

Education for Sustainable Development as a Key Prerequisite to Encourage Sustainable Consumption and Production

ANPED Policy Paper

To "improve the quality of life for everyone within the Earth's carrying capacity" is the core interest of Agenda 21 and all those who care for sustainability. Given the insight that only limited resources are available to fulfil this goal, it is necessary to develop societies which are less consumptive via different and more effective production and consumption patterns. To reach this goal is not only a question of scientific or technical improvement; it is foremost a question which values drive societal development and of political will to make the necessary changes.

Education, learning, public awareness are essential prerequisites for transition to sustainable societies. In this respect, putting humanity and sustainable lifestyle ethical values in the centre of the concept, education for sustainable development (ESD) should significantly contribute to a transition to society ***where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future.***

Being a developing concept ESD is value driven and includes environmental, economic and social aspects in equal and balanced manner. As an interdisciplinary, multi-methodological and holistic approach it involves all kinds of education: formal, informal, non-formal, continuing education, awareness raising and life-long learning. As a participatory process it is based on interaction and cooperation between a teacher and a student, on discussion, and learning from experience.

ESD integrates knowledge and experience of environmental, economic and social education. Broad stakeholder interest, participation and support are vital for the ESD success at all levels.

The decade of 2005 - 2014 is declared as the UN Decade on ESD (UN DESD) with UNESCO appointed as the main coordinator. UN DESD Goals are:

- Integrate SD in education systems at all levels
- Support education as a basis for sustainable society
- Strengthen international cooperation to develop innovative ESD policies, programmes and practices

Successful implementation of all three above mentioned goals from international to local level needs active NGO involvement and participation. Starting from public awareness on sustainability and moving further to sustainable life-styles promotion, lobbying for sustainable consumption and production, contributing to national and local strategies and plans as well as participating in programs and curricula development, information dissemination, mass media involvement, etc. citizens groups can play significant role within the UN DESD.

ESD in Europe, Central Asia and Northern America (UNECE¹ region) and its' implementation at National Levels

Following the decision of environmental Ministers within the Environment for Europe (EfE) process (Kiev, 2003) the UNECE Strategy on ESD was developed via a transparent and inclusive process and became a pioneer example of a region-wide strategic approach to ESD. It suggests development of national implementation plans based on experience and structures acceptable in different countries. At the same time it promotes and facilitates addressing sustainability and learning for sustainability at all levels, integrating sustainability in curricula and wide public awareness and information dissemination. It also requires regular reports on the success of ESD implementation at UNECE level and stresses the importance and necessity of NGO involvement of its implementation.

¹ UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Monitoring and evaluation

Indicators of successful ESD implementation are in process of development. European ECO Forum lobbies for ESD indicators to include qualitative and quantitative assessment of ESD policies and practices and serve for monitoring and evaluation of the Decade as well as Regional Strategies implementation, national and local ESD progress. Developed should be

- o *Indicators demonstrating political will* of the Governments in resolution of problems existing in this field;
- o *Activity Indicators*, demonstrating progress in implementation of the planned activities;
- o *Result Indicators*, demonstrating, how the implemented activities influence the level of commitment and transition of society to sustainable development.

ESD indicators should be used among others for

- a) General evaluation at political / institutional / operational levels (assessing Prioritization of and ESD and awareness in national educational policy, national legislations on ESD; transboundary, bilateral, multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation in ESD;
- b) quantitative evaluation of the results in implementation of planned activities in the framework of strategies, plans and programmes (including existence of relevant curricula, teachers', specialists' and decision makers' trainings on SD, development and publication of teaching and informative materials for ESD; support for research and innovations on ESD;; cooperation and partnership between formal, informal and non-formal ESD, support to NGO and public in ESD, mass media involvement and others.

ESD and Sustainable Consumption and Production

One of the important tasks for ESD is further promotion and explanation of sustainable consumption and production as well as assistance in its implementation at all levels, including the learning process itself.

Clear and direct trade-offs between consumption and production issues and education processes are crucial and thus governments while developing education for sustainable development should ensure in particular:

- i) Integrating knowledge of relevant consumption behaviour into curricula from pre-school to universities and in the concepts of life long learning;
- ii) Providing data for reliable information on consumption and production patterns;
- iii) Report on indicators to shape consumption behaviour that can make a difference.

Recommendations for NGO action and advocacy

- Initiate/participate and support national action plans development and implementation
- Create national ESD multistakeholder platforms and actively participate in their work
- Lobby for UNECE Strategy on ESD and National Strategies and Plans implementation
- Lobby on quick adoption of a clear and comprehensive set of indicators applicable at different levels.
- Take a lead and involve economic and social sectors in ESD at all levels
- Lobby for inclusion of NGO component in all ESD programmes as well as for particular support of NGO projects on ESD.
- Put SPAC and sustainable life styles and behaviour in heart of ESD programs, plans, curricula and awareness in all kinds and at all levels of education and awareness
- Develop and disseminate ESD materials and raise public awareness on these issues

More information can be found:

UN Decade on ESD, UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/education/esd/>

UNECE Strategy on ESD <http://www.unece.org/env/ESD>

Interesting ESD Toolkit: <http://www.esdtoolkit.org>

ECO-Accord ESD Programme: <http://accord.cis.lead.org/edu/intro.htm>

Join European ECO-Forum ESD Listserve:
education-EfE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com