

UNECE Expert group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development
Fourth meeting
The Hague (the Netherlands), 10-12 May 2006
The Nieuwe of Littéraire Sociëteit De Witte

SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson

1. The fourth meeting of the Expert Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) took place in The Hague (the Netherlands) on 10-12 May 2006.
2. The meeting was attended by the members of the Expert Group who are experts designated by governments and by intergovernmental, international, regional, and non-governmental organisations (see the annexe 1). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Roel van Raaij (the Netherlands).
3. The meeting adopted its agenda and agreed on the working procedures.
4. The Chairperson informed the experts of the relevant outcomes of the EU Presidency Conference on “ESD towards responsible Global Citizenship” (Vienna, 13-15 March 2006) insofar as these concerned Indicators for ESD and the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD. He welcomed the Resolution adopted by the participants of the Conference, which recommended, among other, that the EU takes concrete steps towards acceptance, support and facilitation of the implementation of ESD, as stated in the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development across the EU and its neighbourhood, with the involvement of all relevant sectors and stakeholders. Furthermore, he stressed that the indicators developed by the Expert Group would greatly contribute to the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD by assessing the progress and the effectiveness of implementation.
5. The secretariat has prepared an overview of the revised consolidated set of indicators (EG on ESD Indicators-4/3) to facilitate the further work of the Expert Group. A compilation of comments by experts to the consolidated set was made available for the consideration by the experts, as appropriate (EG on ESD Indicators-4/2).
6. The Expert Group stated that no single indicator or sub-indicator should be seen as indicative of quality in its own right. Rather, it is the combination of answers that will indicate the state of progress in, and the effectiveness of, implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD. The experts stressed that the indicators and the reporting mechanism are meant not “to compare” but rather to enable countries of the region to “learn and develop” in the area of ESD, so that the region becomes a “learning region”. Progress over time in implementing ESD could be seen by assessing the progress following the reporting for each of the three implementation phases of the Strategy (2007, 2010 and 2015). The Experts suggested using data for 1 January 2006 as baseline data.
7. The set comprises 18 indicators with 48 sub-indicators structured according to the 6 issues for reporting, which follow the objectives of the Strategy. There are 45 *qualitative* sub-indicators and 8 *quantitative*, of which 5 are of a dual nature. The sub-indicators are of several *types*: 11 sub-indicators are

“checklist”, 29 are “input” (of which 1 is of a dual type), 8 are “output” and 1 is “outcome”. The format of indicators/sub-indicators consists of two parts: a “yes/no¹” part and a “descriptive” part.

8. The set of indicators includes, in addition to specification of the *type* of indicator, information on “means and sources of verification”, and is meant as guidance to help National Focal Points find the information necessary to complete the indicators. It was stressed that in some countries the information might be available in sources relevant to “environmental education” or “development education”, which might not necessarily be viewed as ESD but which could nevertheless provide relevant information for populating the indicators on ESD.

9. The assessment mechanism behind the indicators is based on the answers to the sub-indicators that would provide input into the indicator’s assessment. The conclusion was reached that it is not feasible to sum up the answers to the sub-indicator in a quantitative way to build sound data for the indicator as such. Therefore, the indicator has to be presented as a qualitative judgment of the sub-indicators. To evaluate the answers provided in the annexed templates-tables, and consequently assess the sub-indicators, the Expert Group has developed an “assessment key”. Following the “tailor-made” approach a variety of rankings is used, expressing numbers, percentage, amounts and state of a process. To ensure consistency across the indicator set, these are expressed as a six-category scale from A (minimum) to F (maximum).

10. The Experts encouraged countries to undertake a so-called self-assessment exercise, following the completion of the reporting format. This would imply for countries on voluntary basis to self-assess the status of the implementation of the respective indicator on the basis of the answers to the sub-indicators. The self-assessment exercise would be a valuable addition to the information provided in the Reporting Format and would help to minimise, to the extent possible, the subjectivity of the conclusions drawn by an independent expert when preparing a synthesis reports on progress in implementing the Strategy across the region. Moreover, the self-assessment would provide countries with the opportunity to reflect on the national progress in implementing the Strategy.

11. On the basis of the set of indicators and the outline of the reporting format agreed by the Steering Committee in 2005, the experts provided recommendations to the Chairperson and the secretariat for developing a template for reporting to be used by the National Focal Points (NFPs) on ESD for preparing the National Implementation Reports (NIRs) for the pilot voluntary reporting in phase I (2007), and for reporting in phase II (2010) and phase III (2015). In addition, the experts stressed the need to prepare an informal *guidance for reporting* in order to facilitate the completion of the template by the NFPs. This guidance would include the compilation of available information on the methodology and procedure behind the indicators contained in various documents. The Expert Group also stressed the usefulness of a wide dissemination of the NIRs to the relevant bodies at the national level and recommended to the Steering Committee that NIRs would be translated into the ECE official languages.

12. The Expert Group emphasised the need to have a multi-stakeholder participatory process in preparing the NIRs. They strongly recommended that prior to the submission of the report to the UNECE secretariat by the designated NFP on ESD, the preparatory process should involve all concerned authorities, education institutions and other relevant stakeholders at the national level.

13. Although the “yes/no” part of sub-indicators is required to be reported on in Phase I (by 2007) and the “descriptive” part in Phase II (by 2010), the Expert Group proposed to encourage countries to report on the full set of indicators at the end of each phase, to the extent possible, in line with a country’s

¹ A “no” answer should be selected also in the case of “not applicable”, and explanation provided on why it is not applicable.

progress in implementing the ESD. Those countries that volunteered to participate in a pilot reporting already in Phase I (by 2007) were advised by the Expert Group to report on the full set to the extent possible. Other countries that are not ready for the pilot reporting were invited to complete only the “*yes/no*” part and, if feasible, also the “*descriptive*” part. This exercise would replace the initially foreseen questionnaire and its results will lay down the basis for preparing the first progress report on implementation of the Strategy for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007).

14. The Expert Group considered that the current set of indicators reflects the state of art and it is the best possible result in accordance with the UNECE Strategy itself, the mandate of the Expert Group, the availability of data and methodology, and the common understanding between different countries, educational systems, cultures and languages. They stressed that the current set of indicators would possibly require a revision following the first reporting exercise and the feedback received from the countries on the workability and feasibility of the indicators and requested information for reporting. Therefore, the Expert Group requested the Steering Committee to extend its mandate to allow for a fifth meeting to revise the set of indicators, if needed, in time for preparing the report for the possible next meeting of the Steering Committee, provided its mandate would be extended at the Belgrade Conference.

15. The Expert Group stressed that the indicators developed for the reporting on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy on ESD would provide valuable input into the UN Decade on ESD. Most of the indicators, as well as the methodology used for their development, could be adapted and used by other regions, and therefore could serve to governments and stakeholders as an efficient tool to assess the progress in ESD within the UN Decade on ESD.

16. The Expert Group agreed that the Chairperson with support from the secretariat would submit the progress report on developing indicators for ESD, including the template for reporting, for the consideration by the second meeting of the Steering Committee on ESD (4-5 December 2006).

Annexe 1

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EG on ESD Indicators-4/4
24 July 2006

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