

Education for Sustainable Development Programme

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Institute of Advanced Studies

About Us

The **United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS)** is part of the network of research and training centres within the UN system, an agency, which in its role as the think-tank for the UN, aims to contribute, through research and capacity building, to efforts to resolve pressing global problems. UNU-IAS conducts research, postgraduate education and capacity development, both in-house and in cooperation with an interactive network of academic institutions and international organisations.

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the **Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)** in 2002, based on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Following the resolution, UNU-IAS launched the Education for Sustainable Development Programme in 2003 with funding support from the Ministry of the Environment-Japan, to contribute to the UN DESD, spanning from 2005-2014. The Programme focuses on advocacy and dissemination of ESD principles, promotion of Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs), strengthening of ESD activities of higher education institutions, and contribution to evidence-based policy dialogue through research, capacity development and strategic engagement with international processes.

Goal of the Programme

The goal of the programme is to help in the creation of the **Global Learning Space** for sustainable development. The programme promotes research and actions to advance partnerships for ESD across geographic, knowledge and sectoral boundaries.

Flagship Initiatives

Initiatives of the ESD programme contribute to building broad ownership of DESD through articulation of the value added by each partner—especially higher education institutions and local (subnational) ESD stakeholders. Our initiatives build momentum and participation through building dynamic networks and sustain the same by expanding these networks throughout the DESD. The programme develops and implements research and development (R & D) agendas in collaboration with the networks of RCEs and ProSPER.Net.

Regional initiatives—RCE

The ESD Programme assists in developing **Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs)** all over the world. The RCE initiative is a recognition scheme and facilitative mechanism to give voice to the local level and encourage good practices in ESD. RCEs build upon existing actors and expertise including local governments, higher education institutions, NGOs, private sector and civil society, and link to ongoing local sustainability initiatives. RCEs, both individually (locally) and collectively (globally), aspire to achieve the goals of DESD, by building an innovative platform for multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary information sharing, dialogue and collaboration for ESD. Collaborative undertakings within and across RCEs include policy work and R & D in the key thematic areas of ESD and sustainable development.

Higher Education—ProSPER.Net

ProSPER.Net (Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network) is a growing academic alliance for ESD in the Asia-Pacific region. It was launched with 18 founding members in 2008. As a consortium of higher education institutions, ProSPER.Net implements joint projects to integrate sustainability into curricula of business schools, public policy schools, engineering schools and others.

Competences and Capabilities for Sustainable Development

Under this initiative, we organise expert meetings and coordinate writing and other research projects to advance ESD thinking and practice, with special reference to monitoring and evaluation of ESD and development of multilevel mechanisms to enhance individuals' and institutions' capacities to respond strongly to sustainability challenges. We also engage in postgraduate teaching and curriculum development as an integral part of policy and action research on higher education for sustainable development. The ESD Programme also delivers the ASEAN-Plus-Three Leadership Programme on Sustainable Production and Consumption annually to government officials, business leaders and managers from the ten ASEAN Member States and their three dialogue partners, namely China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Finally, we participate in important processes to influence ESD policy making at the international level, such as an expert group in competencies in ESD established by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).



REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
ON EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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Our Partners

UNU-IAS has been closely collaborating with the **Ubuntu Alliance** –the world's foremost educational and scientific institutions who are signatories of the *Ubuntu Declaration on Education, Science & Technology for Sustainable Development*. The Ubuntu Alliance aims to:

- strengthen collaboration between science and technology researchers and educators;
- better integrate science and technology into educational programmes for sustainable development; and
- strengthen cooperation between formal and non-formal education.

The Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs meets once a year to review RCE applications and recommend the UNU to acknowledge new RCEs.

UNU-IAS closely collaborates with UNESCO, the designated lead agency for the DESD, and other UN agencies through the UN Inter-Agency Committee for the DESD. In addition to RCEs and ProSPER.Net members, we also collaborate with influential research and policy making institutions and regional organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and UNECE.

Where We Are Today

The Global RCE Service Centre and the ProSPER.Net Secretariat have been established at UNU-IAS to provide assistance to individual RCEs and ProSPER.Net members respectively, and to facilitate their communications, networking and R & D activities. In the first half of the DESD, RCEs and ProSPER.Net have successfully mobilised support for the DESD and increased the visibility of ESD. As of August 2010, there are 77 RCEs around the globe and 21 ProSPER.Net members.

RCEs

- As of August 2010, there are 22 RCEs in Europe, 28 in Asia-Pacific, 14 in the Middle East and Africa, and 13 in the Americas.
- National governments, such as those of Japan, Kenya and Denmark, have recognised RCEs as an effective strategy to implement ESD. The ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan (2008-2012) indicates RCEs as partners.
- RCEs collaborate on key sustainability topics such as biodiversity, health, climate, sustainable production and consumption, poverty, youth, e-learning, teacher training for ESD and institutions of higher education.

ProSPER.Net

Current ProSPER.Net joint projects include:

- design of short courses and modules on social entrepreneurship skills,
- development of training materials for business schools on principles adopted by the United Nations Global Compact,
- a Young Researchers' School on sustainable development for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows,
- innovative pedagogies in poverty reduction, and
- the setting up of an alternative university appraisal system.

Research and Publications

The ESD programme's researchers have published numerous articles on ESD, RCEs and ProSPER.Net in peer-reviewed academic journals, and edited special issues of the *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* and a special section on RCEs in the *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*.



Photo credits (from left): RCE Graz-Styria, RCE Zomba and RCE Greater Sudbury.

For more information

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