

**“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:

Schwerpunktprogramm „Ökologisierung von Schulen – Bildung für Nachhaltigkeit ÖKOLOG“
Programme „Ecologisation of schools – Education for Sustainable Development“

2. RESPONSIBLE COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION:

Name: Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Subdept. V/11c, Environmental Education

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3. CONTACT PERSON (name and title): Dr. Günther Franz Pfaffenwimmer

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education/Learning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace, Human Rights & Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy, Regulation, Governance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overcoming Poverty | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tools and materials (e.g. Media & ICTs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Urbanization | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Consumption | <input type="checkbox"/> Research / Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional / international cooperation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economy | <input checked="" 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): governmental:**

The Programme is launched and supported by Ministry of Education, the school network is supported by an NGO in contract with the ministry and by the regional education administration as well as by regional government (environment) departments

▪ **Working language(s):** German

▪ **Setting / Target group(s) / Number of persons involved:**

Target groups are schools, the whole school community (teachers, students, head teachers, non-teaching personnel)
In the Eco-school network 180 schools with about 54.000 students are involved.

▪ **Starting year and Duration:**

Programme start: 1996 with pilot phase
School network start: 2001

▪ **Budget and Funding Sources:**

Central support is provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and by the Forum Umweltbildung (www.umweltbildung.at). This comprises the central co-ordination of the regional support teams including two meetings per year for exchange purposes, the maintenance of the web site www.oekolog.at, the publication of a monthly electronic newsletter and of a quarterly ÖKOLOG-newspaper, the provision of a hand book on didactics and teaching methods, a file full of information and checklists, the organisation of events, a scheme for extra-curricular certification of student achievements, an annual summer academy and the financing of regional in-service training workshops (two per year and province). All together the costs amount to Euro 93.000.-- per year.

For reporting a standard framework is provided and additionally some writing workshops are offered to assist teachers in writing well readable and informative reports.

On a regional level support is provided by the ÖKOLOG regional teams. Their major task is to organise further education and training and - closely connected to that - to promote the exchange of experiences between schools in order to derive maximum benefit from the pool of competence which is accumulating at the schools. They are constituted by nominees from the regional school boards, the regional teacher in-service training institutes, and a member of the ENSI-teacher team. In some provinces, the ÖKOLOG regional teams managed to establish co-operation with the Environment Departments of the provincial governments and with NGOs and were able to get some financial support as for the ECOLOG network schools.

Since the end of 2003, the Environment and Health Education Fund (see above) has been offering a three times higher financial allowance for project funding to Eco-Schools.

▪ **Partner organisations involved (if any):**

Provincial school administration, Provincial governments (environment department), Regional NGO's, teacher in-service training institutions,

▪ **Stakeholders involved (e.g. local community).** *Describe their involvement in this initiative and the kind of relationship you have with them.*

E.g. Provincial governments (environment department) have an interest in the awareness raising capacity of schools. In five of nine Austrian provinces representatives of the resp. departments are members of the regional programme steering groups and by this also delegates to the federal steering group.

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

ÖKOLOG (see www.oekolog.at) is the first and main Austrian programme for schools at the interface of Environmental Education and School development. It is based on the ENSI approach (see www.ensi.org) to EE and ESD taking into account the challenges and opportunities of school autonomy and school programme development.

Schools define ecological, technical and social conditions of their environment and, on the basis of these results, define objectives, targets and/or concrete activities and quality criteria, to be implemented and evaluated.

Students as well as all the other actors at school should be involved in a participatory way and collaboration with authorities, business and other interested parties is encouraged.

For details see also the annex.

7. METHODOLOGY *(provide brief description)*

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

Schools have to apply to become a member of the Ecologisation (ÖKOLOG) school network. The application has to be signed by the school team co-ordinator and by the head of the school, based on an internal decision. Network schools agree to hand in a yearly report on at least one activity. The report should be based on a standardised framework and should document both process and results. The following 10 steps of development are recommended to interested schools:

1. Step: Reach an agreement among all partners in school
2. Step: Establish a school team and select a co-ordinator
3. Step: Analyse the state of the art
4. Step: Define priorities

5. Step: Formulate goals and objectives
6. Step: Develop an action plan and define projects
7. Step: Implement the plan and document the steps of development
8. Step: Control achievements and reflect processes
9. Step: Celebrate successes and strengthen the team spirit
10. Step: Organise the transfer of results and experiences into every day routines.

These ten steps are at the core of innovation: school consensus is required, building and maintaining a school team should be a step towards a "middle management structure" in schools in order to sustain developments, and the further steps should facilitate the development of a school programme. Schools are encouraged to become active in "hard topics", like energy consumption, as well as in "soft topics" like school climate.

The yearly reports of the ÖKOLOG-network-schools show a whole range of activities, from single EE projects to whole school initiatives including school programme formulation and striving for the "Umweltzeichen" (National Environmental Award).

Special activities at the schools

Schools define the actual ecological, technical and social conditions of their environment (first analysis) and, on the basis of these results, define objectives, targets and/or concrete designs of measures for changes, to be implemented afterwards. These measures concern, among others, areas like:

- Saving of resources (energy, water, etc.)
- Reduction of the emissions (waste, traffic, etc.)
- Spatial arrangement (from the classroom to the campus)
- Learning culture (communication culture, organisational structure,...) and health promotion
- (Change) effect outward - influence on the municipality

Raising, planning and implementation of measures should occur to the extent that as many pupils and pupils in partnership-cooperation with authorities, business and other interested parties as possible be included. In this way, schools should give good examples to the population and the local administration.

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

Evaluations, inquiries and studies related to the Austrian Ecologisation Programme:

Prof. Thonhauser and his team developed an extensive set of criteria for the evaluation of the Eco-school pilot phase. Their data base were two interim reports and the final report of the schools, visits to all schools and interviews with teachers, heads of schools, school co-ordinators, students and non teaching personnel.

M. Ehgartner was a member of Prof. Thonhauser's evaluation team and in her master thesis she primarily used the interim reports of the pilot schools.

Payer and his colleagues sent questionnaires to all 6100 Austrian schools. 2300 questionnaires were returned and could be analyzed.

P. Schober-Schlatter made an inquiry via questionnaire in 370 Upper Austrian secondary schools (138 returns) and produced case studies of five schools, in which she was involved as a consultant for quality management processes during three years.

F. Rauch and I. Schrittmesser made a series of in depth interviews with different partners of the Ecologisation network.

▪ **Results**

180 schools with about 55.00 students are in the network, many others are reached by web site, teacher inservice-training seminars and news letters. For details see the annex.

▪ **Strengths**

Schools involved are highly committed, some of them for more than five years. 20 % of the ECO-schools reached the "National Environmental Performance Award for Schools and Educational Institutions" ("Umweltzeichen für Schulen und Bildungseinrichtungen" (see www.umweltzeichen.at/schulen)

▪ **Weaknesses and risks**

The network is a high quality network. How to gain many new schools without losing quality?

Reported weaknesses at school level were: Lack of Time, lack of funding for local support and advice for schools, lack of know-how regarding project, network management and team-building; obligation for schools to sign a kind of contract, if they wanted to become a member of the Ecologisation Network:

▪ **Problems encountered:(fill in if applicable)**

Policy changes with respect to school programme development

▪ **Conditions for successful replication (fill in if applicable)**

▪ **Unresolved issues (fill in if applicable)**

How to keep up continuity as well for funding?

How to develop local advisory support?

How to optimise networking (communication, support, innovation, keep up the involvement)?

How to find structural links and cooperation to quality assessment and educational standards development?

▪ **Why do you consider this a good practice?**

ÖKOLOG is part of the international movement of ECO-schools and/or ESD-schools with whole school development as basis to implement and develop ESD.

Please attach one relevant picture, as a separate file (max 1024 x 768 px /72 dpi/ jpg-format 80% quality/ up to 300KB)

Please submit your "Good practice" (up to 3 "Good practices" per country/organisation) electronically by e-mail to: esd@unece.org. In addition, you are invited to send us any relevant information you might think useful, including references to documents, publications and/or articles describing the initiative, as well as relevant links to websites.

For further information, please send request to the same e-mail address or contact: Environment, Human Settlements and Land Management Division, Economic Commission for Europe Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. fax: 00 41 22 9170107 - web : <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/welcome.htm>

Annex:

For more detailed information please see the excerpt of the publication:

ECO-schools: trends and divergences: A comparative study on ECO-school development processes in 13 countries.

Michela Mayer and Finn Mogensen, Vienna, 2005. ISBN 3-85031-062-0

For download see: www.seed-eu.net / products / publications

"2. The ECO-School development process

In this chapter, the Programme "Ecologisation of Schools – Education for Sustainable Development / ÖKOLOG is described in more detail.

2.1 History and programmatic background of ÖKOLOG

The roots of the project can be traced back to the year 1986, when Austria launched the project Environment and School Initiatives (ENSI) supported by the OECD and focused on ecological education. Since then, the OECD-ENSI team, consisting of eleven teachers from all school types, a co-ordinator in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and a scientific advisor (Peter Posch), have been working in Austria.

In 1995, two initiatives based on this first project were launched in Austria, the 'Ecologisation of Schools' programme and the project 'Environmental Education in Teacher Education' (ENITE), aiming at innovations in teacher education through environmental education initiatives (cf. Posch/Rauch/Kreis 2000).

Chronology and timetable of the programme "Ecologisation of Schools" (ECOLOG) in Austria

since 1986	Research and development activities by the Austrian ENSI team. The team has been composed of ten to twelve teachers, a national co-ordinator and a scientific advisor.
1995	Decision of ENSI to have ECO schools as one of the programmatic topics. Decision of the Austrian Minister of Education to develop a programme for an ecologically sustainable school development. Conceptual development and methodological documentation for the "Ecologisation of Schools" programme.
1996	Selection of 22 pilot schools; introductory seminar
1996	Ecologisation initiatives launched by pilot schools, supervised by the ENSI team with external evaluation
since 10/1997	Recruitment of regional co-ordinators to develop a regional infrastructure; introductory seminar
1/1998	National competition to involve other schools (about 150 schools participated). The schools launched

	Ecologisation initiatives as preparation for the competition, guided by the regional co-ordinators and supported by the ENSI team and the pilot schools; regional training seminars
10/1998	International ENSI conference in Linz
3/1999	Presentation of the results of the competition
6/1999	1Start of the third phase of ÖKOLOG
11/1999 .	Regional support teams form the "Federal Conference of Regional Support Teams"
6/2000	Development of and decision on the ECO School network by the "Federal Conference of Regional Support Teams" and the Ministry of Education; invitation to schools to participate in the network
10/2001	Website, handbook for ECO-Schools, first national conference of the network.
2002	Annual focus topics are decided by the "Federal Conference of Regional Support Teams", Programmatic focusing of the network on ESD.
2002/2004	Focus topic "Learnsapes" based on the results of the ENSI Learnsapes project
2003 - 2005	Focus topic "School Food and Sustainability"
2005	Focus topic "Climatic change and participation"

2.2 What do we mean by the "Ecologisation of Schools"? (after Posch 1998, 1999)

Condensed to one sentence, ecologisation means shaping our interaction with the environment in an intellectual, material, spatial, social and emotional sense to achieve a lasting/sustainable quality of life for all. This concise definition clearly shows: Ecologisation is not a one-time affair, but an on-going task. What is more: it concerns not only schools, but all institutions within the social fabric. The term environment embraces the natural and technical environment as much as the social and intellectual environment.

What are schools doing if they strive for ecologisation? They launch initiatives at three levels, at the pedagogical, at the social/organisational, and at the technical/economic level. Ecological schools are schools which become active at all three levels. They relate pedagogical, social/organisational and technical/ economic initiatives to each other in a constructive way and make the pursuance of these efforts an inherent feature of their educational philosophy. Ecologisation, in this sense, involves awareness and behaviour, social structures and observable as well as quantifiable effects on the quality of the environment. In another sense it is an extended view of education."

In their Initiatives at the **pedagogical level** schools aim at creating stimulating and meaningful learning experiences and at involving pupils in ecological ways of thinking, acting, and feeling at school, in their families and communities. The focus here lies on a dynamic concept of learning according to which pupils do not only acquire knowledge and experiences for the future, but shape their living and working conditions constructively in the present (Elliott 1994).

At the **social/organisational level** schools aim at building and cultivating a culture of communication and decision-making and at developing a social climate which is characterised by mutual recognition and respect.

At the **technical/economic level** schools aim at the ecologically sound and economic use of resources. This includes measures to save resources, to reduce waste, to design indoor and outdoor space in an aesthetic and ecologically viable way and to promote healthy living conditions.

2.3. How do schools become an ECO /ÖKOLOG / School

Schools have to apply to become a member of the Ecologisation (ÖKOLOG) school network. The application has to be signed by the school team co-ordinator and by the head of the school, based on an internal decision. Network schools agree to hand in a yearly report on at least one activity. The report should be based on a standardised framework and should document both process and results. The following 10 steps of development are recommended to interested schools:

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- ❖ 2. Step: Establish a school team and select a co-ordinator
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- ❖ 5. Step: Formulate goals and objectives
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- ❖ 7. Step: Implement the plan and document the steps of development
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The yearly reports of the ÖKOLOG-network-schools show a whole range of activities, from single EE projects to whole school initiatives including school programme formulation and striving for the "Umweltzeichen" (National Environmental Award). Payer et al. (2000) report that....."*Ecologisation schools showed a higher environmental engagement with more environmental measures to reduce emissions, with more concrete future plans in this field and with a significantly higher collaboration with enterprises....*"qqx

2.4 What is innovative in the "Ecologisation of Schools" project? (after Posch 1998, 1999):

Its novelty consists, first and foremost, of three long-term, educational-policy developments.

- a) At the level of the individual schools, it is the step ***from temporary individual initiatives to ecologically sustainable structures and to a combination of pedagogical, social and technical/economic initiatives.*** In this respect, ecologisation can be regarded as an important contribution to school development.

Many innovations at school are individual or group initiatives launched by committed teachers, school heads, and pupils, and tied to their motivation and involvement. Most innovations come to an end when commitment falters or when external support is withdrawn. Few innovations actually have a transformative impact on the culture of the institution as a whole.

- b) At the level of the educational system, it is the ***step from pilot schools to an inherent feature of the system of education.***

This means developing a strategy to spread ecological development processes as widely as possible. Many reform initiatives are burdened by the fact that they are limited to a few, rather privileged schools, particularly because the required investment in terms of counselling and resources cannot be afforded on a general scale. Therefore, a strategy is needed which stimulates and supports a dynamic development within schools, involving teachers, students, administrators, support staff such as secretaries and caretakers, and parents.

There is probably no topic better suited for developing and testing such a strategy than the ecologisation of schools. The development of a sound strategy for the dissemination of initiatives aiming at ecologisation is a pioneering feat whose impact would reach far beyond the specific concern of the ecologisation of schools.

- c) At the level of competences, it is the step ***from the competences of a minority of teachers and headmasters to an intrinsic professional feature of the teaching profession and of school management.***

A survey of environmental education policies in Austria has shown that innovative practice is only rarely generated in teacher training institutions, but almost exclusively in schools. Teacher training has been identified as a weak point in the

educational system (House/Eide/Kelley-Laine 1994). The second issue within the ecologisation programme will therefore be teacher training. In Austria, e.g., three teacher training institutes and three university departments will be developing and testing viable curricula to prepare students for a teaching practice guided by the educational philosophy of the ecologisation program. These curricula will include, inter alia, the involvement of trainee teachers in ecologisation initiatives as part of their training, and the close co-operation with schools which have taken on a leading role in this field.”

2.5 Highlights from the Evaluation of the programme Ecologisation of Schools ÖKOLOG

2.5.1 Evaluations, inquiries and studies related to the Austrian Ecologisation Programme

Throughout the seven years of the Ecologisation Programme, a series of evaluations, inquiries and studies have been written:

- evaluation of the pilot-phase by Prof. Thonhauser and his team (1998),
- a master theses on pilot schools by Michaela Ehgartner (1999),
- a questionnaire assessment study on the ecological effects and economical impulses of the Ecologisation Programme by Payer et. al (2000),
- a doctoral thesis based on a regional survey in Upper Austria by Petra Schober-Schlatter (2002),
- and a study "Networks as Support Structure for Quality Development in Education" by Franz Rauch and Ilse Schritteser (2003).

Prof. Thonhauser and his team developed an extensive set of criteria for the evaluation of the Eco-school pilot phase. Their data base were two interim reports and the final report of the schools, visits to all schools and interviews with teachers, heads of schools, school co-ordinators, students and non teaching personnel.

M. Ehgartners was a member of Prof. Thonhausers evaluation team and in her master thesis she primarily used the interim reports of the pilot schools.

Payer and his colleagues sent questionnaires to all 6100 Austrian schools. 2300 questionnaires were returned and could be analyzed.

P. Schober-Schlatter made an inquiry via questionnaire in 370 Upper Austrian secondary schools (138 returns) and produced case studies of five schools, in which she was involved as a consultant for quality management processes during three years.

F. Rauch and I. Schritteser made a series of in depth interviews with different partners of the Ecologisation network.

2.5.2 How did the different actors at schools participate?

The main actors of the programme were teachers. Heads of schools played an important role in the decision making process to join the programme. But in some cases they were unable to convince their teachers to implement the programme. All reports from schools and evaluations show that schools have been collaborating with external partners like mayors, city councils, companies, doctors, landscape architects, artists, etc.

Concerning the involvement of students Thonhauser reports that in the pilot phase *"two thirds of the co-ordinators gave no information about participation of students, although the importance was repeatedly confirmed. So we assume that the co-ordinators hesitated to report unfavourable facts. Evidence in schools and interviews indicate this: several times students learned from us (the evaluators) that their project was part of a larger national resp. international project. We could not make out what the reason was that teachers did not explain the larger context to their students. We experienced though that this information could have raised the engagement of the students."*

Schober-Schlatter states that *"the initiative of students in upper secondary schools is higher than in lower secondary schools. Students are interested in concrete realisation and continuation of activities, mainly in the field of ecological school management."*

School wardens and parents are reported to have played a minor role only.

2.5.3 How did schools report on their initiatives?

Eco-Schools still have difficulties with reporting. *"When talking with teachers, they repeatedly confirm that they start, conduct and finish a project with enthusiasm and idealism, but that they find it hard to reflect on their work and to write an according report. Quite a few teachers saw reporting as additional work which has to be done in this ECO-school project, but has little importance beyond it."* (Thonhauser)

Teachers still have difficulties to formulate the aims of their activities. There are also few reports in which learning processes, interdisciplinary teaching, democratic participation of students are reflected.

Thonhauser resumed that *"this topic was not seen as important or that teachers hesitated to report negative results. Reflection on the school's setting for project work is hardly systematic and sufficient. The few reports mainly contained complaints about unfavourable situations."*

Public presentation of projects was a concern of the pilot schools. Most of them found ways for publishing internally as well as externally. Generally, the media seemed to be interested in the reports about ecologisation processes in schools. What we could not find out was if and how often public relation was only the work of one or a few teachers, or if and to which amount it was an integrated part of the project with students involved. However, both variants showed impressive results."

2.5.4 What are the difficulties concerning school development?

Schools still have difficulties to use the tool of the school programme as an instrument for planning and further development. Many initiatives start with a high involvement of teachers but end without tangible effects. This could also be observed in the ECOLOG Programme. As a result sinking involvement of teachers could be observed in a series of schools. It is assumed that this is also due to unclear organisational structures of the project: duties and rights of the co-ordinators or of teachers active in projects resulting from negotiations were rarely clearly defined.

Schlatter-Schober concluded that it was not "possible to achieve an ecologically oriented whole school change partly because of the lack of acceptance by non-involved teachers and/or non teaching personal, and partly because it collided with other interests of the schools. As a result, ecologisation was in most cases limited to initiatives of single teachers." In her case studies she found evidence that although common goals proved to be a central precondition for successful change in schools, they also caused conflicts and needs for external support/ facilitation because

- members of the school community do not have a common understanding of environment
- the consequences of an ecologically oriented change are not perceptible for the individual person
- ones own interests have to be "set back",
- the relevance of environmental initiatives beyond planning and designing autonomous classroom teaching is not seen, as in many schools staff members do not believe in their feasibility,
- the attention of members of the school community is focused on the operational level (teaching), discussions are dominated by operational problems,
- the involvement of all members of the school community is made difficult by "cultural barriers" e.g. by the fact that non-teaching personal are not seen as members of the school.

Both the inquiry and the case studies show that the schools' do not fully use their autonomous possibilities for decision-making. Management processes and management instruments are new to the schools as well as the necessary documentation. In all

five case studies communication proved to be a central element of ecologically oriented steering. Talking about the environment in classes, in schools' everyday life, in staff conferences, in meetings of non-teaching personal, in school newsletters, environmental reports, etc. does not only express the importance of the topic for the school. Communication about the environment is also the central element for a common understanding, and the precondition for learning of all members of the school community. All case studies showed

- a lack of communication. Improving communication appears to be a basic prerequisite for change.
- the influential role of heads of schools. Neither his or her personal initiative in favour of a specific project nor the involvement in an environment project team are central, but rather his or her "official" support of the project, e.g. by putting it on the agenda of teachers conferences, and by symbolic communication of support in public. Additionally, some schools showed the possibilities for heads of schools to provide incentives, to co-ordinate and negotiate financial support with the body responsible for maintaining and financing school (for compulsory schools it is the community)".

2.5.5 How are ECO-schools supported and what are the incentives?

Central support is provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and by the Forum Umweltbildung. This comprises the central co-ordination of the regional support teams including two meetings per year for exchange purposes, the maintenance of the web site www.oekolog.at, the publication of a monthly electronical newsletter and of a quarterly ÖKOLOG-newspaper, the provision of a hand book on didactics and teaching methods, a file full of information and checklists, the organisation of events, a scheme for extra-curricular certification of student achievements and the financing of regional in-service training workshops (two per year and province). All together the costs amount to Euro 93.000.- per year.

For reporting a standard framework is provided and additionally some writing workshops are offered to assist teachers in writing well readable and informative reports.

Rauch/Schrittesser (2003) have found in their study that *"the OECD-ENSI teacher team, together with the network co-ordinator in the Ministry can be seen as the 'historical' activity centres of the network... The (Austrian) OECD-ENSI team is still at the core of this network and plays a significant role in what we call the motivational culture of the network. It is referred to as an important resource in all interviews – in terms of emotional support, innovative ideas and personal competence."*

On a regional level support is provided by the ÖKOLOG regional teams. Their major task is to organise further education and training and - closely connected to that - to promote the exchange of experiences between schools in order to derive maximum benefit from the pool of competence which is accumulating at the schools. They are constituted by nominees from the regional school boards, the regional teacher in-service training institutes, and a member of the ENSI-teacher team. In some provinces, the ÖKOLOG regional teams managed to establish co-operation with the Environment Departments of the provincial governments and with NGOs and were able to get some financial support as for the ECOLOG network schools.

Yet *"some of the regional groups do not function too well, or if they do, their success depends too much on the commitment of individual people and too little on the group as a whole"*. (Rauch/Schrittesser, 2003)

The Ecologisation pilot schools were advised by the experienced teachers from the Austrian ENSI team, were provided with a file with teaching materials and could apply for financial support at the Environmental Education Fund. Since 2001, when entering the ECOLOG-network, schools have received a welcome package with an initial membership certificate together with a file of information materials and a handbook (see central support, above). Annually, ECOLOG network schools receive a certificate confirming their membership after having sent in their annual report. These certificates are printed and signed by the Ministry of Education, signed by the responsible ministerial head of section (= the highest ranked civil servant) as well as by the President of the provincial school administration and then handed over to the network schools in regional celebration meetings.

Since the end of 2003, the Environment and Health Education Fund (see above) has been offering a three times higher financial allowance for project funding to Eco-Schools.

2.5.6 What kind of obstacles did they meet?

Lack of Time: Too narrow time budgets were in conflict with the growing complexity and duration of projects.

Lack of funding for local support and advice for schools: The advisory support available was not sufficient to increase the number of ECOLOG-schools and to support the necessary self-evaluation and quality development. Some schools reported that there was not enough information available to enable them to self evaluate their environmental performance. In fact, only a few schools knew what their major environmental impacts were. From those schools who took concrete measures to improve their environmental situation only 20 % could quantify the effects. Even fewer schools could report relevant costs or achieved cost reductions (Payer et al., 2000).

Lack of know-how regarding project and network management and team-building: There are difficulties in networking schools on the regional level, in involving a greater number of students and in co-operating with enterprises and other external partners.

Policy changes with respect to school programme development: In 1999 a main policy aim was that School programs (combining self evaluation and development of selected issues) will become mandatory in Austria in the year 2002/2003. In this situation the programme on Ecologisation of Schools was intended "to provide an opportunity for schools

- to gain first experiences with linking development and evaluation activities and initiatives to provide credible accounts to the public,
- to prepare themselves for the expected mandatory periodic elaboration of school programmes". (Posch 1998, 1999)

In 2001 however, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture decided that the legal foundation of school programme development was no longer a policy priority, at least not for the time being, but received the status of a recommendation to schools. As a result, for most schools self evaluation and development was no longer an issue.

Obligation for schools to sign a kind of contract, if they wanted to become a member of the Ecologisation Network: The (virtual) binding character of this obligation seemed to have been an obstacle for many schools although some of them were highly engaged in the field.

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