



TexUnite

Project: 2024-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000253935 – TexUnite - Service Learning on Sustainability in Textile and Fashion Education

SL Project Title: Sustainable Braiding with Children – A Collaborative Learning and Craft Project

Partner University: Ege University, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Textile Engineering, TexUnite Project Team, Ege University, İzmir, Türkiye

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Executive Summary

Within the Erasmus+ TexUnité framework, 25 students completed a service-learning (SL) project that integrated sustainability education, basic textile engineering knowledge, and community engagement through collaborative braiding activities with primary school children at the Bilimsev Koleji school. In the context of this project, university students learned about sustainable natural materials, particularly jute, and basic braiding techniques. They designed interactive teaching sessions and transferred their knowledge to children through hands-on crafting activities. The project included a virtual exchange (VE) with the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Project outputs included braided jute-based craft items and child-friendly leaflets designed with simple visuals and texts to explain sustainability and jute. The activities contributed to increased sustainability awareness, social responsibility, and perceived educational value of SL and VE.

Background and Context

The textile and fashion sector faces growing environmental and social challenges related to raw material consumption, production practices, and waste generation. Addressing these issues requires strong sustainability literacy and early awareness. The SL project Sustainable Braiding with Children responds to this need by embedding sustainability concepts into textile engineering education and transferring this knowledge to primary school children through simple, hands-on learning activities. The project aligns with the SusTexLab framework by linking academic learning with community engagement and social impact.

Objectives

- ❖ Integrate sustainability concepts into textile engineering education
- ❖ Raise awareness of sustainability issues and key objectives of the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles
- ❖ Enable students to design and deliver interactive, sustainability-focused teaching activities
- ❖ Introduce primary school children to sustainability through playful, hands-on crafting
- ❖ Strengthen collaboration between university students, children, and the local community

Methodology

The project began with lectures on sustainability in textiles, basic braiding principles, jute as a sustainable natural material, and the main objectives of the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles. Practical activities focused on producing simple braided jute structures and developing interactive teaching materials. Outcomes included hands-on teaching materials for primary school children, such as braided jute-based craft items

and child-friendly leaflets which combine simple visuals and short texts on sustainability and jute. The SL experience involved collaborative braiding and crafting activities with children, emphasising experimental learning and community engagement. VE was conducted through online collaboration with students from the University of Ljubljana to share project experiences, teaching strategies, and reflections. Assessment methods included pre- and post-tests and measured attitudes, action potential, and VE experience. Teaching plans, visual materials, activity descriptions, and reflections were compiled as Open Educational Resources (OER).

Implementation Details

The project was carried out during the winter term 2025/26 with 25 textile engineering students from Ege University. The working language was English. Implementation steps included training seminars, preparation of teaching and visual materials, on-site activities at Bilimsev Koleji school, and structured reflection sessions. The project followed a SL framework that combined theoretical instruction, practical application, and active community interaction.

Results and Impact

Post-test results indicate increased sustainability awareness and a stronger understanding of jute as a natural material. University students reported improved teaching and communication skills, as well as a greater appreciation of the educational value of SL and VE. Through direct interaction with children, they improved their communication, teamwork, and teaching skills. Primary school children developed awareness of sustainability concepts and sustainable products through hands-on crafting with jute. Overall, the project strengthened sustainability awareness across the broader school community.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

A key challenge was adapting sustainability concepts and textile terminology to a level appropriate for primary school children. This experience underscored the importance of clear language, visual support, and interactive teaching methods. The experience confirmed that hands-on activities are highly effective in promoting sustainability education and student engagement.

Reflection and Feedback

University students reflected positively on the experience of learning through teaching and engaging with children. They reported increased confidence, a deeper sense of social responsibility, and a clearer understanding of how technical expertise can generate social impact.

Children expressed enthusiasm for the activities and enjoyment in creating their own braided jute products.

Future Directions

The project outcomes will inform future SL activities within the TexUnite framework. The approach can be adapted to other sustainable textile techniques and different age groups. Materials, teaching plans, and reflections will be further developed as OER for reuse and dissemination.