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EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ESTONIA

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In 2015, 195 nations agreed that they can change the world for the better. This will be accomplished by bringing together their respective governments, businesses, media, institutions of higher education, and local NGOs to improve the lives of the people in their country by the year 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related.

Estonia is on a sustainable course if there is progress towards the four main goals: growth of welfare, a coherent society, viability of the cultural space and ecological balance. These are the components of sustainability as defined in the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development. Life in Estonia has improved but this has not been enough to catch up with the leading countries in the European Union.

In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly, through its Resolution 57/254, declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (2005–2014). In 2005, UNESCO launched the Decade of ESD, which reaffirmed the key role of education in shaping values that are supportive of sustainable development.

Estonia has moved forward with a wide range of initiatives that have contributed to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Estonia is a country that has made considerable progress with ESD in a short period of time, considering that it emerged from a totalitarian regime to establish a democratic government in the beginning of nineties. Estonian activities and practices have promoted sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning, supported the development of ESD school plans, equipped educators with the knowledge to include sustainable development in their everyday teaching, developed ESD tools and materials and encouraged ESD to be a part of teacher education.

In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly, through its Resolution 57/254, declared that Estonia has a fairly dense network of nature and environmental education (EE) centres. The centres support implementation of ESD as well as offer extra-curricular activities for students and non-formal education opportunities and self-development activities for adults. These establishments are called by different names, mainly according to the scope of their services, and they include nature schools, environmental education centres, science centres (e.g. the AHHA and the Energy Discovery Centre), thematic centres (e.g. the Ice Age Centre) and museums, and even some enterprises. The centres differ in the opportunities they offer. Some have an exposition and classrooms with learning aids, while others provide educational EE and ESD programmes and nature outings. Some educators from centres visit schools and organise EE and ESD activities at schools and the schools' surroundings.

Estonian culture is closely linked with nature. Nature centres are like small oases, which preserve and keep alive the bond between nature and human beings. Eleven nature centres (Aegviidu, Elistvere, Emajõe-Suursoo, Kabli, Kauksi, Kiidjärve, Nõva, Oandu, Pähni, Simisalu and Viimsi nature centres) of the State Forest Management Centre were renovated. These centres received modern rooms or exhibitions and have been equipped with educational resources. All the necessary information connected with these centres is available at the interactive website www.loodusegakoos.ee. Ten nature centres of the Environmental Board were also renovated. Sustainability was a valuable perspective in these investments and Estonia can be proud of all these state-of-the-art education centres.

Sustainable Estonia (SE21) is a strategy for developing the Estonian state and society until the year 2030 with the aim of integrating the success requirements arising from global competition with the principles of sustainable development and preservation of the traditional values of Estonia. The main task

of the strategy is to answer the question of what should be done to ensure successful functioning of the Estonian society and state also in the longer term. SE21 is designed as a feedback-based and periodically self-correcting societal process, in a way a mechanism of self-management of the society. The core of SE21 consists of (commonly valued) development goals, which are expected to be realised with contribution from a broad range of actors and with funds from a variety of sources.

Among four main goals stated in the strategy viability of the Estonian cultural space is the first goal. The Estonian cultural space is defined as an arrangement of social life based on Estonian traditions and the Estonian language.

Sustainability of cultural space is assessed using the following three criteria (sub-goals) along with their indicators:

1. Extent of the Estonian cultural space.
2. Functionality of the Estonian culture.
3. Temporal continuity and plasticity of the Estonian culture.

Key mechanisms for achieving the goal are education, reflexivity, communication and innovation. Sustainable development is harmonious development of social, economic and environmental areas.

In other words, a country can be considered sustainable, if the quality of people's life is improving, there is a safe and clean living environment and natural resources are used reasonably in order to increase economic competitiveness.

Goals for Estonian sustainable development have been agreed until the year 2030 in National Strategy on Sustainable Development "Sustainable Estonia 21". These goals are: vitality of Estonian cultural space; increase of people's welfare; socially coherent society; ecological balance.

Estonian Strategy for 2020 brings together the activities from different fields, taking into consideration economic competitiveness. In the nearest future, focus is set on productivity and employment and specific activities shall be determined in the development plans of different ministries.

Topics related to sustainable development, competitiveness and reporting are coordinated by the Strategy Unit of the Government Office. Advisory functions are performed by the Commission for Sustainable Development and inter-ministerial working group for sustainable development.

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