



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : Presidency
to : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council
Subject : „Education for Sustainable Development towards Responsible Global
Citizenship” Conference (Vienna, March 13 – 15, 2006)
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached information from the Presidency on the abovementioned subject, in preparation for the Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 18-19 May 2006.

Council (Education, Youth and Culture)

18-19 May 2006

**„Education for Sustainable Development towards Responsible Global Citizenship”
(Vienna, March 13 – 15, 2006)**

- Information from the Presidency –

Globalisation confronts the European Union with new challenges and every citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world.

Education in its dual role – social and economic – plays a key role in ensuring that Europe’s citizens acquire the knowledge and skills required to adjust to global change in a perspective of responsible global citizenship.

Sustainable development is a complex and evolving process that is relevant to all levels of society - Member States, companies, social partners, schools and universities, but also individual citizens need to be aware that their actions have an impact on social cohesion, economic development and the environment.

Education is a prerequisite for promoting behavioural change. Success in reversing unsustainable trends will depend to a large extent on high-quality education for sustainable development, in particular through environmental education in areas such as the sustainable use of energy, consumer education aimed at changing patterns of consumption, health education, media competence and education for responsible global citizenship. In this way, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) can make a vital contribution towards the renewed EU Strategy for Sustainable Development as a whole.

As a contribution to the discussion, the Austrian Presidency organised a conference entitled „*Education for Sustainable Development towards Responsible Global Citizenship*” in March 2006. 160 experts from 36 countries discussed the interrelation of education, social capital and sustainable development, quality criteria for ESD, the role of vocational training and higher education institutions in developing skills and competences for active civic participation, as well as the possibilities and limits of formal and non-formal education in prompting a critical look at lifestyles.

Education lies at the heart of sustainable development, combining consideration for social justice, environmental compatibility and economic growth. Experts therefore agreed that **policy measures** were needed which would take account of sustainable development in educational processes and integrate policy with research and innovative processes, including the expertise of NGOs.

Change **agencies/agents** need to identify areas for reform and build on international cooperation but also to enhance community involvement and the broad participation of individuals and institutions at all levels.

Quality in education for sustainable development means that principles, approaches and our understanding of what responsible education actually entails require continuous consideration and reassessment. Only an ongoing dialogue can ensure that education for sustainable development becomes a visible topic within the EU.

In the context of lifelong learning, education for sustainable development should make specific use of the "Education and training 2010" work programme, whose aims focus on quality and relevance, on access for all and on the openness of systems and institutions towards society and the world at large.

Sustainable development is, moreover, a key element for strengthening the competitiveness and innovation capacities of **higher education systems** in Europe. As agents of innovative and critical thinking, universities should contribute to low environmental impact management through an interdisciplinary approach and by building on existing networks. Long-term and increasingly self-sustaining partnerships and cooperation between European universities and higher education institutions in third countries, encouraging networking and peer learning, should mobilise the full potential for excellence and innovation of European universities in support of the European Union's global strategy for sustainable development.

Further development - at national and international level - will require thematic networks which will enhance cooperation and transform policies at both levels through a process of mutual exchange and learning.

All conference documents are available at www.bmbwk.gv.at/bine-edd-esd