

INFORMAL COUNTRY REPORT

SWEDEN

Report on the progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

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

During 2011 the Swedish school system underwent major reforms. New curriculums for pre-school and elementary school were introduced and the upper-secondary school were divided into 18 different programs, some of them vocational. A new Education Act as well as a new teacher education program was introduced.

Working towards a safe environment and with democratic working methods is mentioned in the Education Act. More specific questions and objectives that concern ESD are further addressed in the school curriculum, syllabuses and examination goals. As these are all steering documents, they do not comprehend any specific action plans for how schools should work with ESD. However, there are a number of well-established diplomas, scholarships and awards in Sweden for schools that have an active and functioning operation for sustainable development. Alongside this, international documents such as the human rights charter, the UNESCO-declaration, conventions on environmental issues, Agenda 21 and Baltic 21 affect national decision making on educational policies and guidelines for public and private schools.

The National Agency for Education gives out the diploma “School for Sustainable Development” to schools, educational and vocational, that integrate a sustainable development perspective on environmental, economic and social questions in their teaching. To receive the diploma, schools are also encouraged to include the students in the whole process of learning. Currently, around 250 pre-schools, elementary schools, upper-secondary schools and one adult education institute holds the diploma.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education annually arrange a conference on global education questions for teachers, school leaders and other concerned actors. During 2012 the conference focused on how educators can work with UN:s sustainable development goals.

The student union at Gothenburg University Business School has in 2012 been approved by the Environmental board as an “environment friendly operation”. They are the first student union in Gothenburg to receive this diploma. The award certifies that the union in an orderly and ambitious way have dealt with environment questions and that the staff is educated in sustainable development and work with policy and goals that ensure environment friendly activities.

There are a number of more informal networks working with ESD in Sweden. Among them HU2, Higher Education for Sustainable development network, are an active organization working with interested partners in universities, authorities and student unions. Their objectives are to share experiences and materials on ESD and meet at least two times a year.

The association “Chalmers Students for Sustainability” is a student union focusing on engaging students in questions concerning sustainable development. During the autumn of 2012 they

introduced a seminar-series called “Watt Next”, inviting Swedish parliament politicians to discuss Swedish energy futures and aspects on climate change.

(b) To promote the introduction of ESD into teacher education;

According to the Higher Education Act, all activities in higher education institutions “have to promote a sustainable development, which means that current and generations to come are secured a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare and justice”. Furthermore, sustainable development is named as one of the examination goals that the students in teacher education should have obtained when finishing the education. (This is also the case for engineering and architecture).

The latest official report on ESD in teacher education is from 2008. The report concludes that there is a great diversity between different universities concerning ESD perspectives, largely depending on “local enthusiast”. Overall environmental aspects are better incorporated in education compared to economic and societal aspects of sustainable development. In 2011 at the national conference for students in teacher education the students expressed a will to focus their education more on sustainable development and international work.

In the summer of 2011 the “Gothenburg Centre for Environment and Sustainability” received funds from the teachers training board to develop a plan to integrated sustainable development in the teacher education course load. The programs name is ESD and the objectives are that teachers should be able to educate students in relevant scientific, societal and ethical aspects of sustainable development, especially focusing on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2009 Uppsala University started the program “Graduate school in Education and Sustainable Development”. The program involves PhD students from eight different institutions for higher-education in Sweden. Their objective is to produce more scientific foundations on ESD with a focus on how to educate students on environment change.

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

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, responsible for all matters concerning higher vocational education (HVE) in Sweden, has integrated sustainable development objectives in their operation. During 2011 a survey was made to map out what efforts were made to work towards sustainable development. Today, the agency has the objective to become environment certified and they encourage all schools to only use environment friendly goods and services. In its work the National Agency has seen a tendency towards more programmes connected to greening the economy. These are mainly in the technical (e.g. energy), manufacturing and urban development areas. The signals from companies and other employers concerning a need for competencies for a green economy are however not yet particularly strong though the demand is greater today than five years ago.

In 2009 the Swedish government presented “Strategy for Entrepreneurship in the School System”. Entrepreneurship is explained as a method to ensure that the students develop good collaborative skills, are inspired to think critically and creatively and that students learn to start and manage their own projects. It is also stressed that students in higher education should learn to set up smaller companies. During 2012, WWF Sweden produced a comprehensive study on how entrepreneurship and ESD are connected in Swedish elementary schools, upper secondary schools and higher education. WWF Sweden explains that an education that can combine entrepreneurial learning with

sustainable development will manage to give students the tools needed to incorporate sustainable development in all areas of their academic and professional life. The report concludes that numerous initiatives have been taken by schools and individual teachers to combine entrepreneurship with ESD. These projects have mostly been successful, and since entrepreneurship is highly valued by the government as an educative tool an ESD project that integrates entrepreneurship are more likely to receive funding.

In Sweden, much of the vocational education in tertiary level, takes place in higher education institutions. That is for example the case for all kinds of engineering education. According to the Higher Education Act sustainable development is named as one of the examination goals students in engineering education should have obtained when finishing the education. At several higher education institutions there are courses aiming at preparing the students for a green economy, e.g. the Master-courses “Sustainable Urban Management” (30 ECTS) at Malmö University and “Social-Ecological Resilience for Sustainable Development” (60 ECTS) at Stockholm University which aims to enhance students' knowledge of the complex interactions between ecological and social systems. Further examples are "Industrial environmental economics" (7,5 ECTS) for BSc students in Industrial Management and Engineering at the University of Gävle. At the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) there are courses regarding e.g. green sustainable building (Green Building - Concept, Design, Construction and Operation).

Chalmers University of Technology, which holds one of Sweden's UNESCO Chairs in ESD, has, as a reaction to conclusions in a major student thesis, identified the need to include more economic SD aspects and sustainable business aspects in their compulsory ESD courses.
