



Changing Together

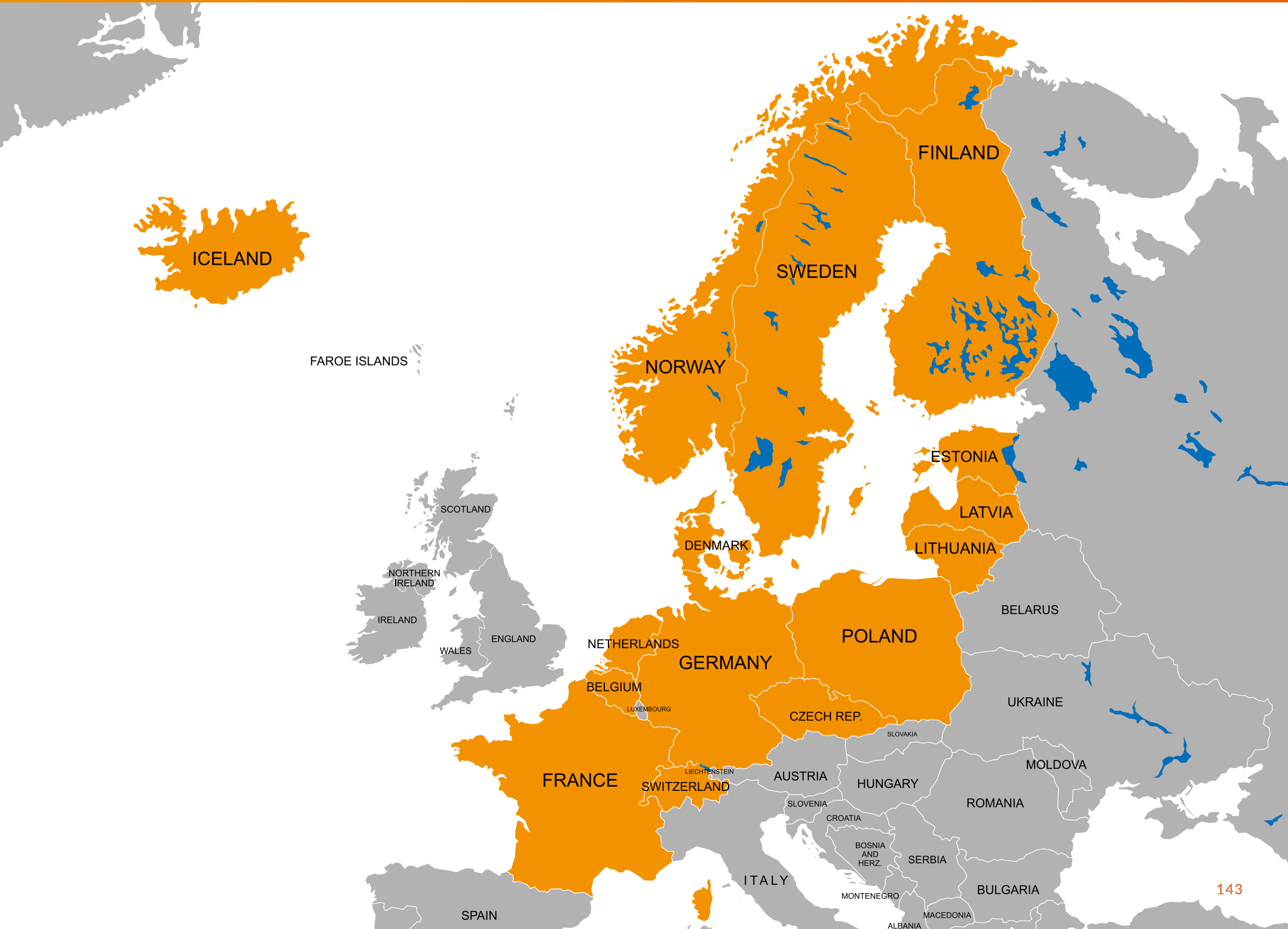
Eco-Schools 1994-2019





Central & North Europe

Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden & Switzerland





Belgium



(Flanders)

Department of Environment and Spatial Development (MOS)

National Operator: Linda Van Meersche

First Green Flag Ceremony in 2007

Country size: 135,22 km²

Population: 6.5 million (Flanders)

Longest river: Maas 925 km

National plant: Heath

Joined Eco-Schools in 2007

Number of Eco-Schools: 34

Highest mountain:

Signal de Botrange 694 m

Signal de Botrange experiences stronger winds than the centre of Belgium as well as much greater rainfall than most of the rest of the country.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Belgium is a federal state and consists of three regions: Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia. Each community organises its own education system. In 2003, the Flemish government launched the Environmental Education (EE) Programme, which included the coordination and implementation of an EE policy, and the testing of innovative EE methodologies and programmes. Twenty practitioners were then assigned to build capacity and implement training on EE.

K-12 Education

For primary schools (students between the age of 2.5-12), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not integrated into the final attainment levels. One school network has, however, already integrated it into the curriculum. In the near future, there are plans to integrate ESD in all final attainment levels.

The Flemish government is currently reviewing the final attainment levels for secondary education. For the first grade of secondary education (age 12-14), ESD is seen as a key competence. The final attainment levels for the second grade (age 14-16 and 16-19) will be ready in 2021 and 2023.

Professional Development

MOS has a subsite on 'KlasCement' where educational material on ESD is gathered. KlasCement is a portal site of the Department of Education where teachers, governments and NGOs can share their educational material.

The local MOS-coaches support teachers by holding pedagogical seminars and thematical workshops for teachers and school leaders. MOS organises network events and shares good practices. The MOS-team is also supported by an ESD team consisting of policy officers of the Flemish government.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Before Flanders joined the Eco-Schools programme, the organisation ran a local EE programme called MOS. The initial impetus to MOS was given in 1993, when the Vrije Universiteit Brussel received a research assignment to develop an environmental protection system for Flemish secondary schools.

In 1999, the environmental conservation project "Green School" was introduced by the Flemish administration in Secondary and Higher education.

In 2001, the MOS-project for primary schools started and in 2002, it was extended to secondary schools. The engagement of a MOS-school was achieved by implementing three steps and earning different MOS awards. As Flanders wanted to be able to award the schools who had achieved the third MOS award with an international standard for working with ESD, the organisation became part of the Eco-Schools programme in 2004. The first MOS-school to also receive a Green flag was Pius X in the Municipality of Destelbergen in 2007.

The EE conservation MOS-project is and has always been a cooperation between seven partners, namely the Flemish Government, the five Flemish provinces and the Flemish Community Commission.

In 2013, the current MOS-programme was given shape. MOS started a renewal operation based on study recommendations and the results of the MOS-communication review. In order to have a more structural impact and to realise behavioural change, MOS opted for tailor-made school coaching.



KEY MILESTONES

Although in the early years MOS focused *sensu stricto* on immediate environmental conservation, the strategy of MOS evolved and followed developments in the field of environmental policy, education and society. Today, the focus is more on ESD and the way in which pupils handle local and global sustainability issues. In this way, environmental problems are put in a broader social context and are viewed as inseparable from other Sustainable Development Goals.

Until recently, Eco-Schools candidate schools had to fill in an Eco-Schools questionnaire for their certification process. To ease the process, MOS developed a workshop with the MOS workgroups (teachers, pupils/students, school leaders, parents, etc.), where the whole team decides whether the school is a real MOS-ambassador, i.e. that all Seven Steps are implemented and integrated into school life. This became the Green Flag assessment mechanism, which made schools feel appreciated and gave them less paperwork.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

I started as a National Operator in September 2017. I always look forward to the school visits. Seeing what schools have achieved to make the Earth a better place, gives me a lot of energy.

The coaches visit the schools to decide in cooperation with the school team which topic they want to work on. They support teachers and principals to integrate the themes into the school policy and help schools find local partners, educational programmes for students and in working with the municipalities. Flanders has a climate trajectory called 'Climate Gangs' for primary schools, through which all schools from a municipality work together and the municipality itself is also a partner!





Green Flag Ceremony 2010



“Once upon a time (20 years ago), there was a school, named Pius X in Destelbergen. The school started an adventure... ‘a MOS-adventure’. It was soon clear that the story of this school was a fairytale come true!”

Pius X wants to be a reflection of what happens in the surroundings of the school. The school team raises the schoolchildren to become world citizens. We focus on sustainable development: enough for everyone and for always! Pius X takes care of the climate, not because we can, but because we need to! Sustainable development is embedded in the whole school. But it is a challenge to keep this approach up to a high level. When we choose the year theme, we always look at it through the Eco-Schools eyes. All these efforts from the children, the teachers and school leader resulted in five Eco-Schools Green Flags. In October, we are receiving our 6th Green Flag. Our mission is to be a school where sustainable development of people and the planet are most important. Our mascotte ‘Gloobje’ will stay at our site for a while because he still screams at the top of his lungs: ‘Don’t mess with MOS!’ You see, fairytales do come true!”

Annick De Cuyper, Teacher, Pius X, Municipality of Destelbergen

Department of Environment and Spatial Development (MOS)
Koning Albert II-iaan 20, bus 8
1000 Brussel

“Becoming a member of Eco-Schools was a logical step in the development of our environmental school programme MOS. It was a new and challenging opportunity to persuade the schoolchildren, students and teachers to continue with their contribution to the protection of our planet. For me personally, it meant the start of international friendships with people with their noses in the same direction. That made us all stronger. The National Operators meetings made me realise that our regional project was doing well. Talking with environmental minded people from all over the world and being exposed to a great number of good practices taught me a lot and convinced me of the importance of our work. During our formal and informal discussions, we all realised that teamwork on the environment strengthens cooperation within the schools in all areas.”

Eric Craenhals, Former MOS-Coordinator - the person who introduced Eco-Schools in Flanders

“The Green Flag of Eco-Schools is an appreciation for schools who succeed to embed sustainable development in the whole school. These schools are an example and an inspiration for other schools. The Green Flag gives them access to an international network. Congratulations to all these ambassadors who fight for a sustainable future.”

Joke Schauvliege, Flemish Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning during the 2017 Green Flag ceremony



Belgium



(Brussels & Wallonia)

COREN a.s.b.l.

National Operator: Denis Jacob



Country size: Belgium 30,688 km²

Country size: Brussels 161 km² / Wallonia 16,844 km²

Population: 5.6 million (Wallonia and Brussels)

Brussels joined Eco-Schools in 2015

Wallonia joined Eco-Schools in 2019

Number of Eco-Schools: 13

National animal: Lion

Belgium: Medieval heraldic symbol

Wallonia: Rooster, symbolising the ties between Wallonia and the French Republic

Longest river:

Meuse (Wallonia) 925 km (192 km in Belgium)

Senne (Brussels) 103 km

Highest mountain:

Signal de Botrange (Belgium and Wallonia) 694 m



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, Environmental Education (EE) is by law included in Education for Citizenship. The Décret-mission states that one of the goals of a school is to help students become “responsible citizens who are able to contribute to the development of a democratic, solidary, pluralist and open society”.

K-12 Education

EE is mostly included in science, geography and citizenship education. Meanwhile, there are opportunities for all teachers to include environmental topics in any subject and to collaborate on projects.

Professional Development

There is no complete professional course in EE, but some schools and non-profit organisations such as Helmo, Institut d’Eco-Pédagogie, CECAFOC, IFC, etc. offer postgraduate or in-service formation for teachers.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Brussels Environment administration, in partnership with COREN, was interested in the implementation of the Eco-Schools programme in Brussels. Therefore, in 2015, the Ministry of Environment subsidised COREN to implement the programme in the French-speaking schools in Brussels.

The goal was to help schools extend their environmental actions, integrate EE and involve the school stakeholders by bringing a concrete methodology to do so. The first Green Flags in Brussels were awarded in September 2016 to four different schools: Ecole maternelle N°2 de Schaerbeek, Ecole Les Peupliers d’Anderlecht, Institut Frans Fischer de Schaerbeek, and Servites de Marie de Uccle.

In 2019, with the support of the Government of Wallonia and the French Community, the Eco-Schools programme will also be available for schools located in Wallonia.



Eco-Schools participating in the Environment Action Festival, April 2018

KEY MILESTONES

In 2014, the preparation of certification tools began, and a year later the first schools joined the Eco-Schools programme supported by COREN. In 2016, the first four schools were awarded with the Green Flag and by 2018, six more schools were awarded.

2018 was also the year that saw the first award renewals. In September 2019, Eco-Schools was launched for schools located in Wallonia.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

In 2018, a special education school, linked to a hospital for students with eating disorders, received the Green Flag. It was a huge victory for them! We are also very proud that Assomption Sainte-Thérèse from Boisfort won the jury prize at the Environment Action festival in 2017 - a festival that celebrates contemporary art and music with a special focus on positive awareness-raising events. In 2019, Servites de Marie from Uccle also won the jury prize at the same festival.



First Green Flag ceremony at Institut de la Vierge Fidèle.
Fourschools receive the first green flags from the Minister, October 2016



Second Green Flag ceremony, October 2017



“It is a recognition of all the work and effort by the team of our school and our partners, especially around our green spaces.”

Joëlle van Langendijck, School Director, Ecole maternelle N°2 de Scharbeek

“This programme attracted Brussels because it allows our schools to value all the projects they have already realised and it helps them understand the long-term approach. Sustaining Environmental Education activities and linking them to courses and other school projects, together with more efficiency and less downtime, are some of the benefits for a school when seeking the Eco-Schools label.”

Brussels Environment administration

“Environmental Education is often depending on individual teachers. They deal with several items to raise pupils’ awareness and a lot of good work is being done. But as an institution, a school doesn’t learn enough from these experiences to improve. Therefore, it is useful to apply the Eco-Schools methodology and tools. They provide a systematic and participatory approach so that Environmental Education becomes everyone’s business and so every teacher and stakeholder becomes involved.”

Thierno Ndiaye, COREN CEO



Czech Republic

TEREZA, Educational Centre
National Operator: Jan Smrčka

National tree: Linden tree, symbol of protection, hospitality and love



Country size: 78,865 km²

Population: 10.5 million

Longest river: Vltava 433 km

Highest mountain: Sněžka 1,602 m

National animal: Double-tailed lion

Joined Eco-Schools in 2005

Number of Eco-Schools: 398



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Environmental Education (EE) has been part of the national legislation since 1992. The implementation of EE is enshrined in the framework of valid legal regulations (Act No. 123/1998 Coll., On the right to information on the Environment, as amended)

K-12 Education

EE is a mandatory requirement for schools as a cross-cutting theme, which must be incorporated into different school subjects at all school levels.

Professional Development

There are many educational training opportunities and courses open for all teachers in the Czech Republic as part of their professional development. One teacher is appointed Environmental Education Coordinator in each school in the Czech Republic. This teacher has to study a specially designed course with a length of 250 hours and pass an exam to be entitled to this task.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

In 2002, the Czech Republic launched its own Eco-Schools programme, which was initially not connected to the international programme. The Czech local programme was different from the international Eco-Schools, but when Educational Centre TEREZA found out about the international programme, they decided to bring it to the Czech Republic in 2005 and modify the Czech programme to follow the Seven-Step methodology. The organisation School Facility for Environmental Education Lipka, helped establish the implementation structure of the programme and became the first regional coordinator of Eco-Schools Czech Republic.

Later, a structure with several regional organisations supporting schools in their respective regions was developed. In 2006, the first school, General Janoušek Elementary School, was awarded the first Green Flag in the Czech Republic along with 14 other elementary schools.

KEY MILESTONES

Changing the focus of the programme has been a key milestone. It helped change the way schools work with the environment by focusing on the Seven Steps, helped children get more involved in developing action competences and strengthened their democratic principles.

As a result of the implementation of the EU funded project We Eat Responsibly, an action-oriented global learning programme, TEREZA Educational Centre received the 2017 Global Education Innovation Award from the Global Education Network Europe (GENE).

In 2017 and 2018, GENE recognised the importance of innovation in global education through its Global Education Innovation Award. The award benefited educational projects that bring about positive change and open peoples' eyes and minds to the realities of the world, locally and globally. It supported global education initiatives that promoted creativity, participation, direct action, synergies and innovation, and ultimately inspired public policy.





“The programme significantly increases the environmental awareness of pupils, encourages their activity and increases interest in everyday school life. Pupils learn to deal with adults, defend their views and take responsibility.”

Andrea Slovakova, Eco-Schools Coordinator, ZŠ Travnık Pˇerov

“Great changes start small and every great deed usually consists of an immense number of smaller steps. You, Eco-Schools, are a shining example of this and for that we thank you. You are the seed, from which a tree will sprout. And this tree will keep growing and will shine with positive energy.”

Ing. Vladimır František Mana, LL.M., Deputy Minister, State Administration

“I highly value the Eco-Schools programme for being so strong in engaging and empowering our youth, motivating teachers and benefiting communities. In fact, before I became the CEO of our organisation, I worked as an Eco-Schools National Operator and was leading the team to bring the Eco-Schools programme to our country. I am proud it has grown into perhaps the biggest, most sound and influential Environmental Education initiative for schools in our country and has become our organisation’s flagship programme.”

Petr Daniš, TEREZA, Educational Centre CEO



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The biggest challenge is to improve the democratic processes in schools, increase student participation in school operations and develop critical thinking. However, every time the programme surpasses the school walls. Every time, our campaigns and actions help activate local communities and inspire private or public institutions to work together to live more sustainably: the programme’s biggest highlight.



TEREZA, Educational Centre
Educational centre TEREZA, Haštalská 17
Praha 1, 110 00



Denmark

Danish Outdoor Council

National Operator: Karen Præstegaard Hendriksen

Country size: 42,933 km²

Population: 5.7 million

Longest river: Gudenå 149 km

Joined Eco-Schools in 1994

Number of Eco-Schools: 250

National animal:

Mute Swan (national bird) and Small Tortoiseshell (national butterfly)

National tree:

European Beech *Fagus Sylvatica* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus Robur*



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Danish school legislation has several acts that support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The Danish “Folkeskole” constitutes the free, public school system, as well as the individual municipal schools. At the national level, the Danish Folkeskole is regulated by the Folkeskole Act, which provides the overall framework for the schools’ activities.

The formal and overall aim of the Folkeskole Act, as declared by the Danish Government, can be summarised in three points. Firstly, the Folkeskole, in cooperation with the parents, provides students with the knowledge and skills that will prepare them for further education and training and instil in them the desire to learn more; familiarise them with Danish culture and history; give them an understanding of other countries and cultures; contribute to their understanding of the interrelationship between human beings and the environment; and promote the well-rounded development of the individual student. Secondly, the Folkeskole endeavours to develop the working methods and create a framework that provides opportunities for experience, in-depth study and allows for initiatives so that students develop awareness, imagination and confidence in their own abilities and backgrounds, so that they are able to commit themselves and are willing to take action. Finally, the Folkeskole prepares students to be able to participate, demonstrate mutual responsibility and understand their rights and duties in a free and democratic society. The daily activities of the school must, therefore, be conducted in a spirit of intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

By means of this Act and the Executive Orders it contains, all municipal primary and lower secondary schools share a common aim, standard requirements concerning the subjects taught, standard regulations concerning the common objectives for the teaching in the individual subjects, as well as standard regulations concerning the leadership and organisation of the school system. However, it is the responsibility of the individual municipal boards to determine how the municipality’s schools are to be organised in practice, within the framework established by law. The municipal boards themselves determine the municipal level of service for the Folkeskole within this overriding framework and can set their own additional objectives for the schools.

There is the freedom to allow for each Danish school to incorporate their own local characteristics. Therefore, schools can choose to have nature or sustainable development or “a green profile” as their individual characteristics, which is a great match with being an Eco-School.

K-12 Education

Each subject in the Danish schools has its own curriculum. Sustainable development is part of the curriculum in some of the subjects in the Danish Public Schools – mainly in the STEM subjects e.g. nature/technology in grades 1-6, food science in grades 4-7 and biology, geography, physics/chemistry and social science in grades 7-9 and in some electives classes.

Professional Development

In Denmark, teachers have different opportunities for professional development offered by university colleges, universities and different organisations, like the Danish Outdoor Council (DOC). To learn more about sustainability, they can attend Continuing Professional Development (CPD), as shorter brush-up courses offered by municipalities or organisations are without ECTS, and therefore not qualifying within the academic system. Within the academic system, they can specialise in a new subject (e.g. biology or geography) to acquire the competences to teach the subject. They can also take postgraduate courses or a full Master’s Degree e.g. in Pedagogical Sociology.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The history of the Eco-Schools programme goes way back. Many people believe that the concept was developed during the first UN conference on the environment taking place in Rio in 1992. In fact, the principle was already on the agenda in 1972, at the Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment, when the world had already started to acknowledge that pollution was a problem for the planet. Denmark, already then, had the Ministry of Pollution Combating (today Ministry of Environment). At the Stockholm conference, one of the recommendations was that future generations should learn to take care of the environment.

Another conference was held in Tbilisi in 1977 with Environmental Education (EE) as the sole point on the agenda. The Danish Outdoor Council was represented at the conference. In 1987, FEEE (then Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe) was founded. Four countries were involved in the formation of FEEE: Spain, Germany, France and Denmark.

In 1992, the former CEO of the Danish Outdoor Council received a visit from the Municipality of Copenhagen and an environmental organisation called Coast Watch, who both wanted to make a programme for schools for them to become more environmentally friendly. The Danish Outdoor Council wanted to be part of the project and all three organisations, therefore, created one programme which they called Green Flag Green School. The Municipality of Copenhagen ran the pilot phase in the East of Denmark and Coast Watch, which was based in Jutland, ran it in the Western part of Denmark. In 1992, the Municipality of Copenhagen assigned the full coordination of the programme to the Danish Outdoor Council. In 1992 and 1993, the first Eco-Schools pilot project saw the light of day and the Danish Outdoor Council brought the idea of Green Flag Green School to FEEE. The idea was to call the programme Green Flag – just like Blue Flag. After certain considerations regarding potential religious connotations, the name was changed to Eco-Schools.

Shortly after the pilot phase, Rønnebæk Skole in the Municipality of Næstved got on board and became the first school in Denmark to receive a Green Flag. Today the school is called Kobberbakkeskolen afd. Rønnebæk. In September 2019, the school celebrated the Eco-Schools 25th anniversary as part of the programme!

As soon as the programme was established, the strategy in Denmark became to involve the top administration in the municipalities. Thus, instead of sending the flag to the school, the Danish Outdoor Council sent – and still sends – the flag to the school's municipality mayor. The awarded school then invites the mayor to attend the flag-raising ceremony, which gives a special boost to the event. Today, many municipal politicians have agreed that all municipal schools should join the programme.



The programme started with primary and lower secondary schools, which still form the largest group of participating schools. However, it has also expanded into high schools, vocational schools and university colleges, though not to the same extent. The DOC believes that the programme supports students' community involvement and changes their understanding of the environment. The DOC has achieved a synchronous development of the Eco-Schools programme and the development of society, moving from from EE to ESD. We look forward to seeing where the programme will take us in the next 25 years!

KEY MILESTONES

Over the years, the Eco-Schools programme has been financially supported by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. In 2012-2016, it was financially supported by the National Centre for Learning in Science, Technology and Health in Denmark. During this period, the DOC had to introduce a small participating fee to register with the programme. After 2016, this fee had to be raised. At the time, it was unclear how this change would be received by the schools, and a big member loss was expected. Surprisingly, almost none of the schools left the programme and new members kept joining. In Denmark, there are now Eco-Schools in 72 municipalities, which makes up a 70% of all Danish municipalities. Many of the participating schools have been part of the programme for 10 years or more. That we have developed a programme that is still attractive for schools to be a part of year after year is a great achievement.



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

My organisation has been part of the development of Eco-Schools for the last 25 years. I have been part of the development for the last five. In that time, I have experienced the commitment from pupils, teachers, headmasters, municipalities and mayors around the country of Denmark, who are committed to engaging the youth in EE and action. It is truly inspiring to be part of the journey of sustainable development; whether it is a school collecting plastic at their local beach and turning it into a big sculpture of an octopus; a school planting a small forest with the 10 most common trees in Denmark so all children at the school will get familiar with them and remember them for the rest of their lives; a school making a stunning school garden from scratch with no funding at all, but goodwill and hard work from teachers, pupils, parents and the local community; schools in which they, after

persuasion from the pupils, have introduced one vegan day a week at their canteen; a school making a “reuse room” where pupils put clothes and toys that they no longer use and can come and collect what they need; or a school totally transforming their system for collecting and sorting waste after the pupils from the Eco Committee got involved.

I love working with each and every one of the schools. It is so inspiring to see how they engage in ESD, how they face their local environmental challenges and what solutions they come up with. All the Eco-Schools approach the Seven Steps in their own way and it is lovely to see how flexible the programme is to the local context at each school. I usually say that in Eco-Schools we have Seven Steps, but there are 250 ways of implementing them!



“Back in 1994, we started the programme at Rønnebæk School with some of the pioneers of nature and environment from the Municipality of Næstved. We started working with the themes of water, waste and energy and worked with them intensively for many years. Now the programme has grown and developed a lot. We can see here at the school that the children get the environmental engagement under their skin from early childhood and carry it with them the rest of their lives.”

Lisbeth, Teacher, Kobberbakkeskolen afd. Rønnebæk. Lisbeth has been part of the school since the beginning of Eco-Schools back in 1994.

“As part of being an Eco-School, what I like the most is being out in our school garden. I love to sow, water it and wait for it to grow. We grow radish, potatoes and onions. All the pupils from the Eco Committee have been out in the school garden. It is lovely to be outside. You learn in another way and something else than what you do being in the classroom.”

Emil, 9 years old, Grade 4 Student, Kobberbakkeskolen afd. Rønnebæk

“I’m proud to be the CEO of the organisation that formed the Eco-Schools programme. Back in the 80s, my organisation developed the idea of Environmental Education with the key principle of engaging the youth of today to protect the planet of tomorrow. And look at it now! Today more than 59.000 schools in 68 countries are involved in the programme. One of the greatest exporting successes of Denmark, if you ask me.”

Jan Ejlsted, Danish Outdoor Council CEO



Danish Outdoor Council
Scandiagade 13,
2450 København SV

Estonia

Estonian Nature Conservation Society

National Operator: Sirje Aher & Eeva Kirsipuu-Vadi

Minutes of mindfulness with nature, spring 2017

Country size: 45,227 km²

Population: 1.3 million

National animal: Wolf

National plant: Cornflower

Joined Eco-Schools in 2016

Number of Eco-Schools: 125

Longest River: Võhandu 162 km

Võhandu is Estonia's longest river. Part of it is called Pühajõgi (the Holy River) because the water was used to heal different diseases.

People also thought that it was the home of God Thunder; as Thunder can bring either good or bad weather, one has to be careful not to make him angry with spilling tree chips or other trash into the water. When a mill was built and the flow of water was disturbed, many years of bad weather followed until the mill was demolished. Today, there is a nature protection area around Võhandu river.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Estonian legislation has several acts that support sustainable development and Environmental Education (EE). Since 1995, Estonia has had the Sustainable Development Act, which establishes the principles of the national strategy on sustainable development and is based on the principles established in the decisions of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The Act of Preschool states that one of the purposes of a preschool is to offer conditions and opportunities for a child to learn to value the environment. The Act of Education says that one objective of education is to create favourable conditions for the development of the individual, the family, the Estonian nation, including ethnic minorities, economic, political and cultural life in the Estonian society, as well as nature conservation, within the context of the global economy and global culture.

The Basic School and Upper Secondary School Act state that the socialisation of the new generation is based on the traditions of Estonian culture, common European values as stated by the European Union, and the recognition of the main achievements of world culture and research. People who have acquired general education are able to integrate in society and contribute to the sustainable social, cultural, economic and ecological development of the Estonian society.

K-12 Education

Estonia has long traditions in teaching about nature and EE. EE and ESD have been a compulsory part of general education since 1996. They are cross-curriculum themes that have to be integrated in every subject. All national curricula for general education, including preschool childcare institutions, basic schools and secondary schools stress ESD. The National Curriculum for Preschool Childcare Institutions sets five learning fields, including the relationship of students with the environment. The national curriculum is ultimately a core curriculum on which each educational institution bases its own curriculum in accordance with the guidelines. Beside cross-curriculum themes, schools can add optional subjects and many schools have themselves chosen or compiled courses on different ESD issues.

The Eco-Schools team in Estonia created learning/teaching material for 15-18-year-old students which covers 35 lessons on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The material can be integrated into different school subjects or taught in separate learning courses.

Professional Development

Teachers have a number of opportunities for professional development. They can select in-service courses offered by universities and private organisations. Whole-school development courses and experience exchange are very popular. There are more than 150 EE centres supporting teachers' professional development and offering curriculum-based programmes for children, youth and adults.



Rannamõisa Kindergarten children learning about colours in nature, 2018

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Estonian Nature Conservation Society joined the Eco-Schools programme in 2016, as there were many environmentally friendly schools and kindergartens willing to join the network. Tallinn Department of Environment supported the idea and financed the participation of Tallinn schools and preschools. EE is a part of the national curriculum thus, in 2018, a number of schools across the country had the possibility to join the programme when the state organisation Environmental Investment Centre decided to finance the management of the programme as a national project.

In September 2017, 19 educational institutions were awarded a Green Flag. Within the first year, 37 educational institutions joined the programme and as of June 2019, there are 123 participating institutions all over the country – out of which most are preschools. The preschool curriculum gives teachers more freedom to choose and integrate topics, and to let children lead the process of learning than in primary schools. Due to frequent meetings and seminars, a good working network was easily created to exchange ideas and experience. In 2016, the coordination of the programme was outsourced to NPO HARED, Training and Development Centre, which has a long term good partnership with educational institutions on ESD and EE. In the autumn of 2019, the coordination is being outsourced to Tartu Nature House.

KEY MILESTONES

NPO HARED, Training and Development Centre is very happy that in three years the number of participating schools and preschools has grown rapidly, from 37 to 123 in an active network. There are 780 members in the closed Facebook group, where they frequently share information about their school actions. Every day there are stories about children exploring nature, discussing environmentally friendly ways of management, and actions towards a more sustainable future. The most popular topic is biodiversity. NPO HARED finds it very important that children and youth care about nature, can name different species, know their habitats and needs, and see their interconnections and relationships. This helps build the understanding of ecosystem balance and the need of sustainable management in the society - growing food, reusing, reducing food waste, using fewer materials etc.



“Tallinn Kindergarten Rabarüblük has participated in the Eco-Schools programme for three years. During this period, the kindergarten has started to plan its activities in a more conscious way. Teachers have become better in setting goals and evaluating results. Learning subjects have been diversified and teachers can now better integrate environment-related issues with the rest of the curriculum. In addition, the kindergarten now also has a better choice of learning tools. As the environmental consciousness of teachers has increased, children and families are more environmentally aware. Parents have become more interested in the activities and events of the kindergarten because many Eco-Schools activities require their involvement.”

Piia Aasmäe, Vice-Principal, Tallinn Kindergarten Rabarüblük

“According to the feedback from schools, the Eco-Schools programme has greatly motivated Estonian schools to work with the Sustainable Development Goals. Estonian pupils enrolled in the programme promote different global environmental issues actively in their school through the formation of pupils’ councils and organise thematic events on the topics of reusing materials, circular economy, recycling etc. Tallinn City Government, Urban Environment and Public Works Department value the Eco-Schools programme very much and support the activities in many ways such as consultation, organisation of thematic training for teachers, etc.”

Gennadi Gramberg, Head of the Environmental Education Division, Tallinn Urban Environment and Public Works Department

“There are several organisations in Estonia active in Environmental Education for children and youth. The Eco-Schools programme differs with its specific focus and intelligibility for target groups. It is inspiring for all parties involved and its reach is global. Therefore, the Eco-Schools programme was met in Estonia with interest, and to start implementing it was comparatively easy. Our organisation, the Estonian Society for Nature Conservation, considers the Eco-Schools programme as a means to fulfil our founding charter in the field of Environmental Education for children and youth.”

Juhan Telgmaa, Estonian Nature Conservation Society Board Member



**Good partners and common goals
make the work enjoyable!**

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

I am very touched by the thoughtful enthusiasm of the teachers and responsible mind of children and youth. They understand very well that it is important to care for the environment and come up with proposals on how to waste less and protect nature. Many schools and kindergarten mow less in the yard to give insects more space and flowering plants the possibility to seed. Some of them keep a 'Darwin's square metre', which is a marked square metre, where one does not mow nor pick any flowers, seeds, etc. to enable research on biodiversity and the growing of species over time. They understand that it is equally important making flowerbeds for butterflies, but also letting nettles, willows and other food plants for caterpillars grow somewhere in the yard.

The other astonishing development is how quickly outdoor education has become a natural part of education in Estonia. We have long cold dark winters, but almost every possibility to learn outside of the classroom is utilised.

The network of National Operators is very supportive. Colleagues from England, the Netherlands and Finland have accepted our invitations to share their experience at our conferences. Together with Latvia, Slovenia and Iceland we started a common project under the Erasmus+ programme, HOB's adventure - Hands-on Biodiversity (HOB), which will take place 2018-2020. Good partners and common goals make the work enjoyable!

Highest Mountain: Suur Munamägi 318 m

The highest mountain is called **Suur Munamägi** (Big Egg Hill).

There are some myths connected to Munamägi and Kalevipoeg, a hero appearing in Estonian national epics. The legend says that Kalevipoeg was tired and wanted to lay down, but the ground under his head was too flat. He, therefore, scooped ground from the left side to the right and by doing so he formed Munamägi (Egg Hill). As the flies were buzzing around him, he turned from side to side, which is how the Vaskna Lake was made. When he got up, the first step he made became Tuulijärv (the Tuuli Lake) and the second Tuhkrijärv (The Tuhkri Lake).

Source: Estonian Literature Museum,
The Archive of Estonian National Poetry "Rõuge parish
Places and Looses.", Tartu 2001



Estonian Nature Conservation Society
Koidu 80
10139 Tallinn

Finland

Finnish Association for Environmental Education

National Operator: Iitu Kiminki



A school visit to the Finnish parliament to teach Members of Parliament about recycling, 2017

Country size: 338,455 km²

Population: 5.5 million

Longest river: Kemijoki 500 km

Largest lake: Saimaa 1,393 km²

Highest mountain: Halti 1,324 m

National animal: Brown bear

National plant: Lily of the valley

Joined Eco-Schools in 1998

Number of Eco-Schools: 312



National tree: Silver Birch

In the old traditions of Fenno-Ugric people, the silver birch was seen as and called the "world tree".

This meant that the tree connected the world of the living humans and the world of their ancestors.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Environmental Education (EE) is not directly included in legislation but instead, it is included in the national curricula for kindergartens and preschools, primary and secondary schools as well as upper secondary schools.

K-12 Education

The implementation of EE is guided by the national curricula in K-12 education. In kindergartens, the curriculum includes targets such as strengthening children's relationship with nature, teaching sustainable lifestyle skills and supporting children's participation and community involvement.

In preschools as well as primary and secondary schools, the national curriculum identifies seven interdisciplinary skills that should be included in all school subjects and teaching. One of these seven skills is "participation, active citizenship and building a sustainable future". EE, and especially sustainable lifestyle skills, are also included in the subject-specific goals of most school subjects. Also, the preschool-secondary school curricula identify the "Eco-Social Approach", a concept introduced by the Finnish scholar Arto O. Salonen, as the value basis of school education. In this approach to education, ecological sustainability is seen as the fundamental basis for all well-being on earth, by understanding the ways ecosystem services support life on earth. It also emphasises the need to educate youth to understand that true meaning and happiness in life are derived from

community, belonging, kind actions and friendship, instead of material wealth and consumption that harm the earth.

In upper secondary education, EE is currently less visible, even though concepts such as "active citizenship", "sustainable lifestyle" and "global responsibility" are mentioned as a basis for the subject-specific learning goals. However, the national upper secondary curriculum is currently being reviewed and the draft of the new curriculum seems to include EE, especially climate education, to a much higher degree.

Professional Development

Even though EE was included in the very core of the 2014 reviewed pre, primary and secondary school curricula, it has taken time for teachers to get tools to implement these goals. Only in recent years has Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) become a bigger part of teacher training in universities, rather than just a topic in biology and geography teaching. There is also state funding for organisations to provide teacher training in these subjects. However, no large scale EE teacher training has been implemented, except for a few active municipalities. Nevertheless, the Finnish Environmental School SYKLI has provided a special vocational study programme in EE for more than a decade already, resulting in hundreds of graduated "environmental educators". In recent years, SYKLI has also been providing teacher training and support for teachers on outdoor education, which has gained a lot of interest among Finnish teachers.



Koivurinteen päiväkotit celebrating their 10th Green Flag, 2018

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The idea of the Eco-Schools programme was brought to Finland by Finnish environmental educators, foremost Kaisa Pajanen. She first heard about the programme at an EE seminar in Denmark in 1996, after which she found out about the NGO, Håll Sverige Rent, which had just started running the programme in Sweden. Kaisa was inspired by their creative EE materials and by the great enthusiasm of Swedish Eco-Schools students and teachers. She had the feeling that the programme had the exact elements that Finland was in need of: new tools for teachers and students to act together in a participatory, empowering, purposeful and creative way.

Kaisa Pajanen presented the idea of the programme to the Finnish Association for Environmental Education, which then started doing background work in order to bring the programme to Finland. In

1998, the pilot phase of the programme was initiated in the region of Eastern Helsinki, funded by European Commission Regional Development Funds. Essi Aarnio worked as the pilot coordinator and one year later, in the spring of 1999, Finland's first three Green Flags were awarded to the secondary school Myllypuron yläaste and the kindergartens Päiväkoti Kurki and Päiväkoti Neulanen.

After the pilot year, the Finnish Association for Environmental Education received numerous requests from schools across the country, eager to join the programme. Even though future financing was still very insecure, the NGO decided to continue running the programme and accepted new enthusiastic participants from all corners of the country. Within the first year of running the programme nationwide, it had approximately 70 active participants.



The longest-standing Finnish Eco-School, Kindergarten Neulanen, celebrating 20 years of having a Green Flag, 2019

KEY MILESTONES

One of the key challenges and achievements of this journey has been providing support and spreading the programme to all parts of a large country despite limited staff resources. In 2001, the programme reached 100 participating schools. In 2008, it reached 200 and only four years later, 100 more joined. The Finnish programme had its 20th anniversary in the academic year 2018-19, which was celebrated in the spring of 2019.

In 2000, the Finnish Association for Environmental Education received the Environmental Award by Kesko, a Finnish market chain, for valuable work towards environmental protection and sustainable lifestyles, as well as WWF Finland's Panda Award.

Kindergarten Neulanan raising one of the first Finnish Green Flags in Spring 1999



“Our whole staff is very engaged in and proud of the Green Flag, and Environmental Education is deeply rooted in our values and everyday activities.”

Karoliina Silander and Kira-Mia Tuisku, Eco-Schools Coordinators & Early Education teachers, Päiväkoti Neulanan

“I think good global programmes consist of a combination of two elements; doing concrete actions on a local level, and the support and power of a global network. This is where the Eco-Schools programme is excelling. The daily actions happen on a small, local level in schools and kindergartens, but at the same time, the participants know that similar small actions happen every day in the numerous Eco-Schools around the world. So with their small, local actions, the schools are actually all the time participating in a big, global movement!”

Sinikka Kunttu, FEE Finland Director,



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The pride and joy children get from being part of the Eco Committee is a unique feature of the programme. It is also impressive to visit longer-standing Green Flag schools and kindergartens and see how deep-rooted sustainability and environmental values are in their everyday work.



Kindergartens celebrating 15 years of Eco-Schools in Finland by organising a street flashmob

Finnish Association for Environmental Education
Lintulahdenkatu 10
00500 Helsinki

France



Association Teragir

National Operator: Julie Saturné



Size: 632,733 km²

Population: 67 million

Longest river: Loire 1,012 km

National animal: Rooster

Joined Eco-Schools in 2005

Number of Eco-Schools: 3,238

Highest mountain: Mont Blanc 4,810 m

Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in the Alps and the mountain has got this name, which means White Mountain, due to the fact that it is covered by snowfield and glaciers.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

According to successive Ministerial circulars, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is one of the main cross-cutting themes for all subjects within the school curriculum.

On 4 February 2015, the Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy and the Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research presented the government's roadmap for ESD. This roadmap provides a development of school trips in nature, organisation of debates on the theme of climate change and biodiversity, implementation of sustainable development approaches in schools and it recalls the challenges and objectives of the implementation of ESD, in connection with the law on energy transition for green growth, the law for the recovery of biodiversity, nature and landscapes, as well as the National Strategy for the Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Development (SNTEDD 2015-2020).

Each regional education authority designates employees in charge of the implementation of the ESD roadmap. Every teacher must contribute to delivering it and a growing number is including references to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda). The Ministry of Education also has its own award system for the schools implementing a sustainable development approach.

K-12 Education

In June 2019, the Ministry of Education set the goal that 10,000 schools should be implementing a global sustainable development project (such as Eco-Schools) by 2022. In 2019, the Ministry also decided that eco-delegates would be elected in each secondary school. There is a growing focus on biodiversity and climate change issues in the curriculum and the schools are asked to implement activities related to biodiversity, like vegetable gardens, composting, birdhouses, hives, etc.

Professional Development

There is still a need for training and for pedagogical and methodological support, as ESD often implies a personal engagement of teachers. With the growing focus given by the Ministry of Education on ESD, more and more training is being offered to teachers on the subject. Although there is still a lot of space for improvement in capacity building opportunities for teachers, organisations such as Teragir are regularly invited to participate in teacher training to talk about Eco-Schools and ESD.



Group picture from the 2009 seminar, which celebrated the 1000th school joining the programme

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Thanks to funding by CITEO, a waste management company, the involvement of Réseau Ecole et Nature, a national EE network, and the historical links of Teragir with the French institutions, the programme started in 2005 with 55 pilot schools with students aged 7-18. In the school year 2005-2006, 40 schools were awarded the Green Flag at the same time. The Education and Environment Ministries quickly supported the programme, and 200 schools participated in the second year and 400 in the third.

KEY MILESTONES

Each new sponsorship or partnership has been a milestone. Every year, Teragir educates and trains approximately 100 local partners in the Eco-Schools methodology, to be able to support the participating schools in their areas. Teragir also established deep connections with many local authorities. The sponsorship of MGEN Group in 2015 has been an essential step to strengthen support for the growing number of schools.

In 2017, Teragir signed a framework agreement with the Ministry of Education to cooperate in the field of sustainability education and promote global sustainable development projects, such as Eco-Schools and Young Reporters for the Environment, as well as to develop both programmes nation-wide. More than 3,000 French schools are implementing the Eco-Schools programme in 2019.

2019 is also a key moment for Eco-Schools in France, with new activities related to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda) and the release of a board game aiming to train students in the implementation of the Seven-Step methodology in their school.

Green Flag award ceremony at the Paris City Hall during the Eco-Schools NOM 2017



“From the beginning, what I have cherished about the Eco-Schools programme is seeing children evolve and gain confidence.”

Anne Rouvière, Teacher and Librarian, Collège Jean Perrin (Le Kremlin-Bicêtre)

“When Teragir proposed that we could support the launch of Eco-Schools in France, its high potential appeared clearly. Since then, 3 million French students identifies the issues and resources of their regions, related to sustainable development. They have learnt to be citizens, how to take care of their environment and each other. It is a major contribution to our work to enhance recycling and circular economy in the country.”

Séverine Lèbre-Badré, Communication Director, CITEO

“Sustainable development reminds us that we are all connected to the environment, and to each other. The nations of the world have set a common project to reach by 2030 in order to achieve sustainable development through seventeen great goals. It says that no one should stay away from this project. Everyone must be part of it, here in France and all over the world. Eco-Schools is probably the most powerful programme to implement global citizenship and sustainable development in a simple way. All stakeholders are associated: local authorities, parents, teachers, the finance sector. Last but not least, students are central to the project! We don't do it for them, but with them.”

Thierry Lerévérend, Teragir Director





NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

Some of the biggest challenges that we have faced while running the programme in France have been finding funding, creating efficient tools for schools and managing the award process, as well as building a network of NGOs and local authorities able to support Eco-Schools and gaining the government's trust.

The signed agreement between Teragir and the Ministry of Education on cooperation in the field of sustainability education and the promotion of global sustainable development projects was a great recognition of the work of Teragir to implement sustainable development in schools. It also encourages and helps deepen the relations with the French regional education authorities.

Association Teragir
115 rue du Faubourg Poissonnière
75009 Paris



Germany

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Umwelterziehung/FEE Germany

National Operator: Robert Lorenz

Green Flag award ceremony at Gut Karlshöhe, June 2019, Photo by Markus Scholz

Country size: 357,386 km²

Population: 82.7 million

Longest river: Rhine 1,232 km

Highest mountain: Zugspitze 2,962 m

National animal: Eagle

Joined Eco-Schools in 1994

Number of Eco-Schools: 780

National plant: Cornflower

During the 19th century, it was customary for unmarried men and women in Germany to wear the flower in their buttonholes to show their marital status.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

by Reiner Mathar

National Legislation

In 1980, the conference of the Ministers of Education (KMK) made Environmental Education (EE) compulsory for all schools in Germany. In the 90s, the global dimension of development was added, and in 2005 the first curriculum framework for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was decided by the Ministers of Education, followed by an extended version including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. This has become the basic curriculum for all German schools, as it was signed by all 16 Ministers and given to the schools as a guideline for ESD. Following the federal structure of the German education system, the concrete practice differs within this framework in the 16 states. Beside these regulations on ESD, Germany has a national strategy for sustainable development which is conceptualised on the state level; some communities have their own strategies. The national and state legislation very often include funding schemes for ESD by the Minister of Education and the Minister of International Cooperation.

K-12 Education

Germany has a long tradition of nature education and EE as well as global citizenship education and ESD. All these different strands were integrated into a holistic concept for ESD at the end of the 90s. Following the federal structure of the whole education sector with the main responsibility on the 16 states level, the concrete practice differs, but all have integrated ESD as a cross-curricular topic for all educational institutions from kindergarten to upper secondary level and university education. The curriculum framework focuses mainly on competence development in the field of sustainable development and includes examples for primary education, lower secondary and even vocational education and training for all subjects in schools. All states support the development on school level by running school networks for ESD (Eco-Schools, Schools for the Future, Sustainable Schools, FairTrade Schools, Schools for democracy/non-violence and Global Schools). Most of those networks are supported by regional centres of expertise or NGOs to center the exchange of practice among schools and offer project development, including elements of a whole-school approach.

Professional Development

Teachers have good opportunities for professional development in Germany. ESD is part of the basic teacher training at the university and the didactic trainings within the first steps into teaching practice as well. ESD is part of in-service training run by local educational authorities, NGOs and regional ESD training centres.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools programme started in Germany in 1994. Three German states started implementing it at the same time and in the following years more and more states followed their example. The German programme focuses on all school levels, except for kindergarten. An annual conference is organised for the regional Eco-Schools Coordinators, where they select three themes that Eco-Schools are encouraged to work with.



The Marion Dönhoff Gymnasium, Photo by Markus Scholz

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Umwelterziehung e.V. / FEE Germany
Goethestraße 64, 99096 Erfurt



Iceland

Landvernd, Icelandic Environment Association
National Operator: Katrín Magnúsdóttir

Fífuborg

Country size: 103,000 km²

Population: 356,900

Highest mountain: Hvannadalshnjúkur 2,110 m

Joined Eco-Schools in 2001

Number of Eco-Schools: 180

Longest river: Thjorsa river 230 km

In Thjorsa, there are two islands called Tröllkonuhlaup (the Giantess Stepping-Stones)

The legend states that a female troll or giant lived in a cave by the river in a mountain called Búrfell. Wanting to cross the river without getting wet, she threw boulders into the Thjorsa river as stepping-stones.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture creates national curricula that follow legislation relevant to all school levels (including the Pre-primary Schools Act No 90/2008, the Compulsory School Act No 91/2008, and the Upper Secondary School Act No 92/2008). The legislation stipulates that education should promote individuals' duties to their community, the environment and the world. It should also promote "physical and mental well-being, a healthy lifestyle and a responsible attitude to living beings and the environment" (91/2008).

The National Curriculum (2011) prescribes that all schools in Iceland, from pre-school to upper secondary levels, build on six fundamental pillars of education. These are sustainability, equality, democracy and human rights, health and welfare, creativity and literacy. The educational ideal of action competence underpins the six pillars in the national curriculum. The decision to emphasise the action competence approach and the six fundamental pillars was based on a long tradition of democracy and citizenship education combined with Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The Ministry created the 2011 curriculum through a collaborative, creative process with several committees of stakeholders and experts. The 2011 curriculum can be seen as representing a shift from a more prescriptive curricular approach to a more descriptive curricular approach, in which the curriculum should serve as an idealistic guiding light for schools to take inspiration from. Schools are audited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and evaluated on their implementation of the national curriculum.

K-12 Education

Based on the national legislation, the focus in the national curriculum defined by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools has been on action competence and sustainability education rather than EE. Sustainability education has, since 2001, been a cornerstone in the national curriculum. Furthermore, sustainable development is one of six fundamental pillars defined in the national curriculum along with equality, democracy and human rights, health and welfare, creativity and literacy.

Professional Development

Since 2014, people attending the Master of Education (M.Ed.) programme at the University of Iceland have to complete a 5 ECTS course focusing on education for sustainability.

Landvernd has been a leading organisation in improving the professional skills of teachers in regards to sustainability education. Once a year, the organisation offers conferences and in-service

professional development courses focusing on sustainability education and which are open for all teachers participating in the Eco-Schools programme in Iceland. These have served to improve the professional skills of teachers as well as to inspire and invigorate the Eco-Schools' work in Iceland. Furthermore, Landvernd has in the past years, been efficient in developing and publishing material for teachers focusing on the Eco-Schools programme, sustainability education and EE. The material is available online and accessible to everyone. Landvernd aims to continue being a leading organisation in sustainability education in Iceland and has plans to develop more material and courses in this field.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Landvernd, Environmental Association of Iceland, became a member of FEE in 2000. Already then, the aim was to become a leading organisation in EE in Iceland. The same year, Sigrún Helgadóttir, a natural scientist and teacher, was employed to facilitate the inauguration of Eco-Schools in Iceland. One year later, in 2001, Landvernd started running the Eco-Schools programme and the first schools started the programme in Iceland. Only one year later, on 27 May 2002, Selás school in Reykjavík was awarded Iceland's first Green Flag.

Some of the partners involved in the initiation process of the programme were the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, the Directorate of Education, and the Environment Agency of Iceland. A delegate from each of these partners along with a kindergarten teacher, an elementary school teacher, an upper secondary school teacher and the National Operator of Eco-schools in Iceland, formed the first Steering Committee of Eco-Schools in Iceland and helped facilitate the inauguration of the programme.

The first schools to join the programme were Fossvogur school, Langholts school, Selás school and Selja school in Reykjavík, Linda school in Kópavogur, Engidalur school in Hafnarfjörður, Borgarnes school in Borgarnes, Borgarfjörður school in Hvanneyri, Snæfellsbær school in Lýsuhóll, Hallormsstaður school in Hallormsstaður, Mýrdalshreppur school in Vík, and Þjórsá school in Skeiða- and Gnúpverjahreppur.

KEY MILESTONES

The biggest highlight is certainly having expanded from 12 to almost 200 schools, which is nearly 50% of all schools in Iceland at all school levels from preschool to university. In the last five years, Landvernd revamped the programme to be more student-centred, and to guide schools towards taking on more complex and impactful themes like global citizenship, climate change and biodiversity. To this end, Landvernd has developed a number of resources for schools and worked with schools to create learning materials. A course for upper secondary schools has been developed where the programme within the schools is almost entirely student-led. The book “Á grænni grein” (2017), which translates to “On a Green Branch”, gives a good overview of the programme and its themes, and is available in Icelandic online. Furthermore, Landvernd has developed learning material about land restoration, ocean literacy, waste reduction and food waste, etc.

Conferences and in-service professional development courses are held annually and serve to inspire and invigorate the Eco-schools’ work in Iceland. Eco-Schools students have held speeches at the Environmental Summit of the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources twice in 2014 and 2018. Eco-Schools have also many times received the annual award “Guard of the Environment” by the Ministry of Environment.



“Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development are the cornerstones of any successful environmental strategy. The Eco-Schools programme has been implemented in Iceland for nearly 20 years and has increased awareness, action and love for the environment and our beautiful nature. Eco-Schools are now, more than ever, important in helping to foster understanding and action in the necessary reform of our societies in the wake of the climate emergency. Congratulations FEE and Eco-Schools around the world!”

Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

“The Eco-Schools programme is our flagship programme. At Landvernd we have been, through Eco-Schools, able to reach a whole generation of Icelanders that are now growing up to be environmentally conscious action takers. Eco-Schools is not only instrumental in improving the way we think about our environment, but it also plays an important role in training young citizens in methods of democracy, critical thinking and taking action.”

Auður Önnu Magnúsdóttir, Landvernd CEO



Vínagerði

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

As the programme grows we are facing new challenges. One of the most prominent challenges we are facing is that schools that have been in the programme for many years lack the capacity to go deeper into more complex themes such as climate change, biodiversity and global citizenship. Thus, the focus has been on these schools when developing new material. We have also held workshops at our conferences and in-service courses for schools struggling with these issues.

As a personal highlight, I can mention the growing awareness of environmental issues and sustainability in the past years. Especially the students have become more aware and more eager to take action and show initiative in tackling the serious challenges the world is facing. By participating in the programme they are given the tools to take action and become more responsible and active citizens.

Landvernd, Icelandic Environment Association
Guðrúnartún 8
105 Reykjavík

Highest mountain: Hvannadalshnjúkur 2,110 m

Hvannadalshnjúkur is positioned in Vatnajökull glacier, which is the largest glacier in Europe. It is located in Vatnajökull National Park, the biggest national park in Europe.

National plant: Mountain Avens flower (Dryas Octopetala)

According to folklore, the plant has the ability to attract money through witchcraft and is hence also called a 'thief's root'.





Latvia

FEE Latvia

National Operator: Daniels Trukšāns / Ilze Rusmane

FEE General Assembly, 2018

National animal: the White Wagtail and the Two-Spot Ladybird



Country size: 64,589 km²

Population: 1.9 million

Longest river: Gauja 452 km

Highest mountain: Gaiziņš 311 m

National tree: Oak and linden

Joined Eco-Schools in 1998

Number of Eco-Schools: 213



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Environmental Education (EE) is referenced in national legislation and must be included in all programmes as per Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. For instance, according to Cabinet regulation No. 716 Article 6(4), a preschool must provide the opportunity for their students to participate in conservation and protection of the environment in the school grounds, as well as to learn to make decisions and to take responsibility for their actions.

K-12 Education

Similarly, EE and sustainability topics must be included in all programmes from preschools to high schools within compulsory education in public (state-funded) schools. The standards of high school education aim to encourage students' active participation in sustainable development in their community by integrating environmental topics in the curriculum.

Professional Development

FEE Latvia runs its own course for teachers entitled "Environmental Education in Schools Based On a Competency-Oriented Approach and the Principles of the Eco-Schools programme".

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools programme was introduced along with the four other FEE programmes in 1998. FEE Latvia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, launched a successful pilot programme in Kuldiga Municipality, which then inspired other municipalities to join the programme. The first Green Flag in Latvia was awarded to Renda Primary School in 2004.

The Eco-Schools team is always full of ideas, but often does not have the capacity to fulfil all of them. The team, as well as the teachers involved on a voluntary basis, make the most of the programme with the available resources. Institutional state support has continuously been an identified need. However, FEE Latvia collaborates with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, which provides financial support annually. FEE Latvia helps teachers find ways to promote their work and achievements in their municipalities to receive more support.



Eco-Schools Award ceremony in Riga, 2009. Former Minister of Environment and later President R. Vejonis was present at the ceremony.

KEY MILESTONES

Some of the highlights in the programme have been the international collaboration, projects and experience exchange for the schools, such as We Eat Responsibly, as well as the increased activity, public reach and creative solutions for annual Global Action Days.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

From the feedback we get year after year and from the good practices we have observed at schools, we gather that the Eco-Schools programme indeed provides strong support for both formal education and local development. The high-point for the programme is that every school understands and appreciates it – even more so now that the school system is changing at the national level. For those involved in the Eco-Schools programme it has proven easier to adapt and understand the new goals and methods as they follow very similar principles: collaboration, teamwork, learning by doing; project-based learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, real-world experiences etc.

In these 17 years, we have seen numerous examples that highlight the immense value of the work of our schools. We feel that EE is a universal tool that promotes sustainable development and helps students develop 21st-century skills and responsible attitudes. It sparks the motivation to take action. An Eco-School is a platform where students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to cooperate. They learn to take an active role in solving various issues of their own and their community.



“Since our school joined the programme, I have noticed many positive changes in our habits and in the mindsets of both myself and other school staff members. We feel that our decisions and actions do actually have an impact and that we can spread our good examples by involving other people from our community in our activities. Our successes also put a certain pressure on the community as a whole to think more about sustainability. For the school staff, the opportunity to develop collaborations and friendships with other schools is highly valued as all the good practices and ideas can be pooled together. Another important aspect is that the Eco-Schools programme has given us a chance to participate in many local and international projects where teachers can exercise their creativity and learn about interesting examples from elsewhere. The Green Flag status also helps our visibility and is definitely something all schools are proud of.”

Aija Pundure, Amata Primary School – one of the first schools to be awarded a Green Flag in Latvia

“It’s not just education that the Eco-Schools programme is about. It inspires, engages and excites, proving that it is indeed a catalyst for youth initiatives in environmental protection, as well as the promotion of sustainability and civic engagement. Students learn from each other, bring their knowledge home and ultimately become exemplars in their local communities. More often than not the road to a better future starts with seemingly small everyday actions that anyone can take on. I am happy to see that Eco-Schools foster a generation that truly understands the need for these actions.”

Janis Ulme, FEE Latvia Head



Students from Ogresgala Primary School planting trees, 2009
43,000 trees were planted over several years within the same Eco-Schools project

FEE Latvia
Lapu iela 17, Rīga



ĀRS

VASŅU
MĀJAS

Ed
Nīst

#ClimateAction
Doma
Gulo Bāli
RIKO JĪS
DO KĀDI!

Repāžu C...
1980

Sveiki
Latvijā!

DZĪVO
Atbildīgi!

STADI

LABĪT
LABU



Lithuania



Lithuanian Green Movement

National Operator: Renaldas Rimavicius

Trees planting activity, 2015

Country size: 65,300 km²

Population: 2.7 million

Highest mountain: Aukštojas hill 293 m

National tree: Lime tree

Longest river: Nemunas river 475 km in Lithuania, 937 km in total

Joined Eco-Schools in 2004

Number of Eco-Schools: 89



National animal: Stork

The White Stork is a national bird of Lithuania. The stork has been regarded as a sacred bird, a mythical predecessor, a protector who brings happiness, prosperity, justice and the guardian of the heaven seal. It is believed to be able to take human diseases and leave them in the swamps and it has, therefore, been considered as the dearest neighbour of the homestead, bringing happiness to the home. Folklore also says that the stork brings children.

From the wintering grounds, white storks come back to Lithuania around 25 March. Hence, ancient Lithuanians called this day "Blovieščiai", and celebrate the return of the storks.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In April 2015, the Lithuanian Parliament approved a new National Strategy of Environmental Protection. The strategy identifies four key areas for long-term environmental policy to be implemented by 2030. These are: sustainable use of natural resources and waste management, improvement of environmental quality, preserving of ecosystem stability, adaptation and mitigation of climate change issues.

The strategy states that participation of society is one of the basic factors in implementing the strategy successfully. Different ways of community involvement are described, including the integration of environmental and sustainable development themes into the various formal and non-formal education programmes. A programme like Eco-Schools, which involves schools and communities in environmental activities, therefore helps to implement the strategy.

K-12 Education

Natural science education is a part of secondary education approved by the Ministry of Education. In schools, Environmental Education (EE) is included in subjects such as global citizenship, nature and human in grades 5-6, and in natural sciences in grades 7-12.

A number of municipalities work with informal environmental schools or centres. Pupils from formal schools are able to participate in these centres and activities on environmental and sustainability topics every week throughout the academic year. Panevezio Nature School, one of these centres, has been participating actively in the Eco-Schools programme for years. National governmental bodies are also running some EE related activities through, for instance, the Lithuanian Centre for Non-Formal Youth Education.

Professional Development

EE is included in environmental study programmes at the university level, e.g. in Environmental Science, Environmental Management, Environmental Engineering, Environmental Management and Protection of the Environment, as well as in some pedagogical studies.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

When Lithuanian Green Movement decided to start the Eco-Schools programme in Lithuania, the environmental departments of different local governments were asked for recommendations of schools actively working in the environmental field. Following these recommendations, some schools were invited to join the programme.

The Eco-Schools programme started in 2004 and 12 schools from ten different municipalities were involved. In May 2005, Triskonių Basic School in the Pakruojis district became the first school in Lithuania to be awarded a Green Flag. Over the years the number of schools participating in the Eco-Schools programme increased. 75 schools were awarded the Green Flag in 2019. Today, kindergartens, primary schools, basic schools to pre-gymnasiums, gymnasiums, vocational schools and informal EE schools are involved in the programme. In September 2019, Siauliu Special Education Centre joined the programme.

KEY MILESTONES

The Eco-Schools programme has helped establish and strengthen cooperation on environmental topics among schools in the same city or region, and among other stakeholders, like local state services of protected areas, local authorities, local forest industries, and local waste management bodies.



“We started with the Eco-Schools programme at Panevezio Alfonso Lipniuno Pre-gymnasium (at the time, Alfonso Lipniuno Secondary School) in 2004. I have been involved in Eco-Schools activities for thirteen years, and there are only good things I can say about the programme. Students themselves have organised activities, discussed successes, even some failures. The motivation of the pupils increased to participate in environmental activities in general, and a lot of practical work (observations, research, actions) has been implemented. Cooperation with other schools increased through various events, actions, conferences, and the school itself has become more known and visible. I am really glad about being involved in a programme like Eco-Schools. Better relationship with students, a different environment of communication and experiences.”

**Janina Morkeviciene, Former Biology Teacher and Supervisor,
Panevezio Alfonso Lipniuno Pre-Gymnasium**

“I am very happy that the Eco-Schools programme is running in Lithuania. When we started Eco-Schools in 2004 I believed that the programme would bring a lot of benefits. And it is always great to see school communities after the summer vacation actively backing programme activities.”

Rimantas Braziulis, Lithuanian Green Movement Chairman



Lithuanian Green Movement
I. Kanto str. 6, Kaunas



Awarding Triskoniai School



Mazeikiu Renavo School

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The Eco-Schools programme's financial situation is always a big challenge and the Lithuanian Green Movement feels a lack of support from national governmental bodies.

But the widespread involvement in environmental activities, school communities as well as local communities has been a key achievement of the programme. In my experience, students' understanding and knowledge of environmental protection in Eco-Schools is greater when compared to students in non-Eco-Schools.



Netherlands

SME Advies

National Operator: Hak van Nispen

Green Flag Stellegors, 2011

Country size: 42,508 km²

Population 17 million

Longest river: Rijn 1,233 km

Highest mountain: Vaalseberg 322 m

Joined Eco-Schools in 2013

Number of Eco-Schools: 163

**Other FEE programmes: IVN for LEAF, YRE
and KMK for Blue Flag, Green Key**

National animal: Godwit

The Godwit is called 'grutto' in Dutch, because that is the sound the bird is making. About 80% of the world's godwit population is living in the Netherlands in the summertime. With their long beak they can easily find small worms in the wet grounds of the country.

National flower: Tulip (unofficial)

Though not an official symbol of the Netherlands, perhaps no one item symbolises the country more succinctly than the tulip, as the Netherlands produces approximately nine billion flower bulbs annually.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

The Netherlands has a long history of Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainability policies, which began with the European Year for Nature Conservation in 1970. The first policy advice specific to EE in the Netherlands was released in 1975, the first national EE act was passed in 1988 and the first multi-year EE action programme was initiated in 1992. With its first national EE policy enacted in 1988, the Netherlands has a long and rich history of using EE as a key strategy in addressing environmental issues. By positioning EE as a platform for forging relationships and building capacity, the Netherlands' government facilitates a "learning society" to assist individuals and institutions in addressing key issues through education and sustainable practices. National policy also supports new forms of monitoring and evaluation for the country's prominent EE programmes, such as Groen Gelinkt, a web hub that offers teaching materials and information about EE and sustainability.

The sustainability topic was introduced into EE in the Netherlands in 1999. During the UN Decade for Sustainable Development, the Netherlands released two separate policies: one for EE and one for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The two policies converged in 2013 under the country's Duurzaam Doel programme.

K-12 Education

K-12 educators in the Netherlands can access EE resources through Groen Gelinkt, an online search system that allows educators from primary schools, secondary schools, and afterschool programmes to locate EE resources by topic and audience. Sustainable Teacher Education for primary school programmes (PABOs) offer support for schools in initiating sustainability projects. Sustainable Chain Gang (VO) provides a network for secondary schools to support one another in sustainability education efforts.

Professional Development

The Netherlands facilitates national education networks for sustainability in higher education and vocational practices to lobby at all levels and achieve key objectives for engaging students in sustainable development curricula, research, and practice. Sustainable PABOs supports environmental educators by offering professional learning opportunities through conferences, lectures and workshops, newsletters with tips and activities, and online resources. It also supports teacher training colleges and primary schools in learning to use PRISE (Primary Sustainable Education), an assessment and evaluation instrument for ESD in primary education.



De Nieuwe Kring are growing vegetables as part of the Eco-Schools programme



De Kleine Prins in Rotterdam with their first Green Flag

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The National Tourism Organisation, ANWB, was responsible for Blue Flag and in 2003, Henny Kromhout from ANWB/FEE asked Hak van Nispen from SME Advies to implement Eco-Schools in The Netherlands. At first, SME Advies was not convinced to participate because the organisation already had thousands of educational packages and activities offered to schools. SME tried the educational material within the theme of energy saving. No more convincing about the process and the philosophy of student-led change was needed - this was the right way to go!

KEY MILESTONES

Without any support from the government, finances have been and will be a problem. At the moment, participating schools pay registration fees, sometimes with the support of the municipality. It would be a great development if the government or a fund would support the programme with the financial and human resources to implement it. In spite of lacking this, Eco-Schools is mentioned as an excellent example in many publications, in governmental policies and in scientific research. In 2015, 100 Eco-Schools were participating in the Dutch programme and only three years later, in 2018, the number increased to 150 Eco-Schools. SME has been cooperating with more than 128 EE centres in the Netherlands for local support of the schools since. Furthermore, 100 Eco-Schools have achieved the bronze certificate in 2019 and over 15 municipalities support the Eco-Schools programme.



“Rain, we’ve got plenty of it. Let’s collect it and use it to flush our toilets”
Director, Primary school De Molenvliet

“Eco-Schools is an excellent example of how to develop sustainability in schools. It helps schools find their way towards sustainable change, instead of delivering education that focuses on knowledge transfer only. Student-led change gives a school a new perspective on education.”
Roel van Raaij, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

“Eco-Schools is excellent and difficult at the same time. In the Netherlands, education is decentralised and liberalised, so schools are responsible for the way they offer education to students. There are many parties that want to offer their content to the schools for free. So it is difficult for schools to make a selection, therefore many teachers stay with the formal methods of educational publishers (the books). A long term process programme like Eco-Schools is different and schools have to pay for support. Schools are getting used to it and when they participate they are happy to see the changes and show it to others.”
Hak van Nispen, SME Advies CEO



SME Advies
 PO Box 43016; 3540 AA Utrecht

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The cooperation with the local EE centres and municipalities on the local support of schools has been a highlight. These stakeholders know schools best, therefore they can really support them, which has been a unique feature in the Dutch programme.





Norway

The Foundation FEE Norway
National Operator: Sigrid Hungnes

Country size: 385,207 km²

Population: 5.3 million

Longest river: Glomma 621 km

National flower: Purple heather

National animal: Fjord Horse and

White-Throated Dipper

Joined Eco-Schools in 1999

Number of Eco-Schools: 965



Highest mountain: Galdhøpiggen 2,469 m

The question about which mountain peak is the highest in Norway has raged for decades. Some believe it to be Glittertinden others that it should be Galdhøpiggen. The debate comes down to one question: Should the ice count?

Galdhøpiggen has always been the highest with its 2,469 metres, against Glittertindens 2,452 metres. But because Glittertinden has had a large ice cap on the top, it was measured to be 2,472 metres high in July 1965. But since the glacier on the summit of the Glittertind is soon gone, this is no longer the case...



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In 2017, Norwegian kindergartens received a new national framework plan. In this framework plan, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are highlighted as vital in childhood education and that the SDGs should be actively addressed in Norwegian kindergartens. In Autumn 2020, a new subject curriculum will take effect in Norwegian schools. This new curriculum can potentially be ground-breaking as it creates a framework for action-based learning that involves students in deep learning processes, introduces increased student participation and promotes interdisciplinary work on sustainable development.

K-12 Education

Norwegian schools are still very much focused on theory and classroom-based teaching. The Eco-Schools programme provides a useful framework to ensure a good Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Environmental Education (EE) through a more Problem-Based Learning approach. FEE Norway hopes that there will be great progress in this field when the new curriculum in schools is introduced in 2020. EE has a more prominent role in this new curriculum.

Professional Development

In Norway, EE is increasingly considered a relevant part of teacher education. For schools and kindergartens which would like to develop their environmental focus further, there are several courses during the year which they can attend. There is also a wide range of resources which is either available online or can be ordered free of charge, developed for teaching children and youth about sustainable development and the environment. It is also possible for kindergartens and schools to apply for project funding that they can use on specific projects on topics regarding nature, particularly projects emphasising outdoor education. This grant is highly accessible, and schools and kindergartens that are awarded project funds are invited to participate in networks with other schools, as well as attend seminars and workshops.

To date, approximately 1,000 Norwegian schools and kindergartens are Green Flag certified and several municipalities have now agreed that all schools and kindergartens in their area should be part of the Eco-Schools programme. In addition, increased public interest for environmental issues combined with the new school curriculum creates great potential for the further development of Eco-Schools in Norway.

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In 2017, Borhaug School was awarded the Green Flag after being part of the Alcoa W3 project. The picture shows the Eco Committee receiving the Green Flag together with the school principal, the mayor, and representatives from school staff, Alcoa Foundation and FEE Norway.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Jan Brataas, the founder of the Foundation FEE Norway, approached FEE with a request to run the FEE programmes in Norway. FEE Norway started with Blue Flag and was not aware that the Eco-Schools programme existed. The organisation soon became familiar with Eco-Schools and realised that the programme could have a lot of potential in Norway. The programme started in 1999.

FEE Norway also established a collaboration with the Norwegian Ministry of Church and Education who were keen to support this new programme. The Church and Education Minister was present at the first Green Flag accreditation ceremony in Norway in 1999, where Nesheim School in Arendal was awarded a Green Flag.

KEY MILESTONES

In 2000, the two major counties of Nord-Trøndelag and Sør-Trøndelag joined the Eco-Schools programme. Following this, four of the most populated municipalities in Norway also joined the programme. One of the greatest challenges has been a lack of time and resources for teachers in Norwegian schools to prioritise the great, but not obligatory, initiatives.



Tasta School



“We are very pleased with the Eco-Schools programme. Being a part of the programme has helped us to approach our environmental work in a more structured way. This is exactly what we needed as we have worked with environmental issues for several years without having a structure or clear direction.”

Pedagogical Leader, Green Flag Kindergarten Tommlekollen Friluftsbarnhage

“For us in Trondheim municipality, Eco-Schools is the motor that starts Environmental Education in the municipality’s schools and kindergartens, and that continues to evolve the quality of this work year after year. Eco-Schools inspire and motivate both students and teachers to focus on the environment and sustainable development in their everyday life at school and in practical projects. We are proud of the great collaboration we have created between certified schools, kindergartens, the municipality as well as many other local stakeholders in the municipality’s strategic work for sustainable development.”

Bjørn Arild Silseth, Trondheim Municipality

“Eco-Schools is by far the largest programme that FEE Norway runs, and also the one we are most proud to be involved in. Despite the fact that ESD in the Norwegian school system is far from excellent, we are very proud of the effort made by students and teachers in the Norwegian Eco-Schools and the work of our dedicated contacts in municipalities and counties, that work very hard to promote the Eco-Schools programme and support certified schools and kindergartens. Eco-Schools provides a simple, but genius framework and methodology for continuous Education for Sustainable Development, and our experience from running the programme in Norway for 20 years now is that it is becoming more relevant day by day. FEE Norway is very hopeful that in the next 25 years all of Norwegian schools and kindergartens, municipalities and counties will already know what a unique, powerful and engaging tool our programme can be.”

Marit Kjellesvik, Foundation FEE Norway CEO



Highest mountain: Galdhøpiggen 2,469 m

...The latest official survey from the authority responsible for mapping this came out in September 2017. It shows that the snow cover at the top was 2,457 metres above sea level, 15 metres lower than in 1965. Since then, the ice cover has decreased further and there is now only a thin ice cap left.

This does not only mean that the race between Galdhøpiggen and Glittertinden has been decided but also that future discussion should not be about which mountain is the highest, but rather about the fact that Norway’s glaciers are melting.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

I started as National Operator for Eco-Schools in Norway in February earlier this year. For me, a unique feature of the Eco-Schools programme is that the pupils actively initiate and implement environmental measures and positive action in collaboration with local, national and global stakeholders. Being part of, and identifying with, a greater global movement of positive action is empowering and creates hope for a sustainable future. Such optimism and agency are invaluable in a world facing the climate crisis.

The Foundation FEE Norway
Postboks 4502
4673 Kristiansand



Lyngdal Kristne Grunnskole arranged a recycling contest as part of their Alcoa W3 project in 2017.



Poland

Polish Foundation for Environmental Education
National Operator: Jaroslaw Szczygiel

Country size: 312,696 km²

Population: 38 million

Longest river: Wistula 1,047 km

Highest mountain: Rysy Mountain 2,499 m

National tree: Birch

Joined Eco-Schools in 2006

Number of Eco-Schools: 277

National animal: Eagle

The national coat of arms of Poland is a white eagle with a golden beak and golden crown. The emblem originated when Poland's legendary founder Lech saw a white eagle and decided to settle and place the eagle on his emblem.



THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The story of the Eco-Schools programme in Poland starts in 2002 when the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management provided a big grant for an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project with schools and a programme similar to Eco-Schools was initiated. In 2005, after implementing this other programme for a few years, the organisation approached FEE and the International Eco-Schools Director, who at that time was based in Portugal, to ask if Poland could join the programme. In 2006, the application was approved and the implementation of the programme began. The first Eco-Schools Coordinator in Poland was Malgorzata (Gosia) Luszczek, now International YRE Director. The transition from the national programme to the Eco-Schools programme ran smoothly, as the basics of the programmes were similar. In 2007, the first Green Flag was awarded to a primary school in Zawoja Przysłop, Małopolskie Voivodeship



KEY MILESTONES

The number of schools certified with a Green Flag went from just a few schools to 100 schools and then to 300. The Eco-Schools programme became the answer for many, especially rural schools. It became the means for local community engagement in different environmental improvements, not only in schools but also in students' households.

The educational linkages of the Eco-Schools Environmental Review and the professional ISO 14001 audit helps schools and convinces local governments to allocate resources for environmental performance improvements that are implemented together with educational activities – something that increases positive environmental impact rapidly and widely. Handbooks and other educational materials help teachers and students implement the Seven Steps.

A professional online calculator helps the monitoring of energy, water, waste and climate change impact from schools participating in Eco-Schools, and the operational structure of the programme includes local organisations coordinating the programme in different regions of Poland.



“Ecology and sustainable development are very important tasks in the process of education. As the person who represents an institution in which one of the main aims is to support schools in Environmental Education, we engaged with pleasure in the cooperation with the Eco-Schools programme. It started in 2009, and has continued since. In the beginning, the programme was implemented in only a few schools from our region but we now have over 80 schools that have been awarded Green Flags. The programme is especially popular among kindergartens and primary schools, which means that the youngest children are involved in the process of eco-education. Our role is to support teachers and school coordinators who are responsible for the realisation of the programme in their schools. We consult on the action plans, organise workshops, conduct individual consultations, distribute some materials, etc. After almost 12 years of working with the programme I can witness change achieved in our schools and in our attitudes towards Environmental Education.”

Alicja Szarzyńska, Eco-Schools Regional Coordinator

“...Everything starts at school. Not only because the Eco-Schools programme educates children, but also because children educate their parents, other family members and influence the local society. When running an Environmental Education NGO, or any other organisation related to the environment, it is crucial to run activities addressed to children that are supported by their teachers, parents and authorities. All these opportunities are given by the Eco-Schools methodology. As an NGO that cooperates with different stakeholders, such as businesses, municipalities and other NGOs, could we proudly call ourselves an Environmental Education NGO without the Eco-Schools programme?”

Jaroslaw Szczygeł, Polish Foundation for Environmental Education CEO



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The biggest challenge is to maintain continuous financial support that can stabilise the programme, not only coordination but also support for schools in educational and other ideas. Another challenge is to build a close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, which could help us include the Eco-Schools programme as a part of the curriculum. Unfortunately, due to the size of the country and lack of political links, it is very difficult to build that close relationship. ESD is not the first priority for the Polish government nor for many local governments that the schools belong to.

During the time the Eco-Schools programme has been running in Poland, participating schools have had the chance to be involved in some projects connected with EE. In 2015, our country participated in the EU funded We Eat Responsibly project, in cooperation with eight other European countries. The idea of the project was based on the Seven-Step methodology and became a reality through the involvement of a number of Eco-Schools. The idea of the project was also to engage and educate the teachers/school coordinators and the school staff. At the time, I was a National Coordinator of the Eco-Schools programme and the Coordinator of the We Eat Responsibly project. Personally, it was a time when I had the chance to support the increase of knowledge on responsible consumption and I managed to make some changes in my own everyday life in favour of responsible development.





Sweden

Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation (HSR)
National Operator: Kristina Bjerka

Country size: 450,295 km²

Population: 10.2 million

Highest mountain: Kebnekaise 2,098 m

Joined Eco-Schools in 1996

Number of Eco-Schools: 1,700

Longest river:

Klarälven and Göta älv 731 km in total

Klarälven means 'the clear river' in Swedish. It changes name to Göta älv after it has passed through the lake Vänern, but is, however, still regarded as one single river.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Sweden has always been at the forefront when it comes to working with the environment and has, therefore, created many laws and regulations. The realisation that nature has a protective value and that humans' rights to change and use nature are associated with a responsibility to manage nature and promote sustainable development, means that current and future generations are ensured a healthy and good environment, grown and led by a collective effort for sustainable development.

The Environmental Code was created in 1999 as part of Swedish legislation where the most environmental laws are collected. In 1999, the Swedish Parliament also decided on the first 15 environmental goals, as well as the generation goals, which we are still working towards in addition to the global goals.

K-12 Education

The Swedish curriculum states clearly that schools have an obligation to provide students with tools to understand how the environment, economy, health and justice are linked. Sweden has also joined the Global Sustainable Development Goals with the aim of leading the world towards a sustainable and fair future. Therefore, sustainability issues must have a central place in the Swedish school.

The schools should provide students with tools to live and work in a sustainable way. This assignment is included in all parts of the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool and recreational home.

According to the syllabus, all teaching should contain parts that see the subject from different angles or perspectives; a historical, environmental, international and ethical perspective.

Through the environmental perspective, students should be given opportunities to take responsibility for the environment they can influence themselves, but also to create an overall understanding of global environmental issues. The teaching will show how different functions in society and different lifestyles can be adapted to create sustainable development.

Professional Development

Unfortunately, little has been invested in government initiatives to educate teachers in Environmental Education (EE). At most, in Swedish universities and colleges, research and shorter voluntary courses are organised for the teacher-students. For pre-trained teachers, it is mostly NGOs that provide continuing education in sustainable development learning, funded by project grants.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Keep Sweden Tidy (HSR) started extensive EE efforts by educators across Sweden in 1993. The programmes were subsidised by HSR and the municipalities undertook to conduct follow-up training with their own funding. This effort led many educators to increase their knowledge of the issues and to use HSR's educational material. The people educated through these programmes became an important network for HSR.

At this time, there were three projects within FEE: Blue Flag, Eco-Schools and YRE. HSR had started the Blue Flag for guest ports and marinas and in order to participate in the FEE projects, participation in at least two projects was required. Therefore, one of the reasons the Eco-Schools programme started was the administrative requirement.

Another and more important reason was the need to create a tool for action for educators trained in the HSR network. A tool that also aimed to engage the students. Eco-Schools had started in the neighbouring country Denmark and a Swedish school, Flygelskolan, then joined the Danish programme. This programme inspired HSR and it was implemented as an environmental certification/management system with educational materials adapted for schools and preschools in Sweden in 1996.

KEY MILESTONES

Schools in Sweden pay a registration fee to participate in the programme. We hope that in the future schools will not have to pay, as at the moment is discouraging them to join.

The year 2016, Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Eco-Schools in Sweden. It was the first time a big Eco-Schools celebration took place across the whole country and it led to that we now have our own day in the calendar: "The Green Flag Day".



"We must work with sustainable development according to curricula and being able to do so within the framework of Eco-Schools gives us support, inspiration and structure. Together we are strong!"

Eco-Schools Coordinator

"All children and young people have the right to a sustainable future without waste and climate problems. We want to help them to work in a way that creates the ability to act and gives them future faith. Therefore, it is important that everyone is given the opportunity to work for sustainable development, whether they go to preschool, elementary school or high school."

Johanna Ragnartz, Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation CEO





NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

A highlight for me as the National Operator was when I first met all the other National Operators at the National Operators Meeting in 2018 and found out how many engaged people there are around the world. That is amazing.

Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation (HSR)
Rosterigränd 4, 11761 Stockholm



Switzerland

Association J'aime ma Planète
National Operator: Urban Furlan

Country size: 41,285 km²

Population: 8.5 million

Longest river: Rhine 375.5 km

Highest mountain: The Dufourspitze 4,634 m

National animal: Cow

Joined Eco-Schools in 2015

Number of Eco-Schools: 55

National plant: Edelweiss

Edelweiss is a non-toxic mountain flower. It has been used in traditional medicine as a remedy against abdominal and respiratory diseases. According to folk traditions, giving this flower to a loved one is a promise of dedication.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Environmental Education (EE), as part of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), is an integral part of those public policies related to education. In the Federal Government's Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2019, ESD is listed as one of the action areas in the field of education and training. A national centre for ESD called Education21 was created in 2013. This centre acts on behalf of the federal government, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) and the civil society as a national focal point for the implementation and development of EE and ESD in Switzerland.

K-12 Education

Following the National Action Plan for ESD (2007-2014) in 2007, efforts have been made to mainstream EE and ESD into the Swiss education system. ESD is now incorporated in all three Swiss national curricula for mandatory education (Lehrplan21, Plan d'études romand, Piano di studio). ESD is not considered as a new discipline, but as a concept that underpins the learning process. Depending on the curriculum, it is either infused in various curriculum areas, such as natural sciences and social sciences or is introduced in interdisciplinary thematic areas of the curriculum.

Professional Development

ESD has been incorporated into the teachers' education and will be one of the development areas in Switzerland in upcoming years.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

In 2015 J'aime ma Planète Association started the Eco-Schools programme in Switzerland. By then, the association had been involved in EE for around 10 years and was familiar with the benefits of the Eco-Schools programme. The programme was also known among some of the teachers, students and parents who had taken part in it before moving to Switzerland and who had shared their Eco-Schools experience with the association. Thanks to the programme's reputation, the president of the association, Patricia Defauw, the General Director, Catherine de Noyelle, and the National Operator, Urban Furlan, along with other members of the association, had decided to look into implementing Eco-Schools in Switzerland. Catherine de Noyelle met with the Eco-Schools team from France in January 2015. Following this, J'aime ma Planète Association applied for FEE membership and began running the programme the same year. Two years later, on 26 June, Switzerland's first Green Flag was awarded to Lycée Rodolphe Töpffer.

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Collège Champittet Nyon celebrating their first Eco-Schools Award in 2018. The school created a one hour show on sustainable development and environmental conservation.





“One of the most unexpected things about running the Eco-Schools programme in our school is that it has helped unite the school community behind a common goal. It makes people who do not necessarily interact with each other on a daily basis work together and that is fantastic”

Joseph Gabioud, General Director, Le lycée Rodolphe Töpffer

“A highlight of running Eco-Schools is to see its empowerment potential and the change that it brings to the school community. A quote from one of the teachers illustrates that well: “I have not only learnt a great deal, but I have also changed as a person. And I have never seen my students as motivated as they are with the Eco-Schools project”

Gaëlle Kroh, Eco-Schools Coordinator, Les Coquelicots

“The Montagu Foundation started supporting J’aime ma Planète as early as 2011, as it was convinced that this young association could bring an innovative and enthusiastic message to schools in the Canton of Geneva. The association’s activities quickly grew stronger and became increasingly dynamic, thanks to a highly competent team and quality teaching materials.

In 2015, FEE chose J’aime ma Planète as its partner in Switzerland for the development of the Eco-Schools programme. The Montagu Foundation was convinced of the relevance and the potential of this programme. In less than four years, dozens of schools throughout the country have committed to Eco-Schools, thus showing the increasing reach of the programme. The two new offices opened recently for the programme by J’aime ma Planète in other Swiss cantons, Vaud and Zurich, are a reflection of this.

The Montagu Foundation is proud to support such a committed and reliable partner. The Foundation is very grateful to J’aime ma Planète for all the work, to date and to come, done in educating the future generations and for the protection of the environment.”

Eric Demole, Chairman of the Montagu Foundation

“The entire team of the J’aime ma Planète in Switzerland is very pleased and proud of being able to implement the Eco-Schools programme in the country. Arguably, this is one of the best programmes I have seen: it is well structured and thought through, setting the right basis for the entire school communities to teach and promote a sustainable way of living. I also applaud the action-oriented approach that requires a long-term engagement from schools. Over the years, we have seen growing interest and received very positive feedback from schools all across Switzerland. Thank you and wishing you another 25 successful years!”

Patricia Defauw, J’aime ma Planète Founder and President

KEY MILESTONES

Switzerland is a federal and multilingual country with a decentralised education system, where the education programmes must be in line with the three national curricula, one for each of the three linguistic regions. Moreover, in Switzerland, the decisions regarding the education sector are in the hands of the 26 Swiss Cantons. These peculiarities have important implications for the development of the programme on a national level. The approval given by three cantonal authorities of education in the French-speaking part of Switzerland was a very important step for the development of the programme, as it was what made it possible for the Eco-Schools programme to be implemented in various public schools in those cantons.

In terms of achievements in the schools, in the academic year 2018-19, a school campus became plastic-free. In June 2018, a two-hour-long end-of-the-year school show dedicated to Eco-Schools and nature conservation took place. In terms of programme development, among the biggest achievements of the programme have been the successful pilot project, with the first two schools receiving the Green Flag Award in 2016, the expansion of the programme throughout Romandy, the opening of an office in Vevey in 2017, the publication of the Eco-Schools Handbook and the creation of the website dedicated to the programme for the French-speaking part of Switzerland in Autumn 2018. In 2019, the Eco-Schools Handbook was also published in English for English-speaking schools. Moreover, this year, the programme has been extended to the German-speaking part of the country and an office has been opened in Zurich.

Since its launch, the programme has grown immensely and over 60 schools will have been a part of it by the end of the 2019-2020 school year.





Children discovering aromatic and medicinal plants on the school terrace 2016.
L'écoline, the first nursery school receiving the Green Flag ward in Switzerland.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The role of the National Operator is unique, as this figure acts as a bridge between the local (national) Eco-Schools family and the international one. The sharing of experiences and knowledge within the international community is definitely a plus in running this programme.

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