



Newsletter - May 2008

Edito

“Because...if all the people of the world do something, this problem will stop”. The message, posted on the Youth Eco-Parliament’s (YEP) website, reflects the spirit with which hundreds of young people across Europe have been mobilising feelings and ideas around today’s environmental challenges.

YEP is an environmental education programme run by PRO EUROPE and the Réseau Ecole et Nature to encourage and contribute to sustainable development. Over the past year, linked to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), the 3rd edition of this initiative has brought together young people from ten European countries and Canada to identify, assess and share best environmental practices in their local communities.

The outcome of their exchanges within an online forum will now feed into a Report entitled YEP Report for the environment: Let’s change our daily habits! On 15 May 50 young delegates will submit their findings to UNESCO representatives in the context of PRO EUROPE’s 4th International Congress in Prague.

Awareness raising, information and involvement are the key concepts behind an exercise that shows that practical examination of what is done in our own

About PRO EUROPE

PRO EUROPE (Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe) is the umbrella organisation for packaging and packaging waste recovery schemes that use the “Green Dot” trademark as a financing symbol. PRO EUROPE acts as the authoritative voice and common policy platform for its members, representing the interests of all “Green Dot” packaging recovery and recycling organisations. PRO EUROPE’s members span 25 Member States, 2 candidate countries (Turkey, Croatia), Norway, Iceland, Ukraine and Canada.

The members of PRO EUROPE wish to demonstrate that the recycling of used packaging is an important step on the path towards the sustainable development necessary to safeguard our planet for future generations.

PRO EUROPE members are also committed to raise awareness of environmental citizenship. Within this context, PRO EUROPE set up in partnership with the Réseau Ecole et Nature the Youth Eco-Parliament, an initiative that allows young people from different countries to share a common educational approach and take an active part in the current debate on environmental issues.

For detailed information on PRO EUROPE please visit our homepage www.pro-e.org

communities can be an effective way to cope with environmental degradation.

The project is also the result of a pan-European dialogue between young people overcoming geographical and linguistic barriers. The nature of this teamwork deserves, at least, two reflections.

First, this type of cooperation acquires crucial relevance when applied, in particular, to environmental issues that, being in essence cross-border, call on us all to act in unison.

Second, the impact of communication on this process is enormous. Communication technologies have served to create an

information sharing platform which supports the establishment of a relationship, connecting people and encouraging feedback. Within it, young people have expressed their perception of the role that civil society should play in the attainment of a sustainable world while experiencing what European citizenship means to them.

PRO EUROPE is pleased to integrate and present the vision and recommendations of the Youth for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development as part of its Congress in May. Essentially, we are all looking at environmental issues from a common angle and a shared strength.

“Thanks to our joint actions, sustainability is becoming reality”.

Bernard Hérodin

President of PRO EUROPE

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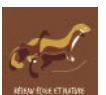
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Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe

PRO EUROPE



ECO EMBALLAGES



The Youth in action

From June 2007 to May 2008 more than 3400 young people from ten European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal) and Canada picked out, analysed and highlighted more than 100 environmental projects carried out by other young people in their respective local communities. These projects dealt with various issues such as biodiversity sustainability, energy, waste, water, food, urban environment. Below is a selection of these projects:



In Cologne, thirteen students aged between 15 and 17 have been running two projects. Under a local project called Kölle Putzmunter, they annually invite citizens and schools in Cologne to clean a part of the city. Based on interviews and testimonies, a documentary is finally produced. By means of a survey, Ecological Footprint is aimed at identifying environmental habits among young people in Cologne.



Managing our waste and natural resources is the topic of the project that UK young eco-parliamentarians have been running this year. They plugged into a campaign to spread green pledges among neighbouring schools. A competition for the design of a recycling bin was also launched. Another project consisted of using the school's greenhouse to grow seeds from native trees and plants while making it as energy efficient and carbon neutral as possible.



Embracing a whole region for the first time, the French YEP has involved 37 schools in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in a pedagogical project

A success story

During its first year (2003-2004), the YEP gave some 3,000 European students involved in environmental projects the opportunity to work collectively to create a 'European White Paper for the Environment'. This contained resolutions and proposals for action on air, water, waste, energy and food.

In 2005-2006, the second YEP brought together young people aged 14-17 from more than 14 European countries and produced seven 'Open Letters for the Environment' based on their experience working on local projects. These Open Letters were presented at the European Commission Green Week in June 2007 where YEP delegates called for action to stop environmental degradation, more support for products made of recycled materials as well as for a pan-European environmental education programme that will firmly integrate the environment in school curriculum.

Building on the success of the two first editions, it was inconceivable not to continue the YEP adventure. The 3rd YEP will culminate once again at the occasion of the PRO EUROPE International Congress, where young people will explain and discuss their work with all participants.

on environment and sustainable development. Drawn up through collaborative writing via the internet, a regional communication plan for the environment will be finally presented to local authorities.



Fifty schools from 17 Spanish communities have been selected to contribute to "Youth for Sustainability", a book that, edited by ECOEMBES, compiles a series of innovative environmental initiatives.

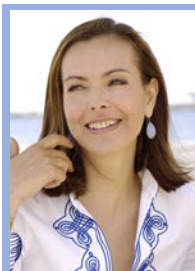


Across Canada, students in sustainable development, environment and recycling clubs as well as science, biology and geography classes from 63 schools have accomplished feats ranging from convincing a municipal

council to start a community-wide paper recycling programme to implementing in-school water conservation to achieve a school waste diversion target of 70%.



Secondary school children in Hungary participated in a round table discussion on environmental protection held at the national Parliament together with decision-makers, NGO representatives, journalists and industry representatives. The main topic of the debate was climate change and its anticipated impact on the environment. Each participant put forward his or her commitment to be included in the concluding document of the Hungarian input to the 3rd YEP.



For its 3rd edition, the Youth Eco-Parliament benefits from the patronage of two prestigious people. These patrons are: French actress **Carole Bouquet**, spokesperson of the association "La Voix de l'Enfant" (the Child's Voice); and the Chairman of the European Parliament Environment Committee: **Miroslav Ouzky**.



UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

“Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract – sustainable development – and turn it into a reality for all the world’s people.”

KOFI ANNAN
Ex-Secretary General of the United Nations

In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). Covering the period from 2005 to 2014, it aims to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

Addressing all three pillars of sustainable development - society, environment and economy - along with culture, the Decade focuses on promoting and improving quality education, reorienting educational programmes, building public understanding and awareness, and providing practical training.

The DESD implementation plan for which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, is the lead agency, strongly relies on stakeholder commitment and cooperation at local, national, regional and international levels.

UNESCO is in charge of the promotion and coordination of the Decade and strongly relies on stakeholder commitment and cooperation at local, national, regional and international levels to implement it. The YEP which gathers the energy, enthusiasm, creativity and commitment of young people contributes to achieving the Decade’s goal. Concretely, the YEP participants will enrich the next Decade biennial report by submitting the outcomes of one years’ work: the report: let’s change our daily habits!

Bernard Combes, UNESCO Programme Specialist for Education for Sustainable Development met with the YEP representatives in Paris on 28 October 2007 and shared his opinions on this initiative and explained how it fits in the Decade programme.

The YEP is useful and necessary to mobilise young people on sustainable development issues. Compared to the previous edition, I see a clear evolution. This third edition of the YEP was more concrete. In the Open Letters of the second YEP, the young people made recommendations to all stakeholders. This time, they went a step further by observing and analysing concrete examples of environmental projects in their neighbourhood. Their commitment was therefore greater and it allowed them to gain a real understanding of what is at stake by observing their local environment.

The YEP is an opportunity for young people to become more responsible as well as to comprehend the complexity of environmental issues and better understand how they interlink. It is sometimes impossible to find an immediate solution and their experiences within the YEP show them this reality. They face the limits of action by witnessing potential obstacles encountered by the project leaders during the implementation of their projects but also by their local authorities (e.g. when they meet their mayor who tells them that there are rules that need to be respected as well as competences).

It is important for young people to understand that each person has a role to play. They need to be encouraged to be critical and to find their role. Young people are the next decision-makers; they have to learn how to take the appropriate decisions.

The report from the YEP can be an invitation for young people of other countries to draft their own report. The same methodology can be applied elsewhere once this first experience is completed and the report written. There can be a capitalisation of experience on the way to do it.

Telling young people that their report will be integrated in UNESCO’ report makes them aware that their contribution will be taken into account. Listening to them will validate their positions.

The YEP provides them with the opportunity to meet with other young people but also with adults who do not always pay attention to young people’s opinions. One of the key challenges faced by UNESCO is the lack of communication.

Collective writing on the Web

A piece of collective writing posted on the YEP website has given rise to the final YEP Report for the environment: Let's change our daily habits! Once more, the exercise has proved how online communication tools can serve to enhance cooperation and empower citizens while reaching out to broad audiences without frontiers.

The whole writing process has taken place via the web. More than 80 young volunteers were engaged in the carefully scheduled drafting of the five chapters, which, born as summaries based on the national experiences, were steadily completed before a consolidated version was agreed.

The exchanges through a dedicated forum have been supported by chat sessions. Young people have regularly attended the virtual meetings to hear about other people's

Some figures

- 175 groups or classes registered
- 3400 young people involved
- 108 national projects online
- More than 200 messages posted to the forum
- 3 chat sessions per week
- Huge amount of information in the collective writing chapters
- First newsletter "News from the YEP" issued in January 2008

projects, discuss specific issues, be informed about the writing process, gain motivation to post a message or just pick up an article to contribute to the YEP newsletter.

The YEP website has shown to be an extraordinary platform to uphold information, communication and participation. Helping young people to mainstream environmental issues across Europe and beyond, it has certainly contributed to boost local multipliers of a message on sustainable development.

Step by step

- June 2007 (to May 2008). Young people from ten European countries and Canada take didactic actions on sustainable development. Collective writing via the YEP website kicks off.
- October 2007. National projects are published online. On 27-28, delegates from the ten countries meet in Paris to analyse the findings and decide on the structure of the YEP Report for the environment: Let's change our daily habits!
- November 2007 to March 2008. Selected young delegates start writing the YEP Report using the website.
- May 15, 2008. The YEP Report will be handed over to UNESCO representatives in Prague during the PRO EUROPE 4th Congress.
- September 2009. The YEP Report will be included as part of UNESCO's 10-year report on the project entitled 'Education in the Spirit of Sustainable Development'.

Green Dot 2008: From Waste to Resource Management

Pro Europe Prague Congress, 15-16 May

Prague will be the host for the first PRO EUROPE Congress taking place in Eastern Europe. Under the patronage of the EU Commissioner for Environment, Stavros Dimas, 'Green Dot 2008: From Waste to Resource Management' will provide a platform for representatives from politics, business, NGOs, science and the civil society to reflect on achievements, voice new strategies and debate current EU policies.

In parallel, the Youth Eco-Parliament will officially present the Report Let's change our habits! to UNESCO delegates.

For information and registration to the Congress, please visit www.proeurope-congress.org

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Have your say!

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