

INFORMAL COUNTRY REPORT

CYPRUS

Report on progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable

Priority axes:

a) Ensure that there is an education for sustainable development (ESD) school plan in every school by 2015

In relation to the particular question - regarding Cyprus - it is stated that the preparation of each school's own plan for ESD is, since 2012, part of the formal educational policy of Cyprus educational system. The preparation of each school's own Sustainable Environmental Educational Policy (SEEP) is the result of the educational reform, which started in Cyprus in 2008 and included the issues of the environment and sustainable development, in Primary Education at this stage, as an intrinsic part of the everyday school life, with the introduction of the National Curriculum for EE/ESD for the first time in Cyprus Educational System.

The writing of the particular National Curriculum and its inclusion in the school program, besides the fact that it is highly innovative and radical, it is also important, since it is an effort to confront the uniformity and marginalization observed in schools in relation to the examination of environmental and sustainable development issues. In essence, the National Curriculum is based on the formation of the ESD plan of each school (is called SEEP), and all the thematic units of the National Curriculum operate as vehicles for holistically and, in an interdisciplinary way, investigating the issue of the ESD school plan. ESD school plans are based on the study and examination of an issue of sustainable development by each school, which is chosen by all participants in the learning process (students, teachers, school management, local communities, etc.), with reference to: a) the needs and interests of students and teachers, ii) environmental problems faced by the school, c) the characteristics, problems and needs of the community in which the school is located, d) environmental issues affecting the short or long-term quality of life locally and globally. This policy is long-term, systematic and collective.

It seeks change and intervention, regarding sustainable development issues at the school and the community, aiming at the improvement of quality of life and education in the school and the community. An important element in terms of the preparation of ESD School plans is that they do not focus only on targets relating only to the student, but pay special attention to the identification of interventions and changes in the school and the community towards sustainable development. The preparation of ESD School plans for each school is mandatory. For designing and implementing ESD school plans in schools, the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, has written the "Guide for implementing EE/ESD in school". The guide describes and analyses all the steps that needed to be undertaken by the schools in order to organize and implement their ESD school plan, as well as to support teachers for using curriculum for EE/ESD in the framework of ESD School plan. Also, in Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture a website has been established (http://www.schools.ac.cy/klimakio/Themata/perivallontiki_ekpaidefsi/index.html), presenting good examples and practices for ESD School plans developed by schools. Additionally, a series of obligatory training courses were conducted in CPI (Cyprus

Pedagogical Institute) to principals and teachers for effectively developing an ESD School plan. It is noted that the design of ESD School plan of each school, is based on a long-term planning basis, aiming at the systematical and long-term formation of the sustainable school. Therefore, at the beginning of each school year, the ESD school plan is designed by each school, implemented throughout the school year and evaluated on the basis of quality criteria.

The self-evaluation of the school in relation to the implementation of ESD school plan, allows each school to decide whether to continue with the same issue for the next school year, or set a new issue on the basis of what was studied last year.

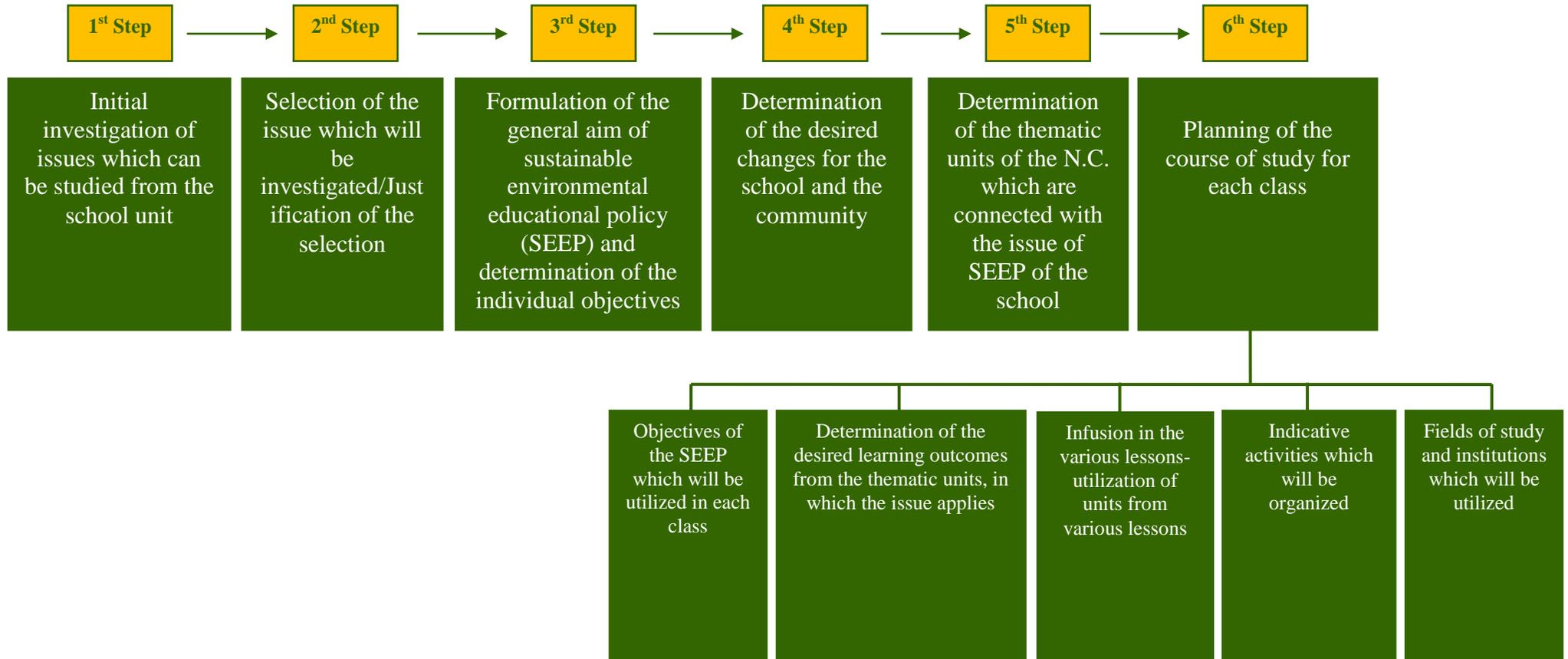
At present, ESD School Plans were officially incorporated in Primary Education, while, currently, they are in a piloting phase in Pre-primary education. At a later stage, they are planned to be introduced in Secondary Education.

It is important to note that the effective implementation of ESD School Plans on the basis of a holistic school approach requires addressing some key challenges concerning:

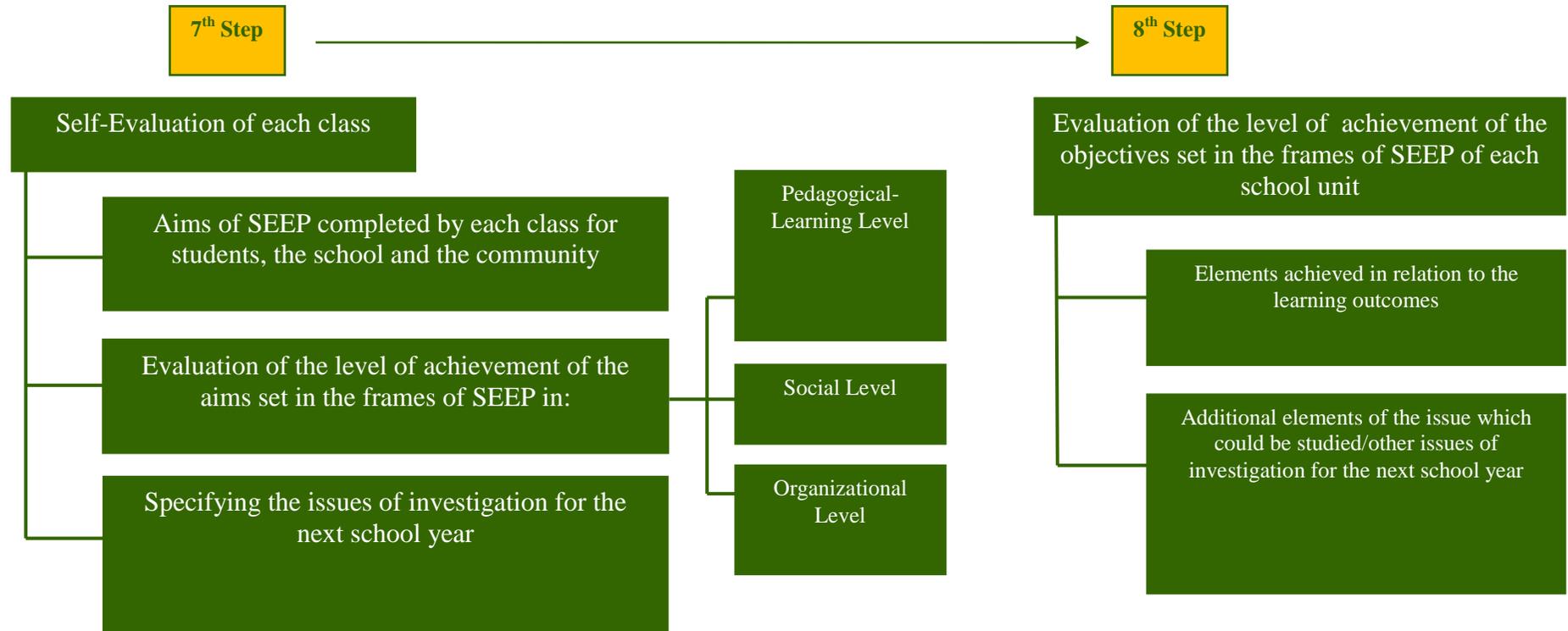
- a) The understanding on the part of principals, teachers and all those involved in the educational process, that, ESD School Plans are not environmental education programs often limited to specific activities which have a specific duration, but are holistic plans involving the whole school unit, seeking change of the culture and ethos of the school towards ESD.
- b) The supporting of schools, financially or through other means, in order to promote interventions and changes which can make the school a learning organization oriented towards sustainability.
- c) The promotion and strengthening of those processes which can help establish meaningful relationships and dynamic communication between the school and the community, agencies and organizations.

The steps which each school in Cyprus follows to develop ESD School Plan (SEEP) are diagrammatically presented below:

Steps for developing an ESD School plan in Cyprus Educational System



Evaluation of ESD School Plan



B) Promote the introduction of ESD into teacher education

In relation to ESD in teacher education, it is indicated that various programs and courses, both obligatory and optional, have been promoted in Cyprus in an educational and training level. The introduction and upgrading of the quality of education and teacher training towards ESD emerged as a necessity, on the one hand, by raising the issues of environment and sustainable development, both through the introduction of the Curriculum of EE/ESD and through the enhancement of environmental education programs and environmental interventions in the school and the community. Education and training on issues of ESD offered by the Pedagogical Institute as the organization responsible for the ESD to meet the training needs of teachers in education.

The programs and courses offered vary in type and content, covering various aspects and elements of ESD and concern various key stakeholders (principals, teachers of all educational levels, inspectors).

Education and Training Programs in ESD for Teachers and Principals

In regard to school principals, it is noted that the field of ESD has been introduced in the compulsory education and training courses of newly appointed principals of Primary and Secondary education. In the context of the specific field, the principals are introduced to the basic principles and aspects of ESD, to the concept of sustainable school and the way of planning and implementation of ESD School plans. However, particular importance is attached to the area of leadership and sustainable schools, since the role of principals is crucial for creating sustainable schools.

Accordingly, the obligatory courses for assistant directors in secondary education include a module for ESD. Assistant directors are introduced to the key principals of ESD, as well as to the concept and content of sustainable schools. In addition, their role in promoting ESD in school is discussed, as well as the innovations, which can be promoted in a school through the newly established curriculum for EE / ESD. During the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 180 Principals from Primary Education, 43 Principals from Secondary Education and 289 assistant principals from Secondary Education participated in the compulsory education and training courses for ESD.

Teacher education programs for ESD

As for the training of teachers in ESD, various series of compulsory and optional seminars and courses are promoted in school-based training, central training, education and training courses through action research, fieldwork training and training in outdoor environments.

More particular, in the level of compulsory education in ESD issues, two series of programs of education and training of teachers in primary education are carried out throughout the year. The mandatory training involves all teachers of schools. Specifically, each school is required to choose a teacher, as the coordinator of the school for EE/ESD, who is trained in the implementation of the curriculum for EE/ ESD, and then acts as the trainer of EE/ESD of his/her colleagues of his/her school unit.

A) Compulsory Education and Training courses of teachers for the implementation of the NC (National Curriculum) of EE/ESD. It is implemented on an annual basis at three time periods. It is developed in three phases: a) the first phase informs teachers about the philosophy, principles, pedagogical framework of the NC, as well as the way of its effective implementation, b) the second phase concerns the explanation of the methodological

framework for the implementation of the NC and the teaching techniques used, as well as the basic steps for planning the ESD School plan [Sustainable Environmental Education Policy (SEEP)] of the school, c) the third phase of the training of teachers involves the implementation of quality standards relating to the assessment of the school unit in relation to the effective promotion of SEEP in their school.

B) Compulsory Education and Training of Teachers for ESD and implementation of the National Curriculum, in school basis, in the form of school networks. This program is annual, also, and it is addressed to teachers of primary education. The schools in each city are divided into networks. Each network consists of 10 schools which have common geographical, cultural and social characteristics. On the frames of this program, teacher education is carried out on a school basis and it is entirely of a practical nature. The program is developed in three phases: a) In the first phase, teachers, one from each school, are planning their school's ESD School plan (SEEP). They discuss and exchange opinions about difficulties which may arise, as well as examples of good practices in the organization, the issues of investigation, the objectives, interventions and changes promoted to each school, b) in the second phase, lessons are taught in the classes on ESD. The lessons are based on the ESD School plan, which each school has. Discussion follows, to give feedback on the lessons taught (content, teaching techniques, student participation, organization of the learning process, etc.), c) in the third phase, the teachers make a self-assessment of the implementation of ESD School plan (SEEP) under the guidance of the advisors of ESD.

During the years 2011-2013 720 teachers from Primary Education participated in the compulsory education and training courses for ESD.

Optional programs of education and teacher training in ESD

Apart from the mandatory educational and training programs offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, optional teacher education and training courses for ESD are offered, which last 15-20 hours each and are in the following aspects:

- The sustainable school
- The teaching strategies of ESD
- The use of external environments as key tools and means for ESD
- Training in the use of new technologies in ESD
- Training in the use and application of educational materials produced by groups of teachers, to support the areas of the curriculum.

The above training courses for ESD, concern educators at all levels of education (Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education). These courses can be attended independently or, a teacher can follow all the series of programs, on an annual basis to a training course of 80-100 hours.

These seminars are empirical, interactive and experiential. They are organized in various areas such as Environmental Education Centers, museums, local trades, botanic gardens etc. All education and training programs offered are posted on the website of the Pedagogical Institute (<http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?lang=el>).

Overall, 200 teachers from all educational levels participated in the optional training programs for education for Sustainable Development, for the years 2011-2013.

C) Reorienting Technical and Vocational Education and Training in support of Sustainable Development and the transition to a Green Economy

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and especially the department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) are now undergoing a major modernization and reorientation. In particular, the following innovations have been introduced the last few years:

- The Educational Reform and the New National Curricula
- The introduction of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the development of a Competence-Based Curriculum and System of Vocational Qualifications
- The establishment of Post Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training.

All these innovations take into consideration and support sustainable development and the transition to a green economy.

One of the main objectives of the New National Curricula by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education is the acquisition of key competences, through the combination of theoretical teaching with practical training. The students are given the opportunity to develop basic competences in science and technology, through the implementation of fundamental principles and procedures in everyday life, including pollution management and the utilization of cleaner technologies and products.

Moreover, through technological subjects, students are acquainted with technology, products and resources and they are given the opportunity to develop their green skills. The aim is to develop students who can manage the natural assets sustainably and support environmental goods and services.

The development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the Competence-based Curricula and the System of Vocational Qualifications will ensure that qualifications and standards are valued. The programmes curricula and the occupation standards take always into consideration the transition to a green economy. All these programmes offered by the STVE cover important horizontal as well as job specific skills, including green skills.

Within the context of the Education Reform, the Ministry of Education and Culture has established the Post Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training, which will offer new and further technical specialisation. These institutes operate in Cyprus since 2012 and offer a number of new specializations. In particular, two new specializations have been introduced in sustainable energy generation and distribution: The technicians for solar panels and wind turbines and the natural gas service technicians. Both, specializations give to their students the opportunity to acquire, improve, or upgrade their qualifications and skills in these new fields of sustainable development.
