



ENVIRONMENT & INNOVATION:

Theme 2007/2009

**Climate change:
Let's save energy!**

Eco-Schools International Programme

"The Eco-Schools International Programme's vision is to see an increased level of awareness and knowledge about the environment and sustainable development issues among Schools, and to see that students have the skills and creativity to act in a positive and responsible way towards addressing these issues within their capacity."

"The Eco-Schools International Programme's mission is to spread environmental education to Students around the World as a way to increase awareness and knowledge, through the action oriented, participatory, and positive methods of the programme, as an integral step towards sustainable development."

1. Introduction

Eco-Schools, a programme of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), provides an ideal way to implement Local Agenda 21 in the school and its neighbouring community. The Eco-Schools International Programme was developed as a response to some of the needs identified at the UN Conference on Environment and Development of 1992.

Initiated in 1994 with support of the European Commission, the programme offers a flexible approach for schools to implement an environmental management system, the 7 steps, based on the EMAS/ISO14001 standards.

Initially focusing on themes such as Water, Energy and Waste, other thematic areas of support to schools have been developed in different countries, from Noise, Nature and Biological Diversity, Healthy Living to Climate Change and Sustainable Mobility.

The programme provides a mechanism for schools, and indeed the students themselves, to understand the importance of establishing and putting in practice appropriate environmental and sustainability policies for the school and also at personal levels. However, governments, at national, regional and local level, have also seen that they can achieve and demonstrate pragmatic results relative to international commitments, such as on Education for Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21, by endorsing and supporting the Eco-Schools programme.

It has been identified by the United Nations Environment (UNEP) Programme as a model initiative for Education for Sustainable Development.

Following the FEE approach, Eco-Schools is delivered by non-governmental, non-profit member organizations which work closely with public authorities such as Ministries of Education and Environment to ensure the programme makes concrete contributions and is compatible with national priorities and objectives for Education, Environment and Citizenship. Eco-Schools counts on the support from multi-sector Partnerships to add value to the programme and enrich the support available to schools. Public Institutions, non-governmental organizations, businesses and individuals can all play important roles in providing technical, financial and institutional support to increase the programme's success.

Toyota Motor Europe has given support since 2005 to the Environment and Innovation Project which in its Pilot Phase was implemented in 4 countries (Italy, Germany, Spain and England and Northern Ireland) and is now being implemented in 6 countries: Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey.

2. Eco-Schools Environmental Management System - 7 Steps

The Eco-Schools programme involves seven steps that any school can adopt. Based on the elements of an environmental management programme, the process involves a wide range of stakeholders but it is pupils who must play the most important role. Although Eco-Schools may be awarded a Green Flag after a period, the process is on going and schools must continue to work towards their objectives and re-apply for the award in the future.

2.1. Establishment of the Eco-School Committee

The core of the Eco-Schools process, the Committee organizes and directs the school activities and consists of the stakeholders of the school environment, namely pupils, teachers, custodial staff, caretakers, parents and even representatives of the municipality or local authority. The sense of democracy involved, and the motivation in resolving initiatives brought forth by the students themselves are products of this process.

2.2. Environmental Review

Work commences with a review or assessment of the environmental impact of the school. Pupils are involved in this work, ranging from assessing the level of litter on school grounds to checking infrastructure for inefficiencies.

2.3. Action Plan

The information from the review is used to identify priority areas and create an action plan, setting achievable and realistic targets and deadlines to improve environmental performance on specific issues.

2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Ensures that progress towards targets are followed, that any necessary changes are made to the action plan and that achievement is celebrated. It further ensures that environmental education and care is an on-going process in the school.

2.5. Curriculum Work

Most students undertake classroom study of themes such as energy, water and waste. The whole school should be involved in practical initiatives, for example, saving water, recycling materials and preventing litter. Where environment and sustainable education is not part of the national/regional curriculum, recommendations are made as to how this can be incorporated. Efforts should be made to involve environmental education throughout the curriculum, in addition to the more evident areas of study such as science and geography.

2.6. Informing and Involving

This directly brings Local Agenda 21 into schools, as parents, local authorities, businesses and the wider communities are involved in the Eco-Schools process. Schools are encouraged to make ties with external organisations in order to benefit from their experience and expertise.

Eco-Schools are also encouraged to consider the wider community when preparing action plans.

Schools can keep the wider community informed of actions taken through classroom displays, school assemblies and press coverage.

2.7. Eco-Code

Each school produces its own 'Eco-code', a statement of values and objectives, outlining what the students are striving to achieve.

After a period of participation, an evaluation of the success of these initiatives and the methodology is undertaken, and the whole Eco-Schools programme for each school is assessed.

Successful schools are awarded the **Eco-Schools Green Flag**. Whereas there is flexibility as to the ceremony and awarding process, the criteria for assessing schools for the award should be faithful to the guidelines agreed. Following are the most elementary criteria for assessing Eco-Schools for the Green Flag, though National Programmes often have further quantitative, qualitative or procedural requirements.

3. Eco-Schools and International Perspectives

A success throughout Europe, the Eco-Schools programme is seen as an invaluable tool in other regions not only as a means of addressing environmental education but which can also motivate community development, promote sustainable management of local natural resources, and establishment of appropriate micro-projects which can result in income-generation for schools. The Partnership with UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme; provides important technical, institutional, and financial capacity to facilitate the introduction of the Programme in other regions, particularly in developing countries and those with economies in transition. Eco-Schools, identified by UNEP as a model programme for Education for Sustainable Development, can be seen to make a contribution to key objectives of internationally endorsed initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, and NEPAD – New Partnerships for Africa’s Development.

Countries Where Eco-Schools is Being Implemented or in Pilot Phase (Dec. 2009)

Bahamas	Greece	Portugal
Belgium - Flanders	Iceland	Puerto Rico
Brazil	Ireland	Romania
Bulgaria	Italy	Russia
Chile	Japan	Scotland
China	Jordan	Slovakia
Croatia	Kazakhstan	Slovenia
Cyprus	Kenya	South Africa
Czech Republic	Latvia	Spain
Denmark	Lithuania	Sweden
Dominican Republic	Malta	Tunisia
England	Morocco	Turkey
Finland	Netherlands	Uganda
France	Northern Ireland	USA
FYR Macedonia	Norway	Wales
Germany	Poland	

Currently, the Programme is being implemented by 47 delegations around the world, involving 32.156 schools, 9.125.460 students, 628.005 teachers and 5.013 local authorities. (Dec. 2009)

4. Projects to support the Eco-Schools International Network

The Eco-Schools International Coordination develops projects to enhance the networking potential between schools from different countries to promote north-south and east-west cooperation and sharing of knowledge and good practices. In addition to maintaining a website and producing newsletters with news and developments about the Eco-Schools the following exciting projects are being launched for schools:

“Environment and Innovation project – Climate Change: Let’s Save Energy”: This project is the result of a partnership between FEE / Eco-Schools and Toyota Motor Europe, through the Toyota Fund for Europe (which is managed by the company’s Corporate Social Responsibility division). The Project aims to promote innovative thinking and environmental problem resolution by schools, while focusing on sustainable community development. By launching a European competition for keen innovative projects involving interaction with the local community and stakeholders, coupled with a multi-faceted communication strategy, there is great potential for dissemination of forward-thinking ideas. Not only does it spur original thought, problem solving and group work, but the results may then be replicated or adapted in different areas. Core themes for the project can include Sustainable Mobility and Reduction of the Carbon Footprint, both items in which schools can become fully involved, but which have clear ties to local or community development. The project includes activity at two levels – national and international.

In each participating country, a national jury granted close to 20,000 Euros to schools with very good projects, in order to allow the implementation of their projects. An international jury will judge which schools have done the best job in applying for the grant.

UNEP has committed to be part of the international jury, as well as other institutions: the European Environmental Agency (EEA), the British Council, the Intelligent Energy Executive Agency and the Directorate General Energy and Transport (DG-Tren).

The project, with the theme “Sustainable Mobility” for 2005-2007, was put into practice in Germany, Spain, Italy and Great Britain – (England and Northern Ireland) (www.eco-schools.org/innovation)

The second cycle of the project had the theme “Climate Change: Let’s save Energy!” and was implemented in Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Turkey.

“Pilot Retailers Project”: For the first time, Toyota Retailers, from Denmark Slovenia, will work together with schools to develop and implement innovative environmental projects in their local communities.

“Flick the Switch”: Flick the Switch is a stimulating energy saving campaign aimed at primary and secondary schools and households across Europe. The Eco-Schools Programme is a part of the Flick the Switch campaign, implementing it directly through Eco-Schools Slovakia/FEE Slovakia and Association of Environmental Education in Slovenia/FEE Slovenia.

“HSBC Eco-Schools Climate Initiative”: HSBC and the Eco-Schools International Programme are implementing a new programme that aims to empower students as active contributors to reducing carbon emissions, in 13 countries: Brazil, China, England, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Malta, Northern Ireland, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, USA, and Wales.

5. Who’s behind Eco-Schools?

FEE - Foundation for Environmental Education is a non-profit umbrella organization bringing national non-governmental organizations implementing programmes for environmental education, management and certification.

www.fee-international.org

The international Coordination is hosted by Associação Bandeira Azul da Europa (ABAE), the Portuguese Member of FEE, recognized by the Ministries of Environment and Education which work with the organization in supporting and implementing its various programmes.

www.abae.pt

6. Conclusion

With its participatory approach, involving pupils themselves in both activities and decision-making processes, Eco-Schools is an important instrument for promoting the values of participation and citizenship. Fostering ties with local authorities, organizations, businesses, and indeed pupils’ families. Eco-Schools provides a platform for school-based community development.

Eco-Schools involves a great number STUDENTS/TEACHERS/ADULTS in their Environmental Education projects.

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