



First South-East Europe sub-regional workshop  
on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD  
28 November 2005, Athens, Greece

## SUMMARY REPORT

*prepared by the Chairperson with the assistance of the Secretariat*

1. Following a decision of the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (March 2005, Vilnius), the first sub-regional workshop on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for the sub-region of South-East Europe (SEE) has been organised by the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and with the support of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE). The workshop took place on 28 November 2005, in Athens (Greece). Its major objective was to facilitate work on specific issues that are of particular importance for SEE, thereby providing an opportunity to exchange experiences and to strengthen sub-regional cooperation on the Strategy's implementation.

2. The meeting was attended by delegates from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The representatives of the following organisations participated: the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC CEE), the Borrowed Nature Association, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the South-Eastern Mediterranean Sea Project - Croatia (UNESCO, SEMEP-Croatia) and Mediterranean Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Michael Scoullos, member of the Greek National Commission for ESD and chairman of MIO-ECSDE.

### **I. Welcome and introduction on behalf of the host country**

3. Mr. Ilias Mavroidis (Greek Ministry for Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works) delivered the welcome speech. He underlined the importance and mutual benefit of two back-to-back events hosted by the Greek Government: the Conference for the Official Launching of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean region (26-27 November 2005) and the SEE workshop for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD. He also emphasised that this first workshop illustrates an action-oriented approach to the implementation of ESD. Mr. Mavroidis stressed that it is important to seek synergies between the ESD-related developments in different sub-regions and to exchange ideas and success stories, as well as to discuss challenges faced and existing opportunities. Ms. Alexandra Lekka (Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs) joined the welcome and presented the report on ESD on behalf of Greece.

### **II. Recent developments in relation to the implementation of the Strategy**

4. Participants provided brief reports on the recent developments in relation to the implementation of the Strategy in their respective countries. There is a clear tendency in the governmental policies that EE and ESD should receive prominent recognition. However there is still traditional support to EE



rather than to ESD and, at the same time, still lack of clarity in distinguishing EE and ESD. In some countries EE and ESD are included in the national Strategies for SD, in some in the Strategies for Environment and Economy. Some countries also reflected ESD in their anti-drug Strategy and Strategy for the Right of the Child. In almost all countries introduction of ESD coincides with a general educational reform. On the one hand this provides a more flexible opportunity to introduce changes, but on the other, this slows down the process. With regard to the translation of the UNECE Strategy in the official languages and establishment of the consultative mechanism for the implementation of the Strategy, the majority of the countries confirmed that these two initial measures were under way. They also stressed them as important steps for the promotion of the Strategy in the government as a whole and for the creation of a workable mechanism for implementation. Lack of resources and of specially trained educators were identified as two of the key challenges for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy.

### **III. Progress in the development of indicators to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy.**

5. Ms. Karin Sollart, member of the UNECE Expert Group on ESD Indicators, gave a presentation on the development of indicators for ESD. With regard to the scope, the experts agreed that the indicators should be determined by the objectives of the Strategy and reflect both aspects of the mandate: “the implementation” as a process, and “the effectiveness of the implementation”, as a qualitative feature of the process and of the outcome, including long-term effects of education for sustainable development (ESD). With regard to the concept of use of indicators, the experts identified four types of indicators: (a) “Checklist indicators” that would provide information on initial policy, legislation, regulatory and governance measures taken by a government in order to implement the Strategy; (b) “Input indicators” that would provide information on a broader spectrum of activities taking place in the implementation of the Strategy; (c) “Output indicators” that would provide information on the results of these activities; and (d) “Outcome indicators” that would provide information on the possible impact due to the implementation of the Strategy, in particular its qualitative aspect in terms of values, attitudes and choices in favour of SD. The draft indicators will be submitted for comments to the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD in December this year, and thereafter, the experts will hold two more meetings. The final outcome of the group’s work will be presented for endorsement to the second meeting of the Steering Committee. Participants welcomed the work done by the Expert Group and provided comments on the draft indicators, suggesting a change in timeframe (from Phase II to Phase I) for the use of indicators for Objective 6.

### **IV. Specificity of the region of South-East Europe with regard to the implementation of ESD: success stories, challenges, needs and opportunities.**

6. Mr. Stoyan Yotov, an independent expert (Borrowed Nature Association), delivered an introductory presentation on the topic. Mr. Yotov provided an evaluation of the current status, needs and potential with respect to EE and ESD in the countries of SEE. The key findings were that education systems are well-established throughout the countries of the region and there are a number of ESD-related initiatives taking place at school level. Some work on elaboration of education materials and improvement of school textbooks is under way. However there are still many weaknesses and obstacles that make implementation of ESD difficult. These include:

- legislative gaps in the educational laws
- lack of clarity in the messages from the Government



- lack of coordination between the responsible institutions
- very centralized education systems and outdated programs
- inadequate teachers qualification, especially in rural areas
- lack of interdisciplinary training
- lack of training of trainers
- lack of financial and material resources
- lack of appropriate teaching materials and practical guides
- Insufficient co-operation between schools and universities and between educational institutions and the local authorities
- NGO activities remain far from the requirements of schools

7. With regard to teachers, the following major problems were identified: poor motivation, time pressure due to the overloaded curriculum and low salaries.

8. Participants discussed the issues raised by Mr. Yotov and, furthermore, identified some specific characteristics of the SEE region. Among these were mentioned:

- Historical background of fragmentation and intolerance
- Struggling to find its orientation towards the European Community, as one of the poorest part of Europe
- Lack of strong organisation of civil society due to the poor experience of NGOs in governance and lack of resources for their activities
- Authorities and institutions do not have a tradition of horizontal cooperation
- The region is a mosaic of high quality environmental objects and zones of environmental catastrophes
- Unprecedented increase of unsustainable consumption due to the “consumption thirst” caused by previous socio-economic conditions supported by advertisement and other activities of foreign and local businesses

9. Participants agreed that it will be a real challenge to implement ESD and make it address and tackle all these concerns.

## **V. Cooperation on ESD in the region of South-East Europe: identification of key priority areas and effective mechanisms.**

10. Participants discussed regional cooperation on ESD and came up with the major conclusions on the key priority areas and mechanisms. With regard to the priorities, they agreed that training of trainers to deliver further training to teachers and other stakeholders and development and adoption of the teaching materials should be considered as urgent matters. They identified a number of experiences that already exist in the region and can be used for these two areas. For example, MIO-ECSDE developed teaching materials for secondary schools, which are available through its web-site. It is also conducting trainers’ and teachers’ training in the area of ESD. A Green Pack developed by REC CEE in partnership with Toyota Motor Europe, is already translated into several languages. The UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology for Europe (ROSTE) has preliminarily agreed to support a network of institutions of higher education working in the area of ESD in the Mediterranean region, including the Balkans. Participants also stressed that it is important to clarify, what support countries could provide using their internal potential and what help they need from outside.



With regard to the mechanisms for cooperation, the following sub-regional structures were mentioned: Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES), REC CEE, MIO-ECSDE, EU programmes targeted at neighbouring countries and the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for SEE (REReP). The important role of bilateral cooperation was also underlined.

11. As a practical tool for sub-regional cooperation, participants proposed developing a programme with two interlinked key elements: (a) “creating a critical mass” - training of trainers and (b) developing teaching materials. With regard to the training of trainers, there was general support to introduce “a two-phases” approach. The first phase would be dedicated to the coordination and training of the team of international experts in ESD. The second phase would be conducted on a country-by-county basis. Thus, a team of international experts would deliver training to the countries interested. The training would last about 2-3 days for different target groups. Teachers would be a separate target group. Participants agreed that all countries of SEE should be proposed as target countries for this programme. MIO-ECSDE, possibly in cooperation with the Greek Government, offered to facilitate implementation of this exercise in partnership with other relevant organisations. To this end, participants requested that the UNECE Secretariat and MIO-ECSDE prepare a draft outline for this programme. Participants called upon all interested donors to help secure the funds for it.

12. Participants voiced their hope that this first sub-regional workshop would serve as an example for other sub-regions and would help them in identifying their priority areas for cooperation.

13. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece for the hosting and organising this important meeting and for the warm hospitality that they received in Athens. They also expressed appreciation to the staff of MIO-ECSDE for its professional support and fruitful contribution to the event.

Note: Documents, list of participants and texts of interventions are available through the following web-site:  
<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/WorkshSEE.htm>

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