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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

From policy to practice: strengthening the coordination between stakeholders and promoting educator competences

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Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. At the sixth meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, the co-Chair of the Expert Group on Competences in Education for Sustainable Development presented the outcome document, "Learning for the future: Competences in Education for Sustainable Development" (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2011/6). Following its mandate, at its meetings in 2010 and 2011 the Expert had defined and drafted steps necessary to support the implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD) competences, so as to provide policymakers with a tool to integrate ESD into relevant policy documents.

2. The Steering Committee acknowledged the vital value of the Expert Group's work and highlighted that it had produced a very helpful and significant outcome. It noted that educators were key in advancing ESD in the region. Furthermore, the importance of

* This document was submitted late because it was expected that it would contain the results of the Expert Group meeting scheduled to take place in February 2012. However, owing to prior commitments of the co-Chairs, the meeting had to be rescheduled, and will now be held from 26 to 28 March 2012. The results of the Expert Meeting are thus not included in the present report.

“localizing” the competences, i.e., adapting them to local contexts and making them more specific, was recognized

3. The Committee decided to encourage countries to use the outcome document of the Expert Group on Competences in ESD and to work on the implementation and adaptation of those recommendations at the national level during 2011. Experiences on the localization process would be collected in early 2012. The secretariat was requested to send e-mails to the countries, enquiring about localization experiences.

4. The Steering Committee moreover decided that the Expert Group would be invited to convene again for one meeting in early 2012, in order to work on the analysis and compilation of the national practices and experiences. The Netherlands offered to provide financial support to cover the costs of the Expert Group meeting.

II. Localization of Expert Competences in 2011 as well as feedback provided

5. The feedback provided by the member States in early 2012 shows that the document “Learning for the future: Competences in Education for Sustainable Development” has been disseminated within as well as beyond the ECE region to a wide range of ESD stakeholders and networks.

6. In some countries, the document is already being used in professional education development, as shown, for example, in the the country report of Cyprus. Some countries are currently working on trainings and projects in the field of professional education development, and intend to use the findings of the Expert Group on Competences (e.g., Georgia and Armenia).

7. Moreover, subregional workshops have been organized in the ECE region, aiming at promoting the competences for ESD. For instance, Slovenia and Croatia, together with the ECE secretariat, organized a workshop on ESD, providing a platform for exchange between different ESD stakeholders in the region on how to strengthen educator competences in the subregion. Croatia, together with Kultur Konakt Austria, organized a Regional Conference on Education for Sustainable Development,¹ which, among others, included a workshop on sustainable development competences for educators.

8. A number of ESD stakeholders pointed out the need for more such workshops to be held in the ECE region, in order to support the localization efforts of Expert Group outcomes. In particular, such workshops would also offer an opportunity for promoting the coordination between relevant stakeholders — including different governmental departments, as well as representatives from teacher education institutions.

9. It has become apparent that there are two main challenges to implementing a series of workshops on educator competences under the UNECE² Strategy for ESD, i.e., the lack of a standard workshop concept and very limited financial resources.

¹ See <http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at/images/stories/Pdf/BIKO/konferenzzagreb11/esd%20conference%20zagreb%20programme.pdf>.

² UNECE is sometimes used as an informal acronym for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to avoid confusion with other regional bodies.

III. Proposal for a workshop series on educator competences

10. In order to tackle those challenges it is proposed to develop a standard workshop concept that could be used throughout the region to promote educator competences and to organize workshops back to back to major, relevant conferences and meetings in order to minimize workshop costs.

A. Standard workshop concept to be developed by the Expert Group on Competences

11. In order for a workshop series on the topic of ESD competences in the ECE region to be most efficiently organized, the development of a basic workshop concept would be of great value. The workshop concept would outline a basic workshop agenda, learning objectives, potential learning experiences and support materials (e.g., presentation templates). This basic workshop concept could then be adapted to the specific subregional or national contexts.

12. At its sixth meeting, the Steering Committee mandated the Expert Group on Competences to meet again in February 2012 in order to work on the analysis and compilation of national practices and experiences with adaptation to the competences and to formulate recommendations for policymakers at the national level. Owing to prior commitments of the co-Chairs of the Expert Group, the Expert Group meeting was rescheduled to take place from 26 to 28 March 2012.

13. Given the developments since the sixth Steering Committee meeting, it is now proposed that, at its upcoming meeting, the Expert Group additionally take on the task of developing a standard workshop concept. The workshop materials from the workshops that have already been held on educator competences could be used as a starting point. Moreover, it is suggested that the Expert Group consult with focal points for ESD whose ministries/institutions have already developed training materials that might be highly relevant, as for example, the Sustainable Development Training for Policymakers developed by the Netherlands and Croatia. For workshop materials, existing projects in the field of ESD that are producing a wide range of relevant materials should be consulted. The secretariat could assist the Expert Group to this end.

14. It is proposed to translate the finalized workshop concept into French and Russian, so as to ensure that it can be widely used. Moreover, it is proposed to make the toolkit available on the ECE ESD website together with the outcome document of the Expert Group on Competences.

B. Organization of Workshops back to back to major relevant events

15. Due to the financial crisis, a number of countries have reported that there are no financial resources available to fully or partially fund a subregional workshop. Increasingly, ESD focal points have reported that they face cuts in travel budgets, which impacts their ability to participate in workshops and meetings.

16. It is therefore suggested to organize such workshops back to back with major relevant conferences and meetings. In that way travel costs would be significantly reduced. The main costs would be to finance one to two workshop facilitators who would adapt the standard workshop concept to the relevant context and who would hold the workshops. ESD focal points are invited to inform the secretariat of major conferences and events in their countries which offer an opportunity for implementing such a workshop.

C. Using electronic tools in order to broadcast and share workshop results

17. Given that many countries and institutions have limited resources available to participate in workshops, it is proposed to explore options to broadcast and/or videotape workshop sessions and to make them available online on the ECE ESD website, as well as on the ECE YouTube channel. Moreover, it is proposed that the secretariat explore opportunities to also share the videotaped sessions through other ESD networks in order to reach a broad audience. Moreover, focal points could commit to making the videos available on relevant national websites.

D. Questions for discussion

18. The Steering Committee is invited to consider the proposal to: (a) have a standard workshop concept developed by the Expert Group on Competences; and (b) organize workshops in 2012 mainly back to back with major Conferences.

19. If the proposal is accepted, the target group (policymakers/educators) would need to be identified, as well as the needs that the workshop concept should address.

20. Finally suggestions for opportunities to hold such workshops could be collected.
