ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development
Bureau
Seventh meeting
November 2007 (by e-mail consultation)

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNECE EXPERT GROUP ON COMPETENCES IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT[1]

prepared by the UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for ESD

The Steering Committee requested[2] the UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for ESD to prepare, for consideration by the next meeting of the Committee, a proposal for establishment of an expert group on competences in ESD.

The Expert Group considered this issue at its eighth meeting (Paris, 15-18 September 2008) and prepared the requested proposal. The proposal also includes references to the available information resources related to the issue of competences in ESD, which were known to the Expert Group at that time (Annex III).

The proposal is submitted to the Bureau for comments. The Bureau is also invited to inform the secretariat of relevant information resources in addition to those already included in the Annex III. The revised proposal, reflecting comments by the Bureau, will be submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration and approval.

Introduction

1.   The UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) calls specifically[3] for the development of educators' competences to engage in ESD. The joint session

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[1] This document was not formally edited.

[2] See also the report of the third meeting of the Steering Committee (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/2, para. 27).

[3] The UNECE Strategy for ESD (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, paras. 54 -55).

on ESD held at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference[4] recognized the competence of educators as a frequent bottleneck vis-à-vis improving the quality of education and agreed that one priority for future implementation of the Strategy should be developing competences in ESD. The first reporting exercise clearly identified the need to further define the nature of competences in ESD and the ways in which these may be developed in the education sector. Furthermore, there is a need to create an enabling policy environment in which this work on competences in ESD can be supported and applied in each member State.

2.   The UNECE Reporting Mechanism and the set of Indicators for ESD provide a means to monitor broad implementation of the Strategy, including to identify countries needs for implementing ESD, in formal, non-formal and informal education. The report[5] on progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD highlights the key role of educators in advancing ESD. While the indicator framework outlines a number of competences for *learners*, there is still a need to identify the specific competences required by *educators* in order to achieve this goal. Thus, further work on competences in ESD would also contribute to the future reporting exercises.

3.   The efforts by the UNECE region to address the issue of competences in ESD will provide an important contribution to the United Nations Decade of ESD.

I.   TERMS OF REFERENCE

A.   Scope

4.   Given the need for effective political action to promote ESD in the UNECE region, the outcome of the work on competences in ESD should serve two audiences. It should be addressed *to* policy-makers, while providing clear guidelines *for* educators (see the Mandate, point C. of this document). The work should build upon the foundation provided by a number of initiatives to define ESD competences in the education sector.

B.   Rationale

5.   There is a widespread concern that our current model of development is unsustainable and that our education systems reflect and support this model to a large extent.

6.   We are faced with a dual challenge to (a) re-cast our model of development while (b) preparing our society for survival in a rapidly changing world. Education alone cannot solve the world's problems but it is an essential prerequisite for empowering society to make the transition to a sustainable future.

7.   If education is to be oriented toward sustainability it will demand a corresponding shift in the competences required by educators themselves. Some of these competences are already recognised while others will require an innovative approach. It is hoped that this new

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[4] Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007).

[5] Learning from each other: achievements, challenges and the way forward. Report on progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/3 – ECE/CEP/AC.13/2007/2).

combination of competences will provide the necessary educational setting for effective ESD to emerge.

8.   ESD is based on the competence to think and act in a reflective way; it applies systems thinking, develops the skills needed to contribute to a better future, to accommodate changes and to learn from experience.[6] The concept of competence in ESD is closely connected to the four aspects of learning identified in the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, *Learning: the treasure within*[7] (learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together). The concept needs to be adapted with respect to the special characteristics of ESD: its holistic perspective, value orientation and critical reflective practice. The UNECE Strategy focuses on professional competencies of educators and their needs in terms of understanding ESD and the ability to educate for sustainable development. Professional educators in ESD need special skills to enable learners to understand the world in which they live, act on this understanding, address the complexity and interconnectedness between social, economical, and ecological areas. These skills are often referred to as ESD competencies. ESD competencies could be assessed within the following categories: as subject competencies, methodological competencies, social competencies, and personal competencies[8].

C.   Mandate

9.   Pursuant to the outcomes of the high-level session on ESD organized at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, the Steering Committee decides to establish an Expert Group on Competences in ESD with the following mandate:

10.   To prepare a document to include:

        (a)   general recommendations to policy-makers for creating an enabling environment for the development of competences across all sectors of education, with particular emphasis on formal education; and

        (b)   a range of core competences in ESD for educators, as well as guidelines for the development of these competences among educators.

11.   This document may address the three elements *why? what?* and *how?* of developing educators' competences in ESD.

12.   The *why?* could include a vision of a *sustainable education* and identify a variety of open questions surrounding competences that may require consideration at the policy level (see Annex I).

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[6] See also Sleurs, Willy (ed.): Competences for ESD. A framework to integrate ESD in the curriculum of teacher training institutes. Produced by the Comenius 2.1 Project.

[7] <http://www.unesco.org/delors/>.

[8] Candice Stevens, OECD, Competences for Education for Sustainable Development <http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3343,en_2649_37425_40771408_1_1_1_1,00.html>.

13.   The *what?* could provide a flexible framework or model to facilitate the identification and development of competences in the education sector.

14.   The *how?* could explore the practical implications of developing these competences and provide illustrative examples from existing good practices around the UNECE region. This may also include reflections on how competences are assessed and suggest effective means of evaluation.

15.   There is a dynamic interconnection among these three elements that should be taken into account by the Expert Group on Competences in ESD. Processes, for example, may be needs-driven either by the educators or by the policy makers (*supply* and *demand*). The outcome document should provide a clear analysis of possible intervention points in policy/practice, e.g. training and re-training staff, encouraging educators to share experiences, etc. (see UNECE Strategy for ESD, CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, para. 55).

16.   The complexity of this issue, bringing together professional and individual competences and methods for acquiring and assessing them, means that we cannot expect a definitive model; rather the outcome will provide a useful framework for the practical application of ESD in a broad range of educational settings.

17.   The outcome should be linked clearly to the UNECE Strategy for ESD, the reporting mechanism and accompanying indicators.

D.   Reporting

18.   The Expert Group will report on its work to the Steering Committee at the Steering Committee's future meetings.

E.   Composition

19.   The Expert Group will be composed of members with an extensive experience related to: (a) national and international ESD policies; (b) competences in teaching environmental education and ESD; and (c) the management of institutions that are implementing the "whole-institution approach".

20.   The members of the Expert Group will be designated by Governments; international organizations, in particular UNESCO; and non-governmental organizations. Candidatures should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat by 31 March 2009. Thereafter, the selection will be undertaken by the future Chairperson of the Expert Group with support from the secretariat in accordance with the selection criteria outlined below.

21.   The proposed key selection criteria for the group are as follows:

        (a)   A maximum of 18 members;

        (b)   A balanced geographical representation of the UNECE member States;

        (c)   A balanced composition to include the required expertise;

(d)   UNESCO should be represented;

(e)   Relevant stakeholders should be represented (e.g. academia, IGOs and NGOs);

(f)   To include one or more experts from the UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for ESD with a view to ensuring synergies between the work of these two expert groups.

The proposed detailed composition is as follows:

ESD actors	Area of expertise	Number[9] of members
Government	ESD-related policy-making	4-5
UNESCO	ESD competences	1
IGOs (e.g. Central Asian Working Group on EE&ESD, OECD, EC, UNICEF)	ESD competences	2
Academia (research)	ESD competences, including the whole-institution approach	2-3
Academia (teachers/educators), including representatives of headmasters; teacher associations	ESD competences, including the whole-institution approach	3-4
NGO's	ESD competences	1-2
Bologna process[10]	ESD competences, including the whole-institution approach	1

II.   WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMEFRAME

22.   The organization of work will depend on the lead country and the availability of funds for this activity. The working arrangements will be agreed among the members of the Expert Group. UNECE will provide secretariat support to the Expert Group in accordance with UNECE rules and practices.

23.   [Name of the country[11]] will take the leadership[12] for this process. Countries wishing to take an active part in this process, e.g. by hosting the Expert Group's meetings, are invited to inform the Secretariat in advance of the Steering Committee's fourth meeting.

24.   The foreseen duration of work is a minimum of two years with a minimum of five three-day meetings.

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[9] The number may vary depending on the submitted candidatures and the expertise.

[10] <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html> and <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>.

[11] Currently under consultation.

[12] Include providing the chairmanship of the process, hosting some of the meetings of the Expert Group, report on the progress to the Steering Committee, promoting the process in relevant forums and ensuring the coordination and synergies with other related process.

25.   The proposed timeline and focus of these five meetings could be as follows:

Body / meeting / date	Objective
Steering Committee, 4th meeting, 19-20 February 2009	decision on establishing the Expert Group
Expert Group, 1st meeting, September 2009	familiarisation with the mandate; considering the work already done in the area of competences; clarifying the methodology of work; agreeing on a plan of work and a timeframe; identifying and agreeing on the key issues and elements, as well as defining expected outcomes.
Expert Group, 2nd meeting, December 2009	working on the three elements of the outcome (1) developing the vision part (*the why*) of the document; and considering the parts (2) for policymakers and (3) for teachers/educators, including identification of specific needs for different levels and target groups, including brainstorming on the framework for competences in ESD. Reporting on the progress of work to the Steering Committee in 2010.
Steering Committee, 5th meeting, March 2010	progress report
Expert Group, 3rd meeting, May 2010	taking into account the Steering Committee's comments, as well as the recent developments in the area of competencies, working further on the document.
Expert Group, 4th meeting, September 2010	
Expert Group, 5th meeting, December 2010	finalizing the document for the Steering Committee meeting in 2011.
Steering Committee, 6th meeting, March 2011	final report

III.   RESOURCES

26.   The UNECE secretariat[13] will organize and service the meetings of the Expert Group.

27.   Meetings will be hosted by the lead country and other interested countries. The host country would be expected to:

(a)   designate a contact point for organising the meeting;

(b)   provide the venue for a three-day meeting for up to 20 participants;

(c)   support financially the travel, accommodation and meals for the eligible experts[14] and the travel and accommodation for one representative from the UNECE secretariat;

(d)   make necessary visa arrangements for experts[15];

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[13] Subject to the funds made available through voluntary contributions to the ESD Trust Fund.

[14] Coming from countries with economies in transition and the representatives of NGOs – some 6 people.

(e)   prepare an information note for participants containing practical information[16];

(f)   provide the technical equipment[17];

(g)   facilitate booking of hotel rooms close to the meeting venue;

(h)   provide coffee/tea breaks[18];

(i)   deal with other logistical matters that may arise during the preparation of the meeting.

28.   The host country expenditures depend on the internal domestic procedures and available facilities for meetings. The approximate costs for point (c) above are presented in Annex II. Member States are welcome to inform the secretariat of their interest in hosting one or more of the Expert Group meetings.

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[15] Provide Experts that require visa to enter the Host Country with an official invitation letter copied to the Host Country Embassies in the respective countries.

[16] E.g. on the venue, accommodation, transfer from/to the airport, public transportation, etc..

[17] E.g. a PC connected to the Internet, a big screen for projecting the text, possibilities to print and make copies of materials, a flipchart.

[18] If possible, also lunches to save time.

Annex I.

Open questions in relation to competences in ESD

1.   The field of education is very broad and when discussing ESD we need to take into consideration the following questions.

A. For whom?

(a)   Should the work focus only on teachers in the formal school system or also on educators engaged in teaching in diverse fields, e.g. in the business sector; policy-making sector; etc. and/or in non-formal and informal education?

(b)   Should the work focus only on students in the formal education or also on learners through the informal and non-formal education?

(c)   Should ESD competences target only the ESD specialists (specialized in ESD teaching) or target all educators?

B. Where and when?

(d)   Should the training of educators, with a view to equip them with competences in ESD, be done mainly at the initial teacher training level and/or also during the in-service training (if so, what would be the specific approach for the latter)?

(e)   Should the training of educators focus mainly on the change from teaching oriented on subject/discipline/individual/classrooms to the teaching oriented at the inter- and multi- disciplinary nature of ESD/whole institution approach, and taking into account the specificity of different disciplines/subjects in relation to the sustainable development (SD) themes (e.g. addressing SD through teaching about the environment)?

C. How?

(f)   Should *learning* be regarded as *instrumental* (providing information and developing skills with a view to achieving a predetermined behaviour change) and/or as *emancipatory* (building the capacity to think critically about and beyond sustainability messages - "learning to learn"), i.e. to change the focus from *what* to *how*? Should the outcome supply a "receipt for competences in ESD" or should it stimulate educators and learners to start their own process of "new" awareness?

(g)   Should academic freedom be allowed or should it be standardized (particularly for the higher education level)?

(h)   On the assumption that today's education is facing back and it reflects the nowadays unsustainable society, how to change the focus of education towards a more sustainable local and global future?

(i)   Should the outcome be a model/template or should it be a general concept, allowing for its adaptation to national and local needs and priorities?

(j)   ESD is process oriented and, therefore, it is difficult to be assessed and to show visible/measurable results in a short-term. In this regard, what should be the best approach for the governments/policy makers to adopt it?

2.   These questions may include considering the balance between the following elements:

(a)   formal education   <=>   non-formal and informal education

(b)   students and learners   <=>   teachers and leaders

(c)   ESD subject specialists   <=>   all educators

(d)   initial educator training   <=>   in-service training

(e)   specific subject(s)   <=>   multi-disciplinary approaches

(f)   promoting positive behaviours <=>   learning to learn

(g)   academic freedom   <=>   addressing global priorities

(h)   national and regional priorities <=>   international standardisation

(i)   processes   <=>   products

(j)   understanding an unlimited   <=>   delimiting what is to be called ESD
        variety of approaches

Annex II.

Estimated costs for supporting participation in meetings of eligible experts

1.   The information in the table below provides an estimate of costs for travel and DSA for five eligible experts, on the assumption that the meeting is held in Geneva. Respectively, the costs for five meetings in Geneva would amount at 52'500 USD. For meetings outside Geneva, the expenses for one staff of UNECE secretariat should be taken into account in addition to the experts' expenses.

Participants from	Days / participants / DSA\$[1]	Costs (1), \$	Travel \$/ participants	Costs (2), \$	Total costs (1) = (2), \$
Eastern Europe	3 x 1 x 321	963	900 x 1	900	1'863
Caucasus	3 x 1 x 321	963	1'300 x 1	1'300	2'263
Central Asia	3 x 1 x 321	963	2'000 x 1	2'000	2'963
South-Eastern Europe	3 x 1 x 321	963	800 x 1	800	1'763
Western Europe (e.g. NGO representative)	3 x 1 x 321	963	500 x 1	500	1'463
Total					10'315
Total (rounded)					**10'500**

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[1] The DSA changes in accordance with the USD - CHF exchange rate.

Annex III.

Background documents and material

Background documents (http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm):

- Discussion paper on competence in ESD in the education sector (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/7);
- Reporting Format (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/10);
- Guidance for reporting (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/5).

Reference documents, UNECE (http://www.unece.org/env/esd/welcome.htm):

- The UNECE Strategy for ESD (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1);
- The Vilnius Framework for the Implementation (CEP/AC.13/2005/4/Rev.1);
- Explanatory notes to the Strategy (CEP/AC.13/2004/8/Add.2);
- Ministerial Declaration of the Belgrade Conference "Environment for Europe" (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8, paragraphs 11 and 12) and the Chair's Summary of the Belgrade Conference "Environment for Europe" (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/9, paragraphs 17 – 26);
- the Joint Statement on ESD by Ministers of Education and of Environment (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/4/Add.1);
- Chair's Summary of the Joint Session on ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/4/Add.3);
- Report on progress in implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD "Learning from each other: achievements, challenges and the way forward" (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/3 – ECE/CEP/AC.13/2007/2);
- The pilot reports submitted by UNECE member States (available on http://www.unece.org/env/esd/Implement.Gov.htm);
- The publication of good practices in ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/9, all collected good practices are available on the website http://www.unece.org/env/esd/GoodPractices/index.html);
- Work Plan for implementation of Phase II (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/5);
- Reports of the meetings of the Steering Committee (CEP/AC.13/2005/7, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2006/3, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/2 and ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/2).

Reference documents (other)[2]:

- The report of the United Kingdom Sustainable Development Education Panel (1998)[3]
- Agenda 21
- OECD work on competences for ESD (http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3343,en_2649_37425_40771408_1_1_1_1,00.html)
- CSCT project (www.csct-project.org)
- Tilbury, D. (1993). Teacher education competencies in education for sustainability. A grounded theory University of Cambridge, PhD Thesis.
- Eco-schools (www.eco-schools.org)
- Quality criteria for ESD-schools (www.ensi.org)
- ENSI projects (www.ensi.org)
- Transfer 21: Teilkompetenzen der Gestaltungskompetenzen und ihre Vermittlung (www.transfer-21.de)
- DEEE project, Development Education Exchange in Europe Project (www.deeep.org)
- Project report "BNE- competence study" (www.phzh.ch under Ueli Nagel kom)

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[2] Some of the references under this section are incomplete. These will be completed for the final paper to be submitted to the Steering Committee.

[3] <http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/defra/educpanel/index.htm>.

- OECD DeCeCo project (www.dececo.admin.ch/)
- DEEE project, Development Education Exchange in Europe Project
- FEE project; Blue flag
- EFA-ESD project
- EMAS, ISO 14001
- Works of: Peter Posh; Bill Scott; Steven Sterling; Gerhard de Haan
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- Tilbury, D & Wortman, D. (2005) *Engaging people in sustainability.*
- Center for eco-literacy (http://www.ecoliteracy.org/education/competencies.html)
- …