



UNIVERSITY EDUCATORS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

at Cheltenham and Gloucester

University Educators for Sustainable Development

An Erasmus Partnership of 55 members in 33 countries

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WHY NOT JOIN US?



UE4SD Newsletter

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Higher Education (HE), university educators, professional development, competences

University Educators for Sustainable Development" (UE4SD) is a three year project funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme - Erasmus Academic Networks. The project is working across Europe to locate and capture recent efforts to support the development of ESD capabilities of university educators. The aim is to draw on best practices, new initiatives and usable tools for professional development in ESD for university educators. The project draws together 55 partners across 33 countries, mainly in Europe. The partnership has been divided into four different regional hubs to ensure that regional scenarios and contexts are visible throughout the project.

Project News

Welcome to the first of our bi-annual UE4SD newsletters. The purpose of the newsletter is to serve as a news and information platform for UE4SD partners and external stakeholders. It seeks to provide information about UE4SD activities, meetings, updates from project work packages as well as outcomes and resources that may be of interest to partners. The newsletters will also share partners' profiles and provide details of relevant news and contact details.

This first newsletter presents the key highlights from regional reports drawn from a professional development exercise. UE4SD partners contributed to this report by completing national templates capturing key trends and significant practice. The newsletter also provides information on the first UE4SD project annual meeting as well as links for UE4SD dissemination materials.

The next newsletter will be sent in December 2014 and will include news and updates from network partners. Details on how to make a contribution to the next newsletter will be communicated in November 2014.

The UE4SD project secretariat would value feedback. Please could you take a minute to let us know if the newsletter serves its purpose and advise how it could be improved. Please send your feedback at: ue4sd@glos.ac.uk.

Partner Updates

Mapping the Field: Key messages from UE4SD Regional Mapping Reports

The first phase of the UE4SD project has involved each UE4SD country completing a mapping template to capture existing professional development opportunities for university educators. The regional hub coordinators have analysed the country templates and developed four regional reports which capture background information on the status of ESD within HE at the national level. The reports collate information about key policies, resources and initiatives that support the development of ESD in higher education, and identify ESD professional development offerings for university educators in each region.

We are now pleased to share some key messages emerging from each regional report:

North Region - Summary developed by Dr Alex Ryan and Prof Daniella Tilbury (University of Gloucestershire, UK)

Taking account of the mapping process for the entire North region, there are some clear messages emerging about the current landscape for professional development in ESD in HE as well as signs of how innovation can be supported and interesting examples of ways forward:

1. *There is a favourable policy context for ESD overall:* some countries have yet to prioritise ESD, but many countries have found high level pathways through strategy or legislation, although so far, not many give specific recognition to the role of HE. There is recognition that ESD involves a strategic or 'systemic' approach that covers all subjects in the curriculum, but overall there is little explanation of what ESD involves or its key approaches and principles.
2. *National and regional drivers for ESD in HE can be identified:* in many countries, regional and international networks have worked well to support ESD in HE (and global sustainable development or frameworks and the DESD have been valuable supports). Some of the most significant developments are happening where there are national HE initiatives (Estonia) and where uplift has resulted from key HE education agencies becoming active in ESD (UK).
3. *Professional development for ESD needs a stronger profile:* there are very few references to the need for staff development in high level documentation or in the activities for ESD that have been initiated by HE institutions. Most of the existing opportunities are at entry level, offering initial experiences through events and toolkits, taking short courses and sharing good practices. There are more opportunities in teacher education and far less in other subjects, which shows 'disconnect' with the strategic intentions expressed at policy level.
4. *New approaches to ESD professional development are emerging slowly:* some of the most interesting activities

involve university educators across all subjects, in their institutional teams and through the routine work of their departments. Several initiatives were found that have strong pedagogical approaches and professional development processes, for example through training academies, expert mentoring, professional support and innovation projects (with notable examples from Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Sweden and the UK).

Strategic national approaches seem to have significant potential for supporting responses to ESD in the curriculum by greater numbers of HE institutions and to secure the place of ESD in the HE system. To achieve greater impact in professional development of university educators, deeper training processes will be needed, to move beyond isolated events and short courses. There is also the need to recognise that ESD must involve both *content* and *pedagogy* – and that training activities must support educators to connect these two aspects in their own teaching practices.

Some of the most interesting work found through the North region mapping has shown that there is great value in engaging with existing pathways for professional development of university educators. ESD can develop through national professional competence frameworks and within HE institutions, through training courses and practical projects for academic staff to gain ESD experience.

South Region - – Summary developed by Prof Javier Benayas and David Alba (Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain)

The South Europe region includes Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey and a total of 481 HE institutions with almost 10 million students. The key trends identified in the regional mapping process are the following:

- ESD in HE is recognized in most of the countries of the Southern region, but little information has been provided on what type of ESD approaches and processes are used.
- The policy context in HE is not so favourable since there are no specific strategies or policies which recognize ESD in the sector. However, at the institution level, some universities have developed their own sustainability and ESD plans and strategies. Some have started a process of reorienting courses and modules towards sustainability, especially those of teacher training, as well as developing specialised Master courses on Environmental Education and ESD. All these activities have at the same time contributed to enhance research in this area.
- There are not many ESD professional development initiatives for university educators at national level. Only two out of seven Southern countries identified staff development

initiatives consisting of formal training courses. However, some “pro-active” university initiatives have been found where educators are encouraged to embed ESD principles in the design of modules and learning performance.

- Any country in the region has identified initiatives which related to ESD in quality assurance, enhancement or accreditation in HE. National HE agencies have not included ESD or sustainability in quality assurance processes at the institutional, course or teaching staff levels.
- We have identified some interesting experiences on networks and partnerships that support the professional development of university educators in ESD. Some of the examples include international ESD programmes such as Regional Centres of Expertise and UE funding programmes. Others include initiatives from UNESCO like the Network of the Mediterranean Universities for Sustainable Development focusing on ESD (MedUnNET). These networks have great potential to influence HE policy and practice.
- Finally, the information suggests that the UNECE ESD competences framework hasn't had a true impact in the Southern countries. Three of the countries show some examples of initiatives but information on real linkages with the UNECE ESD competences is not provided.

Overall, we have identified some interesting initiatives and projects in different countries of the region. However, these projects are isolated and limited. Furthermore, we have identified the development of a better global strategy to overcome the scarcities encountered as a key priority in the region.

East Region – Summary developed by Andrew Barton and Dr Jana Dlouhá (Charles University, Environment Center, Czech Republic)

The CEE experience with ESD and prospects for transition at the HE level (as identified in CEE national ESD mapping reports) are as follows:

1. Strong role of leadership: in many countries, efforts targeting an ESD oriented transition are greatly dependent on committed individuals. Sometimes, the initiatives of individuals substitute for the absence of a national system for professional development of university educators.
2. This is related to the vulnerability of the systemic measures to political changes and turbulences. Policy priorities are not stable in this region and it is sometimes difficult to ensure accountability for decisions and strategies in the long term. HE institutions thus are a stabilizing factor where ESD structures (if developed) persist across regimes.

3. Some of the countries reported formalism together with a scepticism toward the result of long-approved decisions and policy documents that have no practical follow-up and impact. In the Czech Republic, for example, implementation documents exist but with no financial budget for real activities. Hungary reports on numerous sustainable development strategies at the institutional level, and the general problem with their practical implementation.
4. On the other hand, in some of the countries, an (E)SD oriented public debate with national, regional and local authorities and specialised NGOs/ civil society organisations has been initiated (Bulgaria).
5. There is a lack of support for the SD concept itself, and as a consequence ESD is often not perceived as a priority. Sometimes, “sustainability” is replaced by other general terms such as “global” (education) (e.g. in Slovakia).
6. Although not explicitly reported, future-oriented thinking (from future vision to practical implementation) represents a problem in this region. Initiatives and activities are supposed to be driven rather restrictively – by regulations, norms and control mechanisms.
7. In general, a system for the professional development of university educators in which ESD competences could be consequently embedded is lacking (Croatia and others). This is also emphasised in reports from Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic. On the other hand, an example of a good opportunity to introduce ESD competence development programmes at the higher education level can be found in Romania, where a system of mandatory socio-psychopedagogical training for students who will become teachers (pre-university and HE) exists.
8. The crucial need for holistic, transdisciplinary and transformative education is also recognised elsewhere. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is reported that these principles are often in conflict with dominant teaching and learning attitudes and models, and the lack of compatibility between existing programs and the concept of ESD itself is a primary obstacle to a change of approach.
9. To support arguments with evidence, research is badly required. In Albania, for example, a gap in research and a lack of evidence has resulted in a misunderstanding of ESD and its role in society.
10. Action at the education policy level is required. Slovenia has called for a strategic document that would provide a formal framework for ESD in higher education and include as many

different disciplinary fields as possible. These efforts should be aligned with international documents produced by UN (UNESCO, UNECE), EU, and related to the other national documents.

11. To develop a holistic and consistent sustainability-oriented HE system that includes the professional development of university educators in ESD, university “greening” should be undertaken in a relatively wide area of university life and include deeper and more qualitative transformations within the processes of education and reflection thereupon.

West Region – Summary developed by Marlene Mader, Prof Gerd Michelsen, Dr Clemens Mader and Dr Simon Burandt (Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany)

Insights from the national mapping reports of the UE4SD partners in the Western European region, which involves the countries of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, have shown that sustainability issues and ESD have found its way into HE institutions. In all countries, there exists some kind of strategic guidelines that recognise ESD in HE – both on the policy as well as institutional level. These strategies are seen as an important framework for the further systemic implementation of sustainability in HE. Nevertheless only a few initiatives could be identified, which support the professional development of ESD competences of university educators.

The Western European partners consider the following aspects to be priority needs in ESD professional development of university educators:

1. linking professional development of university educators with quality assurance and accreditation
2. developing professional development opportunities on a mainstreamed basis
3. informing university educators about ESD and providing concrete tools and examples
4. reaching common agreement on the required ESD competences university educators should acquire
5. highlighting the necessity to promote transversal approaches which correspond to integrative and systemic thinking
6. and discussing the scientific basis of ESD competences in higher education, amongst others the UNECE framework for university educators.

The work package leader, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, is currently combining the four UE4SD regional reports and developing a state of the art document which will consolidate the findings from the four UE4SD regions. The state of the art report will be launched and presented at the UE4SD annual meeting and seminar during 2 October on Prague, Czech Republic.

Events

Join us at the UE4SD Annual Meeting and COPERNICUS Alliance Conference (Prague, 2-3 October 2014)!

The UE4SD Annual Meeting and COPERNICUS Alliance (CA) Conference will take place during 2-3 October 2014 in Prague, Czech Republic. The Conference host is Charles University, one of the oldest universities in Europe, and a core partner of UE4SD and CA.

On Thursday 2 October, all 55 project partners will be assembled in one location for the first time, so it is a grand opportunity to discuss progress on the project to date, results of the mapping exercise, project management and administration, hear the perspectives of representatives from all four regional hubs, and discuss next project stages.

The UE4SD meeting will be followed by a CA Conference on Friday 3 October, which will be opened to CA members and the general public. The Conference will count with the participation of renowned keynote speakers and will provide an opportunity to present the UE4SD project to a public audience and policy-makers.

This is a unique chance to network with a large number of experts involved in the sustainability transition of universities and in particular the theme of competences for ESD. We look forward to welcoming all of you in Prague!

CA Conference: <http://www.ue4sd.eu/copernicus-conf>

UE4SD Mediterranean Event in Gibraltar

HM Government of Gibraltar convened an Expert Group on the Mediterranean on the 28-29th July. UE4SD joined forces with MIO-ESDE to Chair this meeting. University of Sienna, Autonomous University of Madrid, University of Porto, University of Granada and University of Gloucestershire were some of the UE4SD partners attending the meeting. Building upon three key strategic frameworks:

- i) the UENECE ESD Strategy;
- ii) the Mediterranean Strategy for ESD (MSESD); and the
- iii) Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), (under the Barcelona Convention

The meeting identified key priority actions and partnership platforms to progress these within realistic timeframes

The meeting brokered by Prof Daniella Tilbury and Prof Michael Scoullas, acknowledged key agreements and sub-regional partnerships that operate in the Mediterranean. It also recognised that HE has a unique and significant contribution to make to the sustainable development of the Mediterranean. The Gibraltar Meeting brought

together leaders of universities, representatives from government and intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organisations as well as experts in ESD to develop a draft action plan for HE collaboration across the region. The draft ***Action Plan for Higher Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean*** will be shared with stakeholders in Nagoya at the UN Summit on Higher Education for Sustainable Development this November and at the UNECE meeting scheduled for May 2015. These consultations will serve to refine the actions and extend the partnership beyond those attending this initial expert group meeting. It is hoped that a future meeting will consolidate and launch the action plan in July 2015.

Publications and Resources

Share the new UE4SD website link and project leaflet!

We are pleased to announce that the UE4SD website is now live and can be accessed here [\(http://www.ue4sd.eu/\)](http://www.ue4sd.eu/). The website includes key information on the project and its partners, fresh news on project developments, and details of project events.

The UE4SD project leaflet has also been recently finalized and can be viewed here <http://www.ue4sd.eu/project/leaflets-in-project-languages>.

All the translated versions of the leaflet will be available at this link by October 2014.

We would like to encourage all UE4SD partners to check these links and share them widely with key national stakeholders and university colleagues.

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