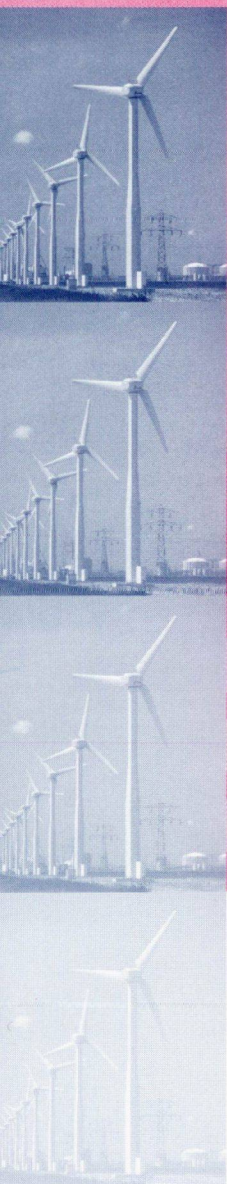


The programme 'Learning for Sustainability' in The Netherlands



Content

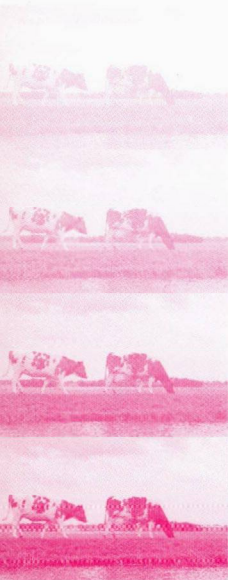
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Introduction

This brochure is intended to inform international people interested about the intermanagerial programme 'Learning for Sustainability', a four-year programme (2000 to the end of 2003) with the objective to (further) develop and stimulate learning processes that contribute to a sustainable society, an ambitious objective.

The programme set up is decentralised to ensure that initiatives for 'Learning for Sustainability' are taken throughout the whole country (not only directed from the national government, but appealing to all initiatives on local, regional and national scale, both from governmental actors as NGO's).

This text discloses how the programme started and developed, what we mean by 'Learning for Sustainability', what the programme objectives comprise, how the organisation is structured and, obviously, which activities are conducted with respect to the programme.



History

The programme 'Learning for Sustainability' is a follow-up to earlier programmes that promoted Environmental Education at national government level. For centuries Environmental Education was particularly stimulated by local and provincial authorities. Town council departments and individual initiatives received public funding to be able to conduct their activities directed at education and volunteers of the environmental movement. At national level scientific research studies, collaboration in the environmental area as well as innovation and quality improvement received funding.

Educational programme 1992 - 1995

From 1992 to 1995 a coherent program was conducted at national level (some 36 million Euros) with the objective of programmed implementation of Environmental Education (EE) in primary education, secondary education, agricultural education and vocational education.

We still have many benefits from that program because Environmental Education was implemented in the curriculum for Primary Education and in the exam programs of the Secondary Schools. Since the start of the program Environmental Education became a substantial content of school methods (books). Also many teachers were trained, as well in vocational training as in courses. At local and regional scale the centres for Environmental Education become more aware of their role as a service centre for schools and teachers, along their traditional work of excursions, programs, fieldwork and lessons for pupils.

Extra Impulse 1996 - 1999

This educational programme was followed by the 'Extra Impulse EE' (1996 to the end of 1999, 15 million Euros government funding), giving the EE-field the opportunity to investigate possible target-groups outside education and to improve the quality of its own organisation and products.

In this period E.E. was further implemented as a tool for innovation in schools, but more important was the development of programs for informal education in other groups in society, such as scouting, church groups, immigrant organisations, women organizations, social-cultural workers in the bigger cities, farmers organisations etcetera.

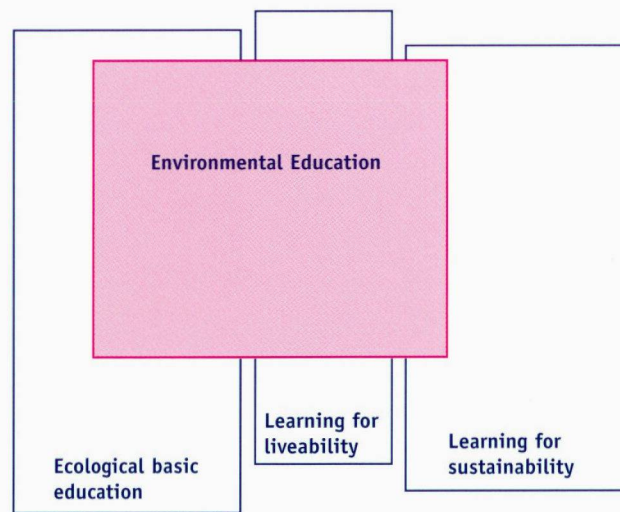
To keep up with these developments the workers in Environmental Education had to professionalise their organisations as well as their personal skills. Many courses and the development of Quality systems were developed.

More than two hundred innovative projects were carried out in this four years.

At the end of the Extra Impulse period three relatively new definitions were emerging, which structured the broadly interpreted EE-concept.

- ecological basic education
- learning for liveability
- learning for sustainability.

These three parts of EE (see descriptions below) can be distinguished in theory. In practice the lines are not that clear. Many EE-activities and -projects will cover a little of everything. The diagram below shows that the influence impact of the EE-working area is different for each part.



Ecological basic education

Ecological basic education concerns learning to know and to appreciate the living and non-living environment and the role of personal behaviour in this respect. In ecological basic education learning is directed at the learning objectives of the individual, who wants to develop him-/herself in having knowledge of ecological processes or mastering skills to for example support environmental interests.

Ecological basic education can often be perceived in primary education, in the work carried out in information centres in nature areas and in activities of nature directed organisations such as Natuurmonumenten (Nature Reserves Association) and the Vereniging voor Natuur- en Milieueducatie, IVN (Association for Environmental Education) in The Netherlands.

Learning for liveability

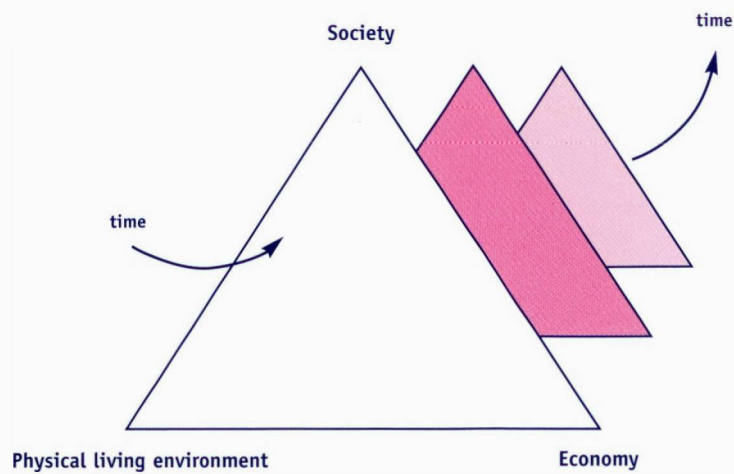
Learning for liveability is directed at making and keeping the school, the schoolyard, the street, the estates and the city liveable. In primary school children learn about waste segregation, preventing street litter, clearing litter together, internal environmental care, etc. Learning for liveability has an important behavioural component and is concerned with 'here and now'. Learning for liveability often takes place in residential estates and industrial estates: together they learn about the best approach to enhance liveability.

In some aspects the activities are more like "information, communication, participation, public awareness" as in a traditional view on "education" as an "emancipative way of learning". Using E.E. as a policy-tool (for environment-, nature-, area development- policies) was – despite of discussion – developed fast, along the more traditional practices of environmental education.

Learning for sustainability

With 'Learning for sustainability' the key concept is sustainable development. An often used description of sustainable development is: a well-balanced development of the three perspectives economy, physical living environment and society (see figure below). Well-balanced means that future generations and also developing countries can supply their needs. Sustainable development focuses on 'here and now' in combination with 'there and then'.

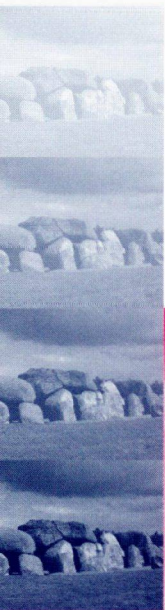
Sustainable development is a subjective concept, which means that sustainability cannot be imposed from above. It is a joint consideration of interests, opinions, norms and values. Sustainable development is formed by the dialogue between different actors.



Parliament and policy framework

The ideas for a new programme to be developed, focusing on 'Learning for Sustainability' have been laid down in a memo, which was submitted to the Dutch parliament. Four ministries and all the provincial authorities make a financial contribution. The programme started in the course of 2000.

The implementation phase of the memo 'EE21 - Learning for a sustainable society' is described in the 'Policy Framework Learning for Sustainability'



Focus on 'Learning for Sustainability'

The programme 'Learning for Sustainability' is a 'government' activity. The programme is steered by an intermanagerial steering committee (see paragraph on organisation) and in the policy framework its goal is formulated as follows:

Contribute to (1) the social debate and (2) the resulting learning processes, aimed at (3) obtaining social involvement and decisiveness, (4) to reinforce sustainable development.

The social debate

In a democratically organised society a continuous debate takes place about the way in which the society is organised and structured, about priorities in collective spending, care and welfare, social securities, the environment, globalisation, future developments that are desirable or are to be avoided, etc.

The results of this debate can be perceived in political decision-making, in attempts to achieve this, in political shifts during elections and sometimes in (imminent) ministerial crises and also in actions by farmers, citizens, young people, such as petitions or lawsuits, happenings or blockades. All these actions are a form of social debate, which surpasses verbal discussion. However, the goal remains to convince others of a specific vision or belief.

The public authorities also take part in this social debate. It is an ongoing process to investigating normatively and practically how far public authorities can and are allowed to go. Many policy programmes contain elements of:

- information transfer
- influencing behaviour
- suggestions for different behavioural perspectives
- awareness.

The programme 'Learning for Sustainability' is an example of this.



Learning processes

The social debate is in intricate process. The art of social debating has to be learned. A country that changes overnight from a dictatorship into a democracy will discover that democracy has to be 'learned' by trial and error. Democracy has to become rooted in the heads and hearts of people, in the organisation and working methods of institutions, in the organisation and decision-making processes of the country: in the smallest details of the system.

However, also for a country that has had a democratic government for centuries, the learning process is not over. The Netherlands are an example of this. Because how does such a country deal with fundamental discoveries such as the 'limited resources of the planet earth', and also with the effect of the inevitable increase in globalisation of human interaction (travel, trade, etc.)? Translating this type of discovery into adaptive behaviour of the individual and organisation requires considerable time. At social level these are existential learning processes.

How do they work? What does society have to learn in this respect? What can society learn from the initiatives and actions that have taken place, in other words what learning experience has society gathered already? Learn lessons from experiences gathered and teach them to others.

Social involvement and decisiveness

Social change requires effort and decisiveness of people. Anything that people initiate, undertake, decide, neglect, damage or refrain from (do nothing) is the result of an individual or joint decision, conscious or unconscious. Social change is the addition of various individual and institutional choices. An intended social change therefore requires different choices and different behaviour from people and organisations. What is required to bring about different behaviour in people?

Reinforcement of sustainable development

The social debate, the subject of this study, is the debate on the way we can achieve a more sustainable society. For many years this has been an important governmental policy objective. Various National Environmental Plans are saturated with this. The coalition agreement of 1998 adopted sustainable development as its guide, at least verbally. The National Strategy on Sustainable Development (with a view to the international conference in Johannesburg 2002) will give a new impulse to the process our society started in the direction of more sustainability. In this process we can learn what has been done, discovered and tried in earlier projects

Learning as a policy instrument

The governmental policy has different instruments to advance sustainable development. An often used division is:

- Legal instruments (laws and regulations)
- Financial-economic instruments (subsidies and taxes) and
- Social instruments (information, learning and participation).

Learning for sustainability is part of the social instruments when trying to realise a more sustainable development.

The social democracy in the form of young people's organisations, women's organisations, trade organisations, class related pressure groups, welfare, social-cultural work, foreigners organisations, education, trade and industry, etc., influence the quality of the living environment and the sustainable character of society. Therefore important partners in Learning for Sustainability can be found here. The social organisations offer citizens a haven to learn: 'consciously' (for example doing a course) and 'unconsciously' (participation in meetings, conferences and actions

At various levels and in different areas activities take place that are aimed at sustainable development and where much is learned at the same time. However, this learning often takes place implicitly and unintendedly and is usually not a preconceived objective of the activity.

What is learning?

A definition of 'learning' is:

A process of information processing resulting in a relatively stable change in the behaviour of an individual or organisation

This means learning is: doing something with information. Absorbing information and integrating the information in one's considerations in such a way that this leads to different choices, different behaviour. Information (consisting of data, basic information) is connected with one's knowledge, one's experience, one's norms and values and the way one leads one's life (giving meaning to life).

Learning processes are often described at an individual level. The Learning for Sustainability programme is however based on the learning citizen, at three levels:

- As a learning person: individual skills, self-development, the individual position in society, leading to sustainable behaviour or not.
- Within the learning organisation: the organisation tries to improve the quality of its own structure and performances. The qualification learning organisation only applies if there are sufficient numbers of individuals who adopt a behavioural change leading to changes in the structure and performances.
- Within the learning society: an addition of learning processes of different organisations and individuals with their own perspectives, but with a cumulative effect.

Social learning processes

In a learning organisation and a learning society the concept social learning applies. The thought behind social learning is that people do not learn alone, or not as usefully as possible, by means of individual routes, but that they also learn and often better, by relating their personal experiences to the experiences of others. It is assumed that other people play an important role in the recognition, formulation and generalisation of individual experiences.

In social learning four elements ('axes') can be distinguished that provide the basis for learning processes:

- action: people have to be able and prepared to consider themselves to be people who can actively take their own situation in hand (motivation): the organisers of the learning process are therefore required to approach the participators as competent actors and to review what they can do themselves;
- cooperation: people have to be able and prepared to collaborate with others: this presents an area of tension of consensus and dissensus in a group;
- reflection: people have to be able (to learn) to reflect on what they have done: look back, evaluate, draw conclusions and translate into changed behaviour;
- communication: it is conditional for social learning that one can communicate about it, explain and demonstrate it to others: transfer of experience.

In this perspective, the new 4-year program in the Netherlands is a mixture of the principles of "ecological basic education", "learning for liveability" and "learning for sustainability", and therefore has aspects of environmental education in traditional and other ways, information, public awareness, participation, "local agenda activities" , citizenship in all kinds of mixtures.



Key-points of the programme

The programme 'Learning for sustainability' focuses on five key-points:

1 – Social integration of learning for sustainability

The 'civil society': the social democracy in young people's organisations, women's organisations, trade organisations, class related pressure groups, welfare, social-cultural work, foreigners organisations, education, trade and industry, etc., influences the quality of the living environment and the sustainable character of society. Therefore important partners in Learning for Sustainability can be found here. In a continuously individualising society this type of organisation has a function in giving meaning to life and the need of citizens to express involvement with society. This also corresponds with the changing role of public authorities with more emphasis on a stimulating and facilitating role.

The social organisations offer citizens a haven to learn: 'consciously' (for example doing a course) and 'unconsciously' (participation in meetings, conferences and actions)

Because learning for sustainability takes place in cooperation with partners from different social sectors, actors will become aware of the individual frames of reference and of letting go of what was taken for granted. This takes time and leeway. This programme explicitly concerns a process. Processes that require time and attention and of which the objectives are not known beforehand. At most an indication of the direction is given.

Social integration requires also for organisations in the EE sector an open attitude towards collaboration partners; to be able to work on the basis of open plan processes. This does not only concern the transfer of knowledge, but also concerns the bringing together of the knowledge and insights of various partners.

2 – Managerial embedding of Learning for Sustainability in the government policy

In this intermanagerial programme it is important that governors, policy-makers, and politicians of all four levels of government all work together (see also 'organisation'). It is also important that co-operation takes place from within different policy areas (social-cultural policy, environmental and ecological policy, economic policy). Eventually there will be threefold collaboration, because in learning for sustainability it is also about collaboration between public authorities and society (social instrument).

Departments know this appeal to intermanagerial and interdepartmental collaboration and acknowledge the importance of interaction with society. Some departments have gone far on the route to working with open plan processes. The best ambassadors for Learning for Sustainability in this key-point are the governors, the policy-makers and the politicians themselves: they are the actors / the speakers / the innovators in this area.

3 – Knowledge management, communication and optimisation of the support structure

The quality of Learning for Sustainability benefits from bringing together demand and supply of knowledge. This knowledge is based on understanding and experiences: the best working methods, new ideas, creative 'solutions', breakthrough processes, skills, etc. It concerns knowledge with an added value, that promotes wisdom and provides understanding. Therefore knowledge management does not only concern storing data.

The premise of knowledge management is not so much that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding concerning learning processes with respect to sustainability, but that this knowledge is insufficiently available. This knowledge has to flow and be available in a wider circle: where ever needed. Connecting knowledge and understanding with 'adjacent' sectors and policy areas is crucial.

Existing networks will be used to this effect, supported by means of knowledge circles, conferences, web-sites, newsletters, etc.

4 – Education: reinforcing the structural embedding of Learning for Sustainability

At the end of the period of the EE Extra Impulse the Ministry of Education adopted the opinion that after eight years (1992 - 1999) the department would not give priority to a substantial follow-up in the Learning for Sustainability programme. Their judgement was that EE was reasonably integrated in the core objectives and attainment targets of all types of education. The steering committee shares this analysis and its policy on future educational activities is determined by exclusively tackling apparent gaps. The most important gaps being:

- reinforcing Learning for Sustainability in secondary education
- supporting education about North-South relationships
- adapting to vocational education.

5 – Professionalisation and quality assurance in the EE sector

The meaning of the EE sector for the programme implies a large extent of professionalism. An offer-directed strategy is not effective, if society wants to play a role in policy development and implementation of public authorities. The same applies to social integration. If one wants to collaborate on themes in the area of sustainable development with organisations from different sectors in society, the attitude should be supply and demand directed. Professionalism (demand directed strategy and continuous attention for quality assurance) is therefore an important condition.

Knowledge management is of essential importance for the professionalism and the strength of the own organisation.

In association with the available expertise the programme supports a further step in learning processes in the area of 'social learning' and 'learning by doing' in settings of 'surprising partners' (governors, politicians, policy-makers, NGOs from adjacent sectors in society, trade and industry, citizens, etc.).

An item of concern is the attention for global aspects of sustainable development. Also in this respect a considerable catching up has to take place.



Organisation: intermanagerial and decentral

The programme 'Learning for sustainability' is an intermanagerial and decentral programme. This means that all the levels of public authority in The Netherlands (national, provincial and local) are represented in the national steering committee and that all twelve provinces have their own programme, besides a national programme. Of the finances 77,5 % is allocated for provincial programmes, 15% for the national programme and 7,5% to programme-management, communication and evaluation.

National steering committee Learning for Sustainable Development

To implement intermanagerial collaboration a national steering committee Learning for Sustainable Development was set up. The committee is composed of:

- the provinces, represented by the Interprovinciaal Overleg (Interprovincial Consultative Body)
- the town councils, represented by the Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (Netherlands Town Council Association)
- the District Water Boards, represented by the Unie van Waterschappen (Water Boards Union);
- the department of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- the department of Overseas Development / Foreign Affairs
- the department of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries
- the department van Education, Culture and Sciences.

The State Secretary of the department of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries acts as coordinating administrator. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries provides the chairperson and the secretary of the Steering Committee.

The most important tasks of the Steering Committee are:

- the determination of the financial framework;
- the assessment of the provincial programmes;
- the conceptualisation of the advice to the provinces;
- the development of the National Ambition Statement and development of the associated national programme (or having this developed);
- the discussion of the annual reports of the provincial programmes and if necessary to discuss them with the respective province;
- the organisation of adequate coaching of programme development and implementation (national and provincial), with adaptation as a specific item of attention;
- the preparation of the report to the parliament and the managerial partners by the State Secretary of the department of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries State Secretary of the department of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries;
- international activities with respect to Learning for Sustainability;
- monitoring the progress with respect to the outlined managerial starting-points.

The steering committee is supported by the programme management, which is conducted by the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development (NCDO).

The provinces

The provinces play an important role in the 'Learning for sustainability' programme. Together they receive 77,5% of the available means and they are responsible for the direction of the provincial programmes.

In each province a Provincial Ambition Statement (PAS) was drawn up, in which the key-points are elaborated into specific provincial ambitions and aspirations. Based on the PAS in each province an organisation structure for Learning for Sustainability and an activities programme were realised.

Finances

In the Policy Framework for Learning for Sustainability the available means are stated. First a table shows the amounts without an added proviso. Then a division into means for the provinces, the national programme and the programme management.

In February 2000 the steering committee adopted a division of means over the five key-points. These amounts should be considered as an indication of the relative importance of the key-points. The division of the amounts over the five key-points is to be considered as 'indicative', which means that the steering committee can make changes to this division.

Table 1 - Budgets Programme Learning for Sustainable Development (in millions of Euros)

Departments	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries	1.37	1.37	1.37	1.37	5.48
Education, Culture and Sciences	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.92
Overseas Development / Foreign Affairs	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	3.64
Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	4.56
Total	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	14.6

Table 2 - Division of means (in Euros), annually

77,5 %	Provincial Programme	2,360,227.-
15 %	National Programme	456,819.-
7,5 %	Programme-management, evaluation and communication	228,409.-
Total		3,045,455.-

**To these figures the guarantee of the Interprovinciaal Overleg, IPO
(inter-provincial consultative body) can be added:**

Provincial programme	- 2,360,227.-
IPO-guarantee	- 681,818.-
Total	- 3,042,045,-

Table 3 - Budgets national programme (in Euros), annually

Knowledge management	159,886.-
Social integration	114,205.-
Managerial embedding	114,205.-
Professionalisation	68,523.-
Education	136,364.-
Working on sustainability (dep. of agriculture)	454,545.-
Total	1,047,728.-

Activities

Below a brief description of some activities is given to illustrate the programme.

Environmental Meeting Programme

The programme is to promote meetings between young people and trade and industry. Young people can visit a company as a school trip and thus become acquainted with environmental measures companies have taken.

Execution by the Gewest Midden Limburg (Midden Limburg District) (collaboration towns) and the school advisory services.

'Leadership in a professional EE organisation', course

The participants gain experience and skills in leading their organisations in a process of change towards a more client directed, product directed and market directed working method.

Executed by the Consulentschap NME Zeeland (EE Consultancy Zeeland) and an external agency.

Learning young for sustainability

Young people's participation in the EE area and area directed policy.

Traffic, transport and recreation in the Utrechtse Heuvelrug (Utrecht chain of hills)

Area directed approach to mobility problems.

With other eyes

An educational part of an art route along the river De Dommel: 'Too good to be true'.

Execution by the Stichting Dommel in Beeld (Dommel in the Picture Association), natuurgroep Gestel (nature group Gestel), teachers and the Brabants Instituut voor School en Kunst (Brabant Institute for School and Arts).

Play streets

Making the street a place to get together by organising a number of Sundays during which the streets are not accessible for cars.

Executed by the Stichting Speelstraten (Play Streets Foundation).

Water spectacle

Involving the public in and making them aware of the water and dehydration issue in the river basin of the Oude IJssel.

Millennium International Children's Conference on the environment

Exchange of experiences and knowledge of 100 children from 50 countries at a conference on the use of water.

Recreational encounters in the agricultural field

Organisations and companies in the countryside are enabled to receive visitors in an educational setting, so that visitors will gain understanding for the landscape, activities, nature, environment and cultural history of the countryside.

Executed by the Nederlandse Land- en Tuinbouworganisatie (Netherlands Agricultural and Horticultural Organisation), Consulentenschap NME Flevoland (EE Consultancy Flevoland) and the Vereniging Dorpsbelangen (Village Interest Association).

Working in the countryside with asylum seekers

In a number of meetings with asylum seekers from various countries, pictures of the countryside are exchanged. Despite language barriers this results in a wealth of surprising insights. Besides this also concrete work is carried out on landscape and nature conservation.

Executed by the Stichting Veldwerk Nederland (Netherlands Fieldwork Foundation).

Confederation-project

Young people's organisations, migrants' organisations and environmental organisations work on promoting the attention for 'Learning for sustainability'.

'Learning for sustainability' and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development

The Netherlands is also working on a National Strategy for Sustainable Development to present at the international conference on environment and development in Johannesburg 2002. Within the Learning for Sustainability programme different initiatives are taken to embed the importance of learning processes in the strategy.

Contribution to the BEPA expert meeting

The Learning for Sustainability programme makes an organisational and financial contribution to the World Conservation Union, IUCN, expert meeting on Biodiversity, Education and Public Awareness.

Essay compilation 'Learning for Sustainability'

In an essay compilation a number of scientists will give their opinion from different perspectives on social learning processes that advance the sustainable development of society.

Toolkit 'Learning for Sustainability'

For professionals in the EE-field an easy-access handbook is compiled (based on a Canadian model) about contents, working methods, implementation plans, success factors, examples of projects, etc.

Colophon and information

This text is published by the programme-management under the authority of the intermanagerial steering committee 'Learning for Sustainability'.

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