



## ENVIRONMENT

### Advancing the pan-European environmental agenda

The fourth Economic Commission for Europe **Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development** was held in December 2009 in Geneva. The multi-stakeholder meeting attracted more than 220 delegates from across the UNECE region, with representation from member States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and civil society. The meeting reviewed the region's progress in implementing sustainable development in the areas of transport, chemicals management, waste management, mining and sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Subregions made varying levels of progress in achieving sustainable development, due to different economic, infrastructural and historical aspects that must be taken into account in the regional and global review. Participants noted that sustainable transport played an important role in ensuring effective communications, trade and migration, while having the lowest possible impact on the environment. Also, it was highlighted that the safe production and use of chemicals was vital for protecting human health and worker safety.

Poverty eradication, protecting and managing natural resources and changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption were considered the three main cross-cutting sustainable development concerns that required urgent action in protecting the planet's human and environmental capital.

Preparations for the **Seventh "Environment for Europe" (EfE) Ministerial Conference** continued in the Committee on Environmental Policy. The Conference, which will take place in Astana, Kazakhstan, from 21 to 23 September 2011, will address two main issues



of regional as well as global importance: “Sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems” and “Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development”.

### **Governments and partners in the EfE process agreed to focus on the following issues for the ministerial discussions:**

- how to ensure effective policies to protect water-related ecosystems, human health related to water quality and quantity, and, in particular, priorities and challenges in adapting water management to extreme weather events and to climate change
- the policy mix and tools that are most effective to improve water efficiency by different users, and ways to encourage investors to take into account the impacts of their activities on water quality and quantity, energy and resource efficiency, and vulnerable populations
- the policy mix for enabling a green, socially inclusive and competitive economy through an integrated approach, as well as approaches to resource efficiency, research, innovation and investment to help the transition towards a green economy.

Europe’s Environment Assessment of Assessments report, prepared by the European Environment Agency in cooperation with UNECE and other EfE partners, will support the work of the Conference. The report will assess existing environmental assessments, processes and practices identifying gaps, needs and priorities; evaluate capacity to measure progress on targets and implementation of Conventions and agreed actions; and contribute to the development of a shared environmental information system within the European Union, and across the pan-European region.

The **Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment**, at its annual session, discussed progress made by Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the implementation of recommendations on environmental monitoring and information management made in the environmental performance reviews for those countries. It provided practical guidance to these countries on how to better implement the recommendations.

The Working Group promoted the exchange of information on major ongoing and planned actions in UNECE countries regarding the modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks; developing inventories of air emissions, wastewater discharge and waste; expanding monitoring of biodiversity; improving data handling; enhancing institutional mechanisms for data sharing and exchange; publishing environmental assessments; and reporting to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Overall, it was found that monitoring of atmospheric air and water was progressing well, while monitoring of waste, soil and biodiversity was still lagging behind.

The Working Group also prepared draft guidelines for developing national strategies to use water-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool. The guidelines aim to assist countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as interested South-East European countries, to revise their water-quality monitoring programmes to make monitoring a practical tool for environmental policy development, target setting and pollution abatement strategies.

The **Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators**, established by the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians continued its efforts to improve environmental data collection and reporting in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe, and to promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region.

At its two meetings held in 2010, the Task Force reviewed a total of 11 of 36 indicators covered by the UNECE *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. It discussed the use of statistical classifications, data collection methods and procedures for the production of these indicators. Useful information was also collected on data availability and on problems in producing the indicators in individual countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe, and some specific amendments to the indicator Guidelines were suggested.

The Joint Task Force concluded that methodological discrepancies in producing the indicators required further examination with the aim of achieving data comparability and providing a better basis for making informed decisions on environmental policy. It recommended that the work be continued, in particular, to review the remaining indicators from the Guidelines and to clarify definitions and develop detailed guidance, possibly in the form of data tables, on the production of indicators. Continuation of data reporting on indicators was considered of high importance for identifying gaps and opportunities for filling those gaps. Fully sharing these conclusions, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, at their meetings in November 2010, agreed to extend the mandate of the Joint Task Force for the period 2011–2012.

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The **Pan-European Programme on Transport, Health and Environment (THE PEP)**, now in its eighth year, made great strides in 2010 in promoting sustainable urban transport. THE PEP symposium on “Green and Health-friendly Investments and Jobs in Transport” took place in December 2010. It gave a renewed political impetus to THE PEP as a unique policy framework that encourages transport policymakers and transport planners to take health and environmental impacts into consideration when making transport policy.

In 2010, two capacity-building workshops were organized under THE PEP, jointly serviced by UNECE and the World Health Organization (WHO). One workshop “Working together to make things happen”, held in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in June 2010, focused on integrated policy approaches to sustainable urban transport. The other, held in Batumi, Georgia, in September/October 2010 explored “Safe and healthy walking and cycling in urban areas”. The Batumi workshop launched a “Walking School

Bus” to promote the International Walk to School Month and featured the participation of local architects, urban planners and municipal authorities to encourage physical activity and environmentally friendly transport through the promotion of human-powered mobility such as walking and cycling.

The **Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme** is currently in its second cycle of reviews. In spring 2010, Azerbaijan was reviewed for the second time; subsequent to the peer review, the final report will be officially published in 2011 in three languages (English, Russian and Azeri). A review on Bosnia and Herzegovina was also produced and peer-reviewed in 2010. The final report, available in four languages (English and the three official languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina), will be officially launched in 2011. Tajikistan will be the next country under review. Work has already begun, with a preparatory mission which took place in June 2010 as well as a fact-finding mission carried out in September 2010. In addition, a preparatory mission to Turkmenistan was carried out in November 2010.



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The Expert Group on Environmental Performance met twice in 2010. Similar to the principle adopted by the Committee in 2008, the Expert Group on Environmental Performance will be enlarged on an ad hoc basis by including experts recommended by delegates to the Committee in future meetings.

The **UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** is at the end of its second phase of implementation (2008–2010). Two key priorities were identified for advancing ESD in the region during this phase: developing and implementing National Action Plans for ESD; and developing competences in ESD.

At its fifth meeting in March 2010, member States considered progress made by countries in the implementation of the Strategy, including the status of development and implementation of the national action plans for ESD; the collection of good practices, initiated in 2009; and preparation of the workplan for Phase III of the Strategy’s implementation.

National Strategies and/or Action Plans for ESD have been developed or are in the process of development in 23 countries across the UNECE region. One expert group is developing a range of core competences in ESD for educators and general recommendations for policymakers to address this issue. The Group will present the outcome of its work to the next meeting of the Steering Committee in April 2011.



A collection of good practices as a key tool to promote ESD in the region and worldwide is ongoing through a dedicated website. At the same time, a thematic collection was carried out of good practices in applying ESD to address sustainable consumption, production and transportation in the context of climate change. Some 60 good practices collected across the region served as a valuable contribution to the fourth Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development in the UNECE region.

A first mandatory national reporting on the implementation of the Strategy is being carried out at the end of Phase II to assess the implementation progress across the region and learn from each other's experiences, based on a set of performance indicators. The results, compiled into a synthesis report, will be further considered in April 2011.

The **Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)** was established to assess and address environmental problems that threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods within and across national borders in conflict-prone regions. ENVSEC collaborates closely with Governments, particularly foreign, defence and environment ministries, national experts and non-governmental organizations.

ENVSEC has carried out assessments and published reports, illustrated by maps, for understanding the linkages between environment and security in the political and socio-economic reality of Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Based on these assessments, ENVSEC develops and implements projects aimed at alleviating and reducing tensions, building confidence among cooperating countries and regions and preventing or avoiding conflicts.

MEAs administered by UNECE are an important pillar of ENVSEC activities and provide added value to the partnership. Moreover, the number of ENVSEC projects that UNECE is engaged in is increasing, highlighting the importance of the MEAs in conflict prevention, preventative diplomacy, confidence-building and regional cooperation to reduce conflicts.

Water and adaptation to climate change in the transboundary context has continued to be one of the priority areas of work under the **Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes** (Water Convention). A programme of pilot projects aiming to support cooperation in adapting to climate in transboundary basins was launched in May 2010. There are at present four pilot projects directly supported by the Water Convention — for the Chu-Talas Basin (shared by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan); the Dniester (shared by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova); the Neman (Belarus, Lithuania and Russian Federation); and the Sava (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia) — as well as many other projects partnering in the overall programme.

*The Espoo Convention continued to grow in 2010, with the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Malta*



Another basin in which the Water Convention is promoting cooperation is the Drin Basin, including parts of Albania, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (UNMIK). To accomplish this, UNECE has initiated the Drin Dialogue, a structured consultation process aimed at the development of a shared vision among the riparian countries and stakeholders for the sustainable management of the basin.

The work on National Policy Dialogues (NPD) on integrated water resources management, a main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative Component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, has continued to expand. New Dialogues have been initiated in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; adding to the ongoing ones in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The NPDs have proven to be powerful tools to strengthen water governance in these countries. They have resulted in legislative acts, ministerial orders, strategy documents and implementation plans.

In April 2010, negotiations started in the Water Convention's Legal Board on the establishment of an institutional and procedural mechanism to facilitate and support implementation and compliance. While the overall objective and powers of such a mechanism are still to be negotiated, the Legal Board underlined that the main aim was to

provide the Convention with a concrete tool to assist Parties in solving implementation problems and preventing or settling differences regarding the interpretation and application of the Convention, taking into account countries' needs and the Convention's distinctive cooperative spirit.

*In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly declared that access to clean water and sanitation is a human right*

Water and health in the UNECE region took a significant step forward at the second session of the Meeting of the Parties to the **Protocol on Water and Health**, held from 23 to 25 November 2010 in Bucharest. Five years after the entry into force of the Protocol, the session marked an important milestone in the evolution of this instrument. It provided an opportunity to review progress achieved so far and to

reflect on and plan for the challenges that lie ahead. A wide variety of topics that had been the focus of work over the past three years were discussed, including ratification and implementation of the Protocol; preventing and addressing water-related diseases; adapting water supply and sanitation to extreme weather events; supporting small-scale water supply and sanitation systems; and access to information and public participation under the Protocol.

In July the United Nations General Assembly, shortly followed by the Human Rights Council in September, declared that access to clean water and sanitation was a human right. The Protocol guides its Parties on how to translate that right into practice, and how safe, acceptable, affordable, accessible and sufficient water can be provided, in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination and of transparency of information. In Bucharest, Parties discussed activities to promote the exchange of experience on measures supporting equitable access to water and thus addressing affordability issues and access in remote communities.

Parties also reviewed the results of the first reporting exercise under the Protocol. The exercise illustrated how the Protocol is helping to address water and health issues in the region, as well as highlighting remaining gaps and common challenges, mostly linked to difficulties in intersectoral cooperation and to the development of integrated strategies. To address these governance issues, the Guidelines on the Setting of Targets, Evaluation of Progress and Reporting were adopted by the Meeting of the Parties.

The **Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents** held its sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in November 2010 in The Hague, the Netherlands. At the meeting, Parties adopted a long-term strategy for the Convention, laying out a road map for the next decade and focusing on five areas: the promotion of the issues treated; the exchange of information; assistance to countries; strategic partnerships; and sustainable financing. Parties also reviewed progress on implementing the Convention made through the Assistance Programme for countries with economies in transition. Countries participating in the Assistance Programme can henceforth avail themselves of an instrument to aid implementation, the "Indicators and criteria for the implementation of the Convention", which were adopted at the sixth meeting.

*The detrimental effects of fine particulate matter and ozone emissions on human health are now proven*

The **Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context** (Espoo Convention) continued to grow in 2010, with the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Malta, as well as numerous ratifications of the Convention's two amendments. An informal review of the application of the Convention revealed that it had been applied to concrete economic development activities on over 700 occasions to date. One recent application was within a pilot project in Belarus involving also Lithuania. The pilot project, under ENVSEC, encouraged dialogue between the two neighbours, led to further development of national legislation in Belarus, and provided a basis for the negotiation of a number of bilateral agreements.

There has been a continuing strong emphasis on the review of compliance of Parties with their obligations under the Espoo Convention, led by the Convention's Implementation Committee. In addition, detailed advice has been given to Tajikistan on how to implement the Convention in its national legislation, should it decide to accede to the Convention. A subregional workshop was held in Tunis on the application of the Convention in the Mediterranean Sea area, bringing together North African States with member States of UNECE that are Parties to the Convention. Strong interest was generated among national experts regarding accession to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment. The secretariat also provided expert support to the negotiation of a Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, as well as drafting recommendations on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context for the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution.

The Convention's Working Group provided a forum for the exchange of good practices with regard to legislation and procedures for implementation of the Convention, and with regard to climate change in environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. The Working Group also began considering in detail the application of the Convention to nuclear-energy-related activities.

The Convention's Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment entered into force on 11 July 2010 and by late 2010 had 19 Parties, including the European Union as a regional organization. Final preparations were therefore made in 2010 for the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. This session, together with the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, will be held in June 2011.

In 2010, the **Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters** (Aarhus Convention) continued to focus on exchange of information, sharing of experience and good practices and capacity-building in the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention through the activities of the Convention's task forces and the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy.

To raise public awareness, access to information and public participation regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms, a joint Aarhus Convention and Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety workshop to discuss good practices and challenges in this area took place in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010.

The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention decided to strengthen the work on public participation in decision-making and entrusted a newly established Task Force with this work at its extraordinary session in April and June 2010. The Meeting also paved the way for the adoption in 2011 of a procedure to allow accession to the Convention by non-UNECE member States.

To foster the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in South-Eastern Europe by promoting the use of electronic information tools, a subregional workshop on this topic took place in Skopje in November 2010.

For the Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the highlight of the year was the first session of its Meeting of the Parties. At this session, the governing architecture of the Protocol, its Work Programme for 2011–2014 and other key decisions were adopted. The PRTR.net web portal (<http://www.prtr.net/>) is continuing to play an important role in assisting Governments and stakeholders in the development, implementation and improvement of pollutant release and transfer registers in the region and beyond. With ratification by Austria, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Protocol membership reached 27 Parties this year.

In 2010, the **Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution** continued work on revising two of its protocols: the Protocol on Heavy Metals and the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol). The Convention's Executive Body is expected to make decisions on the inclusion of particulate matter and black carbon, two pollutants with links to a number of environmental consequences, in addition to impacts on climate, in a revised Gothenburg





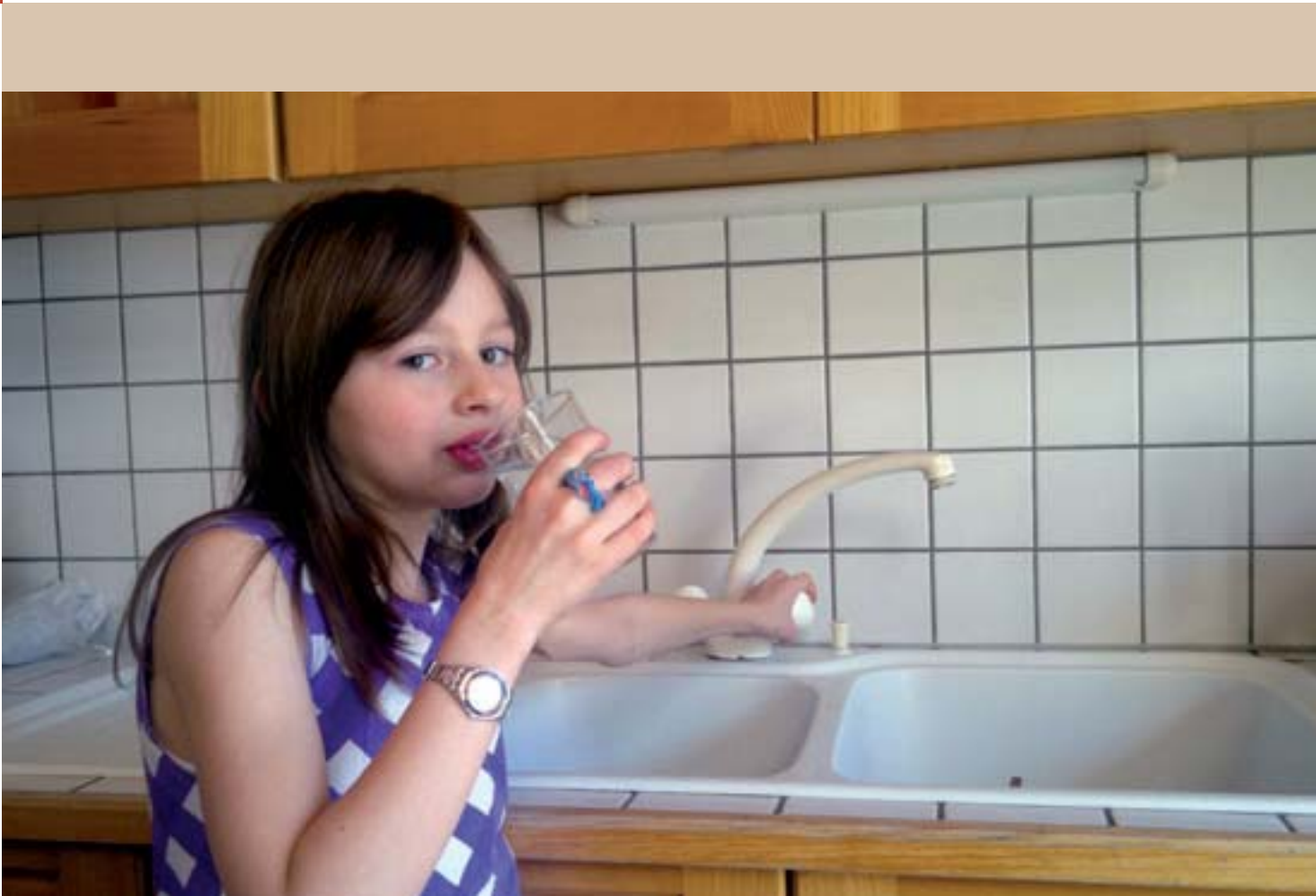


Protocol. In addition, measures to allow needed flexibility for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe will be introduced in the Protocols under revision to help these countries with implementation and ratification.

The secretariat continued its efforts to implement the Air Convention's action plan to assist the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and South-Eastern Europe. A project to assist the Republic of Moldova in implementing and ratifying the Gothenburg Protocol has made significant progress and is planned to conclude in early 2011. In the framework of a project focused on assisting the countries

in South-Eastern Europe to implement and ratify the Persistent Organic Pollutants, Heavy Metals and Gothenburg Protocols, several countries completed strategic national documents which laid out the technical and legislative steps to be undertaken to accede to the Protocols. A joint project was launched in April between the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan, aiming to assist these countries in implementing and ratifying the Convention's most recent Protocols, in addition to facilitating the use of best available technologies, and in developing a policy and legislative framework to address air pollution in the region. Preliminary discussions have commenced with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan on potentially establishing a similar project.

The Convention is working to revise its overall strategic framework. A long-term strategy for the Convention was introduced at the 2010 Executive Body session, addressing emerging issues such as new pollutants and furthering its global outreach. For instance, the detrimental effects of fine particulate matter and ozone emissions on human health are now proven, while reactive nitrogen, with its severe impacts on vegetation, is also a growing concern.



## Learning from each other<sup>1</sup>: the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

There is widespread concern that our current model of development is unsustainable and that our education systems reflect and support this model to a large extent. We are faced with a dual challenge of (a) re-casting 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 is an essential prerequisite for empowering society to make the transition to a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development is crucial for good governance, informed public decision-making and the promotion of democracy. It plays a fundamental role in overcoming social, economic and environmental challenges. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) illustrates the importance of education in achieving sustainable development.

As an important regional contribution to the Decade, UNECE member States adopted the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in 2005, thereby placing ESD high on the political agenda. The Strategy was prepared through a participatory process involving all relevant actors with the aim of encouraging UNECE member States to develop and integrate ESD into their formal education systems as well as into non-formal and informal education. The Strategy also suggests establishing a partnership mechanism between different ministries and agencies to coordinate the implementation.

<sup>1</sup> By Monika Linn, Deputy Director and Angela Sochirca, Environmental Affairs Officer, Environment Division

Work under the Strategy is pursuing a set of related goals: ensuring that policies support ESD, promoting sustainable development through all forms of learning, equipping the education sector with the competences to engage in ESD, developing ESD tools and materials, promoting research and development of ESD, strengthening cooperation on ESD in the UNECE region, and fostering conservation, use and promotion of knowledge of indigenous peoples as well as local and traditional knowledge in ESD.



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The Strategy is the regional implementation pillar of the United Nations Decade of ESD and is being implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO.

The implementation of the Strategy is a continuous, long-term process, with three major phases:

- (a) Phase I (until 2007) - Countries identified what they are already doing that fits within the framework of the Strategy as well as priorities for further action required to implement the Strategy;
- (b) Phase II (until 2010) - The implementation of the Strategy should be well under way. Countries should review progress made in the implementation of their national/state strategies and revise them, if necessary;
- (c) Phase III (until 2015 and beyond) - Countries should have made considerable progress in implementing ESD.

ESD is still developing as a broad concept encompassing interrelated environmental, economic and social issues. Although achieving ESD is strongly linked to national and local priorities, needs and traditions, the international exchange is crucial. In this regard, a Steering Committee on ESD was established to decide on the Strategy's implementation and review its progress in the UNECE region. It also provides a forum for exchanging experiences, in particular at the policy and institutional levels, and is an efficient mechanism for ESD implementation. It is composed of representatives from both the education and environment sectors, as well as key ESD stakeholders participating as observers. Participating countries recognize the importance of "learning from each other".

## Measuring progress

A number of activities have been carried out since 2005. One important achievement is the development of a reporting mechanism, including a set of indicators, as an innovative tool to support the monitoring and the assessment of progress in implementing the Strategy. The first pilot reporting exercise was carried out on a voluntary basis, and 36 out of 55 participating member States have submitted their National Implementation Reports. On the basis of these reports, a first review on progress in ESD in the UNECE region was made in 2007. The second mandatory reporting exercise is currently being carried out, and a third one will follow in 2015. In addition, a guidance for reporting was developed to facilitate monitoring and assessment. These tools and materials have been compiled in a publication, which can be received upon request from the UNECE secretariat.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Learning from each other: the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development", United Nations New York and Geneva, 2009 (ECE/CEP/159).



Another important achievement is a collection of good practices in ESD in the UNECE region<sup>3</sup>. This joint UNECE and UNESCO endeavour resulted in the first publication of a wide range of good practices to promote ESD in formal, non-formal and informal education. Also, a collection of good practices – addressing sustainable consumption, production and transportation through ESD<sup>4</sup> – served as a practical contribution to the Fourth UNECE Regional Implementation Forum for Sustainable Development in December 2009. Good practices offer a wealth of experience and could be a key tool to promote ESD in the region and worldwide during the next phase of the Strategy's implementation.

The culminating event in the implementation of the Strategy's phase I was a joint high-level segment on ESD held during the Belgrade Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"

in 2007. This event was attended by ministers and high-level officials from both the education and the environment sectors. This event gave an encouraging sign of integration with other sectors as well as of ways to cooperate and make sustainable development a reality. The ministers considered the achievements, lessons learned, challenges, and the way ahead. They adopted a joint Statement on ESD, providing commitment to further accomplishment of the Strategy throughout its implementation phases and beyond 2015.

Overall, the conclusion is that phase I for the implementation of the ESD Strategy has been successfully implemented. The close and effective joint work between UNECE and UNESCO, especially in the area of monitoring progress, has been highly appreciated by member States.

The UNECE region has a good base for implementing ESD. Most countries in the UNECE region have education systems with skilled educators, provide access to basic education, grant equal rights to education for all, and have achieved high levels of literacy and scientific knowledge. But many challenges still need to be met to implement ESD effectively. A key challenge is to make the current education systems flexible enough to support the interdisciplinary nature of ESD. Civil society needs to be more involved and institutional and material resources need to be mobilized. Other challenges are the absence of an agreed definition for ESD, confusion about understanding the difference between environmental education and ESD, institutional, legislative and policy frameworks requiring adaptation to the needs of ESD, and the lack of ESD teaching tools, competences and research.

<sup>3</sup> Good practices in Education for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region, UNESCO/UNECE, Education for Sustainable Development in Action, Good Practices No.2, August 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Addressing sustainable consumption, production and transportation through education for sustainable development: analysis of good practices (ECE/AC.25/2009/4); and the compilation of good practices (ECE/AC.25/2009/5); available on website ([http://www.unece.org/env/SustainableDevelopment/4Session/RIM\\_4\\_Dec2009.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/SustainableDevelopment/4Session/RIM_4_Dec2009.htm)).

The first regional progress report on ESD5 concluded that most countries were committed to establishing the policies and institutional and administrative structures. In particular, the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia had made evident progress. The countries of South-Eastern Europe faced a number of challenges, as many were still taking the prerequisite measures to support ESD. Other countries had progressed significantly. The report also showed that a decentralized governing structure was not an obstacle, and that countries with a federal structure had made good progress.

## The key role of educators

The progress report comprises detailed findings and highlights the key role of educators. Major challenges include: (a) giving special attention to those in kindergarten or primary school today, who will become tomorrow's decision-makers; (b) building a stronger partnership between authorities and stakeholders; (c) developing competences in ESD; (d) building the capacity of decision-makers and other stakeholders; (e) a more integrative conceptualization of sustainable development to allow for socio-economic perspectives in ESD; (f) development of adequate ESD materials for all levels; (g) enhancing the use of indigenous and other traditional and local knowledge; and (h) making sustainability attractive not only to certain groups, but to the society as a whole. In the global context, the problems posed by climate change are a leading example of where ESD can be applied to daily life, as climate change affects everyone. ESD offers an essential way to shape knowledge and attitudes, and hence can help address these problems.

The availability of a structured plan of actions at the national level is a prerequisite for successful implementation; hence, the development of National Action Plans for ESD is a priority for member States.

ESD implementation should focus not only on further strengthening of policy and institutional mechanisms and tools, but also on developing competences, content, teaching tools and materials. A more integrative conceptualization is needed to better integrate sustainable development with the environmental education. This could only be achieved with the promotion of stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships with both the education and environment sectors.

Orienting education towards ESD requires a corresponding shift in the competences of educators themselves. Some of these competences are already recognized, while others will need an innovative approach. Hopefully, this new combination of competences will provide the necessary educational setting for effective ESD to emerge. The UNECE Strategy for ESD calls specifically for the development of educators' competences to engage in ESD. The first reporting exercise clearly identified the need to further define the nature of ESD competences and the ways these might be developed. Furthermore, an enabling policy environment for this work needs to be supported and applied in each member State, and made a priority in the region's ESD activities. The Steering Committee has established an Expert Group to work on developing a range of core competences in ESD for educators and general recommendations for policymakers. The Expert Group will present the results of its work to the next session of the Steering Committee in April 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Learning from each other: achievements, challenges and the way forward - Report on progress in implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/3 - ECE/CEP/AC.13/2007/2); and Addendum on Conclusions on the reporting process and on the use of indicators (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/3/Add.1 - ECE/CEP/AC.13/2007/2/Add.1), available on the website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/belgrade.htm>).

## Challenges ahead

The Strategy is now at the end of its second phase of implementation and a review of progress achieved is being carried out to be presented to the Steering Committee in April 2011. As of 2011 the Strategy is entering its third phase of implementation, which will focus on furthering ESD implementation through needs-driven activities oriented towards responding to country-specific challenges with a view to assisting countries to achieve considerable progress in embracing ESD by the end of 2015.

ESD should be promoted through capacity-building, disseminating of good practices and exchanging positive experiences. Partnerships with the private sector, in particular with local businesses, should be further enhanced. Stronger links with economic issues, including through exploring economic incentives and "greening" procurement, should be promoted. More attention should be given to raising awareness of the potential contribution of indigenous and other traditional and local knowledge with respect to sustainability.

ESD has gained in prominence in recent years and many organizations and institutions are carrying out activities related to ESD. It is therefore very important to enhance cooperation and coordination between all ESD stakeholders so as to achieve mutual benefits and synergies and jointly advance ESD. In this respect, a coordination mechanism has been established under the auspices of the Steering Committee, bringing together the ESD stakeholders active in the region with a view to coordinating on-going and planned activities.

To conclude, there is no stronger catalyst to achieve sustainable development than the good will and active contribution of citizens. The knowledge and awareness that education for sustainable development promotes will help change people's mindsets, and in so doing will enable us to make this world safer, healthier and more prosperous.