



Workshop 11 Media as partners for ESD

Time: 31 March: 15.00 – 18.00h (first part), 1 April: 11.00 – 13.00h (second part)

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Introduction

The new concept of education for sustainable development reflects the report established in 1990 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, at the time under the presidency of Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway. This has taken shape over the course of the last ten years defining development as that which “satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the opportunity for future generations to satisfy the needs of their own”.

The sustainable development agenda is vast. It covers issues ranging from the depletion of the ozone layer to child labour, deforestation (which plays a role in climate change), education, globalisation, etc. Education has proven to be important at every level, allowing individuals to acquire knowledge they do not have and reinforce knowledge they have already gained. In fact, the need for education varies from one region to another, from one population to another, from one culture to another and from one age to another. However, all human beings need education.

The importance of education in confronting human environment problems already highlighted by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 was recalled ten years later at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 identified links between the environment and the economy and reaffirmed the commitment of different countries of the world to promote sustainable development and to improve the skills of the individual. The United Nations Gen-

eral Assembly therefore declared the period 2005-2014 the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. “The founding vision of ESD is a world in which everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and to acquire the values, behaviour and lifestyles necessary for a sustainable future and a positive transformation of society.” Hence the need to have the media as partners.

By nature, the presence of public, private, commercial, alternative, national and community media results in plurality. The diverse contents give different social groups the opportunity to identify themselves with the media. Information circulates better (notably when tackling issues of public interest) when the media belongs to different entities.

Producing and broadcasting programmes through the media has a very high cost, called “first-copy costs”. To cover these costs, media producers often have a strong incentive to produce content for the largest number of consumers, presenting material that serves larger audiences with a view to attract the advertisers. Therefore the pure economic characteristics of media markets lead natural market forces to discriminate against the preferences of minorities – racial, ethnic, and any other relatively small groups whose tastes in media differ from the majority’s.

The media has considerable power which can be explained by the way it influences opinion. It is a source of informal education for all generations and all social classes.

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As it turns out, interest in doing this is relatively weak everywhere; as a result, a large number of citizens are deprived of an independent voice. The need to acquire crucial information, political, economic or otherwise, is therefore far from being satisfied, even if the wheels of the market are still turning.

It is thus important to have an exchange between decision-makers and training sessions designed for journalists and professionals involved in public communication on education for sustainable development, during which they learn necessary techniques for effective communication of the issue.

The questions which the workshop “Media, Education for Sustainable Development partners” will attempt to answer will deal with problems in practising journalism and the participation of the media in education for sustainable development.

Are the media really partners or is it necessary to ask them to be partners? How do we do this?

Workshop objectives:

The workshop aims to highlight the importance of a favourable environment which will allow journalists and other media professionals to consider and deal with issues linked to ESD.

This is in accordance with the following objectives of the World Conference on Sustainable Development:

1. To highlight ESD’s essential contribution to achieving good quality education.
2. To promote international exchange of ESD.
3. To make the first assessment of the implementation of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
4. To develop strategies for continuing it.

Discussions

Workshop participants are invited to take an active part in workshop discussions in order to answer the following important questions through the exchange of opinion:

- Why involve the media in education for sustainable development?
- Are they really partners or is it necessary to ask them to be partners?
- How can the media be made more effective in dealing with issues linked to education for sustainable development?

Work groups:

This workshop will be made up of four work groups according to the following four sub-topics:

Group I

Education for sustainable development by the media (analysis of the current situation): this group will evaluate the quality of the media’s work as regards education for sustainable development.

Group II

Handling of ESD issues by the media in different regions of the world (similarities and differences) - this group’s task will be to carry out a comparative study of media in the north and south with a view to establishing a common interactive policy. Different cultures do in fact influence the way in which issues are appreciated and approached. How can cultural differences be overcome and adapted to world politics?

Group III

Development of the media’s essential contributions to ESD to ensure sustainability of development - despite recorded efforts during the first half of the decade of education for sustainable development, much remains to be done to improve the quality of education at all levels. Define the mechanisms which will help answer any questions which have not yet been resolved.



Group IV

Classify or prioritise the initiatives to be carried out

- there are of course many initiatives to be carried out, but they do not carry the same importance everywhere. It is important to adapt specific policies according to need.

Expected results:

The expected results of this workshop are:

- To have harmonised the understanding of the notion of ESD by the media in different regions of the world.
- Good national policies consisting in making information available in real time.
- Awareness by journalists of their profession and promotion of their work by stakeholders.
- To have encouraged the partnership between the media, formal and informal education institutions and other stakeholders in ESD. - *Listing priority initiatives to be carried out within this partnership in relation to the Millennium Development Goals.*

The results of this workshop, one of twenty-two workshops making up the world conference in Bonn, will firstly be covered in the workshop's report and then in the final report of the world conference in Bonn.

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