

Initial Countries Research**Summary Draft**

- **Country Research : Hungary**

Part I : Hungarian framework for environmental education:

Environmental education based on ecological knowledge should be present at all levels of education in Hungary. It should be interdisciplinary and should progress in a linear fashion from kindergarten through postgraduate studies. It's most important goal should be the formation of environmental consciousness in students through the application of pedagogical techniques which make them sensitive to the principles of ecology. It is particularly important that all teacher training programmes include a strong environmental consciousness component as well as instruction in interdisciplinary teaching techniques.

Environment protection:

The Hungarian environment- and nature protection policy belongs to a ministerial level direction only since April 1988. It was with that date, that an Environment Protection and Water Management Ministry was established by unifying the earlier National Office for Environment- and Nature Protection, and the National Water Office. However, the de-concentrated organs of the Ministry, the 12 regional Environmental Protection Agencies have been continuously developed.

With the proceeding of the EU integration process demands on sub-national structures have been intensified. While the formulation of strategy and regulations has remained the responsibility of the centre, various tasks and responsibilities - such as implementation, consultation, legitimization and co-financing - have been shifted to sub-national level, to local governments, moreover to regional and local state administrations. The capacity of these administrations is limited, both in terms of their resources and expertise.

Similarly to other policy fields, in environment protection also various fora have been created where local, county and regional communities, central agencies, moreover representatives of economic agents and NGOs are able to participate in the decision- making and interest

reconciliation process. Thus, the National Council for Environment Protection is an advisory body to the Government, bringing together several authorities on environment, to promote and enhance environmental policy and trying to achieve integration of environment in other policies. Economic interest groups and civil organizations intensively participate in the rule making process, whereby EU integration serves as the framework for argumentation but is often taken as a pretext to enforce vested interests and to deviate investments from their optimal schedule and efficient allocation.

Environmental policies and regulations: By 2002 the country has adopted most of the EU's environmental regulations and norms. Environmental policies are largely based on the use of regulatory and economic instruments, and have been accompanied by sizeable environmental investments, co-financed by the EU in its PHARE and ISPA programs. Inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations and slow development of the institutional system of environment protection is a major concern in Hungary.

Multi-level Governance in Regional and Environmental Policies in Hungary

Implementation problems arise due to lack of resources, lack of information and weak civic consciousness. The Region Southern Transdanubia was selected for illustrating the respective developments in regional policies, and the Region Central Hungary for demonstrating the evolution of networks in environmental policies.

Regional policy.

Southern Transdanubia is considered a region of medium size, representing 15.2% of the total territory of the country. 975 000 people live in this region; this gives the lowest population density of the entire country. The region has numerous small villages, which is a dominant and characteristic feature of this part of the country. The number of population is decreasing. Unemployment rates do not differ significantly from the national data. A dramatic decline in the number of jobs took place in mining, which had very severe negative impacts. The region is rich in natural resources and geographic assets. There are considerable mineral resources and also thermal and medicinal waters. Despite all this, the economic performance of the region is below the national average. Various sectors of technical infrastructure are at different levels of development; in

particular transport infrastructure in Southern Transdanubia is amongst the worst of all regions, which can basically be explained by the lack of motorways.

Although Southern Transdanubia is one of the less developed regions in Hungary, it has a relatively rich experience in the development of regional policy.

Multi-level Governance in Regional and Environmental Policies in Hungary

The agglomeration of the capital Budapest is characterized by the spontaneous creation of several "sleeping settlements", whose population commutes daily into the working places of the capital. In the region the number of the unemployed has been decreasing for years, and unemployment rate is less than the country's average. There has been a shift in employment in the last decade from the production sector to service sector.

The case study region suffers from various environmental problems .Three-quarter of the waste water of Budapest flows without filtering and cleaning into the Danube, the green surface of the capital is quickly diminishing, existing communal landfills do not correspond to the requirements of safe disposal. In the capital Budapest the quantity of the municipal solid waste collected in the framework of public service is approximately 4 million cubic meters .During the 90's the population of the capital has decreased by ten percent and this has diminished the quantity of municipal waste. Organized waste collection covers almost hundred percent of the capital. The single waste incineration work of Hungary operates here, and processes 60% of all collected municipal solid waste of the city.

Environment protection / waste management policy.

Hungary's European integration process has profoundly changed the incentive mechanisms of all types of stakeholders of environment protection, and in particular, of waste management. As of environment protection, Hungary has got derogations in case of only four EU regulations. Two of the environmental regulations of which the harmonization will suffer a delay regard waste management: the EU requirements of directives regarding the incineration of wastes and that on [recycling of packaging materials do not have to be fulfilled completely by the time of the integration.](#)

The most important projects of waste management are co-financed by the EU, the Hungarian Government and by the local communities.

Inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations is a major concern in Hungary. The upgrading of the institutional system of environment protection is a difficult task, which will take more time than the modernization of the tools and the physical infrastructure of environmental protection. Implementation problems arise due to lack of resources, lack of information, problematic political decisions and problems in political culture and environmental awareness. Due to substantial lobbying force of local and sectorial interest groups environmental investments are often targeted to areas with lower priority or lower efficiency.

Regional policy:

Is one of the public policies where the overwhelming majority of actors accept Europeanization in the expectation of subsidies and additional funds to develop the regions lagging behind? The majority of the requirements (concentration, programming, partnership, additionally and efficiency) prevail also in Hungarian law .However, on the other side, in Hungarian regional policy practice, many requirements are met only superficially; on the level of slogans rather than in actual decision-making. For example, the principles of effectiveness, economic competitiveness and partnership are difficult to implement in actual regional policy making.

Conflicts between experts employed by the development agencies and the non- professional members of the council emerge very often. Professionals are not always interested in enabling decision-makers to understand the very complicated rules of applications etc.

As of environmental policy, Hungary still continues to be a laggard with regard to implementation of EU regulations, and this statement holds especially for waste management. There is a sizeable implementation gap between the national and European level legal requirements and Hungarian environmental performance.

Hungarian NGO's and independent environment protection organizations often embrace issues, which in fact are countering EU-conform waste management principles. For many local authorities the new waste legislation has been too difficult to comply by, and the Government has issued a

decree allowing a delay in its implementation. Even so, most of the local governments are in clear breach of the Waste Management Law.

There is lack of consensus on the necessary number and capacity of landfills. Companies and local governments widely disagree on the optimal size and geographical pattern of waste management infrastructure to be developed by using joint private and public, Hungarian and EU sources.

- **Regional framework for environmental education**

The mission of main NGO's to assist in solving environmental problems in Hungary and in CEE countries by encouraging cooperation among non-governmental organizations, governments, businesses, different environmental stakeholders, academic sector and media by facilitating the implementation of innovative environmental and sustainable development related projects, supporting the free exchange of information and promoting public participation in environmental decision making.

The partnership composition fits to this mission; to work with different sectors and stakeholders, with countries in the REC network and EU partners.

Main Projects:

- Environmental education and sustainable development – Green Pack in Hungary
- Environment and Health process in Europe and Hungary
- Implementation of water framework directives
- Promotion of the National Environmental Program II
- Sustainable production and consumption – 10 years framework program
- Improvement of energy efficiency in public institutes
- Evaluation and impact assessment of sustainability - EASY-ECO 2005-2007
- Country Office Expertise:
 - Grants management
 - Education and communication
 - Environmental management
 - EU integration, EU policies

- Facilitation of multi-stakeholder cooperation
- NGO capacity building
- Integrated water management
- International cooperation, project management
- Publishing, online communication
- The field of Sustainable Development
- Education for Sustainable Development

The Concept of Education for Sustainable Development and Its Content Regulation

Hungarian efforts to protect the environment and develop an economy using sustainable resources have been perceptible increasingly in Hungarian social and public governance as well as in the domain of education. Over the last few years legislation on environmental protection and educational policies has converged and this enabled a breakthrough for the area of pedagogy for sustainable development.

Environmental education is regulated by educational legislation.

According to 48. § 3. para of the 2003 Amendment (Act LXI) to the 1993 Act on Public Education (Act LXXIX) all Hungarian public educational institutions must expand the local pedagogical programme by a local strategy for school-based environmental and health education. The development priorities of Hungarian public education are spelled out in the Mid-term Strategy for Public Education, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2004. The National Core Programme of Pre-Primary Education (1999) laid down the foundations of a differentiated and decentralized pre-school education. All pre-school educational institutions created their own educational programmes based on this national core regulatory document.

The National Core Programme of Pre-Primary Education created ample opportunities to elaborate local educational programmes for children at the age of 3-7. The majority of the kindergartens have based their educational programmes on their previously tested experience, incorporating local social educational needs into their action plans.

The attitude of kindergarten teachers to the relevant emerging educational programmes greatly varies based on previous experience and motivation. Kindergartens can be categorised according to their independent innovation initiatives or their willingness to adopt the new pedagogical programmes of other institutions. The challenge to create local educational programmes has “forced” kindergarten educators to assess themselves and to re-interpret specialist literature including pre-school environmental educational methods.

The Practice of Environmental Education in Public Educational Institutions

A great number of kindergartens tackle environmental protection and natural conservation as a priority in their educational programmes. Forest-based pre-school educational methods are popular but not widespread. The foundation of a positive attitude towards nature and clean environment is an important objective for pre-school education. The number of kindergartens with an educational focus on environmental issues is rather limited and there is no widespread empirical data available. The so-called “green kindergartens” participate actively in public calls for proposals on environmental education and their teachers regularly organize extracurricular activities such as special days to celebrate the Earth, Animals, Water, etc... These institutions are relatively well equipped and have positive impact on local environmental protection.

The green kindergartens usually have well-kept gardens with learning paths, which demonstrate nature empirically. The Green Fountain public calls for proposals by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Management annually provide sufficient public subsidy for Hungarian kindergartens to improve their environments and to train their staff.

At school level the traditional forms of environmental education use extracurricular methods (activities, camps, museums and zoo pedagogy, special days, local initiatives competitions, exhibitions, etc.) for the integration and harmonization of various school subjects related to the environment. Since environmental education has no separate school subject definition it is realized mainly in other subjects or in extracurricular teaching situations. This so-called “diffusion” as a comprehensive, overreaching and coordinated educational approach to learn about the environment is a widespread and accepted method worldwide. The learning content includes the natural, the constructed environment as well as aspects of economic, civic and democratic education, which in turn indicates the transformation of environmental education towards a new paradigm of education

for sustainability. One of the most important new achievements in the field of environmental education is the launching of national forest schools Programme. The government subsidizes a special forest school educational programme as a unique learning organization, which started in the school year of 2003/2004. These schools provide several days of out-of-school learning experience during the school year. It makes possible for pupils to live in the forest or national parks, protected environmental areas and discover them as natural learning environments and conduct unique learning exercises different from the ordinary class-based situation. Forest schools are financed both from the central and local budgets. The most important objectives of the programme is that all pupils in general schools should have access to forest schools during the eight years of schooling and should experience team work methods.

The Context of Environmental Education: Support Systems, Networks and Programmes

There are several strengths and weaknesses observable in the provision of environmental education. In pre-school education this form of activity starts with the creation of a timetable and covers the formation of environment-awareness. In the routine of every day kindergarten education there are effective ways of establishing positive attitudes to cherish nature. At school level environmental education usually takes place in the classes of science subjects. In a minority of schools environmental education emerges also in the humanities and conversation classes. The lack of funding and insufficient teacher training is general obstacles to successful environmental education.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development provides access to various international resources (especially know-how) and a number of co-operation frameworks are emerging including the Norwegian “Acid rain”, the Dutch “Ozone survey” and the English “Science Across Europe” programmes.

In 1999 the two ministries established the Task Force for Environmental Education and Communication. The portfolio included the elaboration of a database on forest schools to facilitate choice for practitioners. The majority of forest schools are private enterprises, the educational services of which this task force carries out and this gives information on all new proposals and operates a library as well. This agency also provides consulting related to environmental education including the establishment of forest schools, editing specialist studies, organizing conferences,

presentations and drafting environmental education and communication schemes for local governments.

The 2003 National Development Plan gave a boost to social and economic planning and project generation. This programme contains a separate chapter on Human Resources Development Plan (in a separate operational programme), which tackles the principle of sustainable development as a horizontal priority. All public educational calls for proposals are set to reflect this priority.

The SULINOVA Centre for Programme Development and In-service Teacher Training was set up by the Ministry of Education and published comprehensive educational packages that contain teaching and learning elements for the concept of sustainability, references to support networks and related in-service teacher training capacities to maintain quality assurance. All criteria of sustainability are integrated into the teaching packages elaborated by this centre.

The reasons for environmental educational are further strengthened by the national programme for environmental protection, which defines environmental awareness and the creation of environmentally friendly attitudes as important public duties. The Ministry of Health issued a 3-year programme for National Environmental Hygiene that reflects on environmental education as well. This programme aims to prevent local environmental risks involving regional medical centres, local commissions of environmental protection, educational services and institutions. The county pedagogical institutes shall disseminate the results of the programme.

The most important principle that all citizens are interested and targeted in the learning process of the future and environmental education means an element of life-long learning covering the entire spectrum of society and economy. Another important element of the education reform is the accessibility of ICT-tools and the introduction of personal competences related to them. The Ministry of Education supports an important electronic database, Sulinet Digital Knowledge Base, which is accessible through the Internet to pupils, teachers and the general public. Hungarian zoos and game parks also conduct intensive environmental education programmes. They are normally specialized for kindergartens and school groups in zoo environment, where the animals' repatriation programmes, the conversation of protected species, the maintenance of gene bank functions, and reflection on local and global natural conversation issues are in focus.

The most important assets of environmental education in Hungary, as elsewhere, are the professional knowledge and attitudes of teachers.

There is no comprehensive and coordinated scheme for Hungarian in-service teacher training in the field of environmental education. There are nevertheless a number of courses in several teacher-training institutions (at kindergarten and primary school teacher training colleges).

Over the last few years a number of specialized literature, CD-ROMs and studies have been published and several educational reviews contain studies on issues related to environmental education. There is a wide selection of web sites maintained by specialist NGOs, educational and environmental protection institutions. However, gaps in the foreign language competences of the Hungarian teaching community pose a serious obstacle to accessing international electronic and printed resources. This area of education in Hungary is supported by legislation and financial support initiatives, which arise from both the educational administration as well as from NGOs and professional bodies. The legislative framework strongly supports the strengthening of environmental education and professional stakeholders welcome the integration process to the UNESCO initiative “Decade for Education of Sustainability 2005-2015” (UNESCO, 2002.)