GOOD PRACTICES 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. ESD good practices:

- Focus on the educational and learning dimensions of sustainable development
- Offer new and creative solutions to common problems
- Make a difference and demonstrate a positive and tangible impact
- Contribute to sustained improvement of living conditions
- Can be used as models to generate policies and initiatives elsewhere
- Can be evaluated for innovation, success and sustainability by experts and users

1. **NAME OF THE INITIATIVE CONSIDERED AS A GOOD PRACTICE**:  
ECO-UNESCO’s Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education Programme

2. **RESPONSIBLE COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION**:  
Name: ECO-UNESCO  
Mailing address: 26 Clare Street, Dublin 2  
Country: Ireland  
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3. **CONTACT PERSON** (name and title): ELAINE NEVIN, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, ECO-UNESCO

4. **WHY?**

5. **GENERAL FOCUS OF THE INITIATIVE** (check one or more boxes):

- Policy, regulation, governance
- Learning for sustainability in formal, non-formal and informal settings
- Education of educators
- Tools and materials
- Research and development
- Regional/international cooperation
- Indigenous knowledge

6. **THEMES** (check one or more boxes):

- Overcoming poverty
- Gender equality
- Health promotion
- HIV and AIDS
- Ethics
- Intercultural understanding
- Cultural diversity
- Environment
- Climate change
- Water
- Biodiversity
- Natural resource management
- Disaster reduction
- Democracy
- Corporate responsibility
- Economy
- Sustainable production and consumption
- Sustainable urbanization
- Sustainable tourism
- Rural development
- Responsibility in local and global

1 Your response to this questionnaire should not exceed four pages. Font: Arial, size - 9; margins - 2 cm.
6. INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION (provide brief description): ECO-UNESCO’s Youth Peer-Education Programme seeks to engage and empower young people between the ages of 15 and 18.

The Peer Education Programme is a Youth-led programme that explores ESD and encourages young people to explore development, what it is, how it relates to them, how it relates to people in the developing world and to examine the links between the personal and the global linking their lives to the lives of people in the developing world.

The programme encourages the Youth Peer Educators to think more holistically, critically, both globally and locally about issues relating to sustainable development with a particular focus on developing countries. The peer education programme also encourages young people to link in with other groups in their local community and to develop links to other groups in the developing world using the UNESCO clubs network. The programme consists of a 10-12 week series of workshops that include: peer training, introduction to action projects, up-skilling in using drama and arts with young people, developing communications skills, engaging the community, developing links with the developing world plus an Action Project that the young people engage in. The Action Project will use young people’s creativity and can incorporate any development or environmental issue or method - they will be encouraged to use interactive, engaging methods - they would like to use. The programme will provide support and training in the following areas:

- Youth Arts
- Youth Drama
- Environmental Youth work
- Youth development education

Who?

- Type of organization managing the initiative:

  - Governmental  
  - International  
  - Non-governmental  
  - Private sector  
  - Academia  
  - Local authority  
  - Other (please specify)

- Partners/stakeholders involved (if any):

  - Government (State/provincial/district)  
  - Local authorities  
  - Pre-school institutions  
  - Schools  
  - Vocational education institutions  
  - Higher education institutions  
  - Research institutions  
  - Non-governmental organisations  
  - Community organisations  
  - Private sector  
  - Media  
  - Intergovernmental, international institutions  
  - Other (Private individuals, participants)

- Please name key stakeholders and describe their involvement in this initiative and the kind of relationship you have with them:

  **Key Funder.** Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs)

  **Additional Funders:** Leargas (EU Youth in Action funding):

  **Community Stakeholders:** Local Community Groups, Youth Organisations, Community Schools. Any young people aged between 15-18 years who want to enhance their knowledge of sustainable development.

- Who do you consider to be the learners in this initiative (number of persons involved):

  The learners in this initiative are the participants in the programme itself. This participants (the peer educators) act as multipliers for disseminating information learned and skills developed through the programme to their various peer groups, schools and community groups. There have been three sets of groups to date who have gone through this programme. The number of participants has been 49, aged between 15-18 years. There is also an emphasis on ensuring that there is a diverse ethnic and cultural mix within the programme.

When?

- Starting year and duration:
September 2007 until September 2010. Each programme lasts between 10-12 weeks. Action projects can then take up to an additional ten months.

**Where?**

- Geographical setting:
  - Local
    - Please specify: The Programme is run for youths from within the Greater Dublin Area
  - Regional
    - Please specify: ______________
  - Subnational
    - Please specify: ______________
  - National
    - Please specify: ______________
  - International
    - Please specify: ______________
  - Other (please specify)
    - Please specify: ______________

**What?**

- Educational / learning setting and level:
  - Formal:
    - Early childhood
    - Further and higher education
    - Other
    - Primary education
    - Teacher education
    - Secondary education
    - Professional education
  - Non-formal
    - Please specify: The Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education Programme comprises of many young people from a variety of backgrounds. Essentially the group forms a youth club.
  - Informal
    - Please specify: ______________

**Main objectives of the initiative (provide brief description):** The main objectives of the initiative are the following:

- To raise awareness of local and global issues in relation to sustainability (i.e. - Millenium Development Goals’s, Global Justice, Understanding Development, Fair Trade, increased environmental awareness)
- To up-skill young people involved in the programme in peer education methodologies such as communication and facilitation skills.
- To encourage young people to think critically and holistically about their own role in global and local issues.
- To encourage young people to engage with their peers in subject matter relating to sustainable issues.
- To encourage young people to complete an environmental action project

ECO-UNESCO uses peer education—an innovative pedagogical technique—to empower and up-skill young people in Sustainable Development and encourages them to connect the local to the global and examine links between the environment, society and economy. ECO-UNESCO’s ‘Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education Programme’ provides young people with the opportunity to become peer educators and explore issues of sustainability as it relates to their own life and the world. This youth training programme allows young people to explore the complexities of Sustainable Development while developing their own skill sets. As part of the programme they are encouraged to carry out an environmental action project with their peers. This can be on any environmental or sustainability theme.

In conjunction with the peer education programme a Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education Resource Pack is being developed. The aim of this resource pack is to document ECO-UNESCO’s experience with the programme and to reference other examples of good practise in peer education and Education for Sustainable Development. The resource pack will act as a toolkit and source of reference for other organisations to implement their own peer Education for Sustainable Development programmes.
How does this initiative relate to your country’s national priorities?

National Priorities were outlined in the draft National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – this highlights the role of non-formal education in the promotion of education for sustainable development in Ireland.

The initiative encourages young people aged between 12 and 18 to develop an insight into the issues and principles of sustainable development.

How?

Methods/approaches used for this initiative (list key background materials that were used; if necessary, use a separate sheet):

The Youth for Sustainable Development Peer Education Programme can be broken down into three distinct phases. Phase one involves the participants getting involved in the programme, learning about sustainability and peer education and provided with basic training on becoming a peer educator. Phase two involves the young people learning more about peer education and becoming involved in the delivery of successive programmes. Phase three provides some young people with the opportunity to become involved in a ‘graduates’ programme, where the youths’ skills as peer educators is further enhanced and put to use in additional community projects. The programme also involves the development and running by the young people of local action projects with their peers running parallel to various phases of the programme.

The methodologies that are being used focus on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) good practice. ESD develops and strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities and organisations to make judgements and choices in favour of sustainable development.

The five key areas of ESD are Knowledge, Skills, Perspectives, Values and Risks. The Key to ESD is that it doesn’t teach a particular subject but requires participants to consider different issues regarding sustainable development and develop a deeper understanding of sustainable development’s key principles. This is facilitated through a number of different methodologies.

- Simulation games, group work
- Practical activities
- Issue tracking
- Photographs, artwork and images
- Surveys/questionnaire
- Working with texts
- Discussions
- Roleplay
- Brain-storming
- Group work
- Practical activities (e.g. Urban Safaris, Drum Facilitation, Outdoor Excursions, etc).

ESD methods are holistic and interdisciplinary, values driven, encourages critical thinking, are locally relevant, multi method and involved participatory decision making.

The primary approach

- Working language(s): English
- Budget and funding sources: €210,000 Irish Aid over 3 years (Department of Foreign Affairs) in addition to match funding and €10,000 – Youth in Action EU funding.

7. EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVE (provide brief description and assessment):

Important: This subsection is the most valuable in terms of learning from your initiative. Please share details as fully as possible.

- Has your initiative been evaluated? (if yes, please provide a short description):
  Yes. The initiative receives an evaluation after each peer education programme is complete. This consists of evaluation focus groups with the participants, and assessing the programme using questionnaires. The
programme is also assessed internally by the Programme Co-ordinator and National Director. These evaluations are then fed back externally to our primary funder Irish Aid.

Some quotes from participants:
‘The games and interactive stuff are real good as you’re learning stuff and still having fun’
“It was a good opportunity and taught me a lot about sustainable development. The urban safari was brilliant! The National Youth ECO-Forum gave you a chance to talk to government people about issues you thought were important”
“I thought that aspects of the course were good. I felt that going outside and things like the urban safari were enjoyable. In general I learned a lot about sustainable development”

Results:
The impacts of the initiative have been largely positive based on feedback from the participants during focus group sessions and through written evaluations in the form of questionnaires. From these focus groups and questionnaires adjustments and amendments have been made to the programme to provide for the needs of the participants.

Strengths:
One of the main strengths of the programme is its uniqueness, and the methodologies used during facilitation. To date, the programme is unique within Ireland as a peer education programme on sustainable development. The strengths of this programme are the ESD methodologies that are used to deliver the sessions (as outlined above) combined with the peer education training.

Weaknesses and risks:
The programme engages a number of different young people from a broad demographic base in Dublin and the Greater Dublin area. This ensures that there is a diverse group of individuals involved in the programme. However because of this, retention rates at the beginning of the programme were low. There is also the subject matter; Sustainable Development can be a difficult concept for young people to grasp, and therefore there can be an initial reluctance to get involved in the programme.

Problems encountered: (if applicable):
The content of the programme initially created difficulties. For instance, how to relate many of the complex issues of Sustainable Development to young people in an interactive and exciting way.

Unresolved issues (if applicable):

Conditions for successful replication (if applicable):
There are a number of conditions to replicate this programme successfully: 1. adequate resources including funding; 2. ensuring the correct level of engagement and commitment from young people; 3. ensuring appropriate content in the programme and the peer education training meets the needs of the young people; 4. ensuring there is strong support in place for peer educators to carry out their projects and programmes with their peers; 4. ensuring the scope of the project is far reaching enough so that there is provision in place to accommodate young people’s development once they have completed the programme, i.e., a ‘graduates programme’; 5. ensuring the programme has a strong multiplier effect within the participants, peer group(s) and local community, i.e., through the action project element; 6. having suitably experienced facilitators who (a) are skilled enough to facilitate and motivate young people involved and (b) have an understanding of the complexities inherent to sustainability.

Why do you consider this a good practice?
One of the primary reasons why this could be considered good practice is the programme’s use of Education for Sustainable Development methodologies combined with the use of peer education. Many studies have shown the benefits of peer education models. Through this programme young people develop a more holistic mindset, discover how to think more critically and develop skills to allow them work with others. They learn about the links between their lives and the lives of young people in the developing world. The methods used are practical and encourage the development of sensitivity towards nature and the environment by providing
opportunity to be involved in outdoor activities and projects. The programme also encourages the use of local action projects by young people with their peers.

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

Please submit your “Good practice in ESD” (if you submit more than one “good practice”, please indicate the priority 1, 2, 3, etc.) 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, you can contact us by email (esd@unece.org) or by post mail: 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: +41 22 9170107 - web: http://www.unecoe.org/env/esd/welcome.htm