

## 8. Tools in the Green Combs

In this module we'll explore a set of tools to support you and your team within your actual or future Green Comb operations, activities and workflows. It is divided into two main sections, each dedicated to a distinct category of tools:

- Thinking Tools
- Digital Tools

What are thinking tools? They can be defined as frameworks and models aimed at broadening perspectives in framing problems and solutions. These tools aim to enhance understanding of the interconnectedness within ecosystems, encouraging a holistic view rather than a narrow focus of individual components. Let's see some examples together.

Concept mapping is a useful technique for illustrating the connections between the elements of a concept or system and aiding in their visualisation and understanding.

To ensure that a concept map is accurate, it is necessary to immerse oneself in a subject of knowledge that is well-known before beginning to create one. Being an absolute expert is not necessary, but it is helpful to have a good foundation of knowledge.

Connection circles are a thinking tool designed to help users identify cause-and-effect relationships within a system. This tool can support the visualisation of connections between components of a system and can be useful to analysing complex ideas.

Every item should satisfy two key requirements:

1. It should be crucial for systemic improvements;
2. It can be described as a noun.

We recommend incorporating fewer than ten of these items while writing them around the circle.

The Ishikawa diagram is a great way to find the root causes of problems and solve them. It was made by a Japanese professor named Kaoru Ishikawa and is also known as a cause-and-effect diagram or a fishbone diagram. It works especially well for solving hard tasks. There are a few easy steps to follow:

Explain the issue:

1. List the causes or groups that contributed.
2. Look for possible reasons that are linked to each factor.
3. Take a look at the picture.

Backcasting can be used to help people think about how the choices they make affect the future. It starts with a review of one or more possible futures and works backwards to figure out the steps that need to be taken to connect those futures to the present, which can be a person, a service, or a system. So, designers and other participants could also think about the different ways that certain groups, goods, services, or projects might grow, and pull out ideas that could affect their

work right now, helping them make the future they want or stay away from the one they don't want.

These are just a few examples of the thinking tools you may use in your activities. We have a broader selection in our publication. Check it out!

Let's move on to the Digital tools which may be useful in facilitating the participation and engagement of the members of your Comb.

You definitely need communication and collaboration tools to support your Green Comb when working remotely with internal or external members of the Comb. We encourage you to identify the tools that work best for you for file sharing, document editing and virtual whiteboards to enhance a more interactive and collaborative experience.

In order to organise your Comb's work and tasks you would probably need some project management tools that can provide numerous benefits for members involved in various domains. This can help organising, timelines, and project-related information in a centralised location. Project management tools make it easier for team members to access and track project details. Adopting project management tools simplifies project workflows, enhances communication, and contributes to successful collaboration.

As you remember, the principal function of the Green Combs is to offer high-quality sustainability education programmes. To achieve this objective, it is fundamental to create and share innovative teaching materials, educational resources, and interactive tools to engage students in learning about sustainability.

Analysing data enables data-driven decision-making, allowing Green Combs to prioritise education initiatives based on real insights. Survey and feedback tools serve as valuable resources for collecting insights, opinions, and feedback from the target audience. These tools provide quantitative and qualitative data. You can share research results to contribute to the growth of knowledge in the field of sustainability.

Green Combs are established on the principle of collaboration; therefore, sharing resources and knowledge is fundamental. These tools support real-time collaboration, allowing multiple users to edit and contribute to documents simultaneously. This fosters teamwork, accelerates project timelines, and ensures that everyone is working on the most up-to-date content.

Knowledge management tools facilitate the exchange of knowledge, which is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of a resilient and cohesive community. Establishing a knowledge platform that aids the ecosystem activities promotes development, cooperation, and unity. Cultivating an atmosphere where community members can collectively learn and work towards shared objectives acts as a central hub of the ecosystem, connecting all Green Combs and stakeholders.

In case you are interested in some specific feature of a suggested tool, please have a look at our "How to Guide", where Digital Tools and Thinking Tools are described in detail.