



3rd Pan-European Days on Environmental Education for Sustainability – Barcelona, 1-2 October 2015

Roundtable session:

“Sustainable School Networks”

Chairperson:

Paula Pérez, Coordinator of the Green Schools Programme of the Catalan Ministry of Territory and Sustainability. She also conducted a presentation on the state network ESenRED.

Panellists:

Green Schools Programme, **Josep Planas**, Catalan Ministry of Territory and Sustainability.

Eco-Schools, **Guenther Pfafferwimen**, Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs.

Jürgen Loones, the Environment, Nature and Energy Department of the Flemish government.

Objective:

The aim of this roundtable session was to increase awareness of programmes and projects being run by governments whose key objective is to promote networking between schools that develop environmental education programmes for sustainability.

Four networks were presented:

1. ESenRED (Spain) - Schools Towards Sustainability Network.

A state-wide network of sustainable school networks promoted by public administrations (autonomous communities, city councils, provincial councils, etc.).

The key objectives of the network are to facilitate meetings and exchanges, promote reflection, evaluation and innovation of education practices, and develop common projects that aim to improve student skills and the professional development of teaching staff.

A network that:

- Merges the perspectives of the different education and environment departments with the aim of incorporating them into the daily dynamics of schools.
- Offers a framework for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of education policies and gearing them towards innovation, evaluation, quality and sustainability.
- Provides a chance to strengthen the skills of students and enhance their training in the areas of social and ethical values, cooperative work and socialization, autonomy and learning, and the shouldering of individual and collective responsibilities and commitments.

A network that strives to grow by creating alliances and sharing projects with other European networks.

2. Green Schools Programme (Catalonia)

An instrument created by the Catalan government to help schools seeking to become learning spaces for sustainable development.

The Green Schools Programme is a network of schools that wish to make education for sustainability the focal point of their educational project and therefore work in four areas of action: the curriculum; the organization of the centre, to allow the entire educational community to become actively involved; the sustainable management of the school; and its role in improving its immediate environment. All of this is achieved by networking with other entities.

Through teacher training and ongoing advice, the programme aims to help schools with this continuous improvement process. It also aims to promote networking by encouraging exchanges between the schools (both students and teachers) and the dissemination of best educational practices.

3. ÖKOLOG (Austria): Ecologization of Schools – Education for Sustainability

A network promoted and supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs that aims to improve schools' environmental education and school development.

ÖKOLOG is divided into nine federal networks: Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Vienna, Burgenland, Styria, Carinthia, Tyrol, Vorarlberg and Salzburg.

The main stakeholders involved in the network are the schools, the regional teams in the network, the Department of Education and School Development at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt and the Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs.

ÖKOLOG promotes the concept of “ecologization” in schools by fostering the incorporation of different environmental matters, including health aspects, into their educational project. It also specifically promotes activities that impact the school, families and the community as a whole.

The process for joining the network is carried out in three areas: the creation of small projects to be carried out daily at the school; the organization of activities for school teams; and, lastly, the development of a pilot phase to implement it as a project on the school's culture.

Thus, the process starts with the development of small projects that, if effective, are translated into measures that are adopted by the school and end up transforming its culture.

4. Sustainable School Networks (Flanders) MOS (Milieuzorg Op School) Environmental Care at School

The Sustainable Schools Network of the Flemish government is run by the Environment, Nature and Energy Department, which promotes the MOS programme (Environmental Care at School), whose general objective is to "learn together to guide our decisions towards the sustainability of the planet".

The MOS encourages students to participate in activities through the creation of working groups alongside teachers, parents, local governments, NGOs and neighbourhood associations close to the school.

The MOS inspires and helps schools organize initiatives to care for the environment by promoting the creation of networks and exchange activities to bring the young people in society closer to the school community. These initiatives aim to achieve specific results that can be shared and celebrated.

Within the framework of the network, the initiatives that are organized to strengthen it include providing training for different members of the educational community, celebrating international days, participating in European programmes and cooperating with schools in other countries.

Seventy-five per cent of the schools in Flanders are currently members of the network.

Conclusions:

This roundtable session demonstrated the potential of networking between schools for improving education policies for sustainable development and how the educational projects of these schools can enhance student skills and make the community more cohesive.

The various presentations highlighted the diverse strategies for supporting school networks and the stakeholders involved in each of these programmes.

One clear conclusion that emerged is that, although the programmes presented have their own unique features, they also have many similar traits and characteristics in terms of their objectives, methodology and activities. We can thus conclude that they

are all programmes with a high degree of overlap and major possibilities for cooperation.