

# Learning for Sustainable Development

FROM THE MARGIN TO THE MAINSTREAM

2004 - 2007

DUTCH NATIONAL PROGRAM



# The Dutch government has **seriously** committed itself to the topic and implementation of Sustainable Development

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## *Sustainable Development: a subject of (inter)national importance*

The Dutch government seriously committed itself to the topic and implementation of sustainable development. A National Strategy for Sustainable Development was prepared for the Johannesburg summit of 2002, which was subsequently transformed into a National Action program on Sustainable Development (ADO). In almost every department of national government and at all levels of provincial and local government sustainable development has become a subject of importance. It is not only the government which is taking part: many other stakeholders as businesses, NGO's and civilians are contributing to the scheme.

It appears that sustainable development in The Netherlands is on track. However, looking at the Dutch targets laid out in the National Action program as well as the international agreements made in Johannesburg in 2002 and other conventions and policies, more rapid progress is called for. There is still a long way to go and in spite of all the attention it has received, sustainable development is not yet part of the mainstream. To anchor itself into society, sustainable development depends on changes in lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production.

## *Judgments and choices*

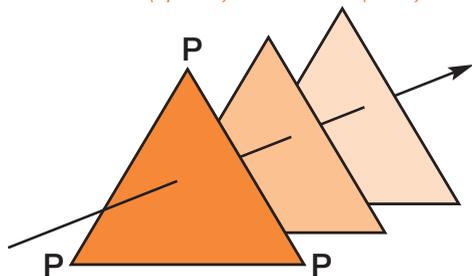
People make judgments and choices almost every minute in their everyday lives: as a consumer in the supermarket, as a member of traffic, as an employee or employer, as a tourist on holiday and so forth. 'Sustainable' judgments and choices should involve the consideration of 'people, planet, profit' (triple-p) interests as well as consideration of

## More rapid progress is called for

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long term effects and the effects that making such decisions will have on other parts of the world. The more aspects of sustainability are involved in the judgment, the more sustainable the outcome will be.

*'there' (space) and 'later' (time)*



The development of a sustainable society could be described as a continuous **learning process**. It involves exploring issues and dilemma's, putting choices in a broader perspective and looking further than the short term and the self-interest. As awareness and experience increases in considering the several aspects of sustainability, individuals, groups, communities and organizations strengthen their capacity to make sustainable development part of their lifestyle.

## Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education is a key-factor for change. Therefore the Dutch Program 'Learning for Sustainable Development 2004-2007' picks up precisely at this point.

In line with the goals of the UNECE-strategy on ESD and the Decade for ESD, the national program creates effective learning processes in order to enable judgments and choices in favour of sustainable development. Learners at all levels will be encouraged to use systematic, critical and creative thinking and reflection in both local and global contexts. Because education for sustainable development aims at a shift in people's mindsets, the learning targets include awareness, knowledge, skills, understanding attitude and values.

## Towards the mainstream

The experience gained from earlier and comparable programs demonstrates that learning processes are more effective if they are connected to existing and actual projects. In other words: if **'learning'** and **'doing'** are integrated. It is therefore very encouraging that the ESD-program has been incorporated into the National Action program on Sustainable Development (ADO) as an 'illustration program'.

As a result the program's learning processes can more easily be connected to mainstream-processes in The Netherlands, such as the 'Grote Stedenbeleid' -Big Cities-policy- or the National Environmental Policy-plan and other processes in society in which several stakeholders are involved.

## Project criteria

In selecting projects the 'Learning for Sustainable Development 2004-2007' takes the following into account:

- several aspects of sustainable development (ecological, economic, social, cultural, global, and future aspects as well as a participatory approach) should be incorporated
- several stakeholders connected to the subject should be involved
- there should be connection to mainstream-projects, processes and policies
- formal as well as informal and non-formal education should be considered
- interaction should play an important role. Social learning allows learners to relate or mirror their ideas, insights, experiences and feeling to those of others. In this process personal ideas are likely to change as a result.

Another important factor is that the learning process should be developed within one of the program's focus-areas. These areas are described on the next page.

# People make judgments and choices almost every minute in their everyday lives

## *Focus*

The learning processes will be based on three levels: the learning individual, the learning organization and the learning society. These three levels form the structure of the program. Each level is focused on specific target groups or situations.

### **Level 1: the learning individual; Focus: formal education**

Activities within this level are aimed at vision-development and agenda-setting of sustainable development in the entire (formal) educational system. This means primary and secondary school education, vocational training and training and university education. The program also aims to engender teachers and other educators with the knowledge and competences to deal with sustainable development inside and outside the classroom. It also builds on numerous projects, pilots, materials and training that were developed in preceding programs on ESD and other educations as environmental education and development education.

### **Level 2: the learning organization; Focus: government(s) and policy-making**

The objective here, is to implement more sustainable decisions, making sustainable development an integral part of governmental decision making processes. In this focus-area, national, provincial and local governments learn how to deal with integral policy-making, the participation of citizens and organizations and how to improve the quality of their own structure and performances.

### **Level 3: the learning society; Focus: complex decision-making processes in society**

Within this level, learning processes are connected to situations in which several stakeholders - with their own perspective - work towards a collective solution (for example in the development of an industrial area, or the planning of a community public area). In this way, so called 'learning arrangements' are created, allowing several stakeholders to contribute to and to learn from the decision making process. In this, the role of NGO's, businesses, civil society is in the center. Informal and non-formal education is important in this perspective, and 'social learning' is the way to give structure.

Each level is focused on target groups or situations

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## Knowledge Management Organization

The activities that are developed within each of the levels create a wealth of information and 'good practices' which, when shared by learners, is of great value to governments and stakeholders. Knowledge Management within the program, will bring together demand and supply of knowledge. Data will not only be stored but also flow and be available in a wider circle wherever needed.

The Dutch national program 'Learning for Sustainable Development' has been assigned by the Parliament of The Netherlands. A very distinctive aspect of the program is that its organization is inter-departmental and inter-governmental. The activities of the program will be developed by partnerships of governments (several ministries and several departments on governmental -national, provincial and local- levels), and stakeholders. Representatives of the ministries and various governments form a Steering Committee which is responsible for overseeing the program's execution.

To put the program into action, an external agency and program management will be installed. This agency will co-ordinate the **national activities** of the program. **Local activities** will be co-ordinated by the government of the provinces in co-operation with municipalities and water boards.

The development of a sustainable society could be described as a continuous learning process

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## *Invitation*

Dutch organizations are invited to join the program. Any organization, or cooperation of organizations, that sees an opportunity to connect a learning process to a mainstream-project, is invited to share its ideas with the program-agency. Based on the program-criteria, the commission will determine the activities which will then be executed.

## Knowledge Management plays an important role

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The 'Learning for Sustainable Development' program is rooted in nature- and environmental education (EE), as national EE programs were conducted from 1988. The subjects 'nature' and 'environment' have been gradually incorporated into the broader concept of sustainable development while the concept of 'social learning' is replacing 'education' as a narrow concept. Both of these developments have been taken into account during the planning of the program. In this way the new concept of ESD has grown, also incorporating aspects of other educations such as development education and citizenship education. The current program's predecessor was the 'Learning for Sustainability' program, implemented in 2000 to 2003. The results of this program, which was determined by many divergent projects and experiments, has proved to be invaluable in creating the 'Learning for Sustainable Development 2000–2007' program. The illustrations in this brochure originate from the former program.

Learning for Sustainable Development is a program from:

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food quality
- The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs
- The Dutch Provinces, represented by the Association of the Provinces of The Netherlands
- The Dutch Water boards, represented by the Association of Water boards

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