duńskie – „hygge” i szwedzkie – „lagom”. W wyniku analizy okazało się, że kraje skandynawskie, mają podobny klimat i wartości dotyczące związków z przyrodą. Widoczne są jednak różnice w lokalnych filozofiach życia a ich mieszkańcy prezentują specyficzne style życia, różne zachowania i zasady społeczno-kulturowe w przyjmowaniu koncepcji ZR. W konkluzji artykułu pozostawiamy otwarte pytanie o filozofię lokalną Polaków, styl życia i edukację dla ZR.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój, edukacja, styl życia, filozofia lokalna

## Introduction

In the awareness of contemporary man the idea of sustainable development has been perceived for many years as an imperative postulate for a change in the present direction of cultural and civilizational development of mankind. The change is supposed to be introduced in the way which enables protecting the natural environment and its excessively exploited resources so as to create optimum living conditions for the present and future human population (Gawor 2010).

The definition of the sustainable development concept (SD) was first presented by Gro Harlem Brundtland in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 titled *Our Common Future*. SD was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Today, there is a range of definitions more or less adjusted to the present state of the environment and the stage of civilizational development of societies. In education for SD the concept needs to be developed in a transparent way so that it can be popularized on various stages of both formal and informal education.

In social philosophy SD is considered a generally accepted concept of changes which aims at satisfying needs of all people, supporting economic growth without threatening the natural environment and preserving it for future generations (Tuszyńska 2018). SD comprises: people’s ethical responsibility for nature, protecting animate and inanimate nature, economic ground, legal ground, social ground and political ground which means the role of the state is to formulate, implement and control sustainable development strategies (Gladwin 1995). Earlier, the term sustainable development was found in 18th century in German forestry education. Hans Carl von Carlowitz (1645-1714), considered the father of sustainable forestry, introduced the following principle into the forestry school: In

a forest you can cut down as many trees as you are able to plant to make up for the loss so as to balance the ecosystem and protect it from total destruction. Hans Carl von Carlowitz was the first to clearly establish the principle of sustainable forestry development. He described it in *The Complex Tractate on Sustainable Forestry*.

The industrial revolution commenced in 18th century involving transition from agriculture-based and manufacturing-based economy to large-scale mechanical factory production caused environmental waste which people were unaware of. The 1950s brought rapid civilizational development worldwide, which meant destroying ecosystems and experiencing the consequences of the environmental degradation for human and animal health. Social consciousness of the necessity for the environmental conservation rose, yet much more slowly, alongside the civilizational development which negatively affected the natural environment. In 1969 in the report of the Secretary-General to the United Nations *U’Thant Problems of the Human Environment* the attention is drawn to the disastrous influence of human activity on nature.

Another UN Conference was held in 1972, in Stockholm, with the motto *Only One Earth!* It was the first time that the term “sustainable development” was included in international documents. The SD definition was presented by Gro Harlem Brundtland who chaired the World Commission on Environment and Development and stated in their report that “Sustainable development is the process which ensures that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, no. 1).

Gro Harlem Brundtland initiated formulating SD Strategies during the famous Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Since then, she has been considered a pioneer of developing the SD concept. One of the results of the Summit was the action programme for the 21st century *Agenda 21*. The document

presented the method of developing and implementing SD programmes in local life. It included social and economic issues related to the preservation and management of natural resources aimed at ensuring lasting and sustainable development.

Agenda 21 was the first to draw attention to the role of educating the whole societies by means of modern teaching methods and information technologies. The subject of the SD concept is the whole mankind, not individual nations or cultures, and the main focus of attention of SD philosophy is the present and the future (Gawor 2010). Social philosophy constitutes a form of connection between the concept of lifelong learning (Sobierajski 2014) and the basis for educating the society.

Sustainable development pedagogy is a study of transformational learning in formal, informal and non-formal conditions. It is assumed that education is probably the most powerful tool used for raising awareness and it plays a significant role in ecological culture of both individuals and the whole society as SD education focuses on teaching and learning about complex problems such as climate change, risk of disasters and excessive consumption. The role of higher education institutions is to strengthen the position of (future) educators and teachers providing them with new competencies – skills, knowledge of participative teaching methods, learning and upbringing. SD education is supposed to encourage critical thinking, ability to express oneself and developing scenarios of activities for students and members of a local community.

In 1996, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century chaired by Jacques Delors presented a report to UNESCO *Learning: the Treasure Within* (Report to UNESCO 1998). The report was the outcome of reflections of scientists from 14 countries. The title was inspired by La Fontaine's fable *The Ploughman and his Sons*. The quote was included in the report:

When of your sire berefit,  
   (says the ploughman)  
 The heritage our fathers left.  
 Guard well, nor sell a single field.  
 A treasure in it is conceal'd.

The main aim of J. Delors's report was to present four pillars of education which will be lifelong pillars of knowledge resources for every individual.

Learning to know – it is more about mastering tools for acquiring knowledge than obtaining encyclopaedic information. Learning through practicing concentration, memory skills and ability to think. A young man should learn the skill of concentration. “Primary education can be considered successful if it gives an impulse and foundations allowing lifelong learning at work and after work” (Report to UNESCO 1998).

Learning to do – the pillar emphasises acquiring skills in the learning process, the problem referred to by the theory of pragmatism. The pedagogy of pragmatism states that learning should go alongside the processes of thinking and acting, which provides students with the skill to solve theoretical and practical problems.

Learning to live together – education should ensure contacts in egalitarian conditions, emphasise common aims, common plans, consequently hidden hostility should give way to more peaceful cooperation or even friendship. Learning individual subjects may become a reference point for shaping future behaviours (attitudes).

Learning to be – education should contribute to full development of an individual. Everybody should be able to develop independent and critical thinking. They should decide themselves which are the right decisions to make. Their mind, body, intelligence and sensitivity, responsibility and spirituality should be provided with all possible conditions allowing them to discover and experience humanistic experiences which will attractively complement the achievements of the previous and present generations.

Figure 1 illustrates the theory explaining the core of the four pillars which could be found useful for school education and life-long learning.

The vision should inspire educational reforms with regard to both developing programs and defining new pedagogical policies towards the contemporary generation without limiting the chances of future generations' development.

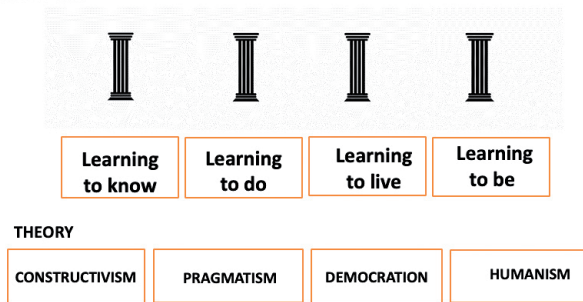
The SD concept, Agenda 21 recommendations and the report to UNESCO recommendations on lifelong learning are implemented in individual countries to a varied extent. In some, including Poland before joining the EU, SD strategies developed by the UN and UNESCO were acknowledged but not ratified by subsequent governments, while SD education was conducted by activists, community workers, organizers of educational activities who mainly cooperated with science teachers. The term

“sustainable development” was first included in the core curriculum preamble in 2017 but since then it has been rarely included in any school subject. Before there had been some attempts to introduce ecological education as an interdisciplinary educational path into the curriculum but they failed due to the lack of teachers trained to conduct such classes.

Scandinavian schools implemented the SD principles much earlier than Poland. Introduced into the general education core curriculum they contributed to raising ethical awareness of whole communities. The aim of the article is to present the local philosophies of life in Scandinavian countries resulting from historical background and introducing them into school education including the value that nature constitutes for humans. The Norwegian core curriculum may serve as an example since it has included elements of sustainable development for a long time.

„EDUCATION HAS A HIDDEN TREASURE IN IT”

Learn to:



FOUR PILLARS OF EDUCATION

Figure 1. Four pillars of education (own elaboration)

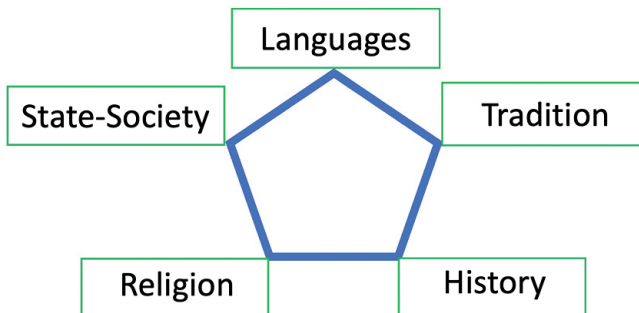


Figure 2. Pentagon of the cultural system according to J. Kleer (2019)

The article is aimed mainly at educators training teachers.

### **1. Education for sustainable development in the Norwegian curriculum**

In recent years, the Norwegian curriculum has been subject of major revision, with changes made to the structure and content of the document throughout both primary and secondary education. The revision was preceded by the report *The School of the Future: Renewal of Subjects and Competencies*. The committee that wrote the report was, as the title of the report indicates, tasked with evaluating which skills and competencies students will need in the future, and how future curricula may support these skills and competencies (NOU 2015:8). The subsequent curriculum revision, then, serves as an operationalization of this future-oriented approach, providing insight into Norwegian governments' thoughts on the matter.

Besides the aforementioned report, the curriculum reform was also based on the Norwegian Education Act (1998) and it follows its assumptions. The Education Act, in addition to addressing the legal and administrative frame of the Norwegian education system, presents the overarching objectives of education and training in Norway, objectives which are further elaborated in the core curriculum (Education act, 1998, §1-1; Ministry of Education and Research 2017). LK20 ascertains this connection while presenting and describing the six core values, rooted in the Education Act: 1. human dignity, 2. identity and cultural diversity, 3. critical thinking and ethical awareness, 4. the joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore, 5. respect for nature and environmental awareness, and 6. democracy and participation. While sustainable development is not mentioned in this part of the curriculum as a concept, we find influences and overlapping themes among these values. Perhaps the pivotal of these is the fifth one, namely, respect for nature and environmental awareness. Through their compulsory schooling,

students should be guided to “develop an appreciation of nature so they can enjoy and respect nature and develop climate and environmental awareness” (Ministry of Education and Research 2017, 9). Further, students will be given the opportunity to experience nature, and to learn to find nature to provide “utility, joy, health and learning” (Ministry of Education and Research 2017, 9) reflecting the concept of *friluftsliv*. Moving on from environmental awareness, several of the other core values of LK20 align with a broad understanding of what education for sustainable development should be, with some examples being human dignity, critical thinking, and democratic participation. These are skills and values which reflect the characteristics of education for sustainable development (ESD) presented in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development framework (UNESCO 2006).

A key change in the revised curriculum is the introduction of three interdisciplinary topics to be implemented in all school subjects. It is within these topics that we find “sustainable development” as an explicit concept in LK20, in addition to the topics “Health and life skills” and “Democracy and citizenship”. Within the interdisciplinary topic of sustainable development, the focus is somewhat shifted from the environmentally centered core value described above, towards sustainability as a broader term. The curriculum is based on the well-known definition of sustainable development presented in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development presented by Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987 which defined SD as “protecting life on earth and providing for the needs of people who live here now without compromising the possibilities of future generations to meet their needs” (Ministry of Education and Research 2017, 16).

Also, the concept is described through the much employed “three dimensions” of sustainable development, the social, the environmental and the economic. Again, the importance of ethical awareness

is emphasized, and here, individual action is also highlighted as a learning objective. More public, cooperative or communal perspectives in actions and participation in sustainable development, however, are not discussed further. The passage on sustainable development concludes with a reflection concerning the role of technology for sustainable development, stating that: “While technological development may help to solve problems, it may also create new ones. Knowledge of technology implies understanding which dilemmas may arise due to the use of technology, and how these can be dealt with” (Ministry of Education and Research 2017, 16).

The environment, climate and sustainable development have been assigned a more significant role in the revised core curriculum as a whole. While the evaluation of the curriculum revision is still under way, some brief conclusions can be made on how these changes have affected the role and scope of ESD in the Norwegian school system. LK20 takes a clear normative stance, and prescribes a multitude of knowledge, skills and values to be fostered among Norwegian students throughout their schooling in order to combat contemporary challenges relating to our common future. Respect and care of nature, ethical awareness, critical thinking, and active participation stand as central tenets of Norwegian schooling. Additionally, sustainable development has been introduced as an interdisciplinary topic, showing a willingness to implement education for sustainable development more holistically than the previous versions of the curriculum. With this framework as a point of departure, teachers are given a more explicit mandate to facilitate knowledge and skills that students will need in the future, and to do so not only within certain subjects, but interdisciplinarily as well.

This is not to say that there are no challenges with the revised core curriculum in its current form. While LK20 does more to show ESD’s relevance in school, its understanding is so broad that it might be more

constructive to ask what ESD is not, rather than what it is within this context. Further, while not a problem in itself, the text draws on a wide variety of approaches to ESD. This is both natural and necessary but may entail conflicts as well. For example, the normative approach presented in some passages may conflict with a more pluralistic approach (Öhman 2004). This holds especially true once differences between the subject curricula are considered. As a final reflection, it can be argued that LK20 is too permissive in its approach. While the text points out the connection between the local and the global level, and the interconnectedness of the globalized world, the solutions offered are perhaps too focused on individual action. The approach has been characterized as being optimistic in terms of technology (Tollefsen 2022), and no efforts are taken to settle the conflicts that arise within and between countries over pursuing a sustainable future. With a lack of critical perspectives on individual and collective action, policy and lifestyles, ESD runs the risk of stagnating, reproducing values and knowledge that may need further reflection, development or that simply must be left behind.

## **2. Local philosophies and Scandinavian lifestyle**

### **2.1. *Friluftsliv* - Norwegian local philosophy**

The Polish team’s study trip to Norway and exchanging scientific and didactic experiences at Agder University in Kristiansand in Norway became a source of inspiration for observing behaviours and studying local philosophies in Scandinavian countries and their place in the concept of education for sustainable development. In Scandinavian countries, sustainable development has been enforced since the concept was developed. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the major pioneer in the SD idea was Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The climate and living conditions in the north were conducive to close contact

with nature. Protestant culture – Lutheran marked by institutional minimalism was also a conducive factor. Educationalist K.E. Nipkow (1990) claims that “where there is no central management system nor the only right decisions which, when challenged, would result in a range of consequences and sanctions, the individual becomes free of the power of authorities and is fated to act in accordance with their own feelings and internalized norms. This open confessional system is attributed by defined pedagogical and enculturative directives: emphasising autonomy and freedom of conscience, stressing the importance of a word and communication, downgrading the significance of what is external and turning towards internal processes [...]” (Milerski 2000).

#### 2.1.1. On *friluftsliv*

The concept of *friluftsliv* (“outdoor life”) holds a strong position in Scandinavian countries. In Norway, traces of this cultural phenomenon are identified at different times throughout history, for example in connection with the independence of 1905 (and the subsequent formation of national identity), and in the environmentalist movement of the 1970’s (Gurholt 2008; Leirhaug et. al. 2020). Though a contested concept, *friluftsliv* is held as a central part of egalitarian Norwegian culture. It is a broad philosophy of the value of experiencing the outdoors, and on discovering and upholding the balance and relationship between culture and nature. With the rise of environmentalism and eco-philosophy in the 1970’s, spearheaded by philosophers such as Arne Næss, *friluftsliv* has been tied to a counterculture against the trials and tribulations of modern living, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its perspectives prove more relevant than ever before in the light of climate change and sustainable development (Leirhaug et. al. 2020). *Friluftsliv* is embedded in everyday life, as well as codified into law; the Outdoor Recreation Act (1957) ascertains all citizens’ right to passage through *utmark* (uncultivated land, countryside) in a respectful manner,

regardless of the ownership status of that land. *Friluftsliv* has also been an important aspect of Norwegian education, as seen in the LK20 core values, and has been connected with games and plays in early childhood education as well as in health and physical education, in addition to its relevance for environmental and sustainability education (Fasting 2014; Leirhaug et. al. 2020; Ministry of Education and Research 2017).

Discovering rich oil deposits changed a range of the foregoing patterns of contemporary Norway. In late 1980s, Norway gradually switched from a socio-democratic welfare state to a neoliberal economy. The gradual transformation to an increasingly liberal economy affected the existing model of the welfare state. However, thanks to oil, the liberal model of Norwegian economy did not impoverish the welfare state completely (Piotrowski 2015).

Norwegian citizens are known for their close to nature lifestyle. The local philosophy called *friluftsliv* involves peaceful life outdoors, contact with nature, communing with nature in their free time, practising outdoor sports, skiing, walking, trekking, admiring nature. It often means leaving for a cottage in the countryside or camping at night. The habits make *friluftsliv* express a great respect for nature.

Establishing close contact with nature is a vital part of Norwegian lifestyle philosophy. It has become the essential part of Norwegian tradition, culture and national identity. It results not only from understanding the idea of sustainable development but also from being fully aware of life in a definite ecosystem which consists of animate nature (flora and fauna) and biotope that is the environment where there is life.

Norway has perfect conditions for spending free time outdoors. It features low population levels, thus even in big cities there are perfect places to enjoy leisure time and practise sports. Green areas, forests and lakes are easily accessible. The Norwegian culture and the lifestyle called *friluftsliv* were praised by

Ibsen (1859). In his poem *Paa Vidderne (On the Heights)* he wrote:

So, there he comes! In wind and storm,  
Through mountain, swaying heather,  
He, who may head for the church.  
Not me, I am free! In a lonesome 'dog's  
corner'  
My generous catch I'll take  
There, where the hearth and home is,  
and the table  
And friluftsliv on my mind.

## 2.2. Finnish *sisu*

Scandinavian countries include primarily Norway, Denmark and Sweden. However, Finland could also be included due to its culture and history. Finnish school education cannot be brought down only to obtaining good results from tests that check students' competencies. The strength of the Finnish system is its nationwide attitude which pays careful attention to assisting single parents. Finland rates well in terms of education equality. According to the report *Save the Children* from 2017 cited by the German radio *Deutsche Welle*, Finnish children enjoy most carefree childhood followed by Norwegian and Slovenian children (Stasik 2017). The Finnish concept of the society lifestyle *sisu* is considered by Finns as the expression of their national character. It is described as stoic determination, persistence in pursuing goals, courage, endurance (Masten 2009; Luthar et al. 2003).

Finns have made *sisu* their national characteristic, writes (Pantzar 2018). *Sisu* is a great determination to confirm actions against the odds, exhibit courage and assertiveness. The condition for this determination is pursuing the balance despite difficulties. *Sisu* is a school subject as part of Finnish culture. Children are instructed to finish what they have started no matter how difficult the task is, thus they are taught responsibility. It helps acquiring skills, which is an important factor in becoming an adult in *sisu* ethos (Pantzar 2018, 125). *Sisu* is

a concept similar to Norwegian *friluftsliv* where sustainable development is included in the core curriculum of the early school education.

In Finland, the job of the teacher is popular and highly respected. All primary school teachers hold master's degrees. The whole society features the culture of trust, which is important for contacts with parents and children. Perhaps, just like in Norway, it contributes to students' high academic results. Sustainable Development Solutions Network launched by the UN stated in the World Happiness Report that Finland together with its Nordic neighbouring countries: Denmark, Iceland and Norway ranked in the first five happiest countries in the world, right next to Switzerland (Pantzar 2018, 27).

Finland has made a big civilizational leap thanks to relying on new information technologies. Modern Finland features high social capital, which results in high activity level of various professions. It is the country which out of all Scandinavian countries has made the biggest civilizational leap, that is why, it adjoins the wealthiest countries such as Sweden and Norway with no complexes or preconceptions. Although the economic growth of these two countries has been tremendous, Finland has achieved the best results in educating the society (Ciećtak 2022).

## 2.3. Swedish *lagom*

Being a Scandinavian country, Sweden also has its local philosophy defined as *lagom*. The meaning of the word could be understood as "just as much as needed", "just so", "not too much, not too little" or "just right". Sweden sees *lagom* as a way of life – love of something that is functional but inconspicuous. It refers to every area of life: from architecture through fashion and motorization to interior design. Ikea shops show the *lagom* character. In *lagom* philosophy the key aspect is the harmony between private and professional life, maintaining balance in every field. For example, sport



plays an important role in everyday life and healthy products are important for good nutrition. Swedes lead simple, ecological life and cherish what they have. They pay much attention to segregating waste, not wasting food. They use reusable bags, and most of all, they take care of the neighbourhood and saving energy. In a nutshell, they live ecologically.

International research conducted in recent years by Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) revealed lower level of knowledge among Swedish children compared to their peers in other countries. Consequently, in recent years Sweden has adopted a range of reforms in its educational system. The status of the teacher profession, until recently underrated, has been improved. Previously, candidates for the job were not required higher education. Low salaries discouraged from applying for the job.

The integration of children with disabilities and able-bodied children plays an important role. Schools provide comfortable conditions in school space: a reader's corner, relaxation or rehabilitation space. An important part of the Swedish educational system is acquiring knowledge through teamwork and cooperation.

At the same time, much attention is also devoted to educating adults. Lifelong learning is aimed not only at Swedish citizens but also immigrants and their children who are offered special educational programs. In Sweden at Upsala University, Sustainability Initiatives network is dedicated to students and postgraduates at different universities. The Baltic University Programme (BUP) is one of the biggest university cooperation programmes in the world with the participation of nearly 90 universities in the Baltic Sea region collaborating on education and research into sustainable development and democracy (Uppsala Universitet 2023). Being a wealthy country, Sweden could be an example for the neighbouring countries also in terms of education. Swedish

economy as well as Danish economy have always been on a similar level. As a result, the societies in both countries have been far richer than Norwegians or Finns. However, both countries in Scandinavia lost their leadership position in terms of wealth at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cieřak 2022).

#### 2.4. Danish philosophy of happiness - *hygge*

Denmark, just like other Scandinavian countries has its own lifestyle expressed in the term *hygge*. The word describing life philosophy making Danes one of the happiest nations in the world. It means that moments of happiness, warmth and closeness are in their lives on everyday basis (Adamczewski 2021). Danish people experience *hygge* performing different activities, it just needs positive thinking. For example, when they are relaxing reading an interesting book, watching a film, chatting with friends or having supper. *Hygge* permeates every aspect of Danish daily routine: from household chores to artistic activity. It proves to be vital to be able to find a moment to zone out for a while and find time for *hygge* in modern hectic life.

We may find it interesting that Danish primary schools are granted considerable autonomy and, for example, they can decide on the daily and weekly schedule. The methods and forms of the content taught depend on a teacher who cooperates with parents. Schools provide students with access to knowledge and skills which will enable further education and trigger their curiosity to become familiar and understand the history and culture of Denmark. "It is vital to develop awareness of cultures of other countries, build a personal relation with nature and promote an individual approach to a student" (Ministry of Children and Education 2018).

Similarly to Poland, in early school education there are sets of subjects:

- Humanities: Danish, English and Religious Education,
- Practical and artistic – Physical Education, Music, Arts,

- Science – Maths, Nature Studies, Information Technology,
- Road safety, health education and career counselling are obligatory educational content and are covered throughout the primary school (Adamczewski 2021).

Elementary education in Denmark is also founded on *hygge* philosophy, that is spending time together in a friendly, safe atmosphere. It is accompanied by outdoor education which involves taking the educational process out of the classroom to the natural environment where students learn through observation, independent experience and experimenting.

*Hygge* is the beauty of everyday routine, it is in sun rays and drizzle. In the scent of freshly cut grass and the sounds of a town waking up. In a cat yawning and stretching. In taste of bread with crunchy crust, covered with a thick layer of home-made jam. *Hygge* hides in meetings with people who accompany us for a while or longer (Tourell 2016).

### Conclusions: complex relations

Outdoor education has become the object of a scientific cognitive discourse for a range of academic fields and practitioners. The disappearing connection between children and the natural world was called nature deficit disorder by Richard Louve (2014, 126) who sees it as a threat.

Do we wonder how to recreate the connection between children and nature? It appears that a solution to the problem could be so called forest kindergartens and schools in which children, regardless of the season and weather, spend most time outdoors – in nature. As Teresa Parczewska puts it – the effort which provides the meaning is taken since a child's first contacts with the surrounding reality (Parczewska 2017). It is worth noting that man defines and understands reality using the meanings he gives to it and denying the conviction of the mirror reflection of the world the human mind

creates (Klus-Stańska 2004, 18). Thanks to diverse climate, Scandinavian winters are really frosty but have their unique charm attracting crowds of ski lovers. On the other hand, southern parts of Norway and Denmark can be really warm. Climate conditions enable developing connections with nature and respecting the environment. Perhaps cultural values visible in local philosophies of life prove that the SD idea is present not only in documents but also in lifelong learning and Scandinavian people find it more important than other nations living in a warmer climate. The comparison of Scandinavian life philosophies suggests that all the countries, despite their differences, prefer and promote non-material values.

Research findings reveal that citizens of Nordic countries expect deeper involvement of the European Union and increased activity in the field of environmental protection. According to Eurobarometr, 60% of Finns, 66% of Danes and 87% of Swedes expect the EU's greater involvement while the European mean of expectations is 67% (Eurobarometr 2017) while in Poland only 49% of citizens expect the support in the area of environmental protection.

According to Magdalena Tomala, 2017 "Nordic people do not expect UE to engage more in economic issues. Only 27% of Danes and 32% of Swedes found the questions important. The result is by 20% lower than the mean of expectations towards the economy in EU. As for the issues connected with EU market, Nordic people find policies vital including counteracting tax fraud and environmental pollution in UE" (Eurobarometr 2017).

The results of the Eurobarometer survey (surveys regularly performed by Kantar and commissioned by the European Commission) conducted in 2019 reveal that now the biggest environmental problem worldwide is stopping the climate change, the opinion expressed by 73% of Poles. It may suggest the level of Polish people's awareness is quite high. When asked about their opinion on environmental protection

76% of Europeans paid attention to the climate change as a serious problem. 90% of Spanish people and only 46% of Estonians expressed their concern for the climate.

The survey also enquired what environmental actions the respondents had taken within the last six months. The findings were that on average more Europeans than Polish citizens had taken environmental actions. For instance, 56% of Polish people sorted their waste to be recycled. The same was done by 66% of Europeans. Only 20% of Polish people bought local products compared with 45% of Europeans. During the last energy crisis 29% of Polish people and 37% of Europeans reduced the energy use. 26% of Polish people and 29% of Europeans limited the use of water. Eurostat also provides the answers to the questions concerning the sources of knowledge about the environment (Table 1). More than half of the Polish population gain knowledge of the natural environment from TV news. The situation is similar in Europe – the main source of information for 66% of Europeans is television. The next popular source of information about the environment is the Internet, which is declared by a third of Poles. The Internet is the leading source of information about the environment for Latvians and Cypriots (56%). The survey also reveals that the radio is a more popular source of knowledge about the environment than social media (Kantar 2020).

The latest data concerning the support for stricter norms of air quality introduced by

the European Union differs more among Scandinavian countries than the average for Europe. According to Eurobarometer 2022, Denmark and Sweden express the greatest support – 71% and 69% respectively. Finland is in favour of changing the norms in 56%, Poland 61%. The European average is 67%.

The analysis of the above-mentioned results as well as these in the table reveals that Poland is close to the European average. Most member states (22) believe the Union norms of air quality should be tightened up.

It may result from the history of democracy in Poland and the cultural system whose evolution has proceeded very slowly. In the Nordic countries democratic ethics is deeply rooted in the history. The tradition of local home rule is particularly important. Thus, the local philosophies, so interesting for us, have developed in a natural way and contact with nature has proved consistent with the concept of sustainable development. It is worth mentioning that the concept of education for SD occurred thanks to the Norwegian ex-prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The social structure providing for social security, principles of the complete equality among people on economic, social and political levels favours integration of local communities and shapes life philosophy. Also, well-developed and egalitarian education system both at schools and for adults, connected with the institution of Universities of the People has deep significance for common democratic actions (Johan Strang 2006).

**Table 1. Attitudes of Polish and European citizens to the questions of environmental protection (own elaboration based on Kantar survey findings 2020)**

N°	Problem	Polish people (%)	European (%)
1.	Stopping the climate change	73	76
2.	Sorting waste for recycling	56	66
3.	Buying local products	20	45
4.	Reducing the energy use	29	37
5.	Reducing the use of water	26	29
6.	Gaining knowledge of the natural environment from television	58	66
	Average value	43.66	53.17

Schools and universities in Poland trying to reach SD targets do not have a clear statement in the education law for the problem of sustainable development. So far, universities' learning outcomes include the information of SD targets. In subject programs, the so called sylabi, academics are obliged to state which SD targets they plan to reach during their classes. The strongest effects resulting from following the Scandinavian local philosophies are achieved thanks to the teachers who have gained experience from international education projects funded by the Norway Grants administered by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System in Poland. The results of such education may lead to creating the Polish philosophy of community and symbiosis with nature for human welfare. As one of the reviewers of the article suggests, seeking the Polish local philosophy it might prove worthwhile to reach the educational tradition dating back to the beginnings of the independent Polish state – perceiving family welfare and attention to nature as tantamount to citizenship and patriotism.

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