

UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

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In the spotlight:

- **Future ESD implementation frameworks**
- **Assessing the impact of ESD**

Dear Colleagues,

How to assess the effectiveness of Education for Sustainable Development? – A question that many members of the Steering Committee appear to face. As a follow-up to the eighth Steering Committee meeting, we circulate a selection of relevant studies in this newsletter, and warmly invite you to share further relevant work on this topic with us and the Committee.

The newsletter moreover summarizes the outcomes of the regional consultation meeting on the follow up of the UN Decade of ESD and outlines the next step towards implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD beyond its third implementation phase.

Best wishes,

UNECE Secretariat for ESD

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Contents

Promoting ESD beyond implementation phase III (2015) in the UNECE region.....	2
Towards a global post UN Decade framework for ESD.....	3
Preparations for the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development	4
Measuring knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable development: two exploratory studies.....	4
Concerning sustainable development among tenth grade students in Manitoba	5
Education for Sustainable Development in Canadian faculties of education	6



UNECE Strategy for ESD

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Future ESD implementation frameworks

Promoting education for sustainable development in the UNECE region beyond implementation phase III

With a view to the third implementation phase of the UNECE Strategy for ESD coming to an end in two years, the Committee re-affirmed its decision to continue implementing the Strategy beyond 2015. The Committee decided to develop a future implementation framework to this end.

The Committee agreed that the proposed implementation framework should include the following topics: common vision; governance body; priorities; financing; and timeframe. It was underscored that the priority action areas of implementation phase III should continue to be at the core of the UNECE ESD work. The implementation framework should be closely linked to the post-Decade ESD programme framework that UNESCO is currently developing. In particular, the reporting requirements should be closely aligned.

During the discussion, the following issues were found to be particularly important to the drafting process of the future implementation framework:

- social, economic and political changes of the last decade and their impact on ESD
- a re-affirmed, shared vision on ESD
- the outcomes of all major relevant events
- considering to invite additional Ministries to take part in the ESD process
- the role of information and communication technologies to effectively address non-formal and informal learning
- strengthened cooperation with the European Union

The Committee requested that the 2015 national implementation reporting be carried out already in 2014 so that the results would be available for feeding into a post 2015 framework.

In addition, the Committee agreed that a High Level Segment of Education and Environment Ministries should be held at the next Environment for Europe (Efe) Conference.

Towards a global post UN Decade framework



In its 190th session, the Executive Board of UNESCO expressed “its preference for a programme framework as follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development after 2014”. The Board requested the Director-General “to develop, in

consultation with Member States, and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the proposal for a programme framework”.

Moreover, the Rio+20 conference outcome document, The Future We Want, states that countries “resolve to promote education for sustainable development and to integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.”

Against this background, UNESCO, as the lead agency for the Decade, launched a process to define priorities and action areas for future work in ESD.

UNESCO to this end organized consultation meetings in all five UN regions and sent out country questionnaires. The regional consultation meeting for the European and North American region was held back to back with the Steering Committee meeting and identified key challenges and successful initiatives of the UN Decade for ESD as

UNECE Strategy for ESD

well as discussed priority action areas for a future implementation framework.

The outcomes of these consultations inform the drafting of a post-Decade programme framework. That framework, which is expected to highlight key priority action areas, is expected to be submitted to the Executive Board of UNESCO and the 37th UNESCO General Conference in autumn 2013 for its consideration and subsequent transmission to the UN General Assembly.

Key challenges

During the consultation meeting for the European and North American region, the following key challenges were identified by Member States and observers in implementing education for sustainable development during the the UN Decade for ESD (DESD):

(a) Strategizing ESD: It was pointed out that ESD is not always sufficiently understood nor connected to wider discourses in education or economic development and that its place in international affairs need to be further clarified. Connecting ESD advocacy to the language of other stakeholders can be challenging. One example given was that ESD has not properly reacted to the trend towards large-scale assessments such as PISA. The need for solid longitudinal impact assessment on ESD was also mentioned in this regard.

(b) From projects to structural integration: While a multitude of activities is implemented, the structural integration of ESD appears to remain a challenge. The need for overarching frameworks to complement and support the many bottom up activities was highlighted. Moreover, in some countries, it was pointed out, there is little cooperation between grassroots organizations and policy makers. It was mentioned that grassroots organizations are not always sufficiently visible.

(c) National coordination: It was pointed out that in many cases, ESD is being implemented through one Ministry. Some countries felt there is a need to extend the remit of this agenda and connect it with multiple Ministries. It was recognised, however,

that coordinating across Ministries was a challenge. In addition, countries with a decentralized education system found it difficult to develop a national ESD vision and coordinate efforts in support of this vision. Lack of coordination also makes it difficult to report on the implementation of the ESD.

(d) Resourcing: The lack of dedicated resources (financial, staffing, etc.) remains as an obstacle to ESD implementation according to many participants. Steps taken to increase awareness of the relevance of this agenda to national and regional priorities may address this situation.

Successful initiatives

The following types of initiatives were identified in the debate as particularly successful and proposed for scaling-up in a post-2014 ESD framework:



- Work at the policy level, such as the recently adopted Tbilisi Communique.
- ESD school plans, e.g. in Estonia, Finland and Cyprus.
- Programmes linking ESD and economic development: Challenging the Crisis, Ireland.
- Formal commitments and actions of higher education institutions, e.g. Higher Education Sustainability Initiative launched at Rio+20 as well as the Copernicus Alliance Rio+20 Higher Education Treaty; which brings together Universities across Europe to embed ESD into the core of the Higher Education system.
- Facilitating ESD implementation through networks e.g. ENSI, or at the sub-regional level, e.g. the Central Asian Working Group for ESD, or at the local level through Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD.
- Establishing inter-departmental working groups on ESD and infusing ESD across all the governmental departments, e.g. in Canada.
- UNESCO Chairs on ESD, e.g. in Greece, Germany, and Armenia.
- Capacity building programmes for educators and policy makers, e.g. carried out by the

UNECE Strategy for ESD

Mediterranean Information Office for Environment and Sustainability Sustainable Futures Leadership Academy or through the Sustainability and Education Academy in partnership with York University and Learning for a Sustainable Future in Canada.

- Using ICT tools to make materials and resources easily available, e.g. in the Netherlands and the Young Masters Programme in Sweden; in the UK government funded project Quality Assurance in ESD Project.
- Vocational Education Sector has made inroads in infusing ESD especially in Spain and France.
- Strengthening Educator Competences for ESD, e.g. the UNECE ESD Competences framework which has been well received and has already been adopted by institutions across Europe.

Key priority areas for ESD post 2014

Participants underscored that ESD implementation post 2014 must be concrete and tangible and focus on action on the ground. Consequently, there was strong support for identifying a limited set of priority action areas, while at the same time providing a platform for all stakeholders active in ESD. Further general comments included the need to fully reflect non-formal education.

The following action areas emerged as priorities for ESD activities after 2014:

(a) Policy level work: ESD must be integrated into education and sustainable development policies and the link must be made between ESD and other relevant processes, such as with the UNECE environmental conventions; processes related to disaster risk reduction and biodiversity as well as the post 2015 Development Agenda. At the national level, policy links with economic and wider social policy are also important.

(b) ESD whole institutional approaches: Whole of institutional approaches (integration of ESD into content and methodology of education, into campus/building management, into how the school life is organized, and facilitation of school-

community interaction) were recognized as a vehicle to achieve holistic and structural implementation of ESD in formal, vocational and higher education and to facilitate a link between formal and non-formal education.

(c) Teacher education: Teachers, or, more broadly, educators, are key drivers of change in the process towards integrating ESD into education. Their capacities must be strengthened through ESD in pre-service and in-service teacher education and other forms which support teacher development of non-formal and informal educators.

(d) Networks: It was highlighted that considerable potential remains in strengthening cooperation and creating synergies by means of networks at various levels. Multi-stakeholder networks are particularly promising in this regard. Networks are important in promoting social innovation for ESD.

(e) Effective monitoring and evaluation: Developing capacity for reflective monitoring as well as long term evaluation of ESD is critical. In particular impact assessment was found to be crucial to sustain support and drive ESD implementation. A sound evidence base is important for making the case for ESD.

Preparations for the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

The ESD World Conference is planned to be held from 10 to 12 November 2014, Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, with associated stakeholder meetings from 4 to 8 November in Okayama, Japan. The Conference is expected to mark the end of the DESD but also to set the stage for the future of ESD.

The Conference will feature a high-level segment, parallel workshops as well as side events and exhibitions.

Assessing the impact of ESD implementation



Measuring knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable development: two exploratory studies

Alex C. Michalos et al.; *Social Indicators Research*; February 2011, Volume 100, Issue 3, pp 391-413.

This study identifies the assessment of changes in behaviour - as an outcome of the integration of sustainable development concepts and values into the learning process - as a key challenge of the UN Decade for ESD. It posits that such changes can be best measured at the local and national level and that in order to do so, baselines of current knowledge, attitudes and choices need to be established. The work was initiated in 2007 to better understand the current levels of awareness and understanding of sustainable development among Manitoban adults and youth.

The study presents results of two exploratory surveys taken in the province of Manitoba, Canada, between January and March 2008. A random sample of 506 adults completed a questionnaire designed to measure respondents' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours concerning the basic themes of the UN Decade. In the same period, a convenience sample of 294 students in grades 6-12 in four schools was surveyed based on a simplified version of the same questionnaire. By gathering baseline data, the study contributes to establishing a monitoring framework to assess changes in levels of understanding and behaviours. The gathered information is vital to better assess the

effectiveness of efforts underway during the Decade.

The study is accessible online: http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2009/measuring_knowledge_sd.pdf

Concerning sustainable development among tenth grade students in Manitoba

Alex C. Michalos et al.; *Social Indicators Research* April 2012, Volume 106, Issue 2, pp 213-238.

This study presents progress on the development of standardized measures of tenth grade students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours concerning sustainable development. The study draws on the conceptualisation of sustainable development by UNESCO as the lead agency for the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. The research was structured according to the following two objectives:

- (a) Using standardized measures, to establish a baseline of the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of Manitoban tenth grade students towards sustainable development. With such a baseline in place, the Manitoba Department of Education could monitor evidence of changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among students that might be correlated to current investments in education for sustainable development.
- (b) To provide the measures to other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally that might be seeking to set similar baselines and/or monitor progress on ESD efforts.

The study is accessible online: http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2011/measuring_knowledge_sd_tenth_grade_mb.pdf

UNECE Strategy for ESD

Education for Sustainable Development in Canadian faculties of education

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada 2012

This report presents the results of exploratory research with Canadian faculties of education which aimed at gaining a better understanding of how they are incorporating ESD into their pre-service programs, research, and other activities. Key findings of the report include:

- There is modest but promising progress toward reorienting teacher Education to address education for sustainable development
- The contribution of the DESD in helping early adopters within faculties to create a legitimate space for ESD debate and action across their faculties is an important one
- There is divergence between individual and institutional responses, in which ESD adoption is still primarily an individual faculty member commitment rather than a faculty-wide response
- Drivers and enablers, barriers and challenges noted through this study are consistent with international research into reorienting teacher education, in particular the Guidelines and Recommendations for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability (McKeown and Hopkins 2005)
- Relationship between faculties of education and ministries and departments of education: The study reinforces the need to examine more carefully how ministries and departments of education and faculties of education can align mutual interests and mandates for ESD.

The full report is accessible online:

http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/279/ESD_Dean_reportEN.pdf
