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**REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE BY THE UNECE EXPERT GROUP
ON INDICATORS FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Report by the Chairperson of the Expert Group
with assistance from the secretariat[1]

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[1] This document is submitted after the official deadline for documents due to the timing of the last meeting of the Expert Group.

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<u>Annexes</u>

Introduction

1.   The Expert Group was established by decision of the High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 2005) with the mandate to develop indicators to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Experts from the following countries and organizations participated in the Expert Group's work: Armenia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Intergovernmental Central Asia Working Group on Environmental Education and ESD, the Environment and Schools Initiative Network (ENSI) and European ECO-Forum, a coalition of citizens' environmental organizations. The Expert Group was chaired by Mr. Roel van Raaij (Netherlands).

2.   The UNECE Steering Committee on ESD, at its second meeting, acknowledged with appreciation the substantive results achieved by the Expert Group and endorsed the set of indicators. Furthermore, it decided to extend the mandate of the Expert Group until the end of 2008 to undertake the following tasks:

        (a)   To revise the set of indicators as appropriate, taking into account the pilot reporting exercise and feedback from countries on the workability and feasibility of the indicators and the requested information for reporting;

        (b)   Further to the relevant outcomes of the workshop on implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD in the EECCA[2] subregion (Moscow, 8–9 November 2006), to explore the possibility of developing criteria to gauge success in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD in the countries of the UNECE region, based on the indicators and examples submitted by countries to the UNECE secretariat.

3.   In accordance with this mandate, the Expert Group held its fifth and sixth meetings from 20 to 22 June 2007 in Vienna and from 12 to 14 December 2007 in Amsterdam, at the invitation of the Austrian and Dutch Governments, respectively.
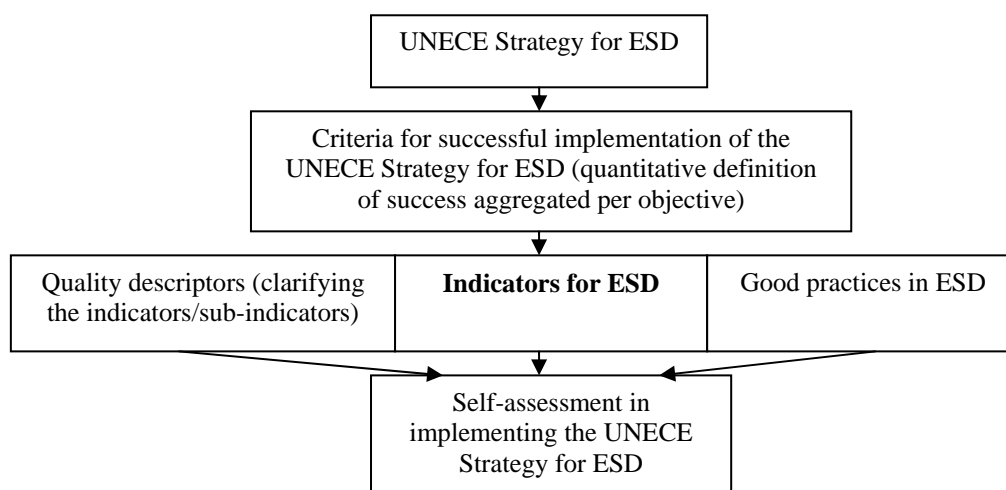
4.   The experts, at their fifth and sixth meetings, agreed that given the complex nature of ESD and the differences in the interpretation of indicators in the different national contexts across the UNECE region, the work of developing quality criteria and revising the set of

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[2] Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

indicators should result in a few products closely interconnected with each other (see Figure 1 below). These could be:

(a)   A set of criteria/thresholds to assess/monitor success in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD, i.e. "a standard to meet" - a more quantitative response to the issue of "success in the implementation";

(b)   A set of indicators, to be revised as needed;

(c)   A guidance, to include an introductory part (already developed) and a set of descriptors comprising explanatory notes on relevant indicators/sub-indicators and providing good practices and examples for each of these indicators/sub-indicators - a more qualitative response to the issue "success in the implementation".

Figure 1: Learning from each other

5.   The experts decided to use, as much as possible, the collection of good ESD practices in the UNECE region carried out jointly with UNESCO and, where good practices were lacking, to compliment with examples from other sources.

6.   The experts decided that the fifth meeting should focus on an exploration of ideas on quality criteria, and that the sixth meeting should address "re-drafting" and making amendments to the reporting format and sub-indicators.

I.   QUALITY CRITERIA

7.   Discussion on the need to develop quality criteria took place at the Moscow workshop. One of the workshop's conclusions was that some quality criteria for the successful implementation of ESD need to be developed to facilitate/support the interpretation of the indicators/sub-indicators, which depends substantially upon the national context. In addition, examples of good practice could be collected for relevant indicators/sub-indicators to demonstrate how ESD principles could be implemented within specific contexts. The Expert

Group agreed that this issue should be approached from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

8.   The Expert Group decided to develop a set of criteria/thresholds as a follow-up to the quantitative approach (see annex I). These "thresholds" were intended to provide countries with an understanding of an expected minimum level of achievement; progress could then be monitored in subsequent phases of the implementation scheme. The set of quality criteria follows the objectives of the Strategy. Since much of the available information on quality criteria was for the school/project level (e.g. "Quality criteria for ESD Schools"[3] developed by the "School Development through Environmental Education" and ENSI networks), the Expert Group agreed to develop quality criteria targeted at the policy level.

9.   To define quality, the Expert Group agreed that the definition of quality should be based on the principles described in the Strategy. These principles suggested the qualities or values that one would look at in judging "good" practice. Making these values explicit could be achieved by translating them into illustrations or examples of good practice. This reasoning led to the idea of developing "descriptors" to explain the meaning of "good" practice, as a follow-up to the qualitative approach.

II.   INDICATORS FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

10.   The results of the first reporting exercise went beyond the original expectations. The 36 reports submitted in time for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference proved that reporting was a useful tool for Governments and at the same time it engendered conclusions on certain areas where improvement vis-à-vis the set of indicators was needed. In response to feedback received from countries on the indicators' workability and feasibility, the Expert Group had extensive discussions on possible amendments to the set of indicators. It noted that a limited number of indicators needed to be presented in a more explicit way with a few additional specifications. Furthermore, several issues, such as clear presentation of priorities for sustainable development (SD) themes and the role of stakeholders in the preparation of reports, should be reflected in a more transparent way. The Expert Group agreed that the most effective ways to overcome these shortcomings would be: (a) to amend a limited number of indicators; and (b) to prepare a set of descriptors containing explanatory notes to each indicator, which would serve as a supporting tool to enhance reporting by Governments (see chapter III below). This would ensure better understanding of indicators by Governments on the one hand, and on the other would allow for distilling meaningful conclusions on the status of the Strategy's implementation in a given country.

11.   The Expert Group made proposals for revision of the set of indicators and entrusted the Chairperson, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a revised version for consideration by the Steering Committee. The revisions include the addition of one new sub-indicator (2.1.3) dedicated to teaching/learning methods under the indicator 2.1 and a few modifications and additions to the annexed template tables.

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[3] "Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools", Guidelines to enhance the quality of Education for Sustainable Development; Soren Breiting, Michela Mayer, Finn Mogensen, May 2005.

12.   The Expert Group also suggested organizing trainings for national focal points specifically addressing understanding of the indicators and the importance of monitoring and assessment.

13.   The Chairperson of the UNESCO Decade of ESD Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group of the United Nations Decade of ESD was invited to inform the Expert Group about the work done thus far and reporting mechanisms regarding the monitoring and evaluation process for the United Nations Decade of ESD. The Expert Group agreed that the UNECE indicators and the established reporting mechanism constitute an important contribution from the UNECE region to the global monitoring and evaluation process for the United Nations Decade of ESD, and that they ensure synergies and mutual benefits. With respect to the submission of national implementation reports (NIRs), the Expert Group referred to the decisions by the Vilnius High-level Meeting and by the Ministers of Education and of the Environment in their Joint statement on ESD made at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, which provided for the submission of a single report on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy that would also serve as a report on the implementation of the United Nations Decade on ESD.

14.   The Expert Group considered the differences and similarities of the UNECE reporting format and the UNESCO draft questionnaire under development to assess the implementation of the United Nations Decade of ESD. They agreed that the NIRs and other available information on ESD implementation from the UNECE region represent a valuable regional contribution to the assessment of the implementation of United Nations Decade of DESD. They also agreed that despite the difference[4] in timeline for reporting, the contribution from the UNECE region should be made through the UNECE format for reporting to avoid a burdensome reporting exercise for countries and to follow decisions by the Ministers of Environment and Education at the Vilnius High-level Meeting and at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference[5].

III.   DESCRIPTORS

15.   Further to the above conclusions, the experts agreed that the descriptive part of many of the current qualitative indicators/sub-indicators was sometimes confusing and could be better explained. This was the result of efforts to keep the set of indicators short and concise, and could be rectified by revising the indicators/sub-indicators themselves or providing additional explanations in a guidance document to accompany the set of indicators. The latter seemed to be a more appropriate approach for the policy level at which the NIRs were being prepared. The set of descriptors would be structured to include: (a) the reference to the indicator/sub-indicator; (b) the description of those sub-indicators that required some additional clarification of their meaning and expected reporting information; (c) the relevant quote from the Strategy and/or the Vilnius Framework[6]; and (d) their illustration, i.e. by examples, good practices, case studies or

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[4] The first reporting for the United Nations Decade of ESD is planned for the mid-term review Conference to be held in Germany in 2009, while the first mandatory reporting for the UNECE Strategy is planned for the end of phase II in 2010.

[5] Joint Statement on ESD by Ministers of Education and of Environment (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/4/Add.1)

[6] Vilnius Framework for the Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

references to the relevant places where these could be found. The template for the proposed format for this set of descriptors is reflected in annex II.

16.   The Expert Group concluded that the set of descriptors is an organic phenomenon and that its field "illustration" would require updates in line with the evolution of the implementation process (e.g. for each of the implementation phases of the Strategy, revisions might be necessary to keep abreast with developments in SD and ESD). The Expert Group also decided that, given the complexity of the exercise of preparing a meaningful and comprehensive set of descriptors including valuable illustrations, further work would be required. This would also entail the development of a more appropriate template for the collection of good practices illustrating the indicators/sub-indicators, thereby effectively supporting the understanding of both the expected results and the actions needed for successful implementation.

IV.   GOOD PRACTICES

17.   A set of examples of good practice in ESD would facilitate a clearer understanding of how ESD might be better implemented at the national level. To this end, good practices were collected jointly by UNESCO and UNECE in preparation for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference.

18.   Efforts were made to classify these good practices according to the indicators and sub-indicators within the UNECE reporting format. More work was required to ensure that examples could be found to cover each indicator and sub-indicator and to supply references, as much as possible, so that readers could find further information as required.

V.   OTHER MATTERS

19.   The Expert Group noted that a tension exists between those who see ESD as a means of changing behaviour (instrumental view) and those who consider it to be a more learner-centred process (emancipatory view). In resolving this tension, the experts noted that ESD comprises two interrelated approaches[7]:

        (a)   "ESD 1", providing information and developing skills with a view to achieving a predetermined behaviour change. This is important because some behaviours are self-evidently beneficial. While the preferred sustainable behaviour is made explicit, building up learners' capacity to learn is often implicit, if it is there at all;

        (b)   "ESD 2", building our capacity to think critically about and beyond sustainability messages ("learning to learn"). This includes testing SD ideas and exploring the contradictions inherent in sustainable living. In this approach, building our capacity to learn is explicit, whereas sustainability messages may be implicit. This is learning as sustainable development (i.e. recognizing that SD is inherently a learning process).

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[7] Vare, P. and W. Scott (2007), "Learning for a Change: exploring the relationship between education and sustainable development", *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development* 1(2), 191–198.

20.   Achieving a balance between ESD 1 and 2 is important. ESD 1 is essential to planning for the future, but too much ESD 1 could make society more unsustainable, either because people feel they need to be told what to do next or because they learn to resist the encouragement of experts. ESD 2 helps us survive and thrive in the future, but while ESD 2 may build resilient, self-confident people, these capacities are of little use isolated from critical knowledge of sustainability issues.

VI.   RECOMMENDATIONS

21.   To ensure high-quality answers in the NIRs, the Expert Group strongly recommended that Governments:

    (a)   Strengthen cooperation between the environment and education sectors;

    (b)   Strengthen multi-stakeholder participation in preparation of the NIRs. It is very important to prepare the NIRs in a transparent and participatory manner. One option could be to encourage countries to establish stakeholder groups to support the national reporting process.

    (c)   Recognize the self-assessment exercise as a means to learn from the implementation;

    (d)   Support the NIRs with examples and good practices. The experts stressed the need to include examples, or references, e.g. links to websites, documents, etc. during the preparation of the NIRs. Such examples would be crucial to assessing in an objective way the progress achieved by countries, and would substantially facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices.

    (e)   Present good practices and NIRs in an interactive and user-friendly way through the UNECE website. The experts stressed the need to increase the use of information and communications technology, which could provide various information and documents related to the implementation of the process through the UNECE website in a user-friendly way. This might require additional resources, but would vitally support and further ESD implementation. For instance, one service might be to provide user-friendly access to the NIRs allowing for information searches by objective, indicator, or sub-indicator. Another useful service might be revising the website providing good practices to enable searches for good practices related to objectives of the Strategy.

    (f)   Organize trainings for national focal points on the use of the reporting format and on the meaning of indicators.

    (g)   Build capacity in ESD at all levels, in particular in the field of monitoring and assessment – the implementation of the ESD Strategy should be a learning process in itself. The development of a specialized training programme for different target groups would be useful for supporting these capacity-building activities.

22.   The Expert Group has accomplished its current mandate. However, it has identified several areas that require further work, e.g. finalizing the set of descriptors, adapting the template

for the collection of good practices to meet the needs of the Strategy's implementation and developing a training programme for different target groups.

23.   As a result of consultations between the secretariat and the Chairperson of the Expert Group, a proposal for the extension of the mandate of the Expert Group on Indicators for ESD is submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration and decision. (Information paper No. 1).

Annex I

**CRITERIA TO ASSESS SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

1. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] ensuring that policy, regulatory and operational frameworks support the promotion of education for sustainable development

(a)   Basic prerequisites for the implementation of the Strategy have been achieved (see 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.2.7);

(b)   ESD is explicitly mentioned in national legislation and/or national policy documents (see 1.2.1 and/or 1.2.2 and/or 1.3.1 and/or 1.2.3 and/or 1.2.4);

(c)   A national ESD action plan is being developed and implemented through an interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder process (see 1.1.4, 1.2.5 and 1.2.6).

2. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] promoting sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning

(a)   Themes related to social and environmental and economic dimensions are addressed in the curricula at a minimum of four of the ISCED[8] levels (see annex 1 (a));

(b)   These themes are addressed in an integrated manner (see 2.2.1, table and column (b));

(c)   The four learning competencies are addressed covering at least three expected outcomes (see annex 1 (b), column one);

(d)   There is at least one national programme to support the implementation of "a whole-institutional approach";

(e)   ESD is addressed in a statutory quality assessment system in at least one ISCED level;

(f)   At least one examples is given of SD issues being addressed in both non-formal and informal education (see 2.5.1 and 2.5.2);

(g)   The example(s) given in 2.5.3 demonstrates how evaluation results of non-formal and/or informal education have been used to improve practice (see 2.5.3);

(h)   Most of the stakeholder groups are involved in a wide range of educational activities (see annex 2).

3. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] equipment of educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching

(a)   ESD is incorporated in initial and in-service training of educators within at least four ISCED levels (see annex 3);

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[8] International Standard Classification of Education.

(b)　ESD is incorporated in the training of leadership and administrative staff within at least four ISCED levels (see annex 3);

(c)　There is at least one national programme or initiative to support cooperation/networks/platforms on ESD among educators.

4. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] ensuring that adequate tools and materials for education for sustainable development are accessible

(a)　A working system is in use to assure the quality of ESD tools and materials (see 4.2.1);

(b)　ESD tools and materials are available to at least three ISCED levels (see 4.2.2) and at least one of the facilities included in 4.3 exists.

5. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] promoting research and development of education for sustainable development

(a)　Research on ESD is carried out and supported (at least three of the sub-indicators, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.1.4 and 5.3.2, should be met);

(b)　ESD actors are supported in contributing to ESD research and development (see 5.2);

(c)　Initiatives or mechanisms are described that link the ESD research and development with practice (see 5.3.1);

(d)　ESD research involves interactive dissemination mechanisms (see 5.3.1 and 5.3.2.).

6. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] strengthening cooperation on education for sustainable development at all levels within the UNECE region

(a)　At least one example of international cooperation is provided under 6.1.

7. Criteria to assess success in [the implementation of] fostering conservation, use and knowledge of indigenous people in education for sustainable development

(a)　Evidence shows that the role of indigenous people's knowledge is recognized in ESD.

Annex II

PROPOSED TEMPLATE FOR THE SET OF DESCRIPTORS

Indicator / sub-indicator	This part will include the indicator/sub-indicator.
Description	This part will include a short explanatory description of what the indicator/sub-indicator imply.
Relevant quote from the Strategy / Vilnius Framework	This part will include quotes from the Strategy/Vilnius Framework relevant to the indicator/sub-indicator.
Illustration (examples/good practices/case studies)	This part will include the available examples/good practices/case studies relevant to the indicator/sub-indicator.