Key topics: ESD competencies, green economy, holistic and systemic approach, development of curriculum, permanent teacher training, quality of education
(Slovenia)

Education for Sustainability (ESD) and Global Learning address environmental, social and economic issues that are of importance to young people in Slovenia. ESD (VITR – vzgoja in izobraževanje za trajnostni razvoj) is implemented into the curricula of kindergartens, 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.

Slovenia faces with the fundamental decision in addressing ESD strategy. The key question which experts face in the field of education for sustainable development is the implementation of themes and goals of ESD within the national educational policy of the state. This question includes the development of curriculum, permanent teacher training and guarantees the quality of education.

Slovenia follows the document of the UNECE Expert Group on Teacher Competencies which focuses on 3 key area of ESD:

• Holistic approach - Towards integrative thinking and practice
• Envisioning change - Past, present and future
• Achieving transformation - People, pedagogy and education systems.

Slovenian schools also take into account the following ESD competencies proposed by OECD:

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

Slovenian school experts are facing with the current actual issues:

Is ESD in Slovenia well equipped to contribute to greening the economy?

In our country has been a consensus between all educational stakeholders that:

ESD should be used for forming a strong partnership with the economy.

Green economy demands a close cooperation between the business and the education sector especially in terms of integrative and value-oriented thinking and acting.

School Curricula should aim at a shift in student’s thinking and knowledge, but only concentration on knowledge will not fulfilled the requirements needed for green economy in context of ESD.

Knowledge must be added by promoting understanding and teaching practical skills in order to impart ESD competence, and be completed by appropriate values.
These requirements for curricula will still be incomplete in the majority of the national school systems in EU - they are not based on values.

Humanity must harmonize economy with natural systems which requires creativity, knowledge and the participation of every member of society.

The majority of the current EU curricula show that ESD is still perceived as EE and taught by methods of teaching and learning which are not suited to promoting values and holistic approach.

Green economy concepts focus mainly on top-down policies while ESD can contribute to greening the economy from the bottom up because it has the ability to equip people with ESD competencies.

Number of challenges for ESD is identified in way of transition to a green economy, especially, the needs for green skills in context of lifelong learning.

The concepts of green economy and ESD are rooted in the same school of thought and serve the same goal.

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

Teaching and learning green economy through existing school subjects, with links across subjects made where there are common issues or areas of learning. Green economy is implemented from the perspectives characteristic of those subjects, and in a required by the pupil’s developmental phase.

Separately timetabled thematic days, activity weeks and events that focus on a particular content or objective of green economy (for example Campaigning on global development issues, Promoting recycling), often including block timetabling.

Whole-school development plans, policies and ethos with elements of green economy.

Activities integrated into school routines (working with parents).

Educational visits and out of hours learning opportunities and bringing economy experts into the schools.

Projects and school networks (ECO Schools, Healthy Schools, UNESCO ASP net, U4 Energy schools)

any combinations of these.

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

ENSI web (Environment and School Initiatives)

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

SUPPORT/Comenius (Partnership and Participation for a Sustainable Tomorrow) project

CoDeS/Comenius (Collaboration of schools and communities for sustainable development)

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 and green economy 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 ESD and green economy.
Example of good practice in ESD and Green Economy

Slovenian ESD School Model

Slovenian ESD School Model was publicly presented at a meeting of partners in the project SUPPORT (Germany, 2010) and at the conference Becoming a Global Citizen (Finland, 2011). A summary of this lecture is included in the publication GENE (Global Education Network Europe).

The key question or dilemma which experts face in the field of sustainable education is the implementation of themes and goals of ESD and green economy 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 difficulty being included in the formal school curriculum.

The most effective method of implementing ESD and green economy 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 in context of green economy 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 realize 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, its 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 given to the core room of ESD School, where school practice is happening and where the goals and themes of green economy 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 green economy 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 countries at the seventh meeting of UNECE 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 GREEN ECONOMY future and that they will not continue running from it.

What are ESD schools want to achieve through learning and teaching green economy?

How will the ESD schools organize learning and teaching green economy?

How well are ESD school achieving learning objectives of the Green Economy