

Cyprus' Interventions
6th meeting of ESD Steering Committee
7-8 April 2011
Venue: Geneva

The progress of Cyprus on the following topics is presented below in details.

(i) Curriculum revision/adaptation

The revised and reformed National Curriculum in Cyprus includes, for the first time, environmental issues and issues concerned with Sustainable Development which are hitherto defined as part of the official educational policy of the country. A committee of academics, decision makers and teachers from all the educational levels and specialized in various fields, was organised to prepare the National Curriculum for ESD which will cover a cross-curricular material and will apply to all educational levels.

Through this particular programme/subject the issues concerned with sustainable development are clearly defined; the educational aims (items to be learnt, skills and values to be acquired) have been determined and the teaching and learning approaches are clarified for all levels of education. More precisely, this particular National Curriculum is based on the philosophy of the Sustainable School so its aims and objectives refer to students, teachers, the school and the local community. The Curriculum for ESD aims to work from within each school in Cyprus as a tool for guidance through which every school will shape its own sustainable educational policy to address both short and long term problems and needs faced by the particular community where these school units are located. It is noted that each Thematic Unit of the National Curriculum is developed through key-stages of which the outcomes are determined. Issues like the models of production and consumption, sustainable tourism, climatic changes, energy, poverty, fair trade, rural production and the sustainable use of land, desertification, biodiversity, alternative means of transport, energy etc. are approached through organised and well-developed projects and are dispersed throughout the Curriculum as they cover cross-curricula topics.

At this phase, this particular programme of the National Curriculum is being implemented in Cyprus Primary Education and will progressively be extended to cover all educational levels in the next few years.

(ii) Professional development of teachers (in-service training)

The issues of ESD have been incorporated in all the educational programmes and the training of teachers' at all educational levels. Concerning the optional teachers' in-service training programmes, it is noted that these include courses that refer to: a) the theory and methodology of ESD, b) the planning of educational programmes addressed to ESD, c) the basic principles of organisation and planning of a sustainable school, d) the use of the local community and the Centers of Environmental Education as places for the promotion of issues concerned with sustainable development, all integrated within the framework of connecting formal and informal education. Indicatively, 235 people (165 Assistant Directors of Higher Education and 70 Principals) participated in the organised training seminars in the period 2005-2009, while more than 800 teachers have participated in various types of seminars and programmes of training in ESD.

Given the fact that Education for Sustainable Development is formally incorporated in the educational system according to the new curricula, it is important to note that during the school year 2010 – 2011 particular attention was given to the education and training of teachers and principals of primary education since this is the first level of education at which ESD will be formally incorporated. Organised educational and training programmes aim at adequately training both principals and teachers so that they acquire necessary skills and competences. More specifically, this year, obligatory educational and training programmes were organised addressing more than 900 teachers. The programmes of education and training on ESD are being developed so as to cover various areas and the courses include: a) the theoretical framework and content of ESD, b) the philosophy and the development of the National Curriculum for ESD, c) the planning of experiential workshops and the use of relevant pedagogical techniques for the effective implementation of ESD in schools, d) interventions in the school units. Additionally, seminars, meetings and conferences were organised to examine the above issues. The educational and training programmes addressed to teachers will be reinforced and extended in the years to follow and will be offered on obligatory and optional basis.

An important issue regarding the education and training of educators in Cyprus is the education and the in-service training on ESD of principals and all educators holding executive offices. Already, newly appointed principals, attending compulsory programmes within the framework of their in-service training, have been participating in courses related to the content and context of sustainable schools. Through these courses, the familiarisation of the involved principals with the needed skills and competences for the effective organisation, support and application of the Environmental Sustainable Educational Policy was pursued. During the courses issues such as ‘sustainable leadership and ESD’ and ‘leading a sustainable school’ were examined and discussed. In the year to follow all these courses will be expanded and applied on national level. The responsible body for the education and training of teachers in the areas of Environmental Education and ESD is the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute which, if deemed necessary, cooperates with scientists from various organisations for the fulfilment of this obligation

(iii) Development of learning resources

Of particular interest is the attention paid to the development of educational and supportive material related to ESD in Cyprus, aimed at aiding teachers in their effort to implement the National Curriculum. In the present phase, the Pedagogical Institute, which is the co-ordinating body, in cooperation with the Central Committee of the National Curriculum, promotes the production of educational material for the twelve thematic ESD units that are included in the National Curriculum of EE and the ESD. A book entitled “Issues of Sustainable Development in Education” has been published and sent to schools. The book includes material addressing five fundamental issues: Poverty, Sustainable Tourism, Production and Consumption, Desertification and Means of Transport. All issues are approached through the local, national, regional and global point of view. Moreover, electronic data is being prepared which will be available on-line with material related to all the issues concerned with sustainable development and are included in the New National Curriculum. This bank with the relevant material will include useful web pages, activities, games related to environmental awareness, projects which can be used by teachers and can be accessed at:

http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211&Itemid=189&lang=el

It is marked that three educational tools are in the process of production. “Culture and Environment”, “Energy Educational Suitcase” and “Educational Suitcase for the Management of Waste” are three educational tools which include an educational guidebook for the teacher, activity sheets for students, software and films relevant to the issues of ESD, and which could be utilised in various lessons. All educational tools take Cyprus’ reality into consideration and are prepared in collaboration with teachers, scientists and experts in the area of EE and ESD.

(iv) Developing a whole school approach

The whole school approach is the main objective of Cyprus Educational Policy concerning the presence of ESD in the educational system. The whole philosophy of the National Curriculum for ESD is based on the rationale of the sustainable school and the need for each school to organise and apply its own sustainable educational policy based on a pedagogical, organisational and social frame. This policy is long-termed, and deals with each school separately, its particularities and the problems it faces as well the problems of the community in which it belongs. It aims at the qualitative improvement of school and the relevant community within the frames of sustainable development. The aims set during the preparation of the sustainable educational policy of the school relate not only to the students, but also teachers, the school and the community. More specifically, this policy aims at: a) the improvement of the school in order to operate as an educational means for the study of sustainable development issues, b) the improvement and reorientation of the educational and learning process on the basis of the learning strategies and methodological approaches of ESD, as well as the substantial connection of formal and informal education, c) the improvement of the networks of collaboration at all levels with the community and especially the indigenous population involved. The whole school approach aims to change the school and the community through the collective cooperation of the two.

(v) Teacher training (pre-service):

It is noted that the graduate courses of the teachers’ pre-service training are in the process of reform. At the moment a dialogue is in process involving the higher institutions for developing interdepartmental courses on ESD for prospective students. However, only few Universities offer obligatory or optional modules on ESD. Most of the Educational

Departments in Universities consider Sustainable Development Issues as part of the module 'Teaching Science in school'.

(vi) ESD national action plan development and coordination at international as well as national/State level.

Concerning the UNECE Strategy for Education on Sustainable Development Cyprus has not only adopted the Strategy but has developed its own National Action Plan for Environmental Education focused on Sustainable Development which has been approved by the Council of Ministers and is in the process of being implemented. The Cyprus National Action Plan for ESD is based on the philosophy of, and structured according to the central actions set by, the UNECE's ESD Strategy. It, also, takes into consideration the particular conditions in Cyprus and the needs of the Cyprus Educational System. The particular National Plan is implemented by the coordinating unit of EE and ESD of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute in cooperation with the Education Directorates of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) and all the corresponding institutions and organisations for ESD. Moreover, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute cooperates with international and regional organisations such as ENSI and MIO, and EU countries with which opinions are exchanged, common collaborations are developed and good practices are shared in areas and on issues concerned with the utilisation of central actions of common interest on the Strategy of ESD. An example of collaboration is the proposal COMFOS for teacher and leader competences for ESD with Austria as the leading country, which was submitted under the COMENIUS action within the framework of the life-long learning programme.