

INFORMAL COUNTRY REPORT

GERMANY

The implementation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and, within that framework, of the UNECE Strategy, remains a priority in Germany. The German Commission for UNESCO coordinates the implementation at national level, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which leads on the Decade within the Federal Government.

A few important developments since the last meeting of the Steering Committee:

1. Most recently:

- Continuing support at political level: the German Parliament and the State Secretary Committee both emphasize the importance of continuing ESD-activities beyond 2014 in respective resolutions in April 2012 and January 2013.
- Strengthening and intensifying activities at regional and local level:
The Federal Ministry of Education and Research launched in cooperation with the German Council for Sustainable Development a competition to promote local education networks for sustainability. Recognizing the important role networks play in improving quality standards and stabilization of initiatives, the project partners aim to support local activities to create further synergies and to facilitate transfer of good practice. Last September, 32 projects have been selected by an independent jury and funded with a maximum of € 35.000 each to implement their network proposal.

In December 2012 experts from the higher education sector in the federal state of Bavaria met for the first time, to discuss and plan further steps to implement sustainability in the areas of teaching, research and campus management.

In North Rhine Westphalia an agency for "Education for Sustainable Development" was founded mid-September 2012. With the establishment of this agency, the Ministry for Climate, Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of North Rhine-Westphalia attempts to focus its activities so far for the necessary social change towards sustainability by developing a strategy for the federal state to implement ESD and supporting networking activities and the visibility of best practice initiatives.

- In December 2012, the 4th German Sustainability Awards took place and for the first time the German Commission for UNESCO was able to award a special award on ESD to Cities, Towns and Local Authorities who are leading in best practice implementing ESD. 119 municipalities submitted their projects and initiatives. According to the jury, the winning city, Gelsenkirchen, convinced through its exemplary education initiatives for a sustainable future, especially in times of a very tight municipal budget.

2. Since the last meeting of the Steering Committee, our regular activities to promote ESD have also continued:

- The National Steering Committee on ESD in Germany appointed an expert group to discuss the options for continuing ESD activities at national level beyond 2014.
- A Round Table with 130 stakeholders meets annually for strengthening partnerships and networks to promote the implementation of ESD. In between the Round Table sessions, the members come together in working groups to develop teaching concepts and to draft recommendations on how to embed ESD in different educational areas and settings.
- Last September, over 400 organizations participated in ESD Action Days, which are held annually.
- Since the beginning of the Decade, over 1.600 projects have been honoured with the award 'Official German Project for the UN Decade' and 15 cities and towns carry the title 'Official German City/Town for the UN Decade'. The Official Projects exemplify good practice in ESD. (Descriptions of many projects are also available online in English www.bne-portal.de/english).
- To strengthen the move from project level to a more systematic implementation at national level the criteria for 'Official Decade-Measures' were revised and intensified. By December 2012, 30 measures were awarded under the new criteria by the National Committee and incorporated into the National Action Plan.
- The German National Committee has set annual themes for each year of the Decade. The objective of the annual themes (e.g. water, energy, food) is to focus the activities of the Decade in order to attract new partners and make ESD issues more publicity friendly. This year, we are focusing our activities on the topic of 'mobility'. A collection of recommended teaching material across all sections of education illustrating how ESD can be taught by reference to mobility related sustainable development issues has been prepared and is now available for teachers and educators online and in print. Various other activities, such as workshops for educators and stakeholders or a competition in cooperation with partners in the private sector and media for instance, are currently in preparation.

Progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the three priority action areas since the seventh Steering Committee meeting:

(a) To ensure that there is an education for sustainable development (ESD) school plan in every school by 2015

Preliminary note:

As Germany is a federal state, there are 16 different states with 16 different regulations of school education. The following description tries to integrate representative examples (cases) on how to implement ESD at school level.

In 2007, the Standing Conference of the Ministries of Education in Germany (KMK) decided on general guidelines for ESD for schools and in teacher education and published a Cross Curricular Framework “Global Development Education in the Context of Education for Sustainable Development” (KMK 2007). This framework curriculum give examples how to integrate ESD into different subjects at school with the main focus on competencies and the contribution of the subjects to the general concept of ESD in the direction of a whole school approach to ESD. Different expert groups will produce an extended version including nearly every subject at school and special chapters on whole school approach and impacts on teacher education.

Guidelines and methods to integrate ESD into school plans- different examples from Germany:

- ESD as a basic issue of education and as part of the school law of the state;
- Regulations that foster schools to integrate ESD into their school plan or school curriculum;
- Guidelines on how to integrate ESD in school plans and school programmes;
- School networks for ESD, for instance Eco-Schools, ESD Schools, Future schools, UNESCO project schools;
- Regional centres for expertise to assist schools in integrating ESD in their school plans on the long run;
- Regular meetings of the working group on formal education of the Round Table, bringing together experts of national and federal level

(b) To promote the introduction of ESD into teacher education; United Nations ECE/CEP/AC.13/2013/3

In some federal states approaches of integrating ESD during the first phase of teacher education already exist, for example as seminar topics, as basic introduction modules, as principles of teaching for certain subjects, or as optional modules and qualifications. This development can also be recognized during the second phase on the basis of certification and training regulations, additional qualification options and elements of compulsory modules, etc.

Meanwhile ESD is integrated and promoted in various ways in further education of educators and teachers, especially due to the cooperation with external partners in the context of conferences, workshops and the realization of educational project days. There are trainings held for educators and stakeholders, who on their part again offer training on ESD.

Financial conditions have remained unchanged in most of the states. Nevertheless, existing programs are to be continued.

To summarise, ESD has been implemented in parts into teacher education plans.

Activities started in the federal states have to be supported, developed and even more firmly structurally embedded in the system of teacher education.

(c) To reorient technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy.

In the area of technical and vocational education and training a lot of activities were pursued, but a structural integration has not yet been achieved so far.

Specific training modules and continuing education concepts have been developed and also tested in model programs.

In fact the topic of environmental protection has been successfully introduced into vocational training curricula through the definition of standard learning targets since the 90s. And although the federal states have set general conditions for ESD to be integrated in colleges of vocational training, the implementation and realization only took place in specific circumstances and on the initiative of committed teachers and businesses.

The transfer and the dissemination of TVET for sustainable development nationwide are a crucial starting point to integrate sustainability in the vocational qualifications system, its institutions and practices.
