

European SWOT Analysis on Education for Environmental Citizenship



Edited by
Andreas Ch. Hadjichambis, Pedro Reis & Demetra Paraskeva-Hadjichambi



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ENEC Cost Action Report

European SWOT Analysis on Education for Environmental Citizenship

Edited by

Andreas Ch. Hadjichambis^{1,2}, Pedro Reis³, Demetra
Paraskeva-Hadjichambi^{1,2}

1: Cyprus Centre for Environmental Research and Education, CYCERE,
Agiou Andreou 306, P.O. Box 56091, 3304 - Cyprus University of Tech-
nology, Lemesos, Cyprus, e-mail: a.chadjihambi@cytanet.com.cy

2: Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, Kimonos & Thoukididou,
1434, Nicosia, Cyprus, e-mail: demhad@ucy.ac.cy

3: Instituto de Educação – Universidade de Lisboa, Alameda da Univer-
sidade, Lisboa, Portugal, e-mail: preis@ie.ulisboa.pt

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Address

Cost Association Address: Avenue Louise 149, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Postal Address: Cyprus Centre for Environmental Research and Education – CYCERE, Agiou Andreou 306, P.O. Box 56091, 3304, Lemesos, Cyprus.

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List of Main Abbreviations

CE: Citizenship Education
CoP: Community of Practise
DSP: Dominant Social Paradigm
EA: Environmental Attitudes
EB: Environmental Behaviour
EC: Environmental Citizenship
ECn: Environmental Citizen
EE: Environmental Education
EEC: Education for Environmental Citizenship
EfS: Education for Sustainability
ESD: Education for Sustainable Development
FCN: Frequency of Contact with Nature
NC: National Curriculum
NEP: New Environmental Paradigm Scale
PSAs: Public Service Announcements
SE: Science Education
SSIBL: Socio-Scientific Inquiry-Based Learning
STEM: Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics
TPB: Theory of Planned Behaviour
TPD: Teacher Professional Development
VBN: Values Beliefs Norms

Foreword

Environmental citizenship is crucial for the success of any environmental policy. Sustainable development, a circular economy, a low-carbon economy, and a bio-economy require an effective citizen engagement. Citizens are called upon to adopt environmental attitudes and behaviours, make green choices, increase civic participation, and to be aware of and apply their environmental rights and duties. The contemporary environmental crisis with climate change, biodiversity loss, air pollution and all other local and global environmental problems demand an education that is capable of empowering environmental citizens. Education plays a key role in shaping future environmental citizens; nobody is born environmental citizen but anybody can become so by education.

This report presents a SWOT Analysis of an integrated and holistic type of education in Europe “Education for Environmental Citizenship”. The SWOT analysis is presented in two levels. In Part A a synthesis of the results of 157 experts from 28 European countries are presented. In Part B the reader can explore the 23 European country reports.

It is important to clarify that this research regarding SWOT analysis was undertaken before any development on the concept of Education for Environmental Citizenship such as common definition and the pedagogical approach. In this fact it illustrates the experts’ opinion in the different contexts through out Europe.

We hope that European stakeholders will find it useful.

Dr Andreas Ch. Hadjichambis
Prof Pedro Reis
Dr Demetra Paraskeva-Hadjichambi

*European Network for
Environmental Citizenship
ENEC Cost Action CA16229*

14. SWOT Analysis of Education for Environmental Citizenship – Short Latvia Report

Maris Klavins

Department of Environmental Science, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, e-mail:
maris.klavins@lu.lv

Abstract: The chapter analyses the position of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia's educational system in respect to Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Education for Environmental Citizenship prospects are being evaluated based on expert interviews and the analysis of existing positions of EE and ESD. The significance of Education for Environmental Citizenship for the development of the educational system are evaluated.

Acknowledgments: This chapter is based on work from Cost Action ENEC – European Network for Environmental Citizenship (CA16229) supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

14.1 System of Education, Major Challenges and Strengths of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia

According to ENEC (2018) the concept of Education for Environmental Citizenship (Dobson, 2010) is a highly attractive one, as it supports “pro-environmental behaviour, in public and private, driven by a belief in fairness of the distribution of environmental goods, participation, and co-creation of sustainability policy. It is about the active participation of citizens in moving towards sustainability”. The concept covers several major aspects essential for development of educational system to improve citizens' involvement in society and promotes the significance of sustainable development.

Education for Environmental Citizenship can be considered as continuation of efforts to implement environmental education and ESD in Latvia (Ryden, 2009, Pelnena and Klavins, 2009). The preparation of a highly educated workforce, an investment in human resources, and social motivation for education shall all be deemed to be the crucial factors in determining the development of Latvia in the twenty-first century, in order to ensure its competitiveness at the European and global level. Latvia's geopolitical situation and its limited raw material resources and energy determine that its main competitive advantage will be educated people

and a qualified workforce. The system of establishments of general education means that primary education can be obtained within the proximity of the place of residence, as well as provide the opportunities for parents and pupils to choose the establishment of general education. National minorities are being afforded equal opportunities for general education promoting the preservation and maintenance of national culture. The implementation of educational programmes for national minorities is the precondition for social integration in Latvia. The financial allocations for the implementation of the general education policy however are insufficient. It ensures the maintenance of that sector, but fails to encourage the development thereof. The educational system is featured by the general shortage of a qualified workforce and an increase in the average age of pedagogues. There are differences in terms of access to and the availability of good quality education between the towns and rural areas and regional differences in the choice of educational programmes. The material and technical basis has not been renewed in most parts of the educational establishments at all levels and kinds. This considerably decreases the quality of educational process and makes the maintenance costs of such establishments more expensive. The structure of academic personnel is not proportional. The low pay standard makes it difficult to attract young academic staff and researchers. There is a wide offer of continuous education in the country at large, which is developing along with the demand. It would be necessary to set up a system to assess the quality of the continuing education programmes. There is no regulatory framework governing the financing of continuous education and sharing the responsibility regarding the financing for lifelong learning. Employers play a crucial role in providing apprenticeships. At present, the provision of internship possibilities is insufficient, therefore requiring an economic stimulus to foster the interest of businesses in providing internship to students in professional and higher education. Neither is the prentice system sufficiently developed in the country. The development of scientific research and innovations, the intensive use of knowledge and high technologies is the main and the only realistic direction of the development of the Latvian economy anticipated to ensure a stable welfare standard and in this respect environmental education and education for sustainable development is an important tool.

The concept of Education for Environmental Citizenship is a timely one considering the transformation process of education. This process can also include the need to develop competencies that are necessary in society such as being able to manage information flows, acquiring skills for future use, and handling the rapid development of new methods to achieve education goals at all levels.

14.2 Weaknesses of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia

The results of the expert survey on Education for Environmental Citizenship indicates poor information on the concept even of experts in the field, not speaking about general public and teachers on all levels. This aspect can be considered as a significant weakness in implementing Education for Environmental Citizenship and indicating what actions need to be taken. There are actors supporting and promoting EE and ESD. EE is supported by political parties (Green Party) and those NGOs at the national and international level, and therefore it can rely on structured and institutional support. Numerous NGOs support several activities, from campaigns to the Ecoschool network along with the implementation of Environmental Education concepts into the regular education system. ESD in Latvia is supported by the National Committee of UNESCO and therefore the institutional support from ministries is secured. Major activities in the past that have supported the understanding of ESD at the UN level are reflected in the country's mass media and are also on the discussion agenda. The existing efforts are integrated into legislation, as the Law on Environment (paragraph 42) states: "in all study programs at universities concepts of environmental education should be included" (Law on the Environmental Protection of Republic of Latvia. Recent efforts has resulted in development of study materials, study programs, regular activities at school level and quite intensive efforts to achieve aims of the Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development (Klavins and Pelnena, 2010). Another major threat can be related to movement towards aims of Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as implementation of a third concept at large covering major issues included in Education for Environmental Citizenship can hamper progress to achieve intended aims and targets.

14.3 Opportunities of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia

A major opportunity of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia is to provide an input at the reorganisation of the educational system to ensure that this highly attractive concept is aimed at the active involvement of the whole society. This opportunity relates to the still existing aim to support the active involvement of all citizens in political and social processes for the country, and to mobilise resources to solve actual problems. Questions can be raised about the capacity to increase the potential and significance of EE, ESD and Education for Environmental Citizenship, all of which have good prospects in finding their positions in the reorganisation of the educational system. Another opportunity is to develop study (teaching) materials according to the latest achievements and methodologies in order to replace outdated methods and materials. As stated in the survey of experts:

“Acceptance (in governmental level) of the citizenship as complex multidimensional phenomenon and importance of environmental causality in the twenty-first century, .i.e., interaction between humans and environment” (Burgmanis, 2018).

14.4 Threats of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Latvia

Major threats to Education for Environmental Citizenship have been identified and are as follows: 1) a comprehensive environmental education system has not been established in Latvia, so the proposition of a new approach can ‘dilute’ existing efforts; 2) insufficient resources (intellectual, material, financial) to assure Education for Environmental Citizenship; 3) a shortage of study aids on the basic issues of environmental education for the assurance of different levels of environmental education; 4) a shortage of knowledge, motivation and environmental education in the process of further and continuing education; 5) the studies content has an insufficient place assigned to actual, objective information on environment conforming perception, which prevents an awareness of and responsibility for the interaction of environment and man; 6) the content of subjects does not coordinate with the guidelines of education and fails to assure succession at different levels of education; 7) an insufficient quantity of study and teaching aids for environmental education; 8) an insufficient number of qualified teachers; 9) a small number of students will acquire the knowledge of sustainable development and environmental protection during their studies at Latvian educational establishments; 10) a shortage of the state system of syllabi in higher environmental education due to the failure to satisfy the demand for environment management and environmental technologies in manpower market in full; 11) the country has no scientific research institutions, whose activities would allow the settlement of strategic and practical issues of environmental protection, as well the assurance of a scientific basis for decision-making.

14.5 Conclusion

Education for Environmental Citizenship is a concept that has a potentially high contribution to the reorganisation process of Latvia’s educational system. In practice however, major efforts are required in order to achieve a real implementation of the Education for Environmental Citizenship in the educational praxis. A contribution from COST Action ‘European Network for Environmental Citizenship’ would be of importance so that real progress can be achieved.

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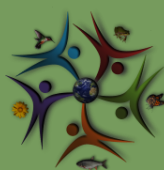
Environmental Citizenship has been an influential concept in many different arenas such as economy, policy, philosophy, organizational and corporation management and marketing and could be better exploited and established furthermore in the field of education as well.

This report examines the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Education for Environmental Citizenship in Europe. In the first part of the report, the need for Education for Environmental Citizenship, is examined along with the methodology and results of an extensive research from more than 157 experts in 28 European countries and Israel. In the second part of the report, the country chapters for the 23 European countries and Israel emphasise the similarities, differences and special features of these case studies.

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