UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

7th meeting, 2012

Report by Germany

The implementation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and, within that framework, of the UNECE Strategy, remains a priority in Germany. The German Commission for UNESCO coordinates the implication at national level, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which leads on the Decade within the Federal Government. A few important developments since the last meeting of the Steering Committee:

- Most recently: In February this year, as an important follow up to the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, hosted by Germany in 2009, the German Commission for UNESCO invited international ESD experts to a workshop in Bonn discussing the future of ESD beyond the end of the Decade. Outcomes will be reported at the 7th meeting of the Steering Committee.

- In the meantime, since the last meeting of the Steering Committee, our regular activities to promote ESD have also continued:
  - The National Plan of Action has been revised and updated in 2011. An English version of the document is available online (www.bne-portal.de/english) and in print (to obtain a copy please contact sekretariat@esd.unesco.de).
  - The National Steering Committee on ESD in Germany appointed an expert group to discuss the options for continuing ESD activities at national level beyond 2014.
  - A Round Table with 130 stakeholders comes together annually to strengthen partnerships and networking to promote the implementation of ESD. Members meet in between the Round Table sessions in nine working groups and
contribute with their expertise by developing teaching concepts and drafting recommendations on how to embed ESD in different educational areas and settings.

- Last September, over 400 organizations participated in our ESD Action Days, which are held annually.

- Since the beginning of the Decade, nearly 1,500 projects have been honoured with the award ‘Official German Project for the UN Decade’. The Official Projects exemplify good practice in ESD. (Descriptions of many projects are also available online in English www.bne-portal.de/english).

- Good practice projects were also successfully identified and supported in the context of a public private partnership between the German Commission for UNESCO and the retail company drogeriemarkt dm. Over 2,800 projects joined the competition ‘Ideas Initiative Future’ and presented their ideas and activities for a sustainable future to the public in 1,200 branches. Over 600,000 customers voted for their favourite projects, which then received funding for their activities. Drogeriemarkt dm provided more than 1.5 million euros for the competition to encourage good practices in Education for Sustainable Development. The cooperation continues this year and will again see more than 2,000 projects in the field of sustainable development supported financially and with capacity building.

- The German National Committee has set annual themes for each year of the Decade. The objective of the annual themes (e.g. water, energy, food) is to focus the activities of the Decade to attract new partners and make ESD issues more publicity friendly. This year we are focusing various activities on the topic of ‘Food’. A collection of recommended teaching material across all sections of education illustrating how ESD can be taught by reference to food related sustainable development issues has been prepared and is now available for teachers and educators online and in print. Various other activities, such as workshops for educators and stakeholders or an education campaign in
cooperation with partners in the media sector for instance, are currently in preparation.

- The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) decided to update the curriculum framework for ESD (from 2007) and to add guidelines and practical examples to implement the curriculum at schools in Germany. The main focus is based on the integration of ESD in mostly all subjects in primary and secondary level including language education, history and arts. Another main field of this updating is to develop guidelines to a whole school approach for ESD, that means to help schools to integrate ESD into everyday practice at their school and to get into a systematic cooperation with the local and social environment of school and try to use the school and it´s maintenance as a role model to integrate sustainable development.

- In March 2012 the Federal Ministry of Education and Research will launch in cooperation with the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) a competition to promote local education networks for sustainability. Recognizing the important role networks play in improving quality standards and stabilization of initiatives, the project partners aim to support local activities to create further synergies and to facilitate transfer of good practice. 30 projects will be nominated by an independent jury and funded with a maximum of € 35.000 each to implement their network proposal.

What remains a challenge – in Germany, and, as we believe, internationally – is to move ESD from project level to a more systematic implementation at national level. To achieve the objectives of the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development an institutionalized embedment of ESD in the structures of all education systems will be required.
Proposed topics of reporting by the Secretariat:

(a) How are the recommendations of the Expert Group on Competences implemented at the national level and adapted to national contexts?

- In the national context of Germany the concept of ‘Gestaltungskompetenz’ (sometimes translated as ‘participation skills’ but somewhat wider in scope) as developed by Professor Gerhard de Haan (Chairman of the German National Committee for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development) ties in with the OECD’s idea of ‘Key Competencies’ as well as the recommendations made by the UNECE Expert Group on Competencies. Within the ESD community in Germany this concept is widely referred to and implemented.

(b) How is cooperation between governmental departments in the field of ESD promoted?

- The German National Committee has set annual themes for each year of the Decade. The objective of the annual themes (e.g. water, energy, food) is to focus the activities of the Decade to attract new partners. In this context we also aim to promote interdepartmental exchange and cooperation on ESD. For instance, in 2008 the annual theme was ‘Water’. In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development a workshop was organised for both educators and stakeholders in teacher training to develop together with experts and scientist in the field of water a catalogue of criteria for the evaluation of teaching material. This year similarly, we are cooperating on the annual theme of ‘Food’ with the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

- Representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear
Safety and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development are members of the National Committee for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and are therefore regularly informed about their respective ESD activities.

(c) Are there any ESD activities carried out or planned to respond to the demands of a green economy, especially as regards technical and vocational education and training?

- The National Institute for TVET (BiBB, member of the National Committee for the UN Decade of ESD) published recommendations on ‘Green Skills’. Substantial progress has been made in its implementation in industrial professions such as the electric and metal sector and the area of sanitation, air conditioning and heating technology. Many examples of good practice projects in professional training institutions across most professions have led to innovative teaching methods being taken up by others and the sporadic implementation of ESD. However, the integration of ESD in vocational training remains underdeveloped. A revision and update of the recommendations towards ESD is in preparation.

(d) Has the economic downturn impacted ESD activities in your country?

- Not to our knowledge.