

Environmental education and social partnership facilitation in low-education and low-income coastal communities - LV

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

For small municipalities, a purposely planned school & outreach environmental education strategy has been designed as a special long term ICZM instrument to facilitate sustainable coastal development.

4. Overview of the case

A school environmental education process has been coupled with a related social partnership in a small scale municipality (e.g. an eco-schools approach) as a comprehensive instrument for furthering collaboration capacities and networking. This instrument has been developed in a step-wise manner and implemented during 2000 – 2007 on a project basis.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The coastal eco-school concept has applied taking into account the small size of Kolka municipality (population ca. 1200 inhabitants in a territory stretching 45 km along the seacoast and less than 10 km inland) and the very limited number of municipal staff. Kolka primary school (a few hundred young citizens and around 20 teaching and assistant/management staff), located on the Riga Gulf, nearby Kolka cape and Baltic Sea, has been developing, stepwise, collaboration - initially between teachers only but then further involving other parties - to horizontally (between school teaching subjects and also indoors and outdoors) and vertically (across pupils age groups and beyond towards municipal outreach interactions) integrate environmental and sustainability education. Outside collaboration and partnerships were stimulated by the local municipality and other actors in order to develop integration within local sustainability pillars of nature and culture environments (particularly the Livonian language and culture-historical environment) as well as socio-economic practices in the Kolka community.

b) Objectives

The long term objective for this school & outreach strategy was to facilitate development of local human resource capacities and municipal understanding of sustainable coastal development. Also to combine this potential with other local/regional

stakeholder development processes in order to enhance eventually the whole spectrum of social partnerships necessary for participatory ICZM in the coastal area.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

At the end of the 20th century, the University of Latvia was involved in the North Kurzeme coastal region municipal collaboration R & D projects and subsequently initiated the Kolka school sustainability (LA21 audit approach) assessment. In 2000, and together with teachers and outside stakeholders necessary LA21 programme guidelines were prepared, including a long term strategy for the school's contribution to municipal sustainable coastal development. Afterwards, the school approved an environmental education development plan and successfully started its stepwise implementation. The Eco-school management is led by an Eco-Council (majority belongs to the pupils) and which, in daily practice, is supported by the pupil's activist group (Green commission) and responsible teacher who acts as a coordinator.

b) ICZM tools

The main categories of tools applied for school & outreach environmental education included: a whole variety of education/training tools, participation and also co-ordination mechanisms, knowledge-information and planning (e.g. strategies) tools. Initially, after the school LA21 audit, a school environmental education development plan was approved. It set the work direction within the school and the development of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude towards both nature and also the culture environment. It also improved the school's inner and outside physical and creative environment as well as encouraging regular professional and collaboration training for teachers and all other staff. Further steps were also developed learning trails and "green classes" were designed in the nearby coastal dune forest; clean-up and different infrastructural, innovation work activities were spread into the community and new collaboration partnerships were established.

The school then participated in an EU LIFE project concerning air and climate research networking. Increasingly school pupils and teachers were taking part in local nature, culture and community affairs studies. They started to prepare and discuss, within their social partnerships, different development proposals and finally delivered them to the local authority.

7. Cost and resources

Information not available

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

All activities planned for the Kolka coastal school involvement were implemented. School assessments showed that pupil's knowledge improved when preparing different examinations and attitude changes towards the Kolka municipality "citizenship" was been recognized. Social partnerships have been widely expanded and, some specific political decisions based upon their work have been taken by the local authority. As a result, Kolka community is more and more contributing to ICZM practices. During the described time frame there have been realised quite a complementary set of projects implemented directly at the school grounds and elsewhere. They have set up:

- local community social partnerships with municipality authority and its infrastructure services e.g. social care services, music school and kindergarten, Livonian information and municipal culture centres, public library and all their outreach activities. Also NGO's, business organisations (e.g. eco-tourism, bio-agriculture), local, and other, outreach media, the Kolka cape information and tourism centre, implementing many joint coastal practices as well as culture heritage development activities;
- coastal regional social partnerships with neighbouring municipalities, Slitere national park, Livonian union, the forestry authority, North Kurzeme region tourism information centre and the Green region association, museums etc.

9. Success and Fail factors

Important are the dedication and professionalism of the school teachers and the other main school partners. The local municipality and Kolka cape information and tourism centre were also key supporters. All of this was accomplished with very limited human resources and institutional capacities at the school and with a scarce supply of learning and supporting materials. The EU LIFE initiative "Livonian Green Coastal Region 21" (2001-2004) was also central. Allowing participation in the preparation, conducting and also reporting to the public and decision-makers of the first coastal region public understanding survey, design and test run of the first eco-tourism bike route as well as eco-camps etc.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The work has continued without external funding after the LIFE initiative ended. The school was recognised as an Eco-school in 2007 and received a Green flag for each of next three years.

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13. Sources

- Ernšteins R., Pulina A., Laicans G., Sustainable Consensus for North-Kurzeme Coastal Region Development: Agenda 21 Process application. Proceedings of EU Research Conference „ Sustainable Region Development”, Lillehammer, EU/ProSus, Oslo University, Norway, 2003 (web-print <http://www.iccr-international.org/regionet/docs/ws2-ernsteins.pdf>)
- Layman's report. EU LIFE Project „Livonian Green Coastal Region - 21", (2004) , Dundaga municipality, Latvia. <http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv/lzp21.pdf>
- LIFE project webpage re-designed for wider post-project applications www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv



Nr12-5-11 cases- LIFE-Leymans_report (5.05 MB)

