United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

8th meeting, 21 March 2013

Information Paper 5

Concept paper on priority action areas[*]
Prepared by the UNECE Secretariat on basis of substantial input given by members and observers of the Steering Committee

*This document was not formally edited.

Background

At the 7th Steering Committee meeting of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), member States agreed upon three priority action areas (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2012/2) para. 32):

a) to ensure that there was an ESD school plan in every school by 2015;
b) to promote the introduction of ESD into teacher education; and
c) to reorient technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy.

The member countries requested the secretariat to draft a short concept paper on those identified priority action areas and mandated the Secretariat to draw on the expertise of Steering Committee members and observers by forming small expert groups to this end (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2012/2 para. 53).

In October 2012 the Secretariat invited members and observers of the Steering Committee to participate in such working groups on the priority action areas. A range of stakeholders, including national focal points for ESD, non-governmental organizations and academia expressed interest in participating in the working groups. The members of the groups are listed in Annex 1. However expressions of interest were either for working on introducing ESD to teacher education or on promoting ESD School Plans. Due to limited expressions of interest, no technical and vocational education and training group was formed at this point in time.

By means of an electronic working platform the groups addressed the following questions, which were developed together with the Chair of the Steering Committee:

1) What relevant activities are being carried out/ what relevant resources have been produced that member states could immediately draw on when working on advancing the priority action areas?
2) What additional activities (e.g. resources, capacity building activities, tools) beyond those already available in the region are vitally needed to advance the priority action areas?
3) Among those needed activities, which ones could and should – against the background of resource limitations - be supported on regional level by the UNECE Steering Committee and what specific resources would be needed to implement those activities?

On the basis of the comprehensive input given by the groups' participants the secretariat drafted this paper. The paper aims at providing input to the discussions of the Steering Committee about future activities to be supported on a regional level. It also outlines a range of readily available resources relevant for working on the priority action areas (Annex 2).

There was no travel required for participation in the groups, i.e. no financial costs occurred.

Ensure that there was an ESD school plan in every school by 2015

The UNECE Strategy for ESD states that "an educational institution, as a whole, (…), should follow principles of SD" (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1; para. 29). Most recently, the Rio+20 outcome document endorsed the whole school approach and encourages education institutions to implement "teaching sustainable development as an integrated component across all disciplines" together with "sustainability management" on the campus and with engagement of the local community.

The working group on ESD school plans strongly endorsed ESD school planning as a crucial component of a whole school approach which goes beyond simply teaching sustainability in school. The Group underscored that ESD good practice means the whole learning environment must correspond to the principles of sustainable development. A whole school approach, for example, encourages to mainstream sustainability into all aspects of the school, i.e. key local and global sustainable development challenges are reflected in the curriculum across all subjects; teaching and learning is learner-centred, exploratory and action-oriented; student-teacher-staff interactions are participatory; buildings and campuses are managed sustainably and provide a 'sustainable learning space' (e.g. resource efficiency, healthy food, green areas, etc.); the school interacts with the community in which it is located. What is learned is put into action. One such example, of what should be included in a whole school approach is illustrated by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) diagram outlined below.

The Group also agreed that ESD school planning is needed to ensure the long-term implementation of ESD based on a progressive, coherent and adaptative approach. Literature from the region indicates that without having sustainable school plans and/or policies in place to establish the responsibility of and provide guidelines for schools to act upon, long-term and systemic ESD change might not be sustained. The *Planning a Sustainable School Guide* by the UK Government for example reinforces this by stating that a plan on sustainable development "can build coherence among a range of initiatives and school practices. It offers schools a bigger picture in which to join-up their work on a range of policies and initiatives, such as *Every Child Matters*, school travel planning, healthy living, school food, extended services, citizenship and learning outside the classroom." Also, the national curriculum of ESD in Cyprus states that "ESD highlights all the principles, pedagogical and methodological process, the content and the organizational and social structures which are prerequisites for the establishment of whole school approaches and can transform the school to a learning organization; a dynamic system which is self-organized, interacts with the community, evolves, and further develops." Another good practice of promoting the implementation of the whole school approach are the Regional Centres of Expertise

(RCEs) on ESD and Open Educational Regions in and through which community based cooperative learning process are promoted and practiced.

Creating a ESD School planning framework
While strongly advocating for ESD school planning, the group underlined that an ESD school plan does not have to be a standalone document, it even would be preferable if ESD could be integrated into existing school plans.

The group stressed the value of putting together a school planning framework on a regional level to provide guidance on how to go about moving towards a coherent and long term implementation of the whole school approach. The group proposed that such an ESD school planning framework should aspire to be evolving and flexible. While providing guidance, it should be relevant for schools that might be at different stages in moving from a traditional to a whole school approach. The school planning framework could target pre-primary, primary and secondary education bridging the gap that often exists between the different stages of formal education. In addition the UNECE school planning framework should not be a restrictive or directive model, but rather a flexible guidance for development, applicable in diverse local, national and regional circumstances. To reflect this characteristic this paper uses the term ESD school planning[1], rather than the term school plan which would suggest a more static understanding. The term ESD School planning embraces the notion that at ESD's core lies within the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. The focus on the process itself is key since – in today's rapidly changing world – the developed knowledge and attitudes will need to be constantly rediscovered and up-dated.

The group stressed that ESD school plans however must not be seen as an extra burden on schools. Hence, the focus of the framework should be on how to make existing School Plans more ESD compatible. Embedding ESD into existing school plans was found to be important because numerous and competing demands are made on the education system. If ESD is seen as another priority that detracts from their existing priorities, it would not be easily embraced. Instead, the emphasis should be on how to incorporate ESD into existing school priorities. ESD school planning offers a concept for schools to organize and construct their own activities to form a consistent concept of school development focusing on sustainable development. For those schools who are in the starting phase it could provide guidance; for those who are already well on the way to become a sustainable school it could help to connect a range of projects under an overarching concept.

The Group underscored the need to have the school planning framework structured around key components. These would include but not be limited to:

(a) The school community and governance
(b) Curriculum design
(c) Teaching and learning methods and materials
(d) Facilities and operations
(e) Partnerships (school-community interaction)
(f) Monitoring and evaluation

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[1] The group noted countries might adopt different names for ESD school planning, according to national and local perspectives and requirements.

Moreover, the UNECE school planning framework could address the process for developing a sustainable school plan or embedding ESD into an existing school plan since the process may be just as important as the plan itself. Sustainable school planning undertakes a process of change that is participatory, holistic and sustainable. When developing an ESD School planning framework the group stressed that available experiences, resources and tools in the region should be consulted and it should be considered to include cases from the region.

It is proposed to keep the format of the working group on ESD school plans – i.e. to work electronically to be as cost effective as possible, and to designate a chair which, in close cooperation with the Secretariat facilitates the drafting process. Only if deemed necessary by the Group and the Secretariat an in-person meeting should be taken into consideration, subject to available funding by a host country or organization

It is proposed that a second call to participate in the Working Group on ESD School Plans is launched to give members and observers of the Steering Committee again the possibility to join the already existing Group.

The Group moreover stressed the need that any outcome document would be translated into their national languages by the member countries of the Strategy, in order to ensure the usability of the produced materials in the region.

Introducing ESD to teacher education

The UNECE Strategy for ESD emphasizes that appropriate initial training and re-training of educators along with, opportunities for them to share experiences are extremely important for the success of ESD. With heightened awareness and knowledge on sustainable development and, in particular, sustainable development aspects in the areas where they work, educators can be more effective and lead by example. The Strategy moreover stresses that educators at all levels of education need to increase their knowledge about and develop their skills and competences for education for sustainable development in order to provide appropriate guidance and support to students. Therefore, competence-building efforts are necessary at all levels of both formal and non-formal education. Among the key actions named by the Strategy are: stimulate competence development for staff in the education system, include sustainable development-related issues in training and re-training programmes for educators for all levels of education; and encourage educators, including those involved in non-formal and informal education, to share experiences. (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, paras 31. 54- 55)

In implementation phase II and III of the UNECE Strategy for ESD, the Steering Committee has supported the development of educator competences of ESD and policy recommendations on promoting those competences by the UNECE Expert Group on Competences. The Expert Group moreover has developed training materials on educator competences, which have been piloted at a sub-regional workshop in Central Asia.[2]

Promoting the use of readily available resources

The working group on introducing ESD to teacher education reinforced the need to promote educator competences for ESD and the introduction of ESD to pre-service and in-service educator training. The Group stressed that very useful materials had been developed in the run of the UN Decade for ESD, such as the Learning for the Future: Competences in ESD report and the Recommendations for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability (McKeown and Hopkins, 2005), published by UNESCO. The Group highlighted that these readily available resources should be further promoted, including through regional capacity building efforts. Drawing on existing guidelines and good practices and making the resources known any capacity building efforts should moreover be embedded in existing learning and cooperation structures/networks and should contribute to extending those. There appears to be significant challenges in the UNECE region when it comes to introducing ESD into teacher education. Among the main challenges mentioned by the participants of the group are a lack of coordination and dialogue, between ministries and teacher education institutions as well as between university departments.

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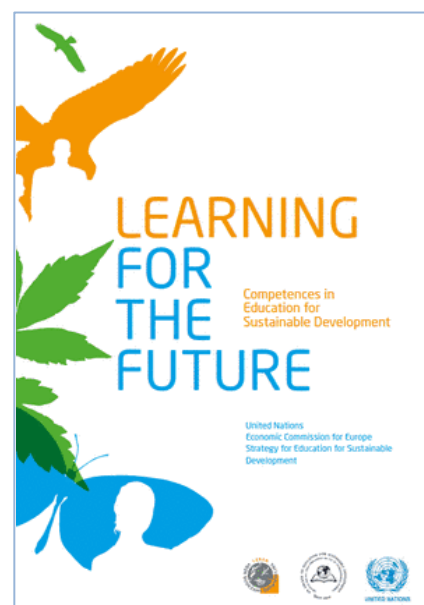
[2] Central Asian countries have expressed the need for more capacity building activities on national level.

Also, universities would often treat ESD as standalone project and often face a lack of capacity to integrate ESD in an interdisciplinary way: this is often the consequence of the lacking of specific roadmaps to further the infusion of sustainability education in the higher Education sector. In pre-service education, certification requirements, limited course time, overcrowded curricula and conflicts with mandated courses and or course contents were also cited as major limitations to mainstreaming ESD into teacher education. The group's discussion reinforced the need to continue introducing ESD into teacher education as there remains much work to be done.

Putting teacher education at the top of the agenda for future implementation of ESD
Due to persistent challenges with introducing ESD into teacher education, the group proposed that the Steering Committee consider placing teacher education at the core of a future UNECE ESD implementation framework with a workplan targeting key areas of teacher education. Issues for consideration may include:

- Defining targets for teacher education
- Recognizing and targeting different needs of initial (university) and in-service teacher education (professional development), this includes different models, content and methodology
- Setting guidelines for teacher training re- orientation (including contents, methodology, setting and tools)
- Focusing on a system-wide change, planned from bottom up as well as top-down, taking into account the various dimensions of ESD, incl. government policies and priorities, teacher professional standards and curriculum content;
- Defining further the contents and methods in which teachers should be trained, guided and re-oriented to achieve integrated ESD from a holistic perspective
- Working on scaling up successful projects
- Promoting the broad implementation and use of existing resources and recommendations through regional capacity building efforts which emphasize a multi-stakeholder approach
- Combining school plan development with teacher education more profoundly to drive change effectively
- Strengthening coordination and encouraging dialogue between the Ministries of Education and the Faculties of Education as well as Presidents of Universities around ESD and a whole school approach
- Fostering interdepartmental cooperation within universities and promoting the infusion of ESD in all disciplines (other than only in the faculties of education)

ANNEX 1

Working group on introducing ESD to teacher education

Name	Organisation/ Country
Carolee Buckler	Manitoba Education/ Canada
Jos Eussen	RCE Rhine-Meuse
Diana Achimescu	Ministry of Environmet and Forests/ Romania
Tatyana Shakirova	CAREC/ Kazakhstan
Michael Scoullos	mio-ecsde / Greece
Michel Ricard / Jean-Marc Lange	Planet'ERE
Aravella Zachariou	Cyprus
Rainer Mathar	ENSI
Irina Semko	Belarus
Manana Ratiani	Georgia

Working Group on ESD School Plans

Name	Organisation/ Country
Carolee Buckler	Manitoba Education/ Canada
Jos Eussen	RCE Rhine-Meuse
Bernard Combes	UNESCO
Per Sund	Mälardalen University, Sweden
Michel Ricard	Planet'ERE
Aravella Zachariou	Cyprus
Rainer Mathar	ENSI
Manana Ratiani	Georgia

ANNEX 2

The Group shared a range of materials/resources during the discussion, which is listed below for interested stakeholders.

ESD School Plans
Selection of good Practices and local approaches

Country	Resource
Cyprus	Presentation: ESD Plans in Cyprus (Sustainable Environmental Educational Policy) Template: Planning Schools' sustainable environmental education policy (SEEP) Template: Planning school classes SEEP Matrix: Key players and roles for putting the whole school approach into practice
Netherlands	Project Description: RCE Rhine-Meuse - for Open Educational Regional Areas
United Kingdom	Poster: National Framework for Sustainable Schools Self-evaluation form for schools: Driving school improvement through sustainable development
Finland	Approach to certification: sustainable criteria and certification for educational establishments
Manitoba, Canada	Draft Sustainability School Plan Strategy Manitoba Sustainable Schools Guide
France	Comité 21: information on school agenda 21s including examples of school plans
Beyond the UNECE Region	Implementing the whole school approach in Kenya Implementing the whole school approach in Australia ESD Good practices in UNESCO associated schools

Policy papers and other relevant materials

Country/ Organisation	Resource
UNESCO	Education for Sustainable Development Lens: A Policy and Practice Review Tool (Module 4 includes a review question and tool on How does ESD help to create sustainable schools) ESD Sourcebook includes a brief for policy makers on Whole-School Approach to Sustainability Education for Sustainable Development and Life Skills – a thematic think peace by UNESCO on Education and skills for inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2015 Exploring Sustainable Development: A multi-perspective approach – a tool helping secondary and other teachers to meet new expectations
Australian Government, Department of Environment and Heritage	Whole-school approaches to sustainability: An international review of whole school sustainability programs
German Government, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and	A Cross-Curricular Framework for Global Development Education in the Context of Education for Sustainable Development

Development	
Environment and Schools Initiatives (ENSI)	Quality Criteria for ESD-Schools (developed together with SEED; available in more than 18 languages) Model: Sustainable School House
Sustainability and Education Academy (SEdA)	Domain Framework for Whole System Approach to ESD

Introducing ESD in teacher education
Selection of good Practices and local approaches

Country	Resource
Manitoba, Canada	• Education for Sustainable Development in Canadian Faculties of Education - a study by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada which examines how Canadian faculties of education are incorporating ESD into their pre-service programs, research, and other activities. • Suggested Actions for Reorienting Teacher Education in the Faculties of Education in Manitoba to Address Sustainability
United Kingdom	• University of Gloucestershire online ressource: University of Guide to Quality and Education for Sustainability in Higher Education
Kazakhstan	• Mandatory discipline "Ecology and Sustainable Development" (2 credits, 90 hours) introduced to higher education system -for bachelors of all universities of Kazakhstan (from 2010); • Voluntary discipline "Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Development" developed for introduced to higher technical education system - for bachelors of technical universities of Kazakhstan (from 2010); • "Green Pack for Central Asia" as a toolkit for introduction Education for Sustainable Development into school education in Kazakhstan and Central Asia (recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan in 2011); • "Caspian Green Pack" as a base for development of schools strategies for Sustainable Development with the accent for energy efficiency in the Caspian Sea region of Kazakhstan (2012-2014, UNDP, SGP GEF, Coca-Cola)

Beyond the UNECE Region	• Australia Research Institute:
	     ○ Mainstreaming Sustainability into Pre-service Teacher Education in Australia – Stage 3: Enablers and constraints (2010)
	     ○ Mainstreaming Sustainability into Pre-service Teacher Education in Australia – Stage 2 (2009)
	     ○ Mainstreaming Sustainability into Pre-service Teacher Education – Stage 1: Whole-school approaches to sustainability: A review of models for professional development in pre-service teacher education (2006)

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Policy papers and other relevant materials

Country/ Organisation	Resource
UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Teacher Education	• Guidelines and Recommendations for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability • Good Practices in Education for Sustainable Development: Teacher Education Institutions
UNESCO Office Jakarta	• Education for Sustainable Development Country Guidelines for Changing the Climate of Teacher Education to Address Sustainability – Putting Transformative Education into Practice