



FIRST FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

First Framework Action Plan for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development

*Preparation: Task Force for the implementation of the
UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development
In Serbia, February 2008*

DRAFT

Introduction

Since 2003 The Republic of Serbia has been committed to an internationally accepted concept of sustainable development¹ as a possible solution to problems of environment, development and society survival. As a country in transition, Serbia faces numerous difficulties on the way to reform all segments of society. There is an ongoing process of adoption of EU legislation (acquis communautaire) and strategic planning documents in accordance with this commitment. Certain sectoral strategies have already been adopted, while the rest are under preparation². Education has been declared one of The National Assembly's priority issues

¹ The concept of sustainable development owes its today's meaning to the Brundtland Report (1987), and its recent elaboration to the Rio Conference materials. According to these documents, as well as to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Serbia, this concept means such economic growth that, apart from economic efficiency and technological advancement, greater utilization of cleaner technologies, overall society innovativeness and socially responsible business, also ensures poverty reduction, more effective long-term use of resources, improved health conditions and life quality, as well as pollution reduction to the level which environmental factors can endure, future pollution prevention and nature conservation. This term refers to a qualitative growth which does not endanger the survival of future generations. Such development implies an intergenerational equality and equity (reference: «Environment and Sustainable Development» Encyclopedia, «Ecolibri», 2003)

² Adopted: National Waste Management Strategy (2003), Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003), Water Master Plan of Serbia 2002-2012 (2003), National Strategy for Development of Agriculture (2005), Energy Development Strategy (2005), Forestry Development Strategy (2006), Study of Sustainable Development of the Water Sector (2006), Strategy for Development of Tourism (2006), National Strategy for Economic Development of Serbia 2006-2012 (2006), Strategy for Official Statistics (2006); Under preparation: National Strategy for Sustainable Development, Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Strategy for Biodiversity – Action Plan and National Report, National Cleaner Production Strategy, National Environmental Strategy.

related to environment and sustainable development. A Task Force for the implementation of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been established, that is, for the preparation of the Action Plan through the engagement of relevant state, economy and civil representatives.

Grounds for the preparation of EESD Action Plan may be found in:

- «The Joint statement of Education and Environment Ministers of the UNECE region on education for sustainable development», which shows the need and commitment to increasing the efforts for its implementation (adopted at The Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Belgrade, October 2007);
- Other international documents (Agenda 21- Rio `92; »The Millennium Declaration», Johannesburg 2002; «Education for All », Dakar 2002; «The Ministers’ Statement on Education for Sustainable Development», Kiev 2003; «UNECE Strategy for ESD», Vilnius 2005; «UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development», 2005-2015);
- The legislation of the Republic of Serbia (Law on Environmental Protection, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 135/04, etc.);
- Strategic and planning documents: 1. Draft National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Serbia 2. Draft National Environmental Strategy (NES), which includes concrete short-term and long-term measures for the implementation and development of education for sustainable development and the improvement of environmental education; etc.



Also,

- The Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Serbia defines human capacity building and increase in employment as national priorities. Being aware of the post-industrial information society, Serbia chose education as a basis for development. Therefore, there is a special focus on modern, high quality and effective education as well as on a life-long learning. «Sustainable economic development in Serbia is reflected through economic growth generation based primarily on knowledge, information, human resources, education and quality of human relationships»³.
- The vision of Serbia defined by the Strategy⁴, the new economic system and the modern structure of economic factors require educated people who learn quickly, advance knowledge and develop skills and competences in pace with the scientific and technological advancement. The higher demands call for thorough education reform in Serbia, that is, 6 % of GDP growth by 2017⁵. Decreasing the number of people without profession ought to be one of the main goals of sustainable development in Serbia.
- Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD) is an imperative of our times. It is a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development. It is an important tool for efficient management, democratic and quality decision-making. EESD enables individuals, groups and communities to judge in favor of environment and sustainable development based on their critical thinking. This kind of education requires integration of knowledge from all relevant sectors (environment, economy, society) with a special emphasis on applying this knowledge in order to provide all citizens with better quality of living. Hence its other name - education for life and survival.
- Action Plan for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development should serve as a national framework for the implementation of policy and measures for the implementation of EESD. However, with regard to the guidelines of UNECE Strategy for ESD concerning the respect for cultural differences, this Action Plan also provides for the enhancement of environmental education for sustainable development (EESD)⁶ in accordance with the Fundamentals of the initiated reform in Serbia and the implementation of objectives and principles of these two complementary types of education (ESD and EESD) as a strong support to sustainable development in Serbia for 2008-2011 (phase one).

³ Strategy for Sustainable Development of Serbia

⁴ Ibidem, p.12.

⁵ Total expenditure on education in Serbia today is 3.5 % of GDP (Strategy for Sustainable Development of Serbia)

⁶ EESD is an inviolable human right, and an important prerequisite for raising public awareness of the necessity for environmental preservation, break of consumer habits, creating conditions for better integration of ecological principles into environmental protection policy and a responsible and active treatment of nature and environment. In fact, EESD is, according to numerous international documents, a fundamental part of ESD, because it is based on a new philosophy of living, ecological ethics and the concept of sustainable development which greatly contributes to life quality improvement of today and future generations.

- AP can neither include nor replace all activities of numerous stakeholders, from the national to the local level, from state authorities to the local government, professional associations and other organizations, formal, informal, extracurricular education, economy, private sector, NGO, mass media, etc.
- Draft AP contains key initiatives, it is open for new proposals and suggestions, since this document marks the beginning of the future efforts of all those who take part in its realization for putting into effect the concept of sustainable development in Serbia.
- Apart from informing the public of the concept of sustainable development and the need to integrate the principle of sustainable development in all levels of society/sectoral policies/, there is also a need for a systematic, coordinated and comprehensive approach to EESD (formal and informal, institutional and extra-institutional). It also requires integration through professional and advanced training as well as additional and life-long learning. Those efforts should lead to stronger awareness, acquiring knowledge and skills, values and attitudes necessary for a sustainable (healthy) living, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable environmental management, biodiversity and human health conservation, pollution reduction and improvement of living conditions for present and future generations.

Starting ground

Beside Serbia's commitment to the concept of sustainable development, in practice, there are many limiting factors regarding its integration into all levels of society and the implementation of EESD in formal and non-formal education.

Serbia is a country with limited natural potential and numerous problems related to economy and development.

Limiting factors:

- ✓ A long-standing political and economic crisis and the process of transition have contributed greatly to the economic state of the country and scarce financial resources for many activities, including all kinds of education activities.
- ✓ For the necessary performance assessment before the adoption and realization of the AP, we need a continued monitoring of educational activities in this field, and consequently, a systematized documentation.

- ✓ Generally, EE⁷ and ESD are not equally present in the educational system according to available information⁸.
- ✓ There is a lack of teachers trained for transferring knowledge of environmental and sustainability issues.
- ✓ There are no standards defined.
- ✓ Although extremely important, non-formal education and other ways of raising public awareness are insufficiently coordinated, unsystematic and inaccessible to all population groups.
- ✓ The absence of a strategic approach to EESD, incomplete access to information, limited media interest and limited opportunities for public participation in environmental decision-making as a result of insufficient financing of educational projects and civil sector campaigns from the state and local government resources.
- ✓ Past professional environmental and sustainability education has been insufficient, especially in case of managers and those who work in industry, agriculture, transportation, energy sector; which is also the case with state and local self-government officials.
- ✓ Public informing, as an important aspect of non-formal education concerning environmental and sustainability problems, is still partial, unplanned and often sensational.
- ✓ Both the term and the concept of sustainable development are insufficiently used in practice and little known among the public.
- ✓ Although the concept of sustainable development is significant for achieving a better quality of living, it is insufficiently used in practice through sustainable consumption and production.
- ✓ The principles of sustainable development are not sufficiently used in environmental management, biodiversity conservation and use of natural resources, water and energy.
- ✓ The environmental awareness is still low and the public is little informed of basic environmental issues (basic ecological knowledge, ecological ethics, economy and other natural and social disciplines).

With regard to these facts and requirements, this Action Plan is based on an attitude that knowledge is a comparative advantage and it stresses the need to integrate environmental and sustainability issues into all levels of educational system, so that education may become the main driving force of change (the Lisbon Strategy), and at the same time:

⁷ EE – Environmental Education

⁸ Sources used for performance assessment: Draft NES, Draft Strategy of Sustainable Development of Serbia, the ministries' reports, pedagogical documentation (curricula of reformed classes), national and regional education meetings (Belgrade, 2003), expert research (teacher's questionnaires, analysis of new textbooks, accredited teacher improvement programs)

- ✓ **Sustainability** and a healthy approach to environment must be an integral part of people's lives and the regular school curriculum of all children and youth, an obligatory part of their schooling, part of educational activities and part of the process of life-long learning. Sustainability means that all people should lead an (1) eco-conscious, (2) healthy, (3) safe, (4) jointly responsible, (5) participative and (6) diversified life;
- ✓ **A priority step** towards creating conditions for a gradual shift to sustainable living in Serbia considers is to address unfavorable socio-economic status of the young, who represent today and future leaders for sustainable development. A comprehensive, operationalized and coordinated Program based on the National Youth Strategy should serve to raise public awareness and promote environment-friendly and sustainable lifestyles;

Vision, objectives and tasks

AP contains directives and recommendations for establishing a new relationship between people and environment in Serbia and for the use of natural resources with regard to ecological principles and the concept of sustainable development and with the aim of reaching a desired level of social welfare in Serbia.

AP considers the fact that Serbia is in the process of adaptation to an example of development set by EU countries and that there is an ongoing process of harmonization of Serbian regulations and standards with EU legislation, which requires higher expertise and special training of state and local government employees.

The vision of this document implies that environmental education for all is crucial in order to reach the level of consciousness necessary for the rational management and sustainable use of natural resources, which requires better integration of EESD into national strategies and legislation.

With regard to this, decision-makers must be highly conscious of the need to apply the rules of eco-management and principles of sustainable management, particularly in the field of economy and environmental management.

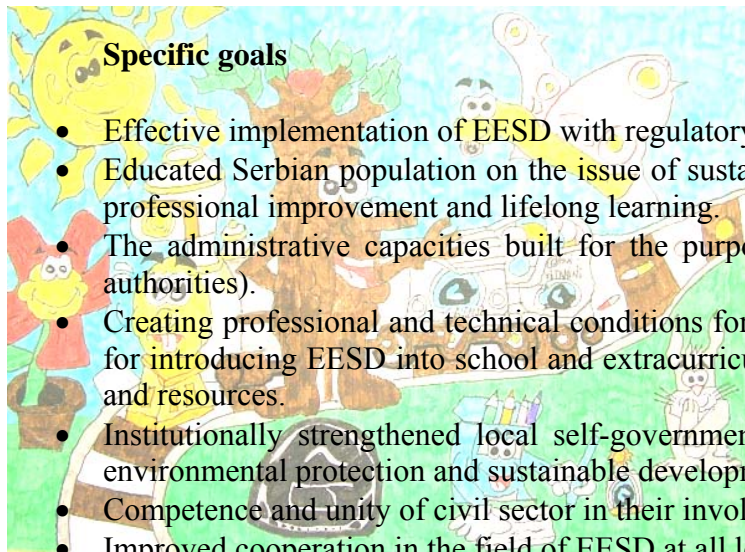
Serbia holds an unenviable position regarding sustainable consumption and production⁹. Therefore, stringent restrictions on «dirty» production, waste of energy, and particularly on non-renewable resources, must be immediately imposed. Apart from the legal

⁹ Excessive and dangerous waste is produced although there is no adequate storage capacity (wild landfills and overloaded dumpsites). Energy efficiency is very low. Material production rate is high, and the recycling rate is low.

framework and economic incentives, which should contribute to the change of situation in Serbia, there is also a need to educate Serbian population on environmental and sustainability issues. This education can make the vision come true.

Basic and specific goals

- In accordance with the above mentioned starting ground, the main objective of AP is to create better living conditions for today and future generations by preparing the society in general to accept new philosophies of living, ecological ethics, as well as the concept of sustainable development and its integration into all aspects of life and work, that is, the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, values, building of social capital, creation of social and cultural identities, and reaching the necessary level of economic development.
- This goal could only be achieved through raising the individual, group and community awareness, knowledge and skill acquisition, adoption of attitudes and values based on this new philosophy of living, ecological ethics and sustainable development. EESD will provide active and higher quality public involvement in the efforts to meet an internationally recognized need to harmonize human society development and protection of the life on Earth.



Specific goals

- Effective implementation of EESD with regulatory, operational and political support both on the national and the local level.
- Educated Serbian population on the issue of sustainable development through formal and non-formal education, personal and professional improvement and lifelong learning.
- The administrative capacities built for the purpose of EESD implementation (an educational system and competent state authorities).
- Creating professional and technical conditions for the implementation of EESD through raising the teaching staff competence for introducing EESD into school and extracurricular activities as well as providing the necessary and adequate teaching tools and resources.
- Institutionally strengthened local self-government and greater competence of their employees and entities designated for environmental protection and sustainable development in local governments.
- Competence and unity of civil sector in their involvement in EESD.
- Improved cooperation in the field of EESD at all levels, and the collaboration with all stakeholders of the UNECE region.

Primary task of AP, considering the proposed short-term and long-term measures and activities, and determining the implementing institutions, time frame and financial resources, is to promote EESD in Serbia through better coordination of stakeholders' activities, greater integration of EESD principles into educational system from kindergarten to university, but also in all other aspects of formal and non-formal education for all population groups.

AP should ensure:

- The implementation of EESD in the overall educational process, from kindergarten to university, as well as a lifelong education for all population groups.
- The involvement of EESD in all educational fields
- The involvement of EESD in scientific research and development projects;
- That the realization of AP is neither unilateral nor overfocused on natural science disciplines;
- Predominance of eco-humanity and ecological ethics in human-nature relationships;
- Greater and higher quality civil society involvement in all segments of life, particularly in affirming sustainable development and greater share in decision-making regarding environmental and sustainability issues;

To achieve the established goals it is necessary to strengthen sectoral cooperation among all governmental institutions, particularly between two relevant ministries, that of education and environmental protection, but also among all other stakeholders through policy coordination and unity, operativity and responsibility. The adoption of AP, with established implementing institutions, operational bodies of intersectoral cooperation and financial resources, which provide logistic support, serves to create the long-expected JOINT FRAMEWORK for concrete action.

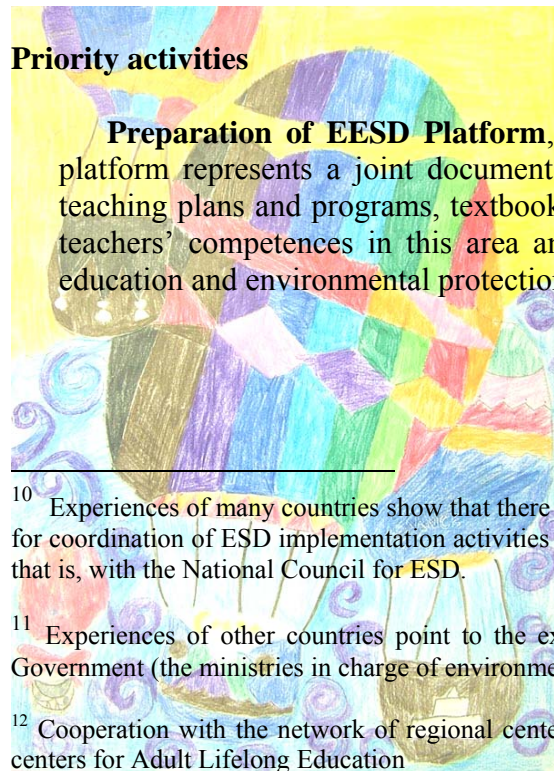
Priorities

The strengthening of institutional framework

1. By establishing a special council or some other advisory body, which shall, on a multidisciplinary basis, gather ESD and EE experts from various sectors. This advisory interdepartmental body shall monitor the implementation of AP, UN Decade of

Education for Sustainable Development and UNECE Strategy for ESD. Needs-based subgroups shall be established for certain educational levels,¹⁰ as operational interdepartmental bodies or a task force.

2. By establishing a National Center for Research, Development, and Implementation of EESD as provided for by draft NES short-term measures to be taken by 2009. There is truly such a need, and the experience of other countries¹¹ goes in favor of such an establishment for many reasons. The Center's scope of action would be: research, development and improvement of EESD, coordination and the implementation of strategic documents, network expansion¹², monitoring the implementation of EESD, maintaining the database on EESD activities at all levels of government and civil sector including international networking, website maintenance, project development and realization and the strengthening of international cooperation.



Priority activities

Preparation of EESD Platform, as a basis for the implementation of this education as a part of education reform. The platform represents a joint document of two ministries containing basic principles and guidelines for the preparation of new teaching plans and programs, textbooks and didactic materials. An important element of education reform is the improvement of teachers' competences in this area and the determining of EESD (ESD and EE) standards. The two competent ministries of education and environmental protection are responsible for the preparation of the platform.

¹⁰ Experiences of many countries show that there is a need to establish a Council for ESD, **as an inter-institutional body for higher and university education** for coordination of ESD implementation activities and the realization of projects, cooperation between these sectors and cooperation with other AP stakeholders, that is, with the National Council for ESD.

¹¹ Experiences of other countries point to the existence of different organization schemes. These centers represent a network of NGO's supported by the Government (the ministries in charge of environmental protection and education), local governments, municipalities, private sector and foreign donors.

¹² Cooperation with the network of regional centers for teacher improvement in Niš, Čačak and Užice, as well as with the National Center and four regional centers for Adult Lifelong Education

International cooperation

The development of EESD requires an intensive strengthening of international cooperation with relevant scientific and educational institutions. This means that Serbia should intensively participate in programs and projects in the UNECE region, on many different levels, and also provide flexible institutional solutions, which would ensure participation in international projects, programs and networks (UNESCO programs, “Health-promoting schools”, European project “Eco-Schools”, “GLOBE”, “WWF”, etc.)

It is particularly important to encourage universities to intensify cooperation with foreign institutions regarding experience exchange in the field of EESD, as well as to involve foreign teachers in their work (remove administrative obstacles and strengthen the cooperation with foreign educational institutions in the above mentioned fields).

Financial framework

For the realization of AP it is necessary to establish financial and other logistic support mechanisms:

- The existing or future funds collected from state institutions, institutes, expert institutions, funds and other public enterprises, for the fulfillment of obligations stipulated by this Law, related to awareness raising programs within their competence (Article 6 of the Law on Environmental Protection)¹³, as well as by other regulations which provide for people’s education, specialized training of state employees, business people, etc.
- Financial resources may be provided through different types of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this field and through joining international programs, projects and networks, as well as through cooperation with financial organizations, UN programs, etc.
- Funds at the local self-government level derived from different sources: economy, donors, interested entrepreneurs, etc.

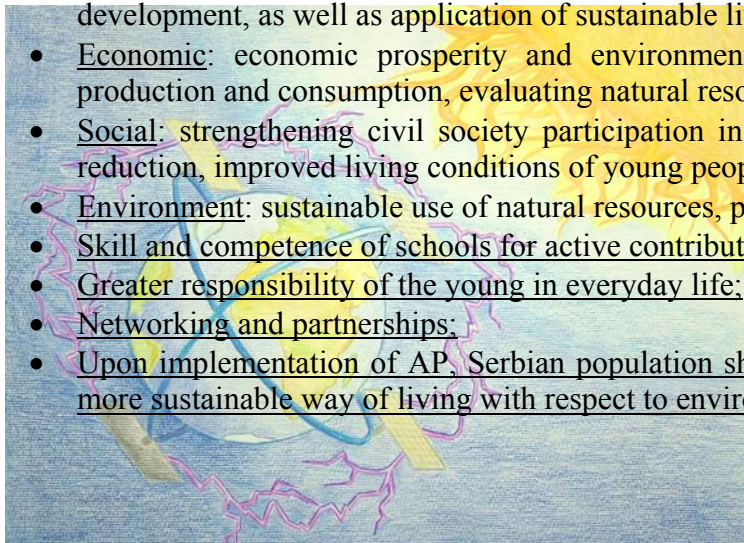
¹³ Article 6 of the Law on Environmental Protection stipulates that «state authorities, scientific institutions in the field of education, health care, media, culture and other institutions, as well as other organizations, within their scope of work, foster, direct and ensure stronger awareness of the importance of environmental protection.

Operational support to the Action Plan

1. Organization of activities for the promotion of EESD, raising public awareness and the announcement of numerous short-term and long-term activities.
2. The realization of programs and projects for the introduction of environmental protection and sustainable development principles into the work of state institutions.
3. Defining monitoring activities and the framework for AP evaluation, through annual review of results.

Expected outcomes

- Higher level of awareness among Serbian citizens, especially the young, of the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development, as well as an improved attitude towards their immediate and global surroundings, more active engagement in decision-making and addressing ecological problems in compliance with the concept of sustainable development, as well as application of sustainable living in everyday life.
- Economic: economic prosperity and environmental conservation made possible by changing the relationship between production and consumption, evaluating natural resources, etc.;
- Social: strengthening civil society participation in decision-making, equality, integration of knowledge and skills, poverty reduction, improved living conditions of young people, sustainable urban/rural development, preservation of cultural diversity;
- Environment: sustainable use of natural resources, preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity;
- Skill and competence of schools for active contribution to sustainable development;
- Greater responsibility of the young in everyday life;
- Networking and partnerships;
- Upon implementation of AP, Serbian population should acquire knowledge, understanding, skills and values for achieving a more sustainable way of living with respect to environmental protection principles.



Revision and reporting

Revision of the Action Plan shall be performed annually and harmonized with activities for the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

All above named stakeholders included in this Action Plan shall inform the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the progress of implementation.



Remark:

Drawings used in this publication were made by primary school pupils for the National Competition titled “Energy Efficiency Mascot for the year 2007”. This Competition was organized and managed by the Energy Efficiency Agency of the Republic of Serbia. The Results of this Competition as well as other useful information could be found on the following e - address: www.seea.sr.gov.yu