



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

from : Presidency

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Subject : Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)

– Policy debate at the EYC Council of 18/19 May 2006 on the contribution of
education to sustainable development

○ Presidency summary

As a contribution to the above review, delegations will find attached a Presidency summary of the
above debate.

Education Council, 19 May 2006

Policy debate on the contribution of education to sustainable development

Presidency summary

In June 2005 the European Council adopted a Declaration on Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development, while in December that year it took note of the Commission Communication on a renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy for the coming 5 years. This revised Strategy is due for adoption by the European Council in June 2006. Sustainable development means that the needs of the present generation should be met *without* compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations, too. This is an overarching objective of the European Union, which is laid down in the Treaty and governs all the Union's policies and activities.

However, sustainable development should not be perceived solely as an environmental issue. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy is aimed at creating a cleaner, fairer, yet wealthier Europe by reinforcing and complementing the Lisbon Strategy. At their meeting in May 2006 EU Education Ministers also emphasised the role of education as a prerequisite for promoting the behavioural changes needed to achieve a reversal of those unsustainable trends which mark certain parts of our lifestyle. Education should thus be recognised as a cross-sectoral issue in the revised strategy. Citizens need to realise that their actions have an impact on social cohesion, economic development and the environment. They need to obtain the knowledge and skills required to adjust to the complexity and multiple interdependencies of today's world in a perspective of responsible global citizenship.

Combining consideration for social justice, environmental compatibility and economic growth, education lies at the heart of sustainable development. It can contribute to greater social cohesion and well-being by ensuring equal opportunities for all and empowering citizens to play an active role in society and to make more sustainable choices. The success of the overall strategy will also depend on high-quality education for sustainable development at all levels of education and cover issues such as the sustainable use of energies and transport systems, sustainable consumption and production patterns, health, media competence and responsible global citizenship. Member States should develop education for sustainable development and targeted training for professions in key areas. In this respect, Ministers underlined the importance of teacher training.

Furthermore, sustainable development is a key element in strengthening the competitiveness and innovation capacities of higher education systems across Europe. Universities and research institutes, as well as private enterprises, have an essential role to play in promoting research that supports efforts to break the link between economic growth and environmental degradation. Universities and other higher education institutions need to provide education and training that will equip a qualified workforce with the necessary skills and competences required to fully develop and exploit sustainable technologies. They should also contribute to low environmental impact management by developing interdisciplinary approaches and building on existing networks.

Ministers agreed that further development - at both national and international level - would require a process of mutual exchange and learning and that existing know-how should become more accessible by sharing examples of best practice. Their discussion highlighted the importance of existing EU education programmes with regard to education for sustainable development. Member States could further develop respective national action plans, by making use of the “Education and Training 2010” work programme and the 2007-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme. Synergies could also be sought in the context of the UN Decade of Education for SD (2005-2014), while Member States should also be encouraged to implement the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development adopted in Vilnius in 2005.
