

**"GOOD PRACTICE" IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE UNECE REGION**

"Good practices in ESD" are initiatives closely related to Education for Sustainable Development, that demonstrate good practice, generate ideas and contribute to policy development. These good practices:

1. focus on the educational and learning dimensions of sustainable development.
2. are innovative. They develop new and creative solutions to common problems, such as:
 - ❖ ways to discover what the key local issues of sustainable development are
 - ❖ ways to adapt processes to relevant teaching and learning strategies
 - ❖ ways of fostering links between learning situations and the community
 - ❖ ways of integrating local knowledge and culture
 - ❖ curriculum development processes enabling content to be decided as locally relevant
 - ❖ starting points on how Education for Sustainable Development can best be put into effect.
3. make a difference. They demonstrate a positive and tangible impact on the living conditions, quality of life of the individuals, groups or communities concerned. They seek to bridge gaps between different societal actors/sectors and are inclusive, in order to allow new partners to join the implementing agents/bodies.
4. have a sustainable effect. They contribute to sustained improvement of living conditions. They must integrate economic, social, cultural and environmental components of sustainable development and reflect their interaction/interdependency in their design and implementation.
5. have the potential for replication. They provide effective methodologies for transdisciplinary and multi-sectoral co-operation. They serve as models for generating policies and initiatives elsewhere.
6. offer some elements of evaluation. They have been and can be evaluated in terms of the criteria of innovation, success and sustainability by both experts and the people concerned.

If you submit more than one "good practice", please indicate the priority 1, 2 or 3.

1. NAME OF THE INITIATIVE CONSIDERED AS A GOOD PRACTICE¹:

Sustainable Universities

2. RESPONSIBLE COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION:

Name FORUM Umweltbildung

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3. CONTACT PERSON (name and title): Dr. Christian Rammel

4. FOCUS OF THE INITIATIVE (check one or more box(es)):

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education/Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace, Human Rights & Security |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educators | <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy, Regulation, Governance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overcoming Poverty | <input type="checkbox"/> Climate Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Intercultural Understanding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Diversity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Reduction | <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools and materials (e.g. Media & ICTs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Urbanization | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Consumption | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research / Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Tourism | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional / international cooperation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) |

¹ Your response to this questionnaire should not exceed 2 pages. Font: Arial , size - 9; margins - 2 centimeters.

5. INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION *(provide brief description)*

- Type (governmental, non-governmental, municipal, other):

The project is a joint initiative by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture.

- Working language(s): German
- Setting / Target group(s) / Number of persons involved: All public universities and higher education institutions in Austria
- Starting year and Duration: Starting 1999 - ongoing
- Budget and Funding Sources: Approximately 15 000€ per year
- Partner organisations involved *(if any)*:
- Stakeholders involved (e.g. local community). *Describe their involvement in this initiative and the kind of relationship you have with them.*

6. MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE *(provide brief description)*

The main objective is to strengthen and to integrate the issues of sustainable development in the daily life of higher education institutions in Austria. After a starting phase of networking and communication with the relevant stakeholders, the project aims at 1) raising the motivation for sustainable higher education, and 2) supporting the pioneers in this field by the development of a nationwide "sustainability award" for higher education institutions in the public sector.

7. METHODOLOGY *(provide brief description)*

Methods/approach for this initiative *(list key background materials that were used; If necessary, use a separate sheet)*

The general approach is to start a bench marking and nationwide learning process among public higher education institutions. This shall be done due to a "sustainability award contest" which will be held every second year. Herein, the main focus is on continuous processes of "sustainable higher education" and not on temporary projects, single persons or singular events. Additionally, participation, open learning and renewal should be at the very heart of such processes. As the award is divided into 8 different action fields (such as curricula, operations or students initiatives), universities can submit their contribution to this contest according to their individual strengths to win the award in one particular action field related to their own opportunities. Subsequently, universities shall use this experience to improve their performance in the other fields and to aim for more awards of other action fields in the long run.

8. RESULTS AND EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVE *(provide brief description and assessment)*

- Results: Assembly of a expert commission for evaluating the particular contest contributions according to a list of different sustainability criteria for higher education institutions.
- Strengths:
 - 1) Benefiting from a national network of university stakeholders which was established by the project over the last five years.
 - 2) The focus on processes.
 - 3) The possibility of starting with sustainability in "easy" areas (according to the individual strengths of the institution).
 - 4) Bridging a wide spectrum of different stakeholder-experts in the award commission.
- Weaknesses and risks:
 - 1) No monetary donation with the award,
 - 2) Complexity of universities,
 - 3) Heterogeneity among higher education institutions
- Problems encountered: *(fill in if applicable)*
- Conditions for successful replication *(fill in if applicable)*
- Unresolved issues *(fill in if applicable)*
- Why do you consider this a good practice?: As Austrian university initiatives are strongly characterized by isolated efforts and ESD projects mainly driven by individual pioneers, a nationwide award has the potential to foster a higher degree of institutionalization of ESD processes in higher education institutions. Additionally, the early phase of conceptualization among the relevant ministries and the FORUM Umweltbildung reflected an open ESD learning process itself, and underlined the first time the high importance of universities for ESD. Subsequently, during the momentary phase of establishing the sustainability criteria for the award, the learning process is underpinned by the necessity of balancing governance and guiding by federal institutions with the freedom and potential of universities to act according to their own particular context and opportunities.