

# **International Forum on Education for Sustainable Development**

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UNESCO Beijing Office and

Beijing Municipal Education Commission

**Paper on contribution from DENMARK:**

**Learners' Guide 5 within the UNESCO Baltic Sea Project:**

**“Education for Sustainable Development - BALTIC 21”**

edited and financed in co-operation with the Danish Ministry of Education

The Learners' Guide is intended as a contribution from Denmark to the efforts made within Baltic 21 Education which is an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region decided by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden

It is the fifth in a series of educational books elaborated within the Baltic Sea Project, a UNESCO network of schools in the Baltic Sea Region, launched by Finland in 1989.

The main objectives of the Baltic Sea Project are to:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increase the awareness of the students about the environmental problems in the Baltic Sea Region and give them an understanding of the scientific, and of the social and cultural aspects of the interdependence between man and nature</li><li>• develop the abilities of the students to study changes in the environment</li><li>• encourage students to participate in developing a sustainable future</li></ul> |
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Education for sustainable development was introduced and strengthened in the Baltic Sea Project with the 1992 Rio Declaration, and the Agenda 21 Action Plan moved the focus from environmental education onto more individual lifestyle teaching.

Education for sustainable development, however, is a much difficult concept to teach, a difficult complex to grasp, and therefore indeed an educational challenge!

When in 1997 Sweden terminated its period of hosting the Baltic Sea Project students worked with some of the chapters in the Agenda 21 Action Plan and presented their work at a major conference entitled “From Words to Action” in Nyköping, Sweden 1997.

For the next major students' and teachers' conference, which took place in my home town, Sonderborg, Denmark in 2000, entitled “On the Threshold - Baltic 21” the regionally agreed Agenda 21 i.e. Baltic 21, formed the framework for the Baltic Sea Project schools for their preparatory school work.

Learners' Guide 5 has been based upon the students' and teachers' experiences from working with the sectors included in Baltic 21 prior to, during, and after the conference.

Learners' Guide 5 has 6 chapters:

- Chapter 1 - Baltic 21, an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region
- Chapter 2 - Education for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region
- Chapter 3 - Perspectives
- Chapter 4 - Democracy as a Necessary Prerequisite
- Chapter 5 - Best Practices on Sustainability from schools in the Baltic Sea Region
- Chapter 6 - From Local to Global

## **Chapter 1 - Baltic 21, an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region**

The chapter contains the overall goals and suggestions on how to work with each of the Baltic 21 sectors.

The methodology is suggested in three steps:

1. Preparatory work
2. Practical Work
3. Discussion

The main idea is to enable young people in their ordinary school work and in a variety of subjects to work with the complexity of sustainability through the sectors agreed upon at the political level, i.e. sustainable agriculture, sustainable energy, sustainable fisheries, sustainable forestry, sustainable industry, sustainable tourism, sustainable transport.

Before students can do this, however, you have to discuss with them what sustainability means, and you have to agree that this is what you would like to elaborate knowledge on. You have to decide how to deal with the three dimensions and perspectives in Baltic 21 i.e. what it means in terms of economy, culture and social life, and for the environment.

No single subject can possibly deal with the three dimensions. Co-operation between natural science subjects, social sciences and culture oriented subjects is needed.

## **Chapter 2 - Education for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region**

Chapter 2 deals with the Haga Declaration, the background for the decision in 2002 to include education as a most important sector in Baltic 21! A useful table explaining the differences between Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development is included.

Elements pointed at when schools measure progress or evaluate their works are  
Information- Motivation -Training - Learning - Cultural activities - Competence development  
Project work and Availability/Opportunities

To understand sustainability both locally, regionally and globally the time dimension is needed. For this purpose Environmental History is part of chapter 2.

Environmental history introduces its main concept:

To know in what direction development is heading, you need a point in the present and a point in the past in order to make decisions for the future.

## Chapter 3 - Perspectives

Why deal with sustainability in education? What reasons can be stated?

Various researchers and lecturers give some examples. To mention a few:

- Agriculture, Food Quality and Human Health. Production of food inflicts upon people's life expectancy, their health and mortality rates
- The global climate change
- NGOs and their work at local and/or global level
- Empowerment and action competence

## Chapter 4 - Democracy as a Necessary Prerequisite

It is not the knowledge that students gain that matters most. It is how students make use of their knowledge that matters. One way of empowering young people is to "Inform others of your work". To inform others students need *knowledge* on the subject matter they want to inform about, they need *courage* to inform others, to *stand up in public*, to *ask questions* to a decision maker or to dramatise to the public in a pedestrian street, and *communication skills* to discuss with decision makers.

You will find examples of these facets and on thematic workshops, and find students who construct a solar panel out of a satellite dish and cook a vegetable soup on solar radiation.

## Chapter 5 - Best Practices on Sustainability

Chapter 5 is a most important chapter with a kaleidoscopic bouquet of experiences and practices. The Baltic Sea is the shared and vulnerable Sea that connects the riparian countries and the BSP schools, but traditions, people, education and possibilities vary immensely. The differences and practices are described through articles on e.g. Energy in Poland and Lithuania, Forestry in Estonia and Transport in Latvia just to mention a few.

## Chapter 6 - From Local to Global

When a regional network of schools wants to be global in scope the Internet is a useful tool. The Agenda21Now! story tells you how the Internet enables pupils to communicate and share their ideas with teachers and scientists worldwide. Teachers co-operate and serve as supervisors and students are trained to be moderators prior to discussions in real-time.

*"Ideas change the world only when they are shared"*

This slogan met me on a poster when as a delegate at the World Summit for Sustainable Development I arrived at Johannesburg airport, South Africa, in August 2002.

Learners' Guide 5 may not change the world, but by presenting and sharing its contents, it is my sincere hope that it may serve as a source of inspiration for others.

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