

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Education and awareness-raising promoting sustainable development'

(2008/C 53/06)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- stresses that education for sustainable development cannot be effectively implemented without the involvement of local and regional authorities given that in many Member States local and regional authorities have a central role to play in educating the public about sustainable development.
- calls for education for sustainability which must include a wider introduction of environmental protection, citizenship and health education to school curricula, with a view to raising society's awareness and level of concern.
- recommends the creation of an attractive internet portal containing frequently updated content, publicity and educational materials to be used by teachers, associations, local government and all parties interested in the promotion of sustainable development.
- calls on local and regional authorities to liaise with the media to play a central role in promoting the idea of sustainability by explaining its main principles and benefits to as wide an audience as possible, in language that is easy to understand, and by encouraging and reporting on the public debate on this topic.
- encourages the media to take the initiative both in publicising the results of education on sustainable development and in scheduling presentations of the measures and activities of local and regional authorities at viewing times when the people to whom the activities are addressed are available.

Rapporteur: Marek OLSZEWSKI (PL/UEN-EA), Mayor of Lubicz, Chair of the Commission for Education and Culture, Joint Central Government and Local Government

Policy recommendations

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. draws attention to the fact that local and regional authorities across the European Union are one of the main forces shaping education and information policies, including in the area of sustainable development. The role of local and regional government involves promoting, coordinating and supporting these types of activity. In this context, education for sustainable development cannot be effectively implemented without the involvement of local and regional authorities.

2. confirms the examples of best practice in which local and regional government plays a role in the promotion, implementation and coordination of sustainable development through education and training. Examples of projects, which deserve to be more widely promoted as model projects, are: the Agenda 21 network, RES (Network of Regions on Education for Sustainability) — launched by the Umbria Region in Italy, the European Sustainable Energy Week, the British ChangeLAB project (Changing Lifestyles, Attitudes and Behaviour), compulsory sustainable development education in Bavaria (Germany) and in Finland, the vocational training system in the Netherlands, the activity of the Regional Environmental Education Centres in Poland and the activity of the open universities.

3. calls for greater attention to be focused on the role played by the following institutions in the area of informal sustainable development education: countryside parks, national parks, regional protected sites, museums and art centres. Moreover, such institutions can substantially support the formal education of teachers and pupils in the above field.

4. highlights that in this light, the development of a network of cooperation between regions and local communities and bodies working to promote best practices in the area of sustainable development and the exchange of experience is a matter of key importance. The European Commission, through the joint participation of the Committee of the Regions, should firmly support the registration and dissemination of best practices in the field of education for sustainable development.

5. welcomes the recognition that investment in human capital is a sine qua non for maintaining sustainable development in the European Union.

6. believes that education is an element which binds together the three pillars of sustainable development — economic development, environmental protection and social development — Education is a prerequisite for the development and participation of the individual in modern society, as well as being a precondition for the development of society itself.

7. asserts that education represents the most important part of a broad process involving not only discussion of the idea itself, but also the generation of lifestyle changes out of respect for the principles of sustainable development as part of efforts to improve peoples' quality of life.

8. confirms that appropriate education and explanation of the advantages of sustainable development can help make necessary lifestyle changes more acceptable and prevent conflicts between long-established ways of life that are perceived as 'comfortable' and newer, more sustainable approaches.

9. also welcomes the fact that one of the Strategy's primary aims is to ensure social equity and cohesion, which is to be achieved through education and information activities, inter alia.

10. highlights that in many Member States local and regional authorities have a central role to play in educating the public about sustainable development. The means at their disposal include not only pre-school, school and higher education, for which they are often formally responsible, but also adult education institutions and initiatives to preserve and promote culture. They also act as role model for local employers and investors, and are the main providers of services of general interest.

11. draws attention to the different experiences of the Member States in building societies and economies in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Instilling a sustainable development mindset requires the development of special programmes to support education in the new Member States and candidate countries. Social problems, economic and political challenges require a different approach.

12. in accordance with the *Strategy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on Education for Sustainable Development* of 23 March 2005, draws attention to the evolving nature of the concept of sustainable development, which is changing along with our understanding of its constituent processes. For this reason, the monitoring role of scientific research should be emphasised, one of the aims of which should be to monitor changes generated by sustainable development and the redefinition of sustainable growth.

Education as an instrument for raising awareness of the principles and functions of sustainable development

13. highlights that the education process is the most important way of introducing into civic life values which support the principle of sustainable development on an individual level.

14. stresses that successful education for sustainability is not possible without encouraging an appropriate level of commitment, enthusiasm and skills amongst teachers and training staff. Successful education for sustainability must also include a wider introduction of environmental protection, citizenship and health education to school curricula, with a view to raising society's awareness and level of concern.

15. calls on the Member States to increase opportunities for integrating environmental and sustainable development into the national education systems.

16. considers that children and young people are amongst the most important beneficiaries of education for sustainability as they are the foundation of the generation for whom such principles will form the backbone of their system of values and way of life. Sustainability education should also cover the pre-school age group.

17. calls for an education to promote sustainable development, starting at nursery school level, with knowledge being conveyed not only through concepts but above all through teaching which is based on the senses and on practical experiences.

18. asserts that family life plays an important educational role. It serves as the basis for all formal education in the field of sustainable development. For the Committee of the Regions, advice on how families can apply the principles of sustainable development in their everyday lives therefore represents one of the most important aspects of informal education in this area.

19. calls for the creation of an attractive internet portal containing frequently updated content, publicity and educational materials to be used by teachers, associations, local government and all parties interested in the promotion of sustainable development. The portal could be set up at the initiative of Education and Environment ministries in the Member States, designated officials could draft content for the website and publish up-to-date information about conferences, initiatives and steps to promote sustainable development. Regular cooperation with other institutions, associations and foundations dealing with sustainable development could also be helpful.

20. believes that education for sustainable development should include action which targets more widely than ever before entrepreneurs, farmers, public administration, the media and NGOs as representing the groups that are particularly important for bringing sustainable development into the mainstream.

21. it is also the role of education to raise the awareness of the political elite and of society of the need to hold social consultations and dialogue when implementing sustainable development strategies in order to take account of the interests

of all the sectors concerned and to strike a balance between the various aspects of development.

22. supports the idea of establishing permanent relations between the European Youth Forum and the individual presidencies in order to exchange views on the directions sought for sustainable development.

23. draws attention to the role of international student and pupil exchange programmes, one of the principal functions of which is to raise awareness of the value of cultural diversity and tolerance and to promote a variety of solutions for sustainability. Programmes such as ERASMUS, SOCRATES, GRUNDTVIG, TEMPUS etc. have represented, and will continue to represent, a core element of education which promotes the exchange of everyday experiences in the field of sustainable lifestyles and the promotion of best practices in this area.

24. suggests providing further support for the broadly defined processes of greening agriculture, particularly creating demand for organic produce by educating society about high-quality foodstuffs and by providing additional education for farmers in the area of environmental and integrated farming, agricultural and forestry-related environmental activity, animal welfare and biomass production.

25. calls for increased funding for environmental education and the promotion of support for the implementation of the Rights of the Third Generation should occupy a central place within this process, through education in the fields of: rational energy usage, launching renewable sources of energy and environmentally friendly modes of transport, sustainable consumption, the use of eco and energy labels, the importance of environmental agricultural production, recycling etc.

Lifelong learning and sustainable development

26. calls for greater emphasis to be placed on the issue of sustainable development in the new integrated Lifelong Learning Programme. High quality education is imperative in order to recognise the need to build sustainable development into all areas of life. To this end, calls for the promotion of the training of public officials, school, undergraduate and postgraduate teachers, of the general public, of volunteers and of economic and social players, and for the participation in working groups, seminars, work forums on the issue in a European setting.

27. draws attention to the need to make vocational training systems more flexible, for example through the more thorough application of procedures for validating informally acquired skills so as to provide broader access to vocational training for those excluded from the system. Good examples include the Finnish or Dutch models for certifying and validating informally acquired vocational skills.

28. recommends that a Community-wide model of education for sustainable development, to be jointly devised between the Member States, should embody the following bases:

- A commitment on the part of the entire educational community to enhance the environmental and sustainability quality of schools and their surroundings.
- Sustainable management of schools, covering eco-friendly purchasing, waste disposal, energy efficiency water consumption, acoustic pollution and security.
- Training the educational community according to their areas of skills.
- Putting environmental education on the school syllabus.
- Involving the educational community in the local community.
- Bringing local Agenda 21 actions together with school Agenda 21 projects.
- Defining specific indicators to measure the extent to which schools have incorporated education for sustainable development into their annual programmes and thus measure the sustainability quality of schools.

29. believes that distance learning is one of the most important means of reaching those groups traditionally excluded from education: residents of rural areas, the disabled, housewives, etc. These groups represent a source of untapped and hidden potential for the development of the EU's communities. We suggest increasing spending on the expansion of free distance learning platforms and allocating greater resources to the development of distance learning programmes, including citizenship education programmes.

30. emphasises the pressing need to place statutory education in a local and regional context. To help achieve this, it suggests systematically expanding the R3L network (Regional Statutory Education Networks) to encompass all regions of the European Union, including EEA/EFTA and candidate countries.

31. welcomes the provisions of the Renewed Strategy which stress the need to reduce the proportion of early school leavers to 10 %.

Sustainable development and the knowledge society

32. believes that sustainable development is not possible without a knowledge-based society. For EU countries to develop economically and face up to global competition, it is vital to continuously raise public awareness of the value of education, scientific research, the prestige of the scientific world and to consolidate the position of the natural sciences. The lion's share of this responsibility will fall on local and regional stakeholders, who have a direct impact on formal primary and secondary education.

33. in view of the progressive fall in the number of students studying exact sciences, draws attention to the fact that children's and young people's interest in the natural sciences must be supported (e.g. by popularising inquiry-based pedagogy) if the principles of sustainable development are to be implemented. In addition, there is a need to step up gender mainstreaming which will help increase the number of young people studying exact sciences.

34. believes that action to establish closer ties between the scientific research sector, education and regional administration should continue. To this end, there should be dissemination of best practices applied within the EU's Framework Programmes in particular to make regions aware of the advantages to be gained from such cooperation. The Committee of the Regions values the role of Framework Programmes in monitoring changes brought about by sustainable development.

Social changes in Europe sustainable development and education

35. considering the ageing of European society, calls for efforts to be made to redefine education systems to allow the elderly to become more fully integrated into society.

36. in the face of current and impending demographic, migratory and cultural trends in Europe, tolerance of diversity in society is a key condition for lasting development. Calls on Member States to promote education models in which tolerance towards other beliefs, culture, gender and lifestyles is a key element of their citizens' education.

37. calls for greater attention to be drawn to the issue of supporting local and regional authorities in taking account of sustainable development in processes encouraging healthy living and pro-health policies.

The media and education for sustainable development

38. in the light of the above, calls on local and regional authorities to liaise with the media to play a central role in promoting the principle of sustainability by explaining its main principles and benefits to as wide an audience as possible, in language that is easy to understand, and by encouraging and reporting on the public debate on this topic.

39. calls on local and regional authorities to work closely with the media to showcase good practices in the area of sustainable development.

40. considering the above comments on the role of regions and local communities in education for sustainable development, calls on local and regional authorities to develop their own communication strategies on how to promote sustainable development.

41. calls for a strengthening in the regions' existing initiatives such as promotional campaigns for sustainable development and for the provision of greater support, and urges training and advice in these fields.

42. calls on public institutions to draw up cooperative agreements with public and private media organisations, so that environmental issues are present in documentary, educational and entertainment programmes and the sector's personnel are trained to deal with such issues in a strictly scientific manner. Furthermore, there is a need to plan contextualised communica-

tion strategies covering both the issue or topic in question, and the population sector to which it is to be addressed, thereby bringing about behaviour and attitudes in keeping with sustainable development.

43. encourages the media to take the initiative both in publicising the results of education on sustainable development and in scheduling presentations of the measures and activities of local and regional authorities at viewing times when the people to whom the activities are addresses are available.

Brussels, 28 November 2007.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Michel DELEBARRE

APPENDIX

I. Best practice examples obtained from questionnaire responses

Bulgaria

Dobrich municipality in Bulgaria plans to campaign actively amongst children, students and adults, using publicity material with the participation of local newspapers, radio and television, to raise awareness about the introduction of waste separation. The municipality would be ready to share the results and experience gained from introducing this system with the CoR at a later stage.

Cyprus

The Greek-Cypriot town of Ayios Athanasios formed an 'Environmental Education Team' made up of former teachers who are well-informed on the subject. Meanwhile, those taking part in the Grundtvig programme have set up a programme to draw attention to environmental issues. Ayios Athanasios was the main organiser of this process. Cooperation has developed between all those educational establishments that use their activities to promote environmental protection, recycling, sustainability, etc.

Spain

The Spanish 'Área de Gobierno de Medio Ambiente, Dirección General de Sostenibilidad y Agenda 21, Departamento de Educación para el Desarrollo Sostenible' has a project called 'Environmental practice in sports events'. Its objective is to harness the potential of sport as a tool for environmental education, in order to introduce environmental criteria into the organisation of sports events, and foster eco- and urban-friendly public know-how and behaviour among event organisers, athletes and spectators. Environmental practices in the organisation of sports events are implemented in three areas:

- Madrid as the location for national and international sports trials, working with the appropriate federations.
- Madrid as an organiser of smaller-scale events, often at district level.
- Creation of a special environmental volunteer body to take part in sports events.

Events can be classified into three types according to their varying levels of environmental impact:

- Sports events held in sporting facilities. These are events taking place in indoor or outdoor sports locations, such as stadiums, swimming pools, sports halls, athletics tracks, etc.
- Street sports events, requiring special traffic diversion measures, route preparation and waste management. This applies to marathons and cycle races.
- Sports events held in green areas. In this case, urban parks are used. They can involve athletics competitions, cycling or outdoor swimming events.

Measures to deal with the various impacts of events (with special attention being given to the environmental variables of waste, mobility and energy and water consumption) can be classified as good environmental practice in preparation for the event, during the event, and following the event.

The Department organised the 30th Madrid Marathon in April 2007 in cooperation with MAPOMA, a private organising body. Steps were taken regarding:

- Minimisation of waste, removing sponges, oranges and bottle tops.
- Increased recycling, recovering tee-shirts and plastic bottles, setting up recycling points.
- Raising environmental awareness among runners and spectators.
- Communication with the media.
- Protection of sensitive areas on the route through the Retiro park.
- Mobility. Use of clean, bioethanol-powered cars as official vehicles.
- Cooperation with environmental Red Cross volunteers (environment) and the Emaus charitable association.
- Sponsor. Ecoembes, a non-profit waste recycling body.
- Stakeholders: Education, Cleansing and Collection Departments (Environmental Area) Mapoma (marathon organisers), Ecoembes, Red Cross, Setém (fair trade), Emaus.

Evaluation:

- A 5 780 kg increase in packaging recycling.
- Removal of 70 000 sponges, bottle tops and organic waste.
- Half-hour cut in the time needed by the cleansing services.
- 88 % of participants welcomed the measures.
- 63 % of participants put the environmental measures into practice.
- Education for organisers, participants and spectators.

Other initiatives of the Department include:

— SPRING, SUMMER AND AUTUMN SCHOOLS

Activities under these programmes are directed to adults in general, adults and children together, and children in particular. These seasonal programmes are specific to the Department for Education for Sustainable Development.

Green itineraries. Activities carried out in public parks of historical, botanical and cultural significance to the city. They include the Retiro, Casa de Campo, Oeste, Fuente del Berro, Quinta de los Molinos, El Capricho, Juan Carlos I, Tierno Galván and Lineal del Manzanares parks.

Environmental open days and workshops. These take place at various municipal environmental management locations, and are intended to make known and enhance the urban environment, including places such as the glasshouses and hothouses in the Retiro and Casa de Campo parks, the Butterfly and Insect Centre, the Birdlife and Stork Centres, the Migas Calientes composting plant, and special days for bird ringing, allotment gardens, children's workshops, cycle routes, etc.

Courses. Topics are selected with a view to alerting people to behave in a more eco-friendly way. Examples include traditional and ecological gardening, bird populations in parks, water in the city, domestic ecological gardening and climate change.

— ORGANISATION OF DAY EVENTS, CONGRESSES, EXHIBITIONS

The Department for Education for Sustainable Development provides training-related support by holding day events, congresses and seminars. Some recent ones include:

- The First Bioethanol Day for sustainable transport.
- Exhibition on 'The Secret of the Trees'.
- National Environmental Congress. Twice-yearly. Presence of a municipal stand, coordination of municipal participants. Held by the CONAMA Foundation.
- First Day of Sustainable Business Mobility, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and the Mobility Foundation.
- First Day of Sustainable Gardening in the City of the Future, in cooperation with the Directorate General for Environmental Heritage.

*Germany*Example 1

In Land Bremen in Germany, issues of sustainable development form part of the ongoing training programme offered by the *Land* Schools Institute (LIS). The 'Aktion ¾ plus' ('¾ plus initiative') also in the *Land* of Bremen (Germany), aims to encourage energy saving in Bremen's schools and thus convey the importance of sustainability to pupils.

Example 2

The Berlin-Brandenburg *Land* Institute for Schools and Media (LISUM) regularly carries out training sessions for teachers on individual topics relating to sustainable development. In addition, a specialist conference with training workshops on sustainable development has taken place every year since 2000. In 2008, an interregional congress on *Global learning for sustainable development* will take place in Brandenburg under the auspices of LISUM Berlin-Brandenburg. This congress takes the Millennium Goals and the UN Decade of Education as a starting point and aims to improve awareness in Berlin and Brandenburg, in the areas of education and youth, of the reference curriculum of the conference of education ministers, and to promote its implementation through training programmes and projects.

*Austria*Example 1

Upper Austria welcomes the introduction of a Union-wide model for awareness-raising measures in the field of sustainable development in pre-schools and primary schools. However, this model should limit itself to key messages. More detailed information should be provided by local and regional authorities who are better placed to respond to the specific information needs of pupils. The idea of disseminating a common European spirit on sustainability amongst pupils by means of awareness raising measures is very much welcomed.

Example 2

The Upper Austrian Academy for the Environment and Nature of the Upper Austrian government has been carrying out education and information activities in support of sustainable development in Upper Austria since 1989. The Academy has a Management centre 'Agenda 21' that is launching, supporting and promoting 'Local Agenda 21 processes' for an environment with a future; a combination of methods are used locally (for example, fliers, municipal newspapers, posters, bill-boards, home page, information evenings, personal contacts, contacts with the media).

The Upper Austrian municipalities were involved in setting up and developing the Upper Austrian environmental plan. Municipal and regional policy/decision makers were brought together and provided with information in an attempt to encourage them to set up climate alliance/rescue communities and initiate local and regional Agenda 21 processes.

The further education programme of the Upper Austrian Academy for the environment and nature includes training for environmental experts in municipalities, and further education activities for teachers and educationalists aimed at raising awareness of the importance of a sustainable lifestyle. An educational series for persons involved in development processes in municipalities and regions has also been established.

*Poland*Example 1

Polish National 'Green Certificate' programme for the support and certification of educational institutions in the field of sustainable development

This is a programme to provide educational institutions with support and certification in the field of sustainable development. The programme is implemented at two levels: environmentally friendly nursery and primary schools are awarded 'Class I Green Certificates', and nursery and primary schools which are centres of sustainable development are awarded 'Class II Green Certificates'.

The programme has been running since January 2000. This educational initiative, which is implemented by NGOs, provides effective support to the Polish educational system in shaping attitudes and raising environmental awareness among children, young people and entire communities grouped around educational institutions. Class I and II Green Certificates awarded to institutions which fulfil specific requirements are an example of quality labels in Polish education awarded for activity in the field of sustainable development. The programme is sponsored by the Ministries of the Environment and of Education and Sport as well as by the Chairman of the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, and it is run in cooperation with the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre. The aim of the 'Green Certificate' programme is to disseminate the idea of sustainable development by inspiring communities in which educational institutions are located and supporting actions taken by them as local centres of sustainable development.

On 22 April 2005 in Trzebaw, Poland, there was an opening ceremony for the 'Green Class', targeted at not only children and young people from the school but also the entire local community. Thanks to the 'Green Class', the school and municipality have benefited from:

- an open-air space to organise lessons, games and school ceremonies;
- an area for conducting 'green lessons' in a natural environment (observation of a 'mini ecosystem' of flora and fauna, arts and technology lessons using natural materials);
- an area for children, teachers, parents and local residents to rest and relax in;
- an area for tidying and taking care of.

In addition the programme integrated the whole school environment and local community and demonstrated that even very small schools can work efficiently to achieve shared goals and tasks. This initiative helped to promote the school, which has already become well-known locally as an environmental school. Valuable as the programme is, its benefits needed to be publicised more broadly and effectively, and the application procedure for certification needs to be simplified.

Example 2

'Eco-units' at Primary School No 1 in Września

Starting in 1999, the school management, teachers, pupils and parents of Primary School No 1 in Września, Poland, worked together on numerous environmental initiatives over several years; the culmination of these efforts was the award in January 2007 of the prestigious certificate of 'patron of the environment' (sponsored by the Polish President), preceded by award of three consecutive titles of 'promoter of the environment' during 2004-2006.

In the case of 'Eco-units' these initiatives not only included the annual 'clean up the world' campaign, but also regular participation in environmental competitions, trips and hikes. The aim of these environmental projects was to raise awareness and promote behaviour to protect animal and plant life (for example by sorting rubbish and secondary raw materials for collection).

In 2004 the school was awarded first prize by the regional Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management. This prize of PLN 70 000 was used to help set up a School Centre for Environmental and Nature Education, including features such as multimedia equipment, teaching aids, computer programmes and a portable weather station enabling observation of meteorological conditions in the field.

The school launched an educational programme for Forms 4-6 — which is still ongoing — on 'the environment in our region'. This includes basic programming for general education in six-year primary schools and junior high schools, for nature education programmes and for other educational pathways.

The central themes in the programme are conserving nature, protecting the environment and ecology. Lessons are taught in the immediate natural surroundings. The programme introduces various forms of nature conservation in the Września region, as well as other issues which are inseparable from any discussion of the natural environment, such as protecting regional landscapes, water, air and soils, waste management, how various plant communities work, and healthy lifestyles.

In the 2003-2004 school year the school also carried out an educational project, which involved working on a nature trail from Nowy Folwark to Leśniczówka Słomówko. Thanks to this project a nature trail was created on the outskirts of the town, enabling nature and biology lessons to be held in the field for pupils from the municipality and surrounding areas.

Example 3

'Green Package' multimedia kit for environmental education

These kits, which were provided with the help of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in Warsaw, were used as teaching aids in Wielkopolska schools.

The 'Green Package' has been approved by the Ministry of Education and received a positive evaluation from the Ministry of the Environment. It is a free multimedia kit for environmental education to be used by teachers and pupils in junior high schools, and is also suitable for other educational levels. The kit comprises five parts covering 22 issues linked to environmental protection and sustainable development. The kit includes a teacher's book with lesson plans and background materials, a cassette with videos and educational films, a CD-ROM with extensive information on environmental protection, a 'dilemma' game and other useful materials.

The 'Green Package' not only helps pupils to acquire knowledge, but above all instils new values and encourages environmental behaviour in school, at home, and in the immediate surroundings. When participating in various activities, discussions, role playing and decision taking, pupils essentially act as partners of the teacher. Through teachers and pupils the values inculcated by the 'Green Package' are also conveyed to family members and society as a whole.

The first edition of the kits was only distributed among participants of specially organised courses. Initially these were training courses for active teachers and teacher trainers from throughout Poland who had expressed an interest in acting as local coordinators and organising and conducting courses for secondary school teachers from their area.

Between April and June 2002 five workshops were held for 104 participants including 13 individuals from Wielkopolska (e.g. from Poznan, Piła, Kalisz, Konin, Gniezno, and Leszno).

A second edition of 5 000 copies was produced in April 2003, taking into account the experiences and suggestions of teachers who had used the first edition. The package included new films, corrected lesson plans and a CD. Polish institutions and organisations which had declared an interest in distributing 'Green Packages' among secondary school teachers were provided with the kits.

Example 4

Post-graduate studies in sustainable regional development (obtaining EU funds to promote sustainable development in the region) at the Institute of Philosophy of the Social Sciences Faculty of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan

Studies in sustainable development are a valuable initiative to meet local environmental needs. In view of this, the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan is launching post-graduate studies in sustainable regional development, starting from the 2007-2008 academic year. This course is targeted at local and regional councillors, as well as employees of local and regional authorities and other local government institutions; civil servants; employees of private and public sector companies; volunteers; and representatives of NGOs interested in bringing their image in line with the sustainable development strategy. Selection of students for the postgraduate course in sustainable development began in spring 2007. The course is directed by Dr Piotr Warych.

The aim of the course is to train graduates who already have a general knowledge of sustainable development, social and economic sciences, and environmental science, and also to equip them with the skills to apply their knowledge in their personal and professional lives. Graduates of the course should be able to understand and analyse natural processes and the complex interplay between different factors. It is certain that graduates will contribute to disseminating the idea of sustainable development and to its implementation in economic and social processes.

Greece

Within the formal school system of Athens Prefecture, especially over the last few years, in collaboration with the regional Directorates for Primary and Secondary Education, we have encouraged the setting up of teachers' working groups on environmental and civic issues, with the aim of raising student awareness as well as improving learning methods. As far as information campaigns are concerned, each time it organises or helps to organise, or takes part in, events relating to sustainable development of civil society, Athens Prefecture endeavours to announce its activities in advance in the press, on television or on the radio, and to provide relevant audiovisual material making it easier to inform and involve the general public. Obviously it is particularly important here for the media to schedule radio and television broadcasting slots at times when the people to whom our activities or initiatives are addressed are available.

Sweden

Example 1

In Dalarna County, consisting of 15 municipalities of which **Orsa** is one, a 3-year project will be launched in autumn 2007, involving 15 different primary and high schools from the county (2 schools in Orsa) with the following aims and objectives:

- the full range of school activity will be informed by a sustainable development perspective and students will acquire knowledge, skills and a desire to contribute to a long-term sustainable society;
- develop, test and evaluate sustainable development procedures, methods and tools across the full range of school activity so that knowledge and experience can be systematically shared and exchanged with other schools both nationally and internationally.

In addition, the project is intended to ensure that:

- students from participating schools gain knowledge and insight into what sustainable development means in theory and in practice;
- staff from participating schools know about sustainable development and can relay the theory and practice to students;
- participating schools plan their work in such a way that the curriculum's sustainable development aims and guidelines can be achieved;
- participating schools can build on their teaching of global issues;

- interest in natural sciences and sustainable development technologies increases among students from participating schools;
- awareness and understanding about the connection between health and sustainable development increases among students and staff from participating schools.

Dalarna Research Institute contributes by monitoring the project and evaluating participating schools' approach and results in order to highlight good, effective methods and approaches to Education for Sustainable Development.

Example 2

The Environmental Court (Miljötinget)

The Environmental Court is an annual environmental conference for Class 9 pupils and upper secondary schools in the counties of Dalarna and Gävleborg. The aim is to boost young people's commitment to environmental issues in both a serious and light-hearted way. Speakers come from the world of business, politics and NGOs. It goes without saying that the event is a drug-free zone. The project is run jointly by the Dalarna Region and Gävleborg County Council.

On a political level, since the early 1990s Orsa has stipulated in its child/school objectives that activities in this area must strive to achieve various environmental achievement awards such as Eco-school, Green Flag, etc. This means that environmental issues and sustainable development are now high on the education agenda in Orsa. This work is disseminated as children take the message home to other members of their family.

Orsa municipality's education departments are active in this process in various contexts, e.g. the Eco-train (*Ekotåg*) campaign in Skattungbyn; 'Keep Sweden Clean' training for all teaching staff; and a small number of teachers also followed Dalarna University's five-point environmental course in Orsa.

Orsa has an active environmental education network that meets regularly one day per month. As part of the 'Ship of the Future' (*Framtidsskeppet*) initiative, a 'Dalarna Ship' (*Dalaskkeppet*) was created, meeting annually in one of Dalarna's municipalities. Anders Sundvall is one of our driving forces there. Several schools have received Green Flag or Eco-school awards, etc. These schools are working actively for sustainable development.

Our school meals service continues to extend its range of *Krav* food (compliant with eco/animal protection and social responsibility requirements) every year. Two or three schools grow their own vegetables for use in their school canteens.

Since 1997 Dalarna has had a county-wide schools network targeting further education, the creation of forums for exchange of experience, launching Green Flag schools, etc. Teachers have stated openly that this work should be continued and built on. Currently no regional funding is earmarked for this activity. Thanks to these initiatives, however, Dalarna now has a high percentage share of the country's Green Flag schools and schools with Education for Sustainable Development status.

Today there is much greater awareness of the importance of working with sustainable development, however, when it comes to translating this awareness into behavioural change, the problem immediately becomes more difficult. Schools can play a major role in ensuring that our future generations will have the knowledge and skills they will need to work for long-term sustainable development.

II. Difficulties in informing the public and raising awareness about sustainable development

- Information about sustainable development is provided systematically by means of the municipality's publications (municipal newspaper, information pamphlets and announcements). The difficulty is that there is a lack of basic education in environmental matters.
- An adequate framework of strategy, planning and programmes exists at European level, indicating guidelines for sustainable development, but there is still a deficit in terms of putting knowledge and know-how into practice and conveying them to the general public. Consequently, special programmes should focus on applying sustainability, by devising innovative methods and experiments in training, capacity-building and learning: directing existing educational programmes towards specialist programmes tailored to the circumstances of the new Member States. The difficulties in raising awareness about sustainable developments lies in:
 - Lack of interdisciplinary knowledge and team-working in the different departments involved in planning.
 - The rigidity of administrative structures makes team-working difficult.
 - Lack of prior research to meet the needs of the public, communities and the private sector.

- Insufficient role of information and awareness-raising in decision-making and technical spheres, lack of awareness of the importance of information and awareness-raising to enhance the city's environmental management and to urge citizens to make a greater commitment to the environment.
 - Lack of budgetary resources.
 - Others argue that sustainability policies must be consistent and credible. Land Brandenburg argues that when it comes to education and imparting knowledge, the largely voluntary associations play an important role complementing that of formal educational establishments such as schools, further education institutions and higher education colleges. These voluntary associations run training centres and hold regular events as part of the work carried out in accordance with their articles of association. However, these independent education providers, as they are called, are not usually sufficiently well-funded to carry out their work on a continuous basis. They are often unable to raise the required independent funding to benefit from state grants, and the revenue that educational establishments can raise in this area is limited to say the least. A funding instrument to support the educational work of associations that are active in the area of sustainability would thus be very desirable. The EU Structural Funds and the EAFRD agricultural fund do not really provide for this in practice, either because it falls outside their remit, or because the operational implementation by Member States is focused on other priorities.
 - A major difficulty for Upper Austria is the fact that the term 'sustainability', taken on its own, comes across as rather awkward and abstract, and is therefore difficult to communicate. Also, it has been noted that even where an adequate understanding of the meaning of sustainable development has been achieved, a gap still exists between such understanding and concrete implementation.
 - The greatest difficulty encountered in raising awareness of sustainable development in Poland is the lack of general knowledge among target groups, whether students, farmers, representatives of public administration or even scientific circles. A very common phenomenon is misunderstanding of the concept of sustainable development, which was previously solely associated with environmental protection and ecological issues. The relevance of this concept to economic, social and cultural life has been completely ignored. Sustainable development is not a subject for the media which can be conveyed in brief bursts of information; as a result, people are discouraged from learning more about it or putting it into practice.
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