

INTERVENTIONS BY CYPRUS

Item 3: Progress by UNECE member states in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD

3a (Designating national focal points, developing national implementation plans, establishing a consultative mechanism and translating the strategy into official and other relevant languages).

The strategy for ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) in Europe has already been translated into Greek and has been distributed to Governmental and non-Governmental bodies. It is noteworthy that recently the Cyprus National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development has been officially approved by the Council of Ministers for implementation. The implementation of the Strategy will be covered by national financial resources.

The implementation of the National Action Plan is estimated to be completed in five years from the time of its official approval. Within the year 2008-2009, the following actions will be promoted.

- The establishment of an official consultative mechanism in the Ministry of Education and Culture. This will have the responsibility for implementing and monitoring the actions of the Education for Sustainable Action Plan, in the Cyprus formal education system.
- The revision of the National Curriculum for all educational levels and its infusion with the key themes of ESD (Citizenship, peace, justice, human rights, health, natural resources, consumption and production, energy).
- The extension and enhancement of the in-service training of teachers, from all levels of education, in theory, pedagogy and methodological aspects of ESD. Furthermore, it is noted that the design of new training courses for ESD that should be offered to stakeholders, decision makers, schools managers and school counselors, are in progress.
- The development of educational tools for ESD based on Cyprus educational needs and according to the sustainable issues priorities at international and national level.
- The expansion of the national network of Environmental Education Centers, the “Green Schools”. The networking of Environmental Education Centers is organized according to the main principles of ESD. Mainly, it aims to connect formal and non-formal education, to utilize the indigenous people as a learning tool, promote experimental and experiential learning through an interdisciplinary and holistic investigation of environmental and sustainable issues.

3b. Participation in the pilot reporting exercise and submissions of the national implementation reports for phase I of the Strategy;

As regard the pilot reporting exercise for phase I that Cyprus submitted, it is reported that its preparation is based exclusively on the information of the Ministry of Education and Culture that was compiled after a communication with the educational administrations, inspectors from all educational levels and a study of documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture that were associated with the ESD. It is noted that through the pilot reporting exercise for Cyprus most of the indicators that have been checked hadn't yet begun or were in progress. This was because the National Action Plan for ESD was in preparation at the time and at the stage of being submitted for approval in order to begin its implementation.

3C. Developing tools and mechanisms at the national, sub national and local levels, with a view to strengthening the initial measures and developing competences, improving ESD teaching tools and materials and their content, and developing a more integrative conceptualization of ESD with a view to making the move from environmental education to true education for sustainable development.

Regarding these points Cyprus has made steps forward since various educational initiatives have been undertaken in order to develop mechanisms, materials and teaching tools with a view to making the move from Environmental Education to Education for Sustainable Development. Particularly, for that purpose Cyprus hosted from 16-18 of November 2007 the conference "Shared Visions, Sustainable Futures: Education Across Disciplines and Cultures". The Conference was co-sponsored by UNESCO, the University of Cyprus, the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture, and Sustainable Development. In this conference participated more than 200 hundred people from various fields. Academics from all disciplines, primary and secondary school teachers, community activists and policy makers interacted in an open dialogue in order to jointly explore, pedagogical and curricular models emphasizing sustainability and environmental awareness. Moreover, towards the conference pursued to clarify various issues regarding the concept of ESD, its differences and similarities from Environmental Education in order to move forward from Environmental Education to Education for Sustainable Development. The conference developed in six thematic sessions:

- Education for Sustainable Development and the UNECE Strategy
- The implementation of Education for Sustainable Development in formal education
- The implementation of Education for Sustainable Development in Tertiary Education: From theory to practice
- Mapping the future of Education for Sustainable Development: Voices of practitioners across the Mediterranean
- Bringing the Disciplines together: The role of interdisciplinarity in Education for Sustainable Development.
- The role of the local in Education for Sustainable Development.

Further more it is mentioned that the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which is the coordinating institution for Education for Environment and Sustainable Development for the Ministry of Education and Culture, has prepared a series of educational materials for Sustainable issues that could be utilized towards the National Curriculum. Specifically, it has prepared an educational tool with pedagogical activities of an interdisciplinary nature which can be applied, in the National Curriculum of primary education. These activities refer to the issues of poverty, human rights, consumption and production models, consumerism and sustainable tourism. This educational tool aims to help teachers, as well students, to examine sustainable issues outside from the narrow perspective of environment as natural dimension and investigate them towards a holistic aspect and through the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions of sustainability.

Finally, an initiative for reforming Environmental Education Programs that are implemented in schools has started. The main challenge is to reorient the environmental programs towards the perspective of sustainable development. For example, the European eco-school project that has been applied in Cyprus for 13 years is in the process of renovation in order to include in its context issues such as the production and consumption models, culture, eco-tourism, alternative means of transportation and climate changes.