



Recommendation 1258 (1995)¹

Final version

Action programme for environmental education in teacher training

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Europe has created a way of life, greatly dependent on scientific and technological progress, which is now at the limits of its ecological sustainability. Questions are being asked about the viability and the wisdom of unrestrained progressive development. At the same time, the European lifestyle represents for many a desirable model of development. Europe has to be made aware of its responsibility for the creation of economic practices, models for living and infrastructures based on an understanding of what ecological stewardship requires.
2. The most serious environmental risks and threats menace the future of Europe and the globe. The challenges of climate change and transfrontier waste, the mechanical manipulation of soil, the acidification and pollution of soil, oceans and fresh waters as well as the exhaustion of natural resources and the disappearance of species of animals and plants need to be dealt with in teacher training.
3. Environmental problems are caused by human beings and can be corrected by human beings. Environmental education is the key to a better relationship with nature and the use of natural resources. Teacher training is in its turn the key to success in implementing environmental education.
4. Each child has the right to be educated in a positive spirit as a potential agent for the betterment of the overall environment. Too often environmental education portrays a scenario of unsolvable or unavoidable threats.
5. Environmental education and awareness-raising must be part of a community-based approach to the problems, under which there must be a collective acceptance of responsibility for the state of the environment, in addition to individual responsibility.
6. Environmental education must moreover be thought out afresh and re-constructed to include a system of value education and moral responsibility which challenges those wider frames of thinking and behaviour - scientific, technological, economic, social, political and cultural - that reduce the natural world to nothing more than a resource to be plundered for short-term consumption.
7. The concept of environmental education has broadened from protection of the natural environment to that of the historical and cultural heritage; it has now widened to include the notions of active ecological citizenship and sustainable development. This development has to be reflected in teacher training.
8. Moreover, given the experience already gained in the field, it is essential not only to offer the individuals concerned the knowledge and skills needed for implementing environmental education projects, but also to make them aware of - and thus able to deal with and overcome - the obstacles they may encounter when carrying out such projects.

1. Assembly debate on 1 February 1995 (5th Sitting) (see [Doc. 7189](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mrs Rynänen; and [Doc. 7221](#), opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mrs Robert). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 February 1995 (5th Sitting).



9. The best environmental education programmes are visionary in concept and participatory in practice. Imaginative, innovatory techniques and teaching skills need to be created and developed. Daily life in teacher-training institutions can be changed to reflect a more enlightened ecological perspective and so provide a context for pedagogical change.

10. The importance of environmental education and of teacher training in this field has been regularly recognised in international fora from the initial conference held in Tbilisi (Georgia) in 1977 to the new action plan for Nordic school co-operation adopted by the Nordic Ministers of Education in 1993. Council of Europe texts include the Committee of Ministers' Resolution (71) 14 and Recommendation No. R (91) 8 and the Assembly's [Recommendation 937 \(1982\)](#). The proposals contained in these texts are, however, still far from being put into practice.

11. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers launch an action programme for environmental education in teacher training.

12. The main objectives of the action programme should be:

- i. to learn more about the potential of environmental education for furthering sustainable development;
- ii. to collect examples of successful programmes in environmental education through teacher training;
- iii. to develop awareness of society's collective responsibility in which all citizens have differing but specific roles to play in a community-based approach to protecting the environment, and to teach the target groups how to manage and exploit the skills acquired;
- iv. to develop practical strategies for overcoming barriers to the successful implementation of environmental education through teacher training; and to this end, also to train teachers to identify, deal with and overcome the political, administrative and institutional obstacles that often undermine the effectiveness of even the best projects;
- v. to draw up guidelines on how to include the environmental dimension in teacher training in general;
- vi. to develop, test and disseminate practical adaptations (programmes, courses, modules, credits, study weeks) of the principles generated by participants in the action programme;
- vii. to create and strengthen networks of environmental educators in Europe.

13. The action programme should seek to identify promising developments in educational practice, curricula and teacher training.

14. It should also serve as an invitation to all kinds of teacher training institutions to intensify their efforts for the promotion of environmental education. Teachers in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, vocational institutes, technical or adult institutes should be encouraged to include environmental education in teacher training programmes and to improve its quality.

15. Teacher training institutions should also be invited to submit sub-programmes to the action programme. They should inform the Council of Europe of the successful programmes they have organised in environmental education.

16. It is also essential to co-ordinate the various programmes carried out by the European Union, OECD, Unesco and the Nordic and Baltic Councils of Ministers and by non-governmental organisations (such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature or the World Conservation Union) and to make sure that the action programme – while being aimed primarily at central and east European countries – fits into both this range of activities and the Council of Europe's contribution to European Nature Conservation Year 1995.