

UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development
Third meeting
11-13 March 2006
Kardinal-Koenig-Haus, Vienna

COMMENTS ON THE INDICATORS FOR ESD

I. Indicators-related outcomes of the first meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD (13-14 December 2005, Geneva)

Mr. Roel van Raaij, the Chair of the Expert Group reported on the progress made in developing indicators (CEP/AC.13/2005/9 and ppt presentation). He underlined that the key challenge for the Expert Group was to ensure that the indicators reflect both aspects of the mandate: “the implementation” as a process, and “the effectiveness of the implementation”, as a qualitative feature of the process and of the outcome, including long-term effects of education for sustainable development (ESD).

Delegates welcomed the result of Group’s work and valued it as both substantive and innovative. They provided a number of comments on the indicators. Delegates agreed that an overall number of indicators should be reduced in order to allow having a realistic and effective reporting process. It was also recommended to review some qualitative indicators and see whether it is feasible to redesign them into quantitative. At the same time, some countries questioned a usefulness of few input and output indicators, such as, for example, “number of books” stressing the importance of the outcome indicators (e.g. whether books are used and how useful they are). A proposal was made to introduce an indicator that would address a synergy between the measures taken for the implementation of the UN Decade of ESD and the UNECE Strategy for ESD. Some countries noticed a small number of indicators on non-formal and informal learning admitting, nevertheless, difficulties of measuring these issues. Some countries with the federal governmental structures expressed their concern about difficulties to gather some data due to their decentralised education systems. In this respect, it was explained that clauses “as appropriate” and “as understood by your education system in accordance with International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, UNESCO, 1997” will meet this concern. Thus, for countries with a federal structure, a final data will be a compilation of data provided by its various sub-state entities.

It was agreed that delegates will send their comments on the draft indicators in writing to the Secretariat by 20 January 2006. In consideration of comments from the Steering Committee, the final outcome of the group’s work will be presented for endorsement to the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

With regard to the reporting mechanism, the Committee agreed on the proposal presented in the draft work plan of implementation and with regard to the format for reporting, it agreed on the proposal amended by the Expert group.

In addition, Expert Group was requested to suggest a list of the key selected indicators that can be used by governments that volunteered to prepare their first implementation reports for the Belgrade Conference (October 2007).

II. Indicators-related outcomes of the second meeting of the Bureau of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD (23 February 2006, Geneva)

Further to the discussion taken place at the meeting of the Steering Committee, the Bureau approved the time frame for the preparation of the pilot reports by volunteering countries using the selected set of indicators, as follows:

- September 2006¹: the selected set of indicators prepared by the Expert Group together with the format for reporting is sent to the interested countries
- April 2007: reports to be submitted to the secretariat for reproduction and dissemination

III. Summary of the received written comments

Comments by the Secretariat are presented in the brackets, in italic. Where comments have been incorporated in the revised Table with Indicators the following reference is given "see the table".

Canada

- Due to its federal structure, collection of the data at national/state level will be a challenge (*the footnote might cover this concern: "aggregated data from sub-state entities into a national/pan-state report", see the table*)
- Supportive of using qualitative information and reporting on inputs, but believes that research should continue to identify more quantitative outcome indicators especially as these relate to assessing student learning related to the principles and practices of sustainable development.
- Keep balance between small number of indicators and ensure enough indicators to allow for comprehensive reporting
- Support proposal to use description of how "indigenous" knowledge is conserved, used and promoted as an indicator (*see the table*)
- Under objective 1: checklist, input, output and outcome indicators might be identified that focus on the school building as a "green" learning facility. Underlying questions might address whether organizations model ESD curriculum in terms of infrastructure (building of green schools through SD procurement and financial management systems) and school yard environments (schoolyard naturalization, building greenhouses) providing students with opportunities to practice what they are learning. (*similar to Q 2.7*).
- Under objective 2: checklist, input, output and outcome indicators might be identified that focus on incentive programs that promote ESD. Underlying questions might focus on government funding programs that support ESD activities across formal, non-formal and informal learning sectors. (*similar to Q 2.7*).

¹ It is expected that the Expert Group will finalize the selected list at its final meeting in May 2006.

- In indicator 2.2, the list of domains of study where SD is integrated could include citizenship education (*“citizenship” education covered by social science.. Risk of spelling out too many sub-domains*)
- Indicator 5.5 covers the involvement of other NGOs. It may be appropriate to include other governmental agencies outside education (such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the National Research Council of Canada).- (*see the table*)
- ESD indicators identified are, as a group, comprehensive and adequately align with the UNECE ESD strategy and implementation framework.
- Future work should begin to focus on consistency, validation and the avoidance of duplication.

Germany

- Focus on the “process of implementation of ESD”.
 - Due to its federal structure, collection of the data at national/state level will be a challenge (*the footnote might cover this concern: “aggregated data from sub-state entities into a national/pan-state report”, see the table*)
 - The list of indicators proposed seems overly extensive and detailed: the limited personal and financial resources available for ESD in Member States.
- Use initially more descriptive indicators
- International exchange on indicators that are being developed nationally (*Secretariat has made research – there were no indicators on ESD developed nationally to date; possibly will be relevant in future*)
- The answers to each question should include the option “not applicable.” (*this can be done in introduction to the table rather than of each question. Formulation should be “not applicable due to ...pls. provide brief explanation*)

Italy

- Under objective 1: to reflect how to measure the effectiveness of ESD as an implementation tool for the SD process at national level (*It might be not feasible*)
- Under objective 6: to evaluating existing cooperation, sharing and exchange of experiences and materials on ESD (*this is already included*)

Mr. Guenther Pfaffenwimmer (Austria)

- This list of indicators could be used as basis for a grid for national reports which will be more of a qualitative description, reports which could be used for cross case comparison and analysis, for mutual exchange and learning about different approaches in national or regional contexts.
- There a picture of a complex mosaic where different countries develop different approaches (related to/checked with indicators), and/or tools/materials/curricula etc. which could be shared and possibly adapted and applied in other countries and thus develop a momentum of a “learning region”. This could help to avoid that every country would have to develop everything from the scratch.

Hungry

- The number of indicators seems to be too high and the system seems to be too complicated; it would be reasonable to reduce their number and create a simple system using a more user-friendly method.
- Indicators 1.3, 1.4 – it is almost impossible to give an objective answer to the questions. It could be considered if there is an intention to address ESD at the different levels of education system but categorizing by „in progress” and „specified” is difficult.
- Indicators 2.1-2.3 – Answering the questions needs a deeper research; it is worth to report on it in a 5- year frequency. (see the table)
- Indicator 2.4 – types of courses should be specified; needs research to answer the questions. *(it is not feasible to specify them. One of the solutions might be a short explanation in a footnote: see the table. Since (b) covers (a), it is possible to delete (a) and leave (b) with the footnote; see the table)*
- Indicators 2.6-2.7 – Could be „required” type indicators if only a yes/no answer is required; in case of „yes” answer, a short description could be also required.
- Indicators 2.8-2.15 – Deeper research is needed to give a comprehensive and representative picture.
- Indicators 3.1-3.2 – further guidance is needed to specify in which case could we consider that ESD is part of a training (is it in the title? among the topics? in the approach?) *.(see the table)*
- Indicators 4.4 and 4.6 – quantitative answer could be misleading; quality of teaching materials/web sites is also – or even more - important.
- Indicators of group 5 – this group of indicators has a great importance, although it is rather difficult to identify which topic belongs to SD/ESD and which doesn't... that is why is it difficult to give the number of publications devoted to ESD/SD, for instance.
- Indicator 6.2 – We propose inserting „on/about ESD” at the end of the first sentence, otherwise it is not clear that the indicator deals only with those networks.*(see the table)*