Introduction

Mechanisms other than legislation and financial instruments are increasingly integrated into the framework of national sustainable development policies. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is one of those mechanisms. ESD is considered as a tool for governments to bring about progress towards sustainability.

Since the Rio Declaration, environmental education, in both the formal and informal sectors, has been moving towards ESD. In some European countries, such as the United Kingdom, it seems that ESD itself is the starting point, while in other countries, such as the Netherlands and Hungary, environmental education is now being reoriented towards ESD. Although there are many different views and approaches, the emerging trend in Europe is to see ESD as a broad process of societal learning.

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Frits Hesselink (Netherlands)
Started his career as a Fellow at the Institute for International Law of the University of Utrecht. He became involved in curriculum development for law and social studies. Co-founder in 1976 and Managing Director since 1983 of the Institute for Environmental Communication in Utrecht. Involved in formulation and implementation of the various Dutch national programmes for environmental education. Became Chair of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication in 1994. Since 1998 he has worked for his own consultancy in the field of education, communication and training. Clients are governments and (international) organizations in Europe and other parts of the world. E-mail: Hesselink@knoware.nl

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Learning towards sustainability

It is useful to see ESD as learning towards sustainability. This type of learning is provided not only by the regular education sector, but also by other parts of society. Governments and international organizations are now focusing on knowledge management, supporting and stimulating bottom-up activities towards learning for sustainability. Non-traditional ways of looking at education are being promoted. For example, one could consider learning from a management perspective. How do we manage the various learning processes in society towards sustainability? Here are some various dimensions of management and how they could be applied to learning for sustainability:

- **Marketing**: managing the perceptions of target groups in order to induce behavioural change compatible with sustainable development based on individual calculation of costs and benefits;
- **Dialogue**: exploring common understanding between stakeholders, which can lead to bottom-up policies for sustainable development and the co-management of their implementation;
- **Education**: acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enable and empower students for sustainable practices, initiatives and participation as citizens;
- **Higher education and vocational training**: acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enable and empower (future) professionals for sustainable practices, initiatives and participation in their workplace;
- **Learning organizations**: managing change in companies, institutions and communities towards sustainability by formulating objectives, setting indicators, planning actions, monitoring and evaluating; and
- **Knowledge management**: managing data, information and knowledge systems that support and stimulate learning and sustainability.

These areas will be further explored in the following sections, with supporting examples of innovative European programmes and initiatives.

**MARKETING: INFORMAL LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNICATION PERMANENTE**

The classical marketing mantra of 'product, price, place, personnel and promotion' (the 'five P's') is a well-known strategy in business thinking. To use marketing techniques to further perceptions of sustainability is rather new. However, it is through the communication permanente of messages that influence the perception of consumers and the public at large that much informal learning takes place. For instance, the Body Shop, the British cosmetics and skin-care company, is a successful example of managing consumer perception towards a more sustainable consumption pattern.

A second example is a Dutch company, Odin, which has earned a large share of the market for organic products. Through the ingenious introduction of a subscription to a weekly delivery of organic fruit and vegetables a large number of consumers became customers.