

Education for Sustainable Development Program in the Western Balkans

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REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Who are we?

- **REC** -Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
- The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 29 countries and the European Commission, and on international agreement signed with the government of Hungary .
- The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices in 17 Central and Eastern European countries.



- The REC actively participates in key global, regional and local processes and contributes to environmental and sustainability solutions within and beyond its country office network, transferring transitional knowledge and experience to countries and region.
- 15 topic areas (Biodiversity and rural development , Civil Society Support , Climate change , Courses for Sustainable Development , Education , Environmental Information , Environmental assessment , Environmental financing , Health and environment , Implementation of AARHUS convention , Law, Enforcement and Compliance , Local Initiatives , Sustainable consumption and production , Water management).



Introduction

- Development Policy Program adopted by the Government of Finland on 18 October 2007 places particular emphasis on the economic, ecological and social sustainability, while it states that “good education is the cornerstone of sustainable development”.
- In order to provide a consolidated response to the needs of Western Balkan countries in the framework of general Finnish development priorities, a Feasibility Study on an Environmental Education Development Program in the Western Balkans was carried out in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in the beginning of 2008.



- **Program Title** Education for Sustainable Development Program in the Western Balkans
- **Sector** : Education
- **Focus** : Supporting schools and communities to jointly work towards sustainable development
- **Geographical Coverage**: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia and broader Western Balkans
- **Duration**: 2009 – 2013; 4 years including 6 months of project inception phase
- **Starting Date**: April 2009
- **Program Financing**: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
- **Total** 13,807 million EURO



Education for Sustainable Development - Definition

- *Sustainable Environmental Education is a continuous process of education, training and personal development that seeks to form the system of scientific and practical knowledge, skills, values, behavior and activities in the fields of environmental protection, sustainable environmental use and consumption, and education (UNEP Sustainable Environmental Education in the Kyrgyz Republic).*
- *Education for Sustainable Development is a vision of education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future (UNESCO 2005).*



- *‘Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)’ is a concept that goes far beyond environmental education. It is the educational process of **achieving human development** (“the three pillars of human development” proposed by UNDP: economic growth, social development, and environmental protection) in an inclusive, equitable and secure manner. It thus includes **education for poverty alleviation, human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, international understanding, peace and many more.** (UNEP, *The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*)*



General policy framework

- .
- The WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia) have presented a common joint statement as a common expression of efforts, aspirations and needs towards Education for Sustainable Development in the region, as confirmed in the “**SEE Joint Statement on ESD**” adopted at Belgrade “Environment for Europe” Conference in October 2007. ESD is perceived as a neutral platform for regional cooperation between SEE countries that share a complex political environment and a common conflict-burdened heritage from recent past.



- **Policy frameworks for ESD exist.** In all countries ESD has been addressed in the appropriate policies and within various sectoral policy documents. Examples include:
- Action plans for implementation of the Strategy on ESD have been initiated (Serbia 2007). In Montenegro the strategic plan for education reform (2005-2009) includes ESD, and an action plan on ESD integration into the education system has been developed (2007-2009).
- The National Environmental Strategy of both Albania and Serbia contain ESD aspects.
- National Strategies for Sustainable Development (Montenegro in a 2007 and in Macedonia under development) include ESD elements.
- There is an intention by several countries to set up national centers on ESD. National Councils of Sustainable Development were formed in Montenegro and Serbia. These have high-level representation (in Montenegro it is chaired by the Prime Minister) and aid multi-stakeholder involvement. In Serbia there are a number of regional centers on environment and SD mainly developed between local governments and NGOs.



FOCUS

Supporting schools and communities to jointly work towards sustainable development

OBJECTIVE

ESD is an integral part of elementary education in Western Balkans and effective placement of schools in their communities to maximize potentials to reach sustainable development



Conceptual approach

- While there is no universal model of Education for Sustainable Development, this program will focus on the concept of **Sustainable Schools** that advocates for a “whole-school” approach-not only introducing environmental and sustainability themes but also including them in the daily routines of the school.
- In this concept student, educators and administrators are engaged in working towards a sustainable school in terms of teaching approaches, student activities, infrastructure and buildings, transport and meals, management, and community involvement. The latter is particularly important as this program would seek to **enhance the connections and cooperation between schools and communities around them.**



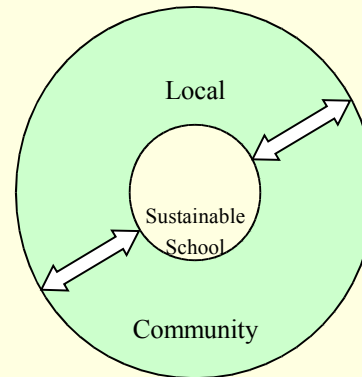
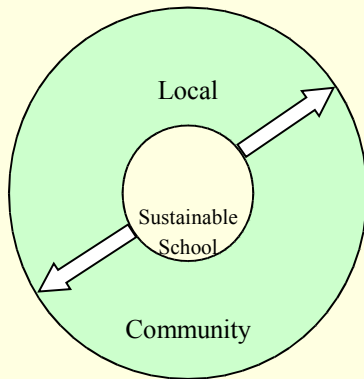
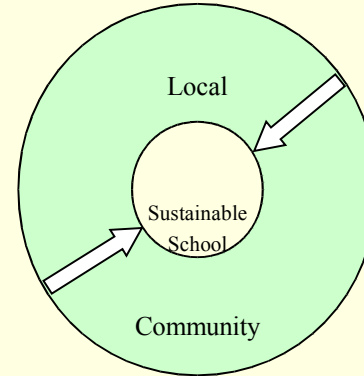
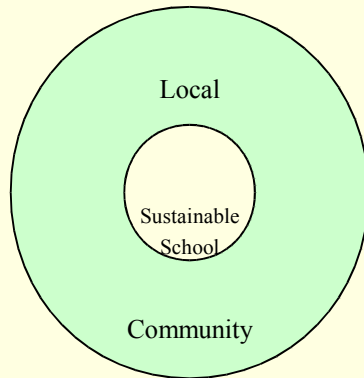
- School and community in close cooperation – participation – commitment – makes the project 'our own'
- Team work!
- Wide concept of ESD
- Ecological
- Economic
- Sociocultural aspect
- A sustainable school prepares young people for a lifetime of sustainable living, through its teaching, its fabric and its day-to-day practices. **It is guided by a commitment to care:**
- **for oneself;**
- **for each other (across cultures, distances and generations); and**
- **for the environment itself (far and near).**



- By possible examples - creating our own solution- 'Western Balkan sustainable school concept' - Our own school concept
- External evaluation: Environmental Certification (OKKA), ECO-schools (Green Flag)
- Schools should become 'communities of practice', where the, the 'elders' of the community are themselves exemplary learners



School-community links in ESD



GEORAPHIC FOCUS

- **Geographic area of intervention** focused on a natural resource and a set of environmental problems shared by a certain number of potential municipalities and schools based in those.
 - Suggested geographical focus is **The Drina River Basin** delineated by the Drina River and shared among project partner countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia
 - 19,946 km² , home to 650,000 people , .
- There are three national parks (NPs)



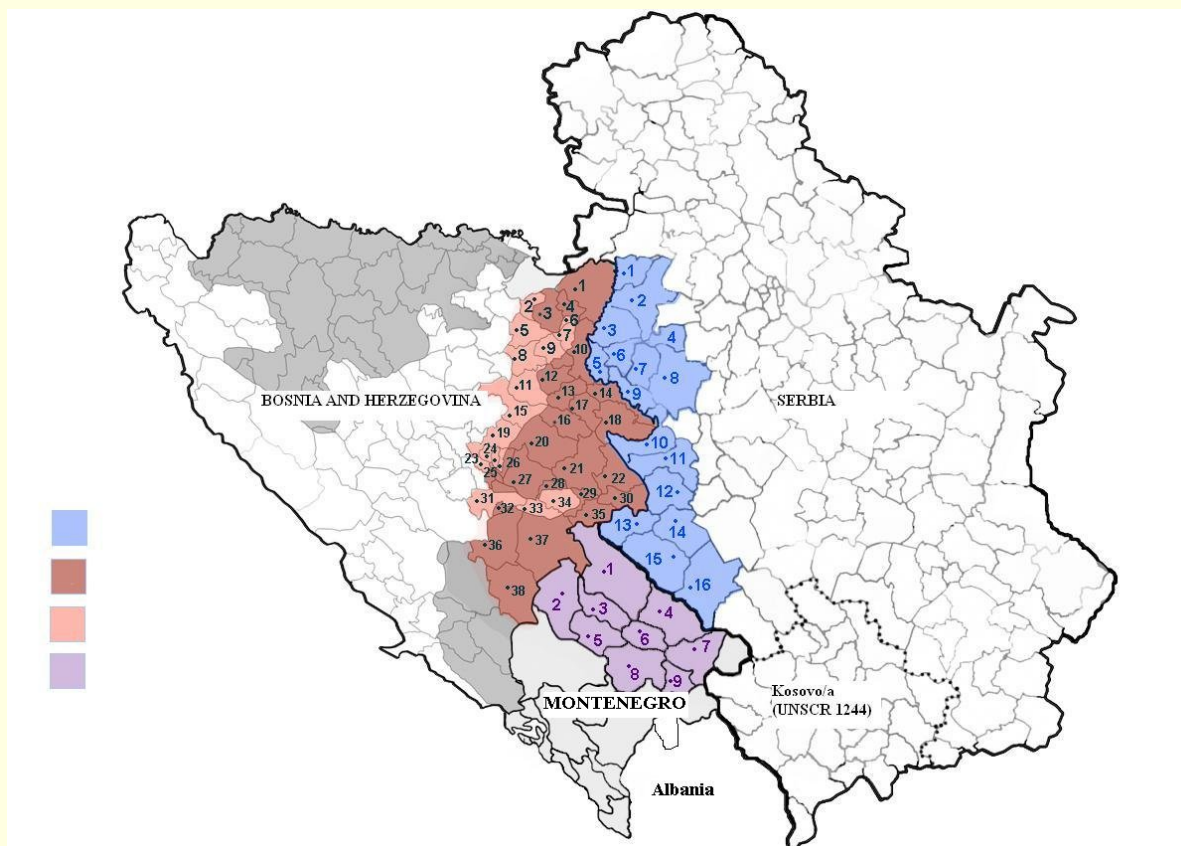








GEORAPHIC FOCUS



- Drina River Basin has around 60 relatively undeveloped and mainly rural municipalities. These communities will constitute the initial list from which 25 target municipalities will be selected (**10 in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 5 in the Federation of B&H and 5 in the Republic of Srpska, 10 in Serbia and 5 in Montenegro**) selected through a transparent process in the Drina River Basin.



PROBLEMS

- **Strategic approach to ESD is needed**
- Though ESD has been addressed in policies to embed ESD within the regulatory and operational frameworks , a clear consensus and coherent plan on how to promote SD through the various education levels is lacking. As a result, ESD receive **no priority action, no budget and no support** and thus are marginalized from the national mainstream. Also, because of this, there are inconsistencies and discontinuities in implementing ESD programs and activities.



- **Lack of coordinated approach**
- There is limited coordination and collaboration between the service providers and specialized institutions as well as government offices in this field. There are difficulties with ensuring a coordinated approach to ESD across government bodies. Also government officials require further specialization in ESD related topics. Further, coordination between the donors/international agencies involved in education and/or environmental programs as well as between the various NGOs is needed-overlapping!



- **Insufficient capacity of educators**
- Inadequate capacities of teachers and schools were identified as main obstacles for implementation of ESD. Because the **initial teacher training** (pre-service training) **does not address ESD issues** in a comprehensive manner, the graduating teachers have insufficient substance knowledge about sustainability and ESD. They leave universities with **insufficient capacities to implement and introduce sustainable development-related themes** in their teaching. In cases when these topics are introduced in the education process, they are usually based on a traditional teacher-centered **“chalk-and-talk”** approach and do not promote active learning and participation of the learners in the process. Teaching is oriented to memorizing contents, instead of learning how to practice ESD **in every day life**



- **Environmental concerns are not an integral part of the curriculum**
- . Environmental concerns are incorporated in the curriculum generally through **teaching science subjects**, although there is a slight movement towards addressing SD issues in the context of social subjects. Environmental themes are also **seen as an issue for some subjects rather than a crosscutting issue of education**. In addition, existing environmental contents in the present curricula are not practical: students have more knowledge than they are capable and ready to use. However, some work has been done to integrate ESD in curricula and teaching practices. For instance, in Montenegro teachers, pupils and schools in cooperation with local communities can create around 20% of contents.



- **Lack of instructional materials and inconsistency between curricula and materials**
- The feasibility study found that the obstacles to the development of adequate tools and materials for ESD include the **general lack of formal education standards on ESD, which limits the opportunity to develop officially recognized tools and materials**. Also adequate expertise on developing ESD tools and materials is lacking in the region, while regional networks for efficient sharing of ESD tools and materials are limited. Financial resources available for new curricula materials and equipment are limited and external support mechanisms do not put enough emphasis on assisting ESD developments. One of the materials that were introduced in the Western Balkans is the instructional material kit “Green Pack”, which is the main product of REC in the ESD.



- **Lack of institutional capacities and competencies of local administrations designated for sustainable development and environmental protection**
- In Montenegro and in Serbia, decentralization of educational system started with adopting new laws on education that take into account the enlarged responsibilities of municipal self-governments. There are a number of references in the law to municipalities, defining their growing role in educational system and challenges stemming from these legal responsibilities. Municipalities may even have a role in curriculum. Municipal administrations are currently **unequipped to identify and prioritize their problems and needs concerning sustainable development** through a transparent process. They are mainly not aware of the importance of ESD in building a sound basis for their future good environmental, economic and social performance.,



PURPOSE

Improved practices in schools and communities for sustainable development in Drina River Basin area (B&H, Montenegro, Serbia) and broader Western Balkans

Educational indicators

Community sustainability indicators



RESULTS

- **Result 1. Sustainable school concept developed and adopted in 80 percent of the target schools.**
- **Result 2. Communities work jointly with sustainable schools towards sustainable development.**
- **Result 3. Education system and local environmental governance in B&H, Montenegro and Serbia improved and benefiting from Sustainable School concept**



ACTIONS

- Develop Local Sustainability Action Plans (LSAPs) in partner communities
- Building capacities of teachers and school principals on fundamentals of sustainable development, ESD, active learning to demonstrate benefits of student-centered and hands-on activities, sustainable school planning and management
- Building capacities of teachers and school management and administration to disseminate the concept of Sustainable Schools in their home environment and beyond
- Building capacities of relevant local stakeholders to draft and implement LSAPs in a transparent and open way to explore potentials for enhancing role of schools to reach sustainable development



- Providing financial support to target schools to implement the Sustainable School concept and realize a certain number of selected priority actions identified through developing school development and sustainability plans (to be disbursed in the form of grants through a competitive process based on previously defined project scope and selection criteria; each target school should receive up to EUR 10.000 during the duration of this project)



- Conducting awareness raising activities to promote implementation of Sustainable School concept in target schools and communities and in the WB region, following previously drafted information and dissemination strategy
- Organizing four regional meetings to disseminate project results and lessons learned.



Thank you for your attention.



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