

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development
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LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME TO ENHANCE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNECE
STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

FIRST DRAFT FOR COMMENTS

This document was drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson at the request of governments that asked for further clarification of the scope and nature of a possible assistance programme. The document was prepared on the basis of the relevant provisions of the UNECE Strategy for ESD, the Vilnius Framework for the implementation of the Strategy and considerations expressed by the Steering Committee and the sub-regional workshops for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.

Introduction

1. The UNECE region encompasses countries with a rich cultural diversity and with different socio-economic and political conditions. The prospects of sustainable development depend to a great extent on changing lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production, respecting at the same time the needs of countries where poverty alleviation is still a major concern.
2. The UNECE Strategy confirms that most countries in the region have established education systems serviced by professional educators, ensured access to basic education and equal rights to education for all, achieved high levels of literacy, developed a scientific knowledge and also in many instances provided for the participation of civil society. However, there are still challenges to be met in order to implement ESD effectively. Education systems should be improved to address the interdisciplinary nature of ESD, the involvement of civil society should be strengthened and adequate institutional and material provisions should be mobilized.
3. Member States agreed that education for sustainable development is a complex and evolving issue and that the implementation process is a challenge for all countries irrespective of their economic development. On the other hand, the UNECE Strategy calls for further assessment of the needs in different subregions and special emphasis on the countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE)¹ in solving their main problems in education for sustainable development. In this regard, two sub-regional workshops held in 2005-

¹ EECCA countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

SEE countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

2006 identified particularities of the EECCA and SEE regions with regard to the implementation of ESD (e.g. success stories, challenges, needs and opportunities) as well as key priority areas and effective mechanisms for cooperation on ESD.

4. At the first meeting of the Steering Committee countries confirmed that they are willing to share their experience and knowledge to assist each other in their efforts to implement the Strategy. Consequently, the Bureau suggested that “learning from each other” should become a key slogan for the implementation process, so that UNECE will become a “learning region”.

I. Objective and Scope

5. The programme is meant to serve as a flexible framework for the countries of the region to cooperate, exchange experiences, provide advisory services and implement pilot projects related to ESD. It is intended to enhance countries’ efforts to apply the Strategy in practice. It might also be helpful for the EECCA and SEE countries when applying for financial support, both from bilateral donors and from financial institutions and programmes, especially with a view to carrying out more complex tasks to implement the Strategy in phases II and III.

6. The programme would have two elements: region-wide and sub-regional with a focus on EECCA and SEE.

7. The region-wide element would include priority areas relevant to all countries in the region. Countries agreed that due to the complex nature of ESD, there are still issues that need further discussion and clarification. The related activities may include (a) capacity building projects on identified² thematic issues through e.g. workshops, trainings, round table debates, and (b) development of new instruments and materials (e.g. methodological guidance for identified target groups). In some instances, (a) and (b) may complement each other.

8. The sub-regional element would focus on SEE and EECCA countries. Many of these countries do not have sufficient human and financial resources to implement the Strategy on their own. While they have the responsibility to implement the Strategy, their efforts to do so effectively need to be supported. The need for financial support was confirmed by representatives of these countries and was recognised by the high-level meeting in Vilnius and by the Steering Committee. The outcomes of the sub-regional workshops show that the obstacles are substantial and that there is a great need for international assistance.

(a) SEE

9. The sub-regional workshop in Athens (November 2005) proposed developing a programme with two interlinked key elements: (a) “creating a critical mass” - training of trainers and (b) developing teaching materials. With regard to the training of trainers, there was general support to introduce “a two-phased” approach. The first phase would be dedicated to the coordination and training of a team of international

² *The issues to be further identified by the Steering Committee*

experts in ESD, consisting of the most advanced experts in the SEE sub-region. The second phase would be conducted on a country-by-county basis. A team of international experts would deliver training to interested countries. The training would last about 2-3 days for different target groups. Teachers would institute a separate target group. Participants agreed that all countries of SEE should be qualified as target countries for this programme.

10. The Athens workshop identified a number of useful experiences that could be taken into account: conducting trainers' and teachers' training in the area of ESD and development and adaptation of teaching materials for secondary schools (MIO-ECSDE³); use of a tool kit "Green Pack" that has already been translated into several languages (REC CEE⁴ in partnership with Toyota Motor Europe); establishing network of institutions of higher education working in the area of ESD in the Mediterranean region, including SEE (UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology for Europe (ROSTE) has preliminarily agreed to support this activity)

11. The following mechanisms for cooperation were identified by the workshop as the most suitable for the implementation of the above activities: the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEEdIES); EU programmes targeted at neighbouring countries; the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for SEE (REReP) and bilateral cooperation. Institutional structures of REC CEE and MIO-ECSDE were also considered as useful mechanisms.

(b) EECCA

12. The sub-regional workshop in Moscow (November, 2006) adopted a resolution, in which participants identified major challenges in the implementation of ESD and proposed a number of priority activities for the sub-region, including annual seminars for national focal points (NFP) and stakeholders; training for NFPs and other decision makers; joint research and exchange programmes; and a digital catalogue on ESD resources and creation of a discussion forum at the UNECE web-site (as a pilot exercise in Russian, with the further possibility of extension to the whole UNECE region)

13. The workshop suggested to make use of existing experiences, as provided by governments, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations (e.g. European ECO-Forum). Participants agreed to further elaborate on this.

14. Institutional structures of education-methodological unions⁵ and non-governmental organisations (e.g. European ECO-Forum) were suggested as mechanisms for cooperation. EU programmes targeted at neighbouring countries and bilateral cooperation were also considered important mechanisms.

(c) European Union and North America

³ Mediterranean information office for environment, culture and sustainable development (MIO-ECSDE)

⁴ Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC CEE)

⁵ State institutional structure that is responsible for the content of education programmes in EECCA countries

15. If they wish so, Member states of the European Union, based on the outcomes of the Conference “Education for Sustainable Development towards Responsible Global Citizenship, Vienna, March, 2006, and North America may wish to identify priority activities and mechanisms for cooperation relevant to these subregions.

II. Actors

16. The programme is expected to be implemented by a wide range of relevant actors. Governments would be the major players. State authorities, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, regional environmental centers and the education community would all take part in the implementation. Each actor would contribute its experience, financial and in-kind means in the most effective way as to ensure synergies. Governments would need to identify what support they could provide using their internal potential and what help they need from outside.

17. The programme will be developed and adopted by the UNECE Steering Committee. Furthermore, the Steering Committee would constitute the principal decision-making body for the activities under the programme and be responsible for giving guidance and strategic directions to its implementation. It will also review the progress of its implementation.

18. The secretariat, guided by the Bureau, will be responsible for the practical organization and management of the activities under the assistance programme.

III. Organisational arrangements

19. The proposed overall duration of the programme is for the period 2007-2014 (by the end of the UN Decade of ESD⁶).

3.1 Preparatory phase (2007-2008)

20. The preparatory phase consists of three steps:

Step 1: The draft assistance programme will be available and open for comments by all members of and observers to the Steering Committee during and after its second meeting. Written comments received by the secretariat will be incorporated into the draft and the revised version of the assistance programme will be subject to discussion and further decision by the Steering Committee in 2008⁷.

Step 2: At the meeting of the Steering Committee in 2008 countries would firmly commit themselves to implementation of the Programme. This commitment will allow interested countries to receive, within the framework of the Steering Committee, external assistance to implement the tasks.

⁶ United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

⁷ Subject to the extension of the mandate at the high-level segment on ESD to be held at the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 2007)

Step 3: Upon request, a team of experts (2-3 experts) will visit interested capitals of countries that are committed to implement the Programme to meet high-level officials in the ministries and agencies as well as stakeholders that will be involved in the implementation. The team's task will be to:

- (i) Review the implementation of the objectives of the Strategy
- (ii) Gain more insight into the particular areas for which capacity-building activities and advisory services are needed; explore the possibilities for launching pilot projects and joint exercises;
- (iii) Report its findings to the Bureau.

21. The Bureau with the support of the secretariat will prepare a report on the results of the preparatory phase of the assistance programme. This report will be presented to the Steering Committee.

3.2 Implementation phase (upon successful completion of the preparatory phase)⁸

22. Assistance to the participating countries may consist of:

- (a) Capacity-building activities in the defined areas (workshops, training sessions and exchange programmes);
- (b) Advisory services in selected areas
- (c) Pilot projects and joint exercises

23. To use the resources needed to organize capacity-building activities and draw up pilot projects within the assistance programme effectively, the participating countries will be grouped according to their preparedness to implement the Strategy and their need for assistance on the identified issues.

24. The assistance will be provided in such a way as to fully use existing mechanisms and international institutional arrangements.

25. The Bureau will inform the Steering Committee of progress at each of its future meetings during the implementation of the programme.

IV. Resources

26. The organization of activities under the assistance programme will be financed using the mechanism of voluntary contributions from donor countries, organisations and financial institutions to the UNECE trust fund, as adopted by the High-level meeting (Vilnius, 2005), as well as through bilateral contributions. Interested member States and organisations are also encouraged to provide in-kind contributions.

27. The preparatory phase may require additional funds to cover experts' fees as well as funds to support travel of experts and the Secretariat to the countries concerned. At

⁸ Those activities that already have been confirmed as a priority may already start to be implemented during the preparatory phase (e.g. based on the outcomes of the sub-regional workshops for SEE and EECCA).

this stage the nature of the assistance programme should be agreed upon. After that a more detailed estimate of resources requirements can be made. This will be developed in consultation with the Bureau or/and country (ies) concerned.

28. A detailed report on contributions to, and expenditures of, the assistance programme will be prepared by the secretariat and presented to the Steering Committee at each of its future meetings during the implementation of the programme.
