

## Country Reporting – Slovenia

mag. Majda Naji

National Education Institute Slovenia, NEIS

Poljanska 28,

1000 Ljubljana,

Slovenia

tel: +386 31 371 307

E-mail: [majda.naji@zrss.si](mailto:majda.naji@zrss.si)

[www.zrss.si](http://www.zrss.si)

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Writing The White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia began in year 2009 and finished in 2011. A central point is the idea of **lifelong learning** (*vseživljenjsko učenje*) and its consequences for the education system, which is to present challenges to each individual and stimulate confidence and belief in one's own abilities. All **key competencies** (*ključne kompetence*) proposed by the Europe Union and partly OECD will present in Slovenian school curricula:

1. Literacy (most basic competencies)
2. Generic competencies
3. Personal Competencies
4. Social or interpersonal competences

Education for Sustainability (ESD) and Global Learning address environmental, social and economic issues that are of importance to young people in Slovenia, EU and wider. ESD (*VITR – vzgoja in izobraževanje za trajnostni razvoj*) is implemented into the curricula of primary and secondary schools in Slovenia through **cross curricular themes**. Slovenia is also included ESD into formal school system as an *elective subject* as well as into non-formal and informal education.

Although cross curricular themes are not a statutory part of the National curricula, schools find ESD useful in designing and planning their wider curriculum. Cross curricular themes should not be considered in isolation; for example, there are links between global education and education for sustainable development.

Environmental education (EE) is a part of education for sustainable development (ESD) and is recognized as complex, continuously evolving concept, with permanent interaction between social, economic and environmental areas and a variety of key themes: inter alia, poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace ethics, responsibility for local and global context, democracy and governance, justice, security, human rights, health, gender equity, cultural diversity, rural and urban development, economy, production and consumption patterns, corporate responsibility, environmental protection, natural resource management, and biological and landscape diversity.

Promotion of ESD in the Slovenian education sector entails a *holistic* and *systemic* approach and a specific knowledge, skills and values.

In Slovenia was established a Program group for ESD (Programska skupina za trajnostni razvoj vzgoje). In the context of Agenda 21 and UN Decade for ESD the members of the group follow *UNECE recommendations and key indicators*:

1. ESD key themes are addressed in formal education
2. Strategies to implement ESD are clearly identified
3. ESD is addressed by quality assessment/enhancement systems
4. A whole institution approach to ESD/SD is supported
5. ESD implementation is a multi stakeholder process
6. ESD is included in the training of educators
7. Opportunities exist for educators to cooperate on ESD
8. Teaching tools and materials for ESD are produced
9. Quality control mechanism for teaching tools and materials for ESD are accessible and disseminated.

Based on this principle Slovenian schools have found many different ways to build ESD into their curriculum. They include:

1. Teaching and learning ESD through existing **school subjects**, with links across subjects made where there are common issues or areas of learning. ESD is implemented from the perspectives characteristic of those subjects, and in a required by the pupils developmental phase.
2. Separately timetabled **thematic days** (for example Day of Earth, Day of the Water), **activity weeks** (*School in nature*) and **events** that focus on a particular content or objective of ESD (for example Campaigning on global development issues, Promoting recycling), often including block timetabling.
3. **Whole-school development plans**, policies and ethos with elements of ESD.
4. Activities integrated into **school routines** (working with parents).
5. **Educational visits** and **out of hours learning** opportunities and bringing **ESD experts** into the schools.
6. **Projects and school networks** (Innovative projects programme, “Hidden Treasure” programme of school projects, ECO Schools, Healthy Schools, UNESCO ASP net, U4 Energy schools)
7. any combinations of these.

In the system of lifelong learning Slovenian schools take into account the following ESD competencies proposed by OECD:

1. subject competences – knowledge, facts, definition, concepts, systems
2. methodological competencies – skills, fact-finding, analysis, problem-solving
3. social competencies – communicating, working interactively, citizenship
4. personal competencies – attitudes, values, ethic

Teacher training is a prerequisite for providing teachers and teacher trainers with the competencies they need in teaching and learning a Sustainable Development (SD) and for

Lifelong Learning (LLL). Topics of the courses in initial teacher training and in-service training institutions which develop a competency-based curriculum of ESD help teachers to implement ESD in their own school praxis..

The National Education Institute Slovenia (NEIS) was a partner in the following international projects and networks in the field of ESD:

1. ENSI web (Environment and School Initiatives)
2. SEED/Comenius (School Development through Environmental Education) project - an important product of this project is a booklet Quality Criteria of ESD school which is translated into the Slovenian language
3. SUPPORT/Comenius (Partnership and Participation for a Sustainable Tomorrow) project

The journal *Sustainable Development in School and Kindergarten* published by NEIS is the only professional periodical for ESD teachers, as well as for those who are responsible for the projects concerning the education for sustainable development at primary and secondary level, in student dormitories, and in national centers for out-of-school activities. It is explicitly holistically and inter-disciplinarily oriented, and it pursues the goals of lifelong learning.

All above mentioned activities and endeavors are aimed to improve students' competencies for sustainable development. We may already witness some good outcomes. In this regard we may take as indicator students' achievements measured by the OECD PISA Survey. In the PISA 2006 which was focused on science competencies, the mean performance of students was better than Slovenian in only 9 out of 57 participating countries, only 7 OECD member states students ranked better than Slovenia. In all question regarding environmental issues the results of Slovenian students were above average. In PISA 2009, focused on reading competencies, the Slovenian results were above average as well.

### **Slovenian ESD School Model**

- The key question or dilemma which experts face in the field of sustainable education is the implementation of themes and goals of ESD within the *national educational policy* of individual countries. This also includes the development of curriculum,

permanent teacher training and education as well as guaranteeing the quality of education. School practice has proven that extensive project work that is being done in the field of sustainable education in Slovenia for instance within the network of the ECO, Healthy UNICEF and UNESCO schools is difficultly being included in the formal school curriculum.

- The most effective method of implementing ESD in the national school scheme includes the cross-curriculum dimensions that enable relevant teaching environments with the help of rational connections between the current school subjects. The National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEIS) has introduced the cross-curriculum concept by emphasizing ESD as a model, called the ESD School.
- The Slovenian ESD School Model, which was prepared in the Innovative Education Centre at NEIS, has three basic elements like every classic house: roof, core or floors, and foundation.
- ESD School roof is formed and stabilized by clearly set national ESD goals and personal goals of children. The core, distributed according to floors, includes school practice as a whole, planned and personal learning experience. The foundations of ESD School include assessment of student knowledge as an integral part of effective learning and teaching. Therefore school authorities should ensure reliable criteria that are also responsible to all education participants, namely for assessing knowledge.
- On the first floor of ESD School, statutory expectations of society in the field of sociology and natural science are realized through current school subjects. The second floor includes cross-curriculum dimensions that enable connections between school subjects, advance the development of personal, learning and mental skills of students, thus forming the complete ethos of an ESD School. The third floor is dedicated to teachers that through a series of teaching approaches and by including all participants in education as well with the possibility of personal choices implement classes. The fourth floor includes learning process components like learning hours, different locations of classes in and outside the school, important events across the world and within a local society, thus enabling the students and authentic and relevant learning environment.
- When the ESD School determines its priority tasks that are in accordance with the state's national goals and personal goals of children, it can begin forming and

implementing the curriculum as a complete and planned ESD learning and teaching experience.

- The ESD School Model can be summarized with the following establishments: *“Only a solid and stable roof of the ESD School enables the planning of sustainable and safe future of our children. If the roof is leaking or if the school has not formed clear ESD goals and personal goals of students, all rooms, where school practice evolves, are damaged. Due to unstable foundations and when a school or state does not have clear knowledge assessment and evaluation criteria, the ESD School can even fall to ruins.”*
- Highest priority must be give to the core room of ESD School, where school practice is happeninng and where the goals and themes of ESD are realized. School subjects with their hundred years of tradition and structure are slowly passing in the fields of knowledge, which are upgraded by cross-curriculum dimensions, among which ESD takes one of the main roles. Cross-curriculum themes can enrich and give meaning to the curriculum experience of young people, thus involving it to their lifestyle and the way of thinking.
- The basic elements of ESD School: roof, core and foundations are acceptable for all national environments. The architecture of ESD School, especially its core, is mostly influenced by the structural ideology of curriculum: target, process or content, curriculum ideologies that are oriented to children, knowledge or society, and mostly the cultural environment, in which ESD School operates. We propose that the participants from individual EU countries at the conference prepare a national ESD School Model by considering its basic elements.
- We have to be aware of the fact that ESD School is formed by school experts and that our students live in this house. Therefore we should build them a school, where they will fell accepted and safe, where they will find what is important to their sustainable future and that they will not continue running from it.

**What are ESD schools  
trying to achieve?**

**How will the ESD schools  
organize learning?**

**How well are ESD school  
achieving their aims?**

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