

COOPERATION AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GLOBALIZATION ERA

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Abstract

The present paper aims to approach a relatively new topic: international cooperation for sustainable development. The first part of this paper is a theoretical construct which deals with the connection that exists between its main variables: globalization, democratization and development. This part of the paper also brings into evidence the necessity and importance of international cooperation for sustainable development (SD) during the globalization era.

The second part of the paper aims to briefly analyse the importance and practice of education for sustainable development (ESD) in our contemporary society: the case of Romania. Conclusions represent the object of the last part of the paper.

Key words: *international cooperation, globalization, sustainable development, education.*

Introduction

The present study aims to analyse a topic that is both interesting and exciting for the present world subject to the process of globalization. The topic we refer to is sustainable development (SD) seen as a fundamental objective of the millennium and the need of involvement and cooperation of all actors on the international scene with a view to accomplishing this objective. For the peoples of the world to be able to aspire to a sustainable future on Earth it is necessary for international cooperation to intensify, as well as for the administration of the development process to be intelligently and sensibly made, and for the political and civic involvement to be made in a massive and responsible way.

„Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea which seems to be abstract – sustainable development – and turn it into a reality for all the world’s people”, as” Kofi Annan, the General Secretary of the United Nations, used to say on 14th March 2001, in Bangladesh.

The implication and cooperation with a view to accomplishing the objective represented by sustainable development implies a radical modification of mentalities and visions regarding economic and social development, the nature of social, national and international relations, as well as the act of bearing social responsibility by all international actors on the global scene. The change of mentalities requires modifications at the level of socialization and education. It is necessary for certain sustainable-development oriented concepts, attitudes and behaviours to be formed and for sustainable development to be an educational objective both at national and international level.

In order to point out certain significant aspects related to the extent to which sustainable development has become an educational objective in Romania we have pursued a case study. This case study aimed at revealing the interest, accomplishments and the degree of implication that are characteristic of the non-governmental organizations which got involved in educational projects for sustainable development.

The subjects of the present study: sustainable development and education for sustainable development (ESD) constituted a major concern for important thinkers: John Elkington, Holmberg, A.Sobol, Fritjof Capra, Ulrich Grober, Alfred Sauvy, Johannes Tschapka, Robert Axelrod and many others.

The present paper, even if it puts to good account only a part of the results generated by research outputs, it also contains a novel element: the above mentioned case study analyses

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educational sustainable development practices/projects proposed by non-governmental organizations in Romania in collaboration with other national and international organizations.

Paper Content

Sustainable development in globalization era. International cooperation for sustainable development

Motto:

“Sustainability is much more than a simple technocrat project that intelligently administers resources, it is much more than a simple term used within the Club of Rome, World Bank or UNO. This idea will be further reinforced once it is understood as a new civilizing project, a new one which is however deeply rooted into our traditions and human consciousness”¹

Sustainable development is a new, generous and corrective perspective over the development of the world, societies, and human beings in the globalization era. „This perspective aims at creating an innovating social development concept which can face future in the sense of becoming a regulatory idea, as, in fact, happened with the concepts of: democracy, freedom, justice and so on and so forth.”²

A synthetic definition of sustainable development – perhaps the most used – is given by Lester Brown, the founder of Worldwatch Institute. This definition has been taken from the report entitled "Our Common Future" of the Brundtland Commission: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." ³

According to F. Capra: “/.../ A human sustainable community must be constituted in such a way that its lifestyle, technologies, as well as its commercial, economic and physical structures could *sustain nature and life, and not destroy them.*”⁴

Nowadays, without a consistent international cooperation, sustainable development remains an unaccomplished ideal. Globalization – a continuous, complex, irreversible and contradictory process – has created such a system of interdependence that outside it chances to survive are scarce. In other words, there is no alternative to cooperation for international actors. The existence and development of international states, organizations, corporations, NGOs and individuals etc. is not possible outside cooperation. We refer to cooperation in general and cooperation for sustainable development in particular. We refer to cooperation among all international actors in order to help all the states develop economically, socially and culturally and in order to help the human being develop no matter to what part of the world we refer.

The multi-dimensional nature of sustainable development is outlined in a suggestive way in the chart below⁵:

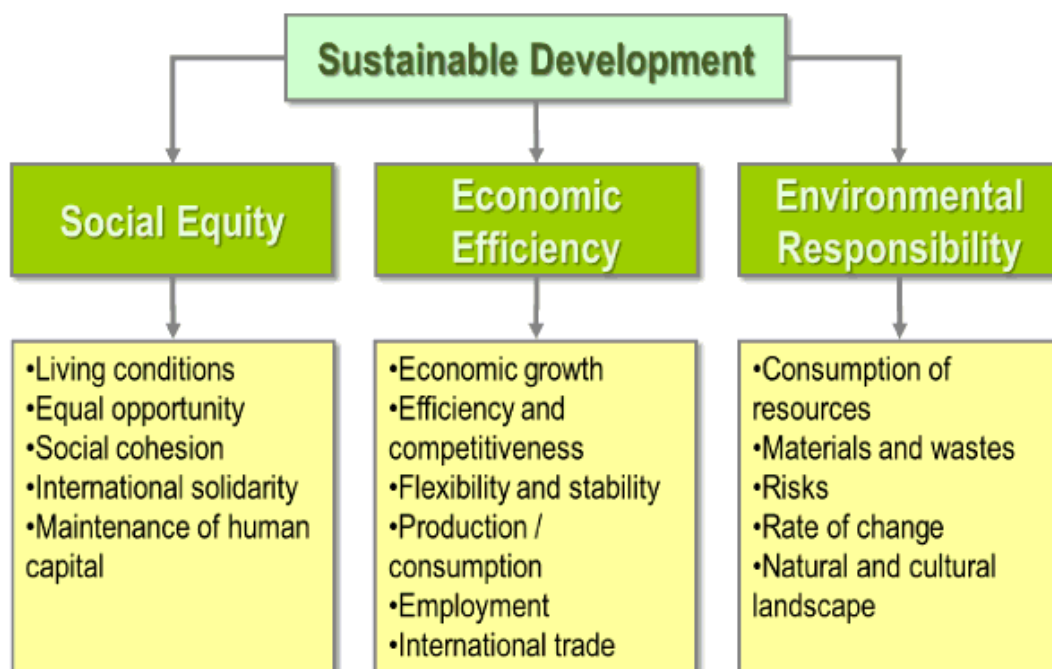
¹ Ulrich Grober, Die Idee der Nachhaltigkeit als zivilisatorischer Entwurf; în: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 24/2001, p. 3, online [version](#) ; [original text](#) ; „Durabilitatea este mult mai mult decât un simplu simplu proiect tehnocrat de administrare inteligentă a resurselor, mult mai mult decât un simplu termen din resortul Club of Rome, al Băncii Mondiale sau al ONU. Această idee va primi noi impulsuri odată ce va fi înțeleasă ca un nou proiect civilizator, un proiect nou, însă adânc înrădăcinat în tradițiile și în conștiința noastră umană.....”

² Thomas Jäger/Michael Schwarz, Das sozial-ökologische Innovationspotential einer nachhaltigen, zukunftsfähigen Entwicklung auf betrieblicher und kommunaler Ebene; în: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 50/1998, Bonn, p. 23.

³ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Our Common Future, Oxford 1987, p. 43.

⁴ Fritjof Capra, Verborgene Zusammenhänge. Vernetzt denken und handeln - in Wirtschaft, Politik, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft, Bern ș.a. 2002, p. 298; original text: „(.....) O comunitate umană durabilă trebuie să fie constituită astfel încât stilul ei de viață, precum și tehnologiile și structurile ei comerciale, economice și fizice să mențină natura și viața, nu să le distrugă.”

⁵ <http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch8en/conc8en/3es.html>.



In a brief presentation, we may say that the general purpose of cooperation for sustainable development is the reduction of the differences that exist between the poor and the rich, as well as peace assurance, protection and preservation of natural life spaces.

International collaboration for development first of all implies a partnership between states/organizations that are donors and states/organizations that are beneficiaries; this is a partnership that involves all international actors (states, corporations, international organizations, NGOs etc.) of which, all parties have advantages on the whole. We do not refer to banks only, but to expertise, experience exchange, good practice exchange, as well as other potential benefits. The donating organization also promotes its image and increases its visibility; these are aspects that should not be ignored. The benefits of organizations must be understood in all their complexity and in relation to all the multiple dimensions that they imply.

Last but not least, cooperation for development indirectly aims at achieving certain macro-objectives like: assuring stability for beneficiaries, diminishing or stopping illegal migration, reducing migration of the labour force through the development of beneficiary member states at national level. Analysing these objectives – benefits posed by sustainable development, we conclude that they reflect a democratic perspective over the evolution of the world and international relations. In other words, the implementation of sustainable development is a component and a premise for the democratization of international relations.

2.2 Education for sustainable development

Motto:

"The purpose of this ... UNO decade ...is to bring together the multitude of initiatives from political education to environmental education, from global education to peace-oriented education,

while also including all these elements into the larger domain of education for sustainable development.⁶

Sustainable development implies that all categories of international actors go beyond certain economic, narrow and selfish visions and mentalities. Thus, it is necessary for a new perspective to be shaped and shared over human to human relationships, as well as over human – environment relationship.

It is also necessary – as the famous physicist Fritjof Capra, a supporter of the holistic paradigm, argues – to adopt radically different principles and values. According to F. Capra, the main obstacle that prevents us from accomplishing sustainable development is the fact that we are trapped in our own obsolete principles, and Newtonian rigid image over life. As a counterbalance measure he suggests a conceptual framework that integrates the biological with the cognitive and social dimensions of life. The unified, holistic way of understanding life is represented by his fundamental manner of organization: the network. In his paper “Hidden Connections – A Science for Supporting Life”, Fritjof Capra argues that all living systems components are linked between them through equal and horizontal relations like in a network. This is true for the metabolic networks within the cells, as well as for trophic relations within ecosystems and even for communication networks within human societies.

The conviction that the whole is always different than the simple sum of its components is central for this systemic perspective. According to this theory, only sustainable measures are accepted, that is to say only measures that do not affect living systems.

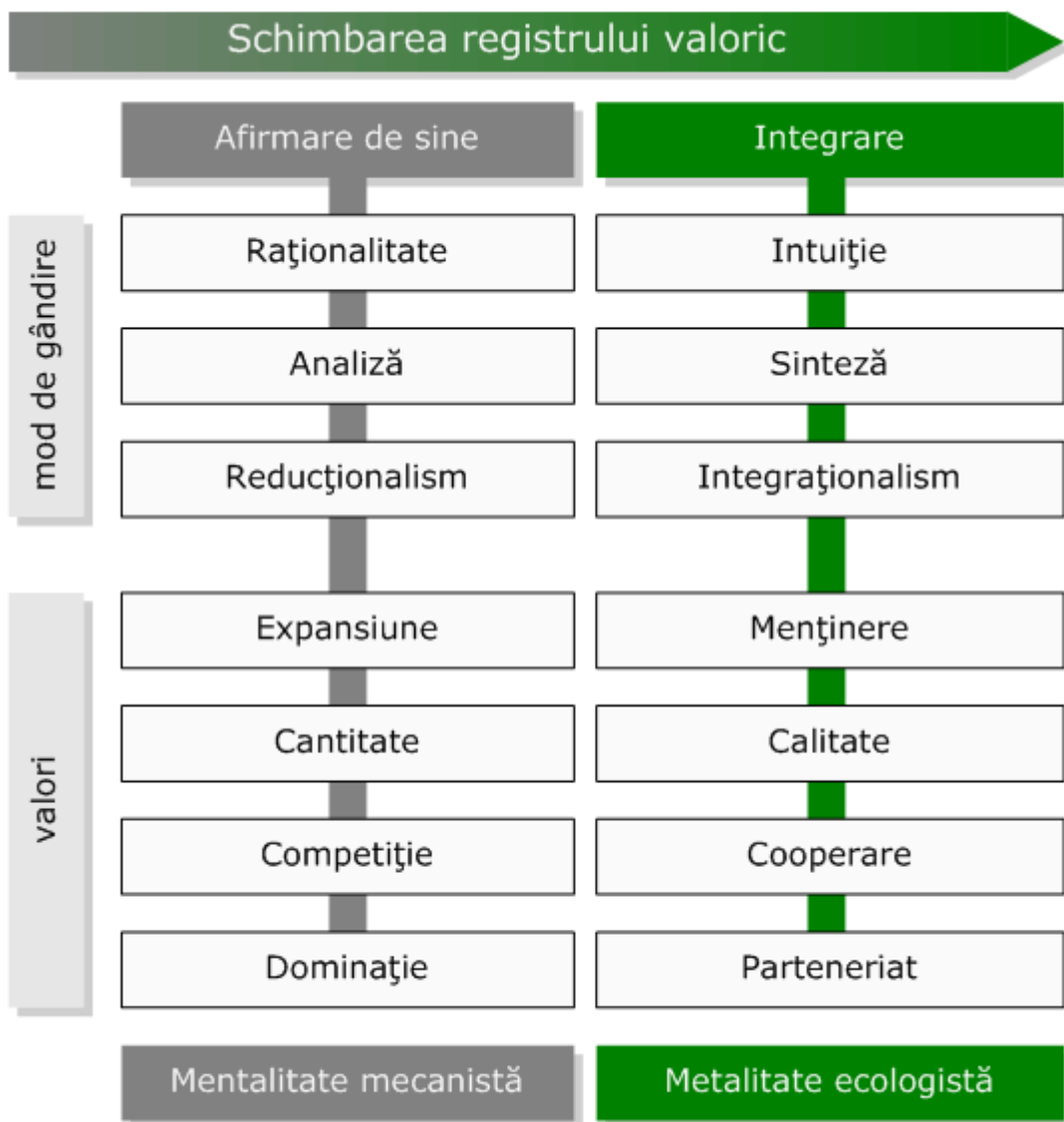
Fritjof Capra tries to put his theory into practice. He is a founding director of the Centre for Eco-literacy located in Berkeley, California, which promotes ecology and systems of thinking in primary and secondary education.⁷

He understands that it is necessary to have an intense and consistent education for sustainable development so that the holistic perspective over life could have more and more supporters. Subsequent to the application of this paradigm – the famous physicist argues – mentality and values will be different, they will transform in a better way human beings, societies, the environment and the planet. The way mentalities are going to be altered is briefly, yet illustratively outlined in the chart below:⁸

⁶ Johannes Tschapka; apud: Ökolog Netzwerkzeitung, 3/2004, "Nachhaltigkeit leben (und) lernen"; in: Umwelt & Bildung 3/2004; original text: "*Scopul acestui ... deceniu ONU ... este să aducem la un numitor comun multitudinea de inițiative, de la educația politică și până la educația de mediu, de la învățământul global și până la educația pentru pace, subordonând toate acestea domeniului mai larg al educației pentru o dezvoltare durabilă.*"

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fritjof_Capra.

⁸ Fritjof Capra, Wendezeit, Munchen 1991, p.XI-XII, http://www.dadalos.org/nachhaltigkeit_rom/grundkurs_1.htm.



(după: Fritjof Capra, *Wendezeit*, München 1991, p. XI-XII)

Another point of view integrates ESD within the educational system and it correlates it with the other components thereof. According to this perspective, education for a sustainable development “does not represent a mere extension of environmental education, which further includes social or economic aspects..., [while it must] be a strong connection element between politics, global education, environmental education or sanitary education”⁹

⁹ Willi Linder, *Hohe Ansprüche*; în: *umwelt & bildung* 3/2004, p. 3.

The efficient and consistent implementation of ESD is a major objective of UNO and the European Council. The accomplishment of the Millennium Objectives cannot be conceived outside appropriate educational policies or outside the implementation of ESD.

In consequence, the General Assembly of the UNO decided on the 20th December 2002 that the period comprised between 2004-2014 should be named the Decade for education in the spirit of sustainable development (resolution 57/254). The assembly appointed UNESCO as a leader-agency in promoting the Decade, and assigned UNESCO the task of conceiving a pattern for international implementation and for clarifying the link between the Decade and other educational processes like the Dakar Action Platform, which was adopted in 2002 by the World Forum of Education. Governments were invited to promote public awareness and an as large as possible program attendance, including cooperation with civil society and other authorities.

In Romania, besides the Ministry of Education and Research, as well as other authorities, the civil society (especially certain non-governmental organizations) brought a substantial contribution to the implementation of ESD projects that are basically aimed at young people, i.e. pupils and students.

2.3 CASE STUDY:

INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: “AGENDA 21”

The present case study aims to present Romanian NGOs involvement in achieving education for sustainable development, as well as the successes and difficulties they face in implementing programs aimed at this objective. We focused on the work pursued by Agenda 21 in this area.

Our case study was based on participatory observation in the project. For achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for involving students and teachers in colleges of education programs and projects in development, Agenda 21 included a management interview and study documents with a view to recording the activities of the foundation.

In contemporary society we find that there are a lot of both governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in achieving sustainable development education.

Among the most representative non-governmental organizations concerned with ESD one should mention: The Civil Society Development Foundation, UNICEF Romania, The International Organization for Sustainable Development, Agenda 21, The Association for Sustainable Initiative etc.

Among the public organizations that pay a particular interest in this field of activity I would mention: The Environment Fund Administration, The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Region 8 Bucharest – Ilfov – Regional, The Agency for Environmental Protection Bucharest, The Environment Fund Administration, The Romanian Water Headquarters, The Municipality of Bucharest, City Hall District 1 Bucharest, City Hall District 2 Bucharest, City Hall District 3 Bucharest, Hall District 4 Bucharest, Hall District 5 Bucharest, Hall District 6 Bucharest, The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport , The Council of Europe, and The Canadian Agency for International Development.

Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21

The main goals of Agenda 21 are: assistance and programs for Sustainable Development. Agenda 21 is a non-governmental, not-profit organization, of national interest, which is politically and religiously free and it was founded in February 2003.

Agenda 21 has devised a variety of ESD projects undertaken both nationally and internationally. The project results developed by this organization are outstanding: in collaboration with the Ministry of Education helped to introduce in Romanian pre-university education to a new discipline aimed at education for sustainable development.

Agenda 21 has initiated and coordinated the modernization process of social science curricula taught in school education so that it would match the needs of sustainable development and the Millennium Goals.

The Organization Structure comprises: President (Professor PhD Alexandru Tasnadi), Executive President (Professor Nina Cugler), Project Coordinator (Florina Pavel) and Volunteers.

The Mission of Agenda 21 includes the following objectives: a) strengthening the role of children and young people in the implementation of sustainable development; b) developing partnerships with the local authorities for valorising the local initiatives and for making the local government more efficient; c) granting assistance and support for the marginalized groups.

Target Group Value

The education opportunities given to children and young people are the guarantee of a sustainable society. Volunteer work in the benefit of the community is one of the fundamental values of the association. Young people are part of the process and are involved in all projects of the organization.

Collaborations with other organizations and institutions : Open Education Centre – Bulgaria, Bucharest School Inspectorate, Ilfov County School Inspectorate, Romanian Radio Society, HIVSports – UK, County Council of Seville, Open Youth Bulgaria, Youth Council Romania, Town Hall of Cazalla de la Sierra, Askim City Hall – Norway, Bucharest Museum,

The main projects of Agenda 21

Of the main projects pursued by Agenda 21 we mention: *Millennium Development Goals Achievement involving high school students and educators specialized in development education programs and projects, Strengthening environmental governance in Bucharest, Students Ombudsman, The involvement of young people in the promotion of human rights, ABCD... Multipliers for human rights, Civic education through television, A European ABC of Young people participation etc.*

Millennium Development Goals Achievement involving high school students and educators in development education programs and projects (December 2010 – June 2013)

- Development education is one of Romania's obligations undertaken once joining the European Union, that of defining and developing a national policy of international cooperation.

- The main objective of development cooperation policy of the European Union is to end poverty in the framework of sustainable development, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

- The aim of the project is to involve students and educators from 4 EU countries and one from the Republic of South Africa in the process of elaborating and promoting the development education programs.

- The themes approached will be correlated with 3 pylons from National Strategy of development cooperation: social justice and ending poverty, sustainable development, good governance and guarantee for observing human rights.

- Objectives: to enhance public awareness about Global problems and Millennium Development Goals among young people and among educators at community level; to develop and use the creative potential of young people so that they will be capable to initiate projects on themes related to global problems, human rights and millennium development goals; to build a support for the local policies on development issues with focus on poverty, discrimination and human rights; to establish communication networks between educators / teachers / local authorities and young people from developing and developed countries which will change the attitudes of the people involved in them.

- Expected results: the elaboration of a Development Education Guidelines, the creation of a Development Education Trainer's Kit, the creation of three Country Development Education curricula (Bulgaria, Romania, Italy), and three Country Development Education packs (Bulgaria, Romania, Italy), as well as an International Development Education Curriculum and an International

Development Education pack; setting up a network of well trained and motivated 150 educators / teachers and university lecturers which will introduce Development Education and the accomplishment of MDG within the partner countries; assuring an increased level of awareness among 3,000 young people, high school students, and university students; encouraging young people activities: 30 projects on development education that will aim at increasing the level of awareness in what concerns the development education problems in the developing countries; 80 policy-makers in schools inspectors and representatives of civil society; 3 Country Development Education Conferences (Bulgaria, Romania, Italy) on development education theme, an International Development Education Conference and Students "World Summit" on MDG.

Strengthening environmental governance in Bucharest (July 2009 – December 2010)

- Financed by: The Council of Europe, Norway Government, Bucharest City Hall

-The project entailed a more sustained involvement of the civil society in the process of strengthening the institutional capacity of the local authorities for elaborating environment strategies, as well as for raising citizen's level of awareness in what concerns environmental issues within the community they live and for enhancing collaboration with the public authorities for identifying and applying proper solutions.

- Objectives: strengthening environmental governance in Bucharest, by importing the know-how offered by the Municipality of Askim, Norway; educating the citizens, especially young people to adopt a behaviour characteristic of a sustainable life style.

- Results: valuable expertise provided by the grant giver and by the Norwegian partner :study visit for 2 Romanian experts ,training for civil servants, experience exchange through a climate network; human and institutional resources diversity: NGOs, public authorities, academic institutions, schools, teachers, students, pupils, the public television, other media institutions, young volunteers; young people, the main actors of the educational activities:12 young leaders, trainers: 400 young people in 12 high schools, 3,000 young people participant in the eco-volunteers march, over 5,000 young beneficiaries of the projects realized in high schools.

Students Ombudsman (March 2005 -present)

- Funded by: UNICEF Office Romania, The Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, The Council of Europe

-Students ombudsman is a national project that started in 2005 in partnership with MERYS and UNICEF Office in Romania.

- Student's Ombudsman is a project that aims at creating and implementing in schools an institution capable of assuring knowledge, promotion and respect for children and the youth's rights. The aim of the project is to teach young people how to act in a democratic society, how to take responsibilities and how to gain skills for exercising their rights.

- Vision: The Students Ombudsman proposes the creation of an institution that: a) will ensure the knowledge, promotion and respect of child / young people rights; b) will mobilize by a unitary mechanism students, teachers, parents, other partners in the community (local authorities, mass media, private companies etc.); c) will stimulate the significant participation of young people and will focus their energy and creativity for shaping the environment they live in.

- Mission : a) to teach young people how to act in a democratic society; b) to help young people take responsibility and fight for their rights; c) to contribute to the development of young people's participative behaviour; d) to complete the education offer of school and family by involving the young people themselves as education providers.

- Structure: In each selected school , the Students Ombudsman was formed by 7 people : 5 students (SO President, SC President, Member 1, Member 2, Member 3) , 1 teacher , 1 parent.

- Results:

a) Over 10,000 young people from 300 schools gained skills and developed necessary competences for their life as an adult in a democratic society; b) Over 5,000 cases of child rights infringements were solved; c) The training during 4 annual training session of the school inspectors

responsible with educational activities (42 participants from all the country's counties and from Bucharest); d) 10 workshops for developing monitoring mechanisms and a National strategy on education for human rights in schools; e) Meetings of the experts for the elaboration of the National strategy on human rights education in schools; f) The elaboration of a curricula based on child rights that will be introduced in the initial training of the teachers in SNSPA; g) Promotion and training materials elaborated and disseminated: child rights manual, methodological guides, posters, flyers, child rights caravan; h) 3 national camps organized in partnership with UNICEF and MECTS (editions 2009 and 2010) and with MECTS and ANSIT (2011 edition), which were attended by 300 young people from all over the country; i) The referral to the project as a good practices example for the youth participation in the UNO's Child Rights Commission report; j) The promotion at international level within some international conferences ("Let's create Europe with and for children", organized by Council of Europe in Stockholm, 2009, "Europe for Citizens", European Commission, Trieste 2010) and within international youth exchanges where members of the organization participated.

- Difficulties in accomplishing ESD projects

Subsequent to interviewing Mrs Executive President (Professor Nina Cugler) we could identify the major difficulties that the organization is facing in implementing its projects. The President of the organization appreciates that most of the managers in the domain identify the same obstacles in achieving their goals.

In accomplishing international projects, the main identified difficulties are connected to the differences between the educational systems, especially that these projects propose the introduction of the ESD issues in the curriculum. The Western European partners have a much more considerable autonomy in establishing the curriculum based on the needs of the local community. Parents, students and NGOs play an important part in this process. In this context, for example, in the new project in which Agenda 21 is partners with Italy, France and Austria, she is facing real difficulties in adjusting the project concept to our educational system, "as we have a centralized one".

On the other hand, there are financial difficulties especially because the projects are on a multi-annual basis, usually 3 years, the reconciliation for our investment (the commission initially grants 80% of the 100% grant that supports the project - meaning 75% on the projects coordinated by old state members of the UE, and respectively 90% for the new members) is done after the project is finished. This means that in case the coordinator is from the old members of the UE, we have to support a percentage of 45% from the costs of the project, and in case is a new member is 30%.

There are also linguistic barriers, sometimes it is hard to have target groups with whom to work in a common language and the work is doubled because of the need to translate a lot of materials. It is a double effort - on one hand all the documents of the initiator and the partners involved, on the other hand on national level all the documents in Romanian. Finally, the success of the project is given by the way in which all the partners are complying with their obligations and they are doing the activities as they were established. Sometimes, there are delays and even blockages in the implementation of the project due to the multi-partners character of the project.

3. Conclusions

The paper brought into evidence the importance and the need of international cooperation, the necessity to get all international actors involved in implementing SD principle in social life at all its levels. The vision according to which the development of certain states implies the poverty of others is already obsolete. Mitigating social differences, that is the clash between the rich and the poor, ensuring peace, protecting the green area are major objectives of the millennium. Their implementation requires not only the awareness of the crucial need to implement SD, but also the change of mentalities through a common effort to educate decision making factors, young people, as well as all citizens in the spirit of SD.

The paper points out that the Romanian society has proved open to promote SD and ESD. We have noticed that this issue is an important topic on the Ministry of Education and Research Agenda, as well as on the agenda of public and also private organizations, but basically on the agenda of Romanian NGOs.

The present case study brought into evidence the initiative, diligence, consequence and accomplishments of the Romanian civil society in implementing ESD projects. More precisely, the analysed case study focused on presenting Agenda 21 projects. Agenda 21 Foundation impresses through it numerous and complex projects, as well as through achieving its objectives and through an efficient collaboration with school inspectorates, as well as other public and private organizations. However, apart from its successes, the civil society is still facing important difficulties in the attempt to implement its projects, including the international ESD-oriented ones.

Besides financial difficulties, there are also differences that are hard to be overcome – especially the inconsistencies between the organization of the existing educational systems (see: the relation autonomy / centralization between the components of every system, linguistic barriers, the non-observance of deadlines by projects partners etc).

The present paper may be a starting point for the accomplishment of a larger research work that would imply a more complex methodology as regards the way in which different ESD socialization agents get involved in Romania.

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