

# **COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

## **COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

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**RECOMMENDATION No. R (91) 8**

### **OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES**

### **ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

### **IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 June 1991  
at the 460th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment and the World Charter of Nature;

Having regard to the conclusions of the Unesco/UNEP Intergovernmental Conference in Tbilisi (1977), the Moscow International Congress (1987) and the various other international events and programmes on environmental education;

Having regard to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention);

Having regard to Resolution (71) 14 on the introduction of the principles of nature conservation into education, and considering its updating to be necessary in order to:

- take account of the aggravation of certain phenomena such as the population explosion and the appearance of new problems such as climatic changes and depletion of the ozone layer;
- ensure that educational curricula deal more fully with environmental problems and the risks facing the environment and society;
- reduce the discrepancy between advances in science and technology and their coverage by schools;
- include in curricula the increasingly numerous sources of information available to pupils;

Bearing in mind the revision of proposals made by the participants in the 38th Council of Europe Teachers' Seminar (Donaueschingen, November 1987);

Endorsing the conclusions of the report entitled "Our Common Future" by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report);

Aware that the state of the environment has reached a critical level;

Convinced that the present situation is the result of the juxtaposition of two phenomena, namely a dramatic increase in population and the globalisation of industrial society;

Underlining the planetary dimension of environmental problems and the need to promote a resources management model that takes more account of the interdependence of individuals and nations;

Noting that the tremendous development of science and the increase in technological power necessitates, on the part of individuals, an increased sense of responsibility for the environment, humanity's common heritage;

Recognising that people have the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, on whose quality their dignity and well-being depend ;

Convinced that environmental education is one of the best ways of restoring a balance between the individual and nature and guaranteeing a rational and reasonable management of planetary resources in a context of sustainable development ;

Considering that the attention given to environmental protection in educational curricula should be increased and that appreciation of and respect for the environment should be basic principles of the teaching of all subjects ;

Convinced that education should consist not only in developing a knowledge and understanding of ecology and biology but also in encouraging more positive individual attitudes towards nature and the environment ;

Wishing that education be based on an ethical approach that is essential for the judicious use of knowledge ;

Being aware of emotional and affective relationships with nature and the environment ;

Emphasising that environmental education in schools should not be separated from that provided in the home, in youth organisations and through out-of-school activities,

Recommends that the governments of member states :

- bear in mind, when drawing up or revising their environmental education policies, the guidelines set out in the appendix to this recommendation ;

- ensure that teachers have an opportunity of revitalising and diversifying classroom activities and basic learning processes by providing them with resources enabling them :

- to use and develop active teaching methods aimed at the discovery and enhancement of the environment,
- to use out-of-school facilities for environmental education,
- to use the new technologies (for example audiovisual media, computer facilities and telematics) for the purpose of visualising the relevant concepts,
- to acquire teaching materials and educational modules meeting the aims of environmental education ;

- promote working relations with research institutes in the field of natural science, social science and education ;

- develop an active and stimulating policy for the initial and in-service training of teachers by :

- introducing appropriate elements into their training programmes,
- creating, within and around schools, educational areas conducive to the sensory awakening of pupils and to practical activities ;

- create an infrastructure designed to help teachers and others involved in environmental education through the provision of consultants, a diversified range of curricula, training facilities and documentation ;

- ensure wide distribution of this recommendation among all interested parties, especially curriculum developers, educational advisers, teacher trainers and teachers ;

Instructs the Secretary General to transmit this recommendation to the governments of those states, Parties to the European Cultural Convention, which are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (91) 8

**Basic principles  
for the promotion of environmental education**

*I. Contents*

Curricula should enable pupils:

- to gain a basic knowledge of ecology in its broadest sense and deal with themes relating to environment protection; teaching in this area should take into account the intellectual and psychological development of pupils;
- to learn to reason in terms of systems;
- to understand the economic, political and ecological interdependences.

It is advisable to:

- enhance, in curricula at all levels of education, the various subjects touching on questions of environmental and ecological protection; while biology and geography are the key subjects for this purpose, all other disciplines can help to promote the teaching of ecology and environment protection (civics, plastic arts, religion, etc.);
- encourage multidisciplinary schemes where every discipline helps to show how the various elements interact and contributes to a global perception of realities;
- mobilise the whole teaching profession around the subject of the environment.

*II. Methods*

Environmental issues cannot be taught solely in the form of knowledge. They should be related to the world in which pupils live and to real-life situations. Experience of nature is the best means of encouraging a favourable attitude towards the environment.

*III. Instruments*

The use of out-of-school teaching tools and facilities for environmental education enables teachers to diversify their teaching methods and stimulate school activities and basic learning processes.

These instruments also make an important contribution to a realisation of the requirements of the environment and should therefore be fully integrated into the educational process.

*IV. Teacher training*

Initial and in-service training of teachers is the key to the integration of environmental aspects into curricula.

The success of environmental education depends to a large extent on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the teachers themselves.