

UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development  
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## **INTERVENTION BY THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (EEA)**

### **EEA and environmental education**

In this era of globalisation and information technologies, children's perceptions and values are no longer shaped by their immediate community alone. Internet and other media bring the world into their living room, introducing them to different cultures and experiences at a much earlier age than ever before. Modern technology-based teaching and learning tools allow them to grasp concepts such as globalization and complexity of interrelationships, which are at the base of sustainable development.

In an effort to adapt to this new context, education systems and teaching methods are equally undergoing drastic changes. For environmental education, this is of particular relevance, as environmental issues all too often have a strong international dimension with a collective responsibility. With its 32 member countries, the EEA is uniquely placed to help introduce this dimension in the agenda of environmental education. As such, the EEA is increasingly exploring means in which to make its information and knowledge accessible to a young audience.

Online multi-media learning tools are amongst the most dynamic instructional technologies available to today's educators. Increasing the accessibility of the EEA website and enhancing the use of multi-media therefore seems the way to go.

This year, the development of EEA's new educational "[Eco Agents](#)" website is the key focus of our work. Eco Agents is an international learning platform targeted at children (9-14 year-olds) and educators alike. It aims at raising children's awareness about current environmental issues and topics. The five topics currently featured include climate change, water, biodiversity, sustainable consumption and air. The issues are embedded in stories introduced in the form of comic strips – a medium familiar and popular among children. The "special eco missions" to which they are assigned encourage them to learn about environmental issues by completing quizzes and reading eco-tips, which they can implement in their daily lives. In this fashion, they learn that the decisions they make can have wide-reaching consequences for the environment thus empowering them to act accordingly.



Recognising the need for teachers' guidance, educational materials for the class-setting will be made available in a "Teacher's Corner" section of the website. Also available will be a database of links to various quality national websites that provide more detailed information about the environment and education.

EEA's challenge lies in finding ways in which to link the international dimension back to the local one. Multilingualism is a pre-requisite, as is the linking of 'universal' values back to children's daily reality. 2008 will be an important learning year, as the "Eco Agents" website will be widely disseminated and its use monitored across Europe.

In addition to Eco Agents, the EEA also aims to link up to wider educational networks throughout Europe in order to ensure that its environmental information is picked up by relevant educational projects for all ages. This will include networking with ministries of education, schools and universities, training centres, life long learning initiatives and educational research.

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