

UNECE Expert group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development
Third meeting
Vienna (Austria), 11-13 March 2006

SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson

1. The third meeting of the Expert Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) took place in Vienna (Austria) on 11-13 March 2006.
2. The meeting was attended by the members of the Expert Group who are experts designated by governments and by intergovernmental, international, regional, and non-governmental organisations (see the annexe 1). Representatives of UNICEF and the Australian Research Institute on Education for Sustainability, and the Chair of UNESCO participated as guests. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Roel van Raaij (the Netherlands).
3. The meeting adopted its agenda and agreed on the working procedures.
4. The Chairperson and the secretariat informed the experts of the major outcomes of the first meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD (13-14 December 2005) and the second meeting of the Bureau (23 February 2006) insofar as these concerned Indicators for ESD. The Steering Committee welcomed the results of the work of the Expert Group, calling them both substantive and innovative. The unanimous request for further work of the Expert Group was to reduce the overall number of indicators in order to permit a realistic and effective reporting process. The secretariat has prepared a compilation of the comments on the draft set of indicators sent by the members of the Steering Committee for the further consideration by the Expert Group and for their subsequent integration, where appropriate, into the revised set of indicators (paper EG on ESD Indicators-3/2).
5. The Expert Group stressed again that its work on indicators should focus on ESD issues and not on SD (as such), i.e. measuring the implementation and the effectiveness of implementation of ESD, as set out in the Strategy, and not measuring the progress of SD (such as progress in biodiversity, climate change, SCP, etc.). Obviously, indicators for formal education are easier to find and track than for non-formal and informal education. Therefore, following the remarks from the Steering Committee on the imbalance between indicators for formal versus indicators for informal and non-formal education, the experts suggested to focus on the former, without, however, diminishing the importance of the latter, in particular its possible negative consequences (e.g. by the unsustainable TV and other advertisements).
6. The Expert Group discussed the methodological approach to be used to aggregate in a consistent manner the 80 initial indicators throughout the whole set. The conclusion was reached that a uniform approach in e.g. aggregation of underlying questions for the whole set is not feasible due to the complexity of ESD issues and the tailor-made approach for each indicator was chosen. However, it was decided to follow an overarching methodology, consisting in a more

efficient structuring of the 80 initial indicators into revised indicators with sub-indicators. The Expert Group also took into consideration the Steering Committee's request to reduce the number of indicators in order to permit a realistic and effective reporting process. Furthermore, the Group proposed to compile as appropriate the substance of some indicators into template-tables that should be annexed to the set of indicators. This approach will allow for simplification, while retaining the substance of the initial set of indicators to the greatest extent possible. It would also provide countries with a user-friendly template requiring them to select predefined boxes as relevant. The issue of properly addressing higher education in the set of indicators was noted. It was suggested that footnotes be prepared across all objectives with a view to translating some of the currently used school system terminology into the relevant terminology appropriate for the higher education system.

7. The Expert Group also suggested that for some of the initial quantitative indicators, such as budget related ones, the provision of simple figures of expenditure would not help to assess the implementation of ESD in a given country in an objective and comparable way. It was suggested to request countries to measure the changes over time (e.g. the annual percentage increase/decrease in the budget allocations by Government for implementing ESD), which would allow for drawing more objective conclusions on the progress.

8. The Expert Group discussed the indicators within the 3 phases of implementation of the ESD Strategy and proposed to report on the whole final set of indicators at the end of each phase, to the extent possible, in line with the country progress in implementing the ESD. Furthermore, in order to measure the "effectiveness of implementation of ESD", the Expert Group proposed to identify some indicators and/or sub-indicators, which would require more research and input from the countries, but which would be very important to measure the effectiveness of the ESD implementation and to group these into a separate box, i.e. to split the set of indicators into two parts: (1) for reporting on the implementation of the ESD Strategy and (2) for reporting on the effectiveness of the implementation of the ESD Strategy. Moreover, a separate indicator (overarching the objectives) to measure the coordination of the implementation of all objectives was suggested for further consideration. However, in order to meet the requests from the Steering Committee to the Expert Group regarding further development of the set of indicators, the Chairperson and the secretariat suggested to consider keeping all final indicators and sub-indicators in one set under each of the objectives, as relevant, and to use the 'status of indicator', i.e. 'required' and 'proposed' for differentiating the indicators to measure and "implementation" and the "effectiveness of the implementation", as appropriate.

9. The Expert Group discussed the need to develop explanatory notes (guidelines for use) to the final set of indicators for assessment and reporting purpose. It was suggested to consider this issue at the fourth meeting of the Expert Group and work on input into the descriptive part of the progress report on ESD indicators that will be prepared for the second meeting of the Steering Committee (4-5 December 2006). The specialised wording of some indicators could be explained in footnotes to the indicators. The Expert Group suggested using the "Learning region" with reference to its work in the descriptive part of the progress report.

10. Furthermore, the Expert Group suggested to propose that NFPs should indicate their goals and objectives and expected results that they aim to achieve at the national level when preparing the National Implementation Report (NIRs) in order to allow for quality enhancement and assessment of the indicator itself. Such questions as 'how do these indicators help you?' and 'What would you suggest to be amended?' could also be included in the template for NIRs. The

Expert Group expressed the need to have a fifth meeting after the first reporting exercise by countries to assess how the set of indicators is working, and if it should be needed to adjust/modify it in accordance with the countries' feedback. This proposal will be submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration.

11. The Expert Group also discussed the issue of feasibility of measurements and assessments required for populating some of the indicators and concluded that for some of the qualitative indicators, in particular under Objective 2, the measurement of the contribution of ESD to SD is not feasible in this evaluation model and conclusions would have to be drawn on the basis of assumptions. Although, there is a logical framework in which education supports a more sustainable lifestyle, the fact that other factors, such as economic or juridical instruments, also have an influence on people's behaviour and choices, should be taken into account. Though education is an important vehicle for change, it is difficult to distinguish and measure the effects of education alone on SD.

12. Due to the complexity of the work at the third meeting of the Expert Group and the limited time available, it was proposed that indicators under Objectives 1 and 6 be revised by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman and circulated to the Expert Group for comments. The Expert Group discussed in detail the initial indicators under Objectives 2, 3, 4, and 5 and revised them. It was agreed to continue the work in teams after the meeting and to request the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson to compile a consolidated version and circulate it to the Expert Group for its comments. Thereafter, the secretariat will revise the consolidated version, taking into account the comments received, and prepare a final version for further work at the fourth meeting of the Expert Group (the Hague, 10-12 May 2006).

13. For the fourth meeting of the EG the following items were proposed for the agenda in order to finalise the set of indicators and sub-indicators:

- Consider and reorganise/reorder the indicators under each of the Objectives in accordance with their type: "Checklist", "Input", "Output" and "Outcome", as appropriate;
- Focus on output and outcome indicators;
- Consider the timeframe for each indicator;
- Consider the time schedule for reporting as a whole
- Provide input into the descriptive part (e.g. develop "Guidelines for Use") of the official document on progress of work on ESD Indicators to be submitted to the second meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD.

Annexe 1

List of participants

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