Swedish report on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Below is a report from Sweden’s National Commission for UNESCO including Sweden’s answers and to the questionnaire from UNECE regarding the implementation of the Strategy for ESD.

This report has been elaborated in several steps. Information and comments were first received from a group at the Ministry of Education and Research and another group consisting of representatives from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, WWF Sweden, The Swedish National Programme for Local and Traditional Knowledge related to Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (Naptek) and Lund University. A first draft of the report was then discussed and further elaborated in the two groups. Finally, the draft report was sent for consultation in a wider context and consulted within the Government, before it was sent in to UNECE.

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

Sweden has a decentralized education administration, where primary responsibility for different forms of education lies with local municipalities, autonomous universities and civil society organizations etc. Therefore, the government agencies are not directly involved in the implementation of the recommendations of the expert group on competences. However, the results of the Expert Group has been disseminated to various ESD actors and networks, to be used as they find suitable. In addition, Sweden has provided financial support to the expert group and contributed with an expert.

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

Within the government offices, primary responsibility for ESD lies with the Ministry for Education and Research. The coordination of reporting and other activities on ESD is carried out closely with the Ministry of Environment and more generally with other relevant ministries in the formulation of Swedish positions on ESD, e.g. in the preparations for the Rio+20 conference.
(c) 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?

WWF is supporting the development and mainstreaming of ESD worldwide where the dimension of green economy is one part. More specifically WWF supports educators to work on issues of green economy by encouraging entrepreneurial learning and working with innovations and small scale businesses which contribute to a sustainable development. Workshops and material for educators and students have been developed on how to plan and start profitable, environmentally friendly and sustainable businesses. Elements include how to start and develop a sustainable business, how to develop a marketing plan, how to finance the business and make an environmental impact assessment.

In Sweden WWF is doing a review of the integration of ESD, or the lack of it, in the governmental effort to support entrepreneurial learning. A report will be launched and a seminar arranged for major stakeholders. For university level education a material has been produced and distributed with inspirational examples on how ESD is addressed in the education of professions such as economist, engineers and designers.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, responsible for all matters concerning higher vocational education (HVE) in Sweden, analyze the demand for qualified workforce in the labor market, decide which programmes are to be provided as higher vocational education and allocate public funding to education providers. In its work the National Agency has seen a tendency towards more programmes connected to greening the economy. These are mainly in the technical (e.g. energy), manufacturing and urban development areas. The signals from companies and other employers concerning a need for competencies for a green economy are however not yet particularly strong though the demand is greater today than five years ago.

The Swedish National Programme for Local and Traditional Knowledge related to Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (Naptek) – is a governmental initiative in response to the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The programme is coordinated by the Swedish Biodiversity Centre at the Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences and Uppsala University. Traditional and local knowledge constitute a valuable resource in ESD and is likely to contribute to a transition to a green economy.
During 2012 the Swedish government has commissioned the Swedish Biodiversity Centre to do an in-depth analyse concerning the role of local and traditional knowledge relating to a green economy. The task is to leave developed proposals to the government (Ministry of the Environment) on how the government can increase and develop entrepreneurship based on traditional knowledge related to biological diversity within the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing and traditional husbandry. The purpose is to promote the maintenance of relevant traditional knowledge and the natural and cultural values connected to traditional management.

In addition, at some of the higher education institutions there are courses aiming at preparing the students for a green economy, eg. "Industrial environmental economics" (7.5 ECTS) for BSc students in Industrial Management and Engineering (industriell ekonomi) at the University of Gävle. At the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) there are courses regarding e.g. green sustainable building (Green Building - Concept, Design, Construction and Operation).

Further, Chalmers University of Technology, which holds one of Sweden’s Chairs in ESD, has, as a reaction to conclusions in a major student thesis, identified the need to include more economic SD aspects and sustainable business aspects in their compulsory ESD courses. In addition, the university has launched work to further strengthen the Knowledge Triangle, using society’s great challenges as a starting point for course development. Chalmers has budgeted 4 million SEK, about 450 000 euros, for this.

**The Young Masters Programme on Sustainable Development (YMP) at Lund University** - is a global online education for high school students, initiated and managed from Sweden. In particular it supports Swedish capacity building efforts in targeted countries and regions but is available free of charge to all schools world-wide.

The overarching objectives of the YMP are to improve understanding of the sustainability challenges we are facing; to provide the tools to turn these challenges into possibilities; and to bring individual empowerment to young people in terms of personal international networks, hands-on proactive methods, capacity building and local projects that can make a difference.

Since November 2011, the YMP is in a phase of rapid expansion. The aim is to draw on the experiences of managing the education in a small and medium scale since 1999 and move forward to create the largest, most comprehensive and exciting distance education on sustainable development in the world. The UNESCO network is an important source for communication with new schools and teachers
on a global scale, and the new website for YMP (www.goymp.org) was launched in participation with UNESCO in Paris, May 2011.

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

The economic downturn has not yet affected the education sector in Sweden to the extent that ESD-related activities have been increased or cut.