

Contribution to the proposed topics, for reporting on the progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development under agenda item 2 (Cyprus)

1. How are the recommendations of the Expert Group on Competences Implemented at a national level and adapted to national contexts?

Recommendations of the expert group on competences have been taken regarding the attempts undertaken, especially this year, for professional development in Cyprus. This is a result of the introduction, in Cyprus educational system, of the Curriculum for Environmental Education/ Education for Sustainable Development, which creates new opportunities and needs for reorienting the teachers' professional development in the framework of ESD. In this direction, a lot of initiatives have been taken so as all the participants, to the school procedures, are competent to effectively implement the national curriculum of ESD in schools. These initiatives are related to a) the reformation of the types and forms of In-service (INSET) courses provided to teachers, principals, inspectors, school counselors for ESD, b) the revision of the context of INSET courses, in light of ESD competences, c) the synergies and networks established amongst various organizations (governmental and NGOs) in a national and international level, for supporting and empowering the continual professional development of all the stakeholders in the school process, d) the educational materials developed for further supporting teachers to work more effectively with ESD.

The recommendations of the expert group of competences have been adapted in Cyprus' context in many ways. Some examples are mentioned below:

Introducing ESD to school with two hours in the school timetable, initially in primary education, and at a latter stage in pre-primary and secondary education, resulted in reconsidering the content, the context and the type and forms of INSET to meet the requirements of the new educational setting established in schools through the educational reform. ESD,

Particularly, a specific module for the planning and application of the school sustainable agenda was introduced, not only to the newly appointed principals in primary education, but to all principals in primary and secondary education to make them able to reorient their school towards sustainability.

Various types and forms of education and training are offered for ESD for teachers. These courses are carried out in the school base where teachers have the opportunity, in their school setting, to work experientially in various educational approaches and techniques of ESD, or have guidance from mentors, that work in the field of ESD, to organize and teach issues for sustainable Development in their schools.

Another type of education and training offered in ESD to the teachers of all educational levels, are intensive courses in the Environmental Education Centers. Through this type of INSET, teachers have the opportunity to work in non-formal settings, put into practice various methodological approaches and understand how non-formal settings can enhance teaching and learning for ESD.

A new obligatory course offered to all teachers in primary education was a course for applying effectively the new curriculum of ESD in their class. More specifically, all the teachers attend a series of courses in philosophy, theory, pedagogy and implementation of ESD in their school. The courses combine theory with practice and are organized through lectures and workshops.

Additionally, optional seminars are offered to all teachers in all educational levels with emphasis on sustainable schools, pedagogical approaches of ESD, interdisciplinarity and how these can be effectively used on ESD.

For school counselors, specific courses are offered in order to be effectively trained on ESD curriculum, so as to be competent to provide guidance for ESD curriculum implementation in schools. Respectively, the inspectors are trained to ESD and specifically on the philosophy of the curriculum of ESD and how this is implemented in practice.

Finally, a whole year course is offered for newly appointed teachers. Through this program, each newly appointed teacher has a support from a mentor (experienced) for a year to work on ESD in his/her class. Mentors and newly appointed teachers are trained, theoretically, on ESD content, educational approaches, sustainable development issues, educational tools and materials for two months, and the rest of the year, newly appointed teachers are working in their school under the supervision and guidance of their mentors.

All the above courses are offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute which is the responsible institution in Cyprus for the professional development of educational stakeholders (teachers, principals, etc).

The context of INSET has been radically changed as a result of the new demands, challenges and needs arising for teachers and principals for ESD especially with the obligatory application of ESD curriculum in schools. According to these, the context of the INSET is reoriented in order to give the opportunities to educators, teachers, and principals to learn how to know, to learn how to do, to learn how to live with others, to learn how to work towards ESD. Great emphasis was given to teachers to understand the national, regional and global character of SD issues as well as to understand that SD deals with the interconnection of environmental, social and economical aspects. Also, emphasis was given for teachers to develop practical skills, to be competent to take initiatives, to use various contexts, to put into practice various techniques, to handle conflicts, to communicate, to interact, to learn, to cooperate with others, to intervene, to assess learning outcomes, to promote intergenerational communication, to encourage

dialogue and to promote active citizenship. These competences are developed, through the various types and forms of education as analyzed above. Each course is giving special emphasis on specific competences and all the courses together pursue to develop teachers' knowledge, system thinking, emotions, ethics, values and actions for ESD.

In addition,, for principals, through the courses offered a focus is given to acquire competences which will enable them to lead a sustainable school, since this is the new direction of schools in Cyprus. For this reason, all the courses are planned so as principals to be competent: a) to understand that sustainable school culture is built upon reflection and dialogue, b) to become committed and passionate in order to inspire their staff to build ideas and visions and drive the values and purposes of ESD into reality, c) to learn to balance the short term and the long term objectives, d) to be able to undertake the change for ESD by abandoning other activities, e) to empower involvement.

These courses to be effective and help teachers and principals to acquire the competences needed to respond to ESD demands, are taught by interdisciplinary teams of experts (pedagogists, educational managers, environmentalists, practitioners, professionals, scientists from the social, economic sciences and arts), in order to give various perspectives of ESD and SD in educators, as well as to holistically approach SD issues in schools . For this reason, various educational tools have been developed to support teachers' education and training, as well as a guide for teacher with learning outcomes for SD issues was included in the school curriculum. Also, a specific educational package titled "How to educate teachers to teach ESD" is in progress. This educational package is consisted of three books. The first book is a proposal with a model of educating educators in ESD. It includes all the structures of the model, how it is developed, what it is pursued, the stages of its development. The second book includes the content of the course (theory, activities, techniques) and the third book includes educational proposals which can be used by teachers in their schools.

2. How is cooperation between governmental departments in the field of ESD promoted?

The cooperation between the governmental departments in the field of ESD is promoted with various ways. Firstly, a coordinating body for ESD in Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has been created, which is in close cooperation with all the relevant governmental departments and services which can contribute to the empowerment and establishment of ESD in Cyprus. Through this coordinating body, there is a diffusion of information, exchange of ideas, cooperation in developing joint INSET courses for ESD, in creating infrastructures in schools and in participating in various projects for ESD with all the stakeholders.

3. Are there any ESD activities carried out or planned to respond to the demands of a green economy, especially as regards technical and vocation education and training?

At the moment, the activities promoted for ESD in technical and vocational education ESD concern various projects related to green economy basically to the domain of renewable resources of energy and sustainable production. Their participation in these programs is an important basis, since it encourages the reflections as well as the reorientation of their interests in novel working fields with important economic, environmental and social profits.

4. Has the economic downturn impacted ESD activities in your country?

The economic downturn had an impact o ESD activities, mainly to the changes planned to be made in the infrastructure of schools, in order to be transferred in sustainability (installation of photovoltaic, water recycling, greening of the school yards, purchase of green products etc). Also, it suspended the establishment of a permanent ESD Unit which would be responsible for the implementation and monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan for ESD. Even though impacts are observed in ESD due to the economic downturn, it is important to note that a lot of other ESD activities are strengthened, and mostly those based on volunteerism and social responsibility. I believe that is due to the fact that the civil society in Cyprus is more sensitive onese issues. I believe that an economic crisis is the foundation for reconsidering their priorities, and ESD is a starting point which leads them to that change. Synergies for ESD activities between the Ministry of Education and Culture and various traits, companies, NGOs have been developed in the frame of Environmental social responsibility. For example two educational kits for ESD which are the main handbooks for students and teachers, were funded by traits and companies. Also, donations were given to schools, for buying recycle bins, composts etc. Also, on a voluntary base, NGOs and Organizations are cooperating with the ministry and provide their expertise in various SD.
