

## “GOOD PRACTICE” IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNECE REGION

**“Good practices in ESD”** are initiatives closely related to Education for Sustainable Development, that demonstrate good practice, generate ideas and contribute to policy development. These good practices:

1. focus on the educational and learning dimensions of sustainable development.
2. are innovative. They develop new and creative solutions to common problems, such as:
  - ❖ ways to discover what the key local issues of sustainable development are
  - ❖ ways to adapt processes to relevant teaching and learning strategies
  - ❖ ways of fostering links between learning situations and the community
  - ❖ ways of integrating local knowledge and culture
  - ❖ curriculum development processes enabling content to be decided as locally relevant
  - ❖ starting points on how Education for Sustainable Development can best be put into effect.
3. make a difference. They demonstrate a positive and tangible impact on the living conditions, quality of life of the individuals, groups or communities concerned. They seek to bridge gaps between different societal actors/sectors and are inclusive, in order to allow new partners to join the implementing agents/bodies.
4. have a sustainable effect. They contribute to sustained improvement of living conditions. They must integrate economic, social, cultural and environmental components of sustainable development and reflect their interaction/interdependency in their design and implementation.
5. have the potential for replication. They provide effective methodologies for transdisciplinary and multi-sectoral co-operation. They serve as models for generating policies and initiatives elsewhere.
6. offer some elements of evaluation. They have been and can be evaluated in terms of the criteria of innovation, success and sustainability by both experts and the people concerned.

***If you submit more than one "good practice", please indicate the priority 1, 2 or 3.***

**1. NAME OF THE INITIATIVE CONSIDERED AS A GOOD PRACTICE<sup>1</sup>:  
SCHOOL AGENDA 21 IN THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY**

**2. RESPONSIBLE COUNTRY/ORGANIZACIÓN: BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY (SPAIN)**

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**4. FOCUS OF THE INITIATIVE:**

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|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| √ Education/Learning       | √ Water                   | √ Citizenship                          |
| √ Educators                | √ Climate Change          | √ Research / Development               |
| √ Corporate Responsibility | √ Biodiversity            | √ Regional / international cooperation |
| √ Environment              | √ Sustainable Consumption | √ Agenda 21 Local cooperation          |

**5. INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION**

School Agenda 21 (A21E) is a programme that brings together the efforts of the education community (teachers, pupils, families and non-teaching staff) to achieve quality in schools and sustainability for the education centre and environment, contributing to a sustainable development of the municipality.

The programme is coordinated by INGURUGELA, a governmental institution created in 1990 through an agreement between two Basque Government Departments, the Department of Education, Universities and Research and the Department of the Environment and Regional Planning, and involves the work of 14 advisors.

The advisors train coordinators at the centres and supply them with material and pedagogical support to run the Agenda 21 in schools.

The programme is directed at all public and subsidised private centres in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) that provide compulsory education for 6 to 16 year-olds (primary and secondary), although some infant schools and post-compulsory education centres also participate. The languages used in the programme are, without distinction, Basque and Spanish, the two official languages in the ACBC..

#### STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

Town Councils, 99 at present, are grouped together in the "Udalsarea 21" network, whose aim is to become a forum to coordinate and cooperate in the execution of municipal Action Plans, advancing Local Agenda 21 and promoting school Agendas and the participation of infants and youths in municipal sustainability plans.

The Town Councils offer education centres technical advice to carry out School Agenda 21. They also organize Forums for pupil participation which are used to announce analyses carried out by pupils on the most significant problems, commitments and improvement measures that have been implemented.

Municipal authorities are committed to responding to the proposals and carrying out some of the alternatives.

#### FUNDING

Programme A21E was established during academic year 2003-04 with 41 schools in the three provinces. This pioneering experience opened the way for academic years 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 to involve 128, 253 and 341 centres respectively in developing their own A21E projects.

The funding earmarked for the programme has increased in relation to the number of education centres involved. Data corresponding to 2006-07 are as follows.

WHO	WHAT	TO WHOM	WHY	FUNDING 06-07
Department of Environment and Regional Planning	Publications	Teachers	Inform on A21E and promote participation of all stakeholders in School Agenda 21.	123.660€
		Families		
	Economic subsidies	Education centres	Economic aid to launch and execution of A21E	711.412 €
		Town Councils	Economic aid to launch and execution of A21E	442.624€
Maintenance INGURUGELA centres	INGURUGELA	Empower and provide resources for INGURUGELA personnel to enable them to provide efficient advice	116.207 €	
Department of Education, Universities and Research	Reduction in hours of Coordinator Teachers	A21E Coordinator Teachers	Provide coordinator teachers with hours to coordinate and efficiently develop A21E	900.000 €
	Teacher Training	A21E Coordinator Teachers	Empower them for the launch and execution of A21E	124.800 €
	Advisory staff	14 advisors (salary)	Promote environmental education for the sustainable development of the ACBC.	434.000 €
	Research Personnel	3 researchers (salaried study licence)	Assess the development of A21E and propose improvement measures	93.000 €
Town Councils	Economic subsidy	School centres	Aid through technical advice to school centres to develop the A21E	442.624€

#### DETAILED PRESENTATION AND INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

The programme is developed through the following phases:

a) **Decision** made by the school Council and staff and the election of a coordinator who will have some hours assigned for carrying out this task and will be trained (40 hour course) and advised during his or her work by Ingurugela. They will participate in monthly coordination meetings with other coordinators in the municipality and municipal A21E technicians.

b) Training the **Environmental Committee** of the centre (participating body in the education community: teachers, non-teaching staff, families, municipal representatives, and where applicable, municipal technicians, but, mainly and with greater prominence, the pupils)

c) **A diagnosis** of the centre is carried out with regard to the three areas of curricular innovation, sustainable management and participation in the education community.

d) **The aims and indicators** are defined: to be achieved following the diagnosis and setting the priorities.

e) **The Action Plan** is drawn up and executed.

g) Results are **assessed** by indicators and are **announced** to the educational community and the municipality.

h) A **report** is written.

i) The Inter-school Forum is organized where **improvement proposals are made to the Town Council.**

## INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AGENDA 21 PROGRAMME AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

School Agenda 21:

1. Improves **education**: pupils are protagonists, reinforcing team work, the subject and study materials are real and significant.
2. Improves the relationship between the municipality-education centre. Schools and towns become “educational” and “sustainable”.
3. It is an integrating and attractive programme and is well provided with resources (human and educational).
4. Offers **collaboration structures** and a very coherent framework for education, sustainability and democratic participation.
5. Promotes network **training**: Ingurugela trains the coordinators, they train the staff, they in turn the pupils, families and non-teaching staff. This promotes learning to learn.
6. Important **institutional backing**, from both the Basque Government through the departments of Education and the Environment, and municipal institutions and the Udalsarea 21 network.
7. Poses **new dimensions** which until now were hardly or not at all developed in the school environment: involving the school-families-Town Council, generating work groups between the different centres in a municipality or district, restructuring relationships between school and municipality...
8. Has the capacity to **integrate** other projects that the school is developing.

## 6. MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE

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School Agenda 21 is a group of aims, objectives, actions and resources to advance towards a cultural change that will lead us to a fairer and more sustainable future. The aims of the programme range from training a specific organizational structure to participating in Local Agenda 21, including, among others, identifying, analysing and proposing alternatives on environmental and social questions, reaching agreements on the sustainability of the centre and the municipality, teaching pupils to participate and get involved in affairs that affect the environmental quality of the centre and their municipality.

More specifically:

- Reach agreements to start living in a more sustainable way in the centre and in the municipality.
- Identify, analyse and propose alternatives on environmental and social questions in the centre and community, announce them on forums, and implement processes for a sustainable use of the environment.
- Strengthen coordination methods between all the stakeholders in the education community.
- Participate in LOCAL AGENDA 21 and become integrated in the social and territorial environment.
- Teach pupils to participate, cooperate, make decisions and get involved in affairs that affect the quality of the environment in their centre and municipality
- Make the education centre an example of responsible practices and respect for the environment.
- Adapt the curriculum to respond to the demands made by sustainable development.

## 7. METHODOLOGY

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The cyclical methodology of the school eco-audit consists of the aforementioned phases: 1) Decision; 2) Organization: environmental committee and Inter-school Forum; 3) Diagnosis; 4) Definition of aims and indicators; 5) Action plan, execution; 6) Assessment and 7) Communication. These phases are cyclically completed and the results of each centre are announced on school Forums, where the proposals and alternatives are prioritised and announced to the local authorities and all the education community.

A diagnosis of the educational, organizational and environmental situation of the centre, serves for reflection and consequently for a review and improvement of teaching methods, the climate and life in the centre, relationships between stakeholders and with the community and the environment, participation in Local Agenda 21, etc. Participation at a municipal level improves, if the subject of analysis is the same for all centres in the same area or community, therefore, a subject is chosen annually and is analysed both in the centre and in the municipality. The result of the projects of each centre are placed in common in the inter-school FORUM, where proposals are unified and prioritised, and then announced to the education community and the Town Council in another municipal FORUM or Hearing.

These annual reflection and improvement cycles will gradually transform the everyday life of the education centre through democratic practice which is respectful with the environment. Pupils being the protagonist participants in a responsible management of resources and the study of the local socio-environmental situation, leads to co-responsibility and the promotion of a spirit of solidarity with both the present and the future of humanity.

## 8. RESULTS AND EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVE

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An investigation and evaluation carried out on the 2003-2006 period shows the following results:

### 1. WITH REGARD TO THE SCHOOL AGENDA 21 PROGRAMME

A21E is a programme with great **potential**, both with regard to its educational or environmental philosophy, and as an active generator which is committed to the municipality. Furthermore, it is a programme with the capacity to group together the different projects carried out at a school, and with potential medium and long term development. It is conceived as a new way to do things, taking advantage of current work and implementing new elements that give the whole the coherence and solidity required to improve educational quality and sustainable management. It is a

programme that has the capacity to both help to solve the school's own problems and to strengthen participation in municipal sustainability.

## 2. WITH REGARD TO INSTITUTIONS

The commitment that different Basque **institutions** have made with the A21E is very important. It should be pointed out that this level of commitment and dedication of resources is a precursor of education programmes for sustainability on an international level, as this does not exist in the other autonomous communities in the State, or in most of the countries that carry out programmes of this type.

The commitment of the UDALSAREA 21 sustainable municipality network is very important. The idea is to avoid the traditional sensation of the school as an "isolated bubble" in the world that surrounds it, favouring the participation of families both in the centre and the municipality, to promote the common work of schools in the same town, and to organize and revitalise participation Forums and the dissemination of school experiences.

## 3. WITH REGARD TO INGURUGELA

The **Ingurugela technical consultancy** values the programme and work carried out by the coordinators in the centres positively, as well as the work carried out by the companies hired by the Town Councils. Similarly, the coordinators rated the training received and the advisory service very highly.

## 4. WITH REGARD TO THE SCHOOL AND THE CURRICULUM

Coordinators are the key to the success of the A21E in centres (together with the management teams that support the project) and carried most of the programme work load in schools.

In primary education all the areas participated in the A21E and in Secondary almost all, which means that the prior conception of "environmental subjects" corresponding to the head of the science department is changing, therefore, important steps are being taken towards inter-disciplinary programmes and towards the participation of all the teaching staff in the centre.

## ANALYSIS OF SUCCESS FACTORS

### 1. GLOBAL DIMENSION

The A21E programme shares many objectives and methodology with other education programmes for sustainable development that exist all over the **planet**. It is not an isolated programme, but adds protagonists to the millions of students and hundreds of thousands of teachers who participate in these programmes. Participants must be made aware that they are carrying out a local action which takes on a global dimension; the "g-local" dimension of this programme. Furthermore, over this period the programme has benefited from coverage from the prestigious proposal in the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014*.

### 2. SUPPORT FOR MUNICIPAL AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

It is important for the A21E to be a commitment of the Basque Government's *Basque Environmental Strategy of Sustainable Development 2002-2020*, and benefit from the assignment of economic and educational resources, training and advice by the corresponding departments.

A success factor of the A21E is the role played by the Town Councils and the Udalsarea 21 network of sustainable municipalities with regard to technical support and facilitating the way to school participation in the sustainable management of municipalities. Work carried out by companies or technicians hired by municipalities and dedicated to helping and technically supporting schools is highly valued.

### 3. INGURUGELA CONSULTANCY

The consultancy is considered one of the strong points of the positive development of the programme. The ratio of the number of schools per advisor increased significantly over these years and, due to the commitment made, will foreseeably continue to increase.

### 4. PUPIL PROMINENCE

The fourth strong point in the A21E programme is its protagonists: **pupils**. This agent is precisely who rates the programme highest. The A21E enables pupils to learn in situations with real and familiar problems, and to work with real material (therefore, to make significant advances in learning); develop interdisciplinary activities and discover complexity; increase awareness about both local and global environmental problems, as well as take on commitments and present proposals to municipal authorities for their possible improvement; it also enables them to develop critical thinking and their capacity for action... in short, pupils are favoured by the innovative education-learning actions that the programme promotes.

## CONSTRAINTS

### INSTABILITY OF TECHNICAL ADVISORS IN MUNICIPALITIES

Problems arise due to annual changes in the personnel who carry out this work in some municipalities.

### MATERIAL NEEDS

Coordinators say that the management of educational material must be improved.

### SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The organization of secondary centres hampers the coordination of coordinators with other project leaders, or with tutors or the teaching staff from the different groups.

### VOCABULARY REFERRING TO THE PROGRAMME

Differing definitions and objectives appear in different documents.

## PARTICIPATION

Family and non teaching strata participation is very low. This is due to several factors: low participation of society in general, little experience of working in common between different groups, new and unknown organizational structures...

The Environmental Committee, in many cases, has not proven to be the dynamic body it was supposed to be and has not turned out to be very operative.

## INNOVATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Subjects developed by centres have been focused mainly on the area of management, and to a much lower extent on curricular participation and innovation.

## EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

And another weak point is **evaluation**, together with **communication**. Although it is true that each centre, specifies each of the corresponding indicators when defining the objectives of the Action Plan, in general they are not used when assessing the achievement of objectives on finishing the programme. Assessments are made based on perceptions instead of being based on concrete data.

Schools, in general, do not plan for communication. Activities are carried out for this purpose, but there is no systematization.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL REPLICATION

**Coordination between centres.** Teamwork is favoured and, above all and specially, enables an exchange of experience and processes, which is extremely enriching both for those who participate and for the programme itself.

Explicit **recognition** of the work carried out. To date this does exist and has been missed by many of the agents. Recognition is considered necessary to positively discriminate for schools that have embarked on this programme and also those who are responsible for running the programme in the school (coordinator, revitalizing group...).

## PERSPECTIVES

School Agenda 21 is a good programme, with great potential, and forms part of a project with a global dimension, which is well developed and, in general, is highly rated by the people involved. The objective is to extend its development to 100% of the education centres that offer compulsory education in the year 2012. In addition to the formerly acquired political commitment, it will also be necessary to:

- a) Sustain the involvement of the institutions that support it.
- b) Develop the potential of the programme: global dimension, involvement of families and non-teaching personnel, etc.
- c) Improve the weakest aspects of the programme.
- d) Recognize the work carried out in schools
- e) Create a network to promote the exchange of experience and the programme itself.
- f) Unify criteria and vocabulary for all the documents.
- g) Intensify the involvement of management teams.
- h) Define a system of indicators that serve as tool for the continual improvement of the programme.
- j) Set a System of Quality Criteria that enables the **recognition of the centres**.



Welcome ceremony of School Agenda 21 (2006-2007)