

Explanatory Memorandum

Becoming a member of ENSI, 'Environment and Schools Initiatives' - What are the potential benefits and what this involves in practical terms for member countries.

14th November 2006

Why join ENSI ?

'ENSI is on the cutting edge of international thinking and practice in environmental education'

'An experienced and credible network on education for sustainable development'

'It is recognised and respected for its pioneering and avant garde work'

Quotations from long-term and recent members of ENSI. Source: ENSI in the Global Environment, 2003, Syd Smith

Are you responsible for addressing education for sustainable development in your department, ministry and country and would value the opportunity of sharing ideas and good practice with peers in other countries, to enhance your clarity on ESD, strategic direction, policy and programmatic impact?

Does you wish to exchange meaningful research and experiences in the area of education for sustainable development, and would like to promote this work with like-minded experts in other countries?

Do you wish to contribute effectively to the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development at international and national level?

By joining ENSI, you will be in a stronger position to respond to all these challenges. A modest human and financial investment from the ENSI member countries resources an exciting international programme of research and innovative activities and projects.

In practice, this means working together through mutual understanding, and respect for cultural diversity, to avoid unnecessary duplication and reinvention. We find a common language, methodology and critique to achieve significant and measurable progress in an area of fundamental importance to formal and non-formal education worldwide.

This explanatory memorandum outlines the benefits to member countries of becoming part of the ENSI international network, and responsibilities and expectations of member organisations.

We hope this will help you to understand more about our philosophy and approach, to be in a position to discuss becoming an ENSI member with all those that will be involved in that decision in your country. We look forward to welcoming you in our organisation.

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INTRODUCTION

What is ENSI ?

'Pioneering work', 'Cutting edge of international thinking and practice in environmental education' ' An experienced and credible network on education for sustainable development'

The Environment and Schools Initiatives Network (ENSI) provides a unique international umbrella for national activities and innovation in the field of environmental education / education for sustainable development and school development, to share learning and experiences and to help advance international and national agendas on education for sustainable development.

As this area becomes increasingly topical, also in the light of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development 2005 -2014, ENSI provides a space for governmental representatives, researchers and other stakeholders working on environment and school development to access the latest developments at international level, to debate, reflect and critique both policy and programmatic advances and thereby help to ensure that education for sustainable development is a meaningful concept and a daily reality for 'grass-roots' students and educationists in our member countries.

The rationale behind ENSI

ENSI's mission is

- the promotion of environmental awareness and
- the promotion of dynamic qualities, such as initiative, autonomy and individual responsibility, as well as teamwork and solidarity
 - the bridge building between environmental research and environmental education policymaking.
- the promotion research lessons toward policymakers
- the promotion of qualitative and action research methods and self-reflected practice

The environment offers a very special context for achieving a broader and more integrated development of human creativity, initiative and organisational skills and qualities that are essential prerequisites for achieving a sustainable society.

ENSI is moving into a new phase of activity and dialogue in identified priority areas of teacher education, eco-school movements, networking and quality criteria within environmental education, and its mainstreaming.

ENSI aims to:

- create stable learning networks, which link schools, families, communities and workplaces
- generate local knowledge and meaningful discourses concerning sustainable development to meet personal, social and economic needs within communities
- foster the democratic participation of students as active citizens in shaping

the environmental conditions of their life and work.

- generate discussion among the different stakeholders of ESD:
pupils, local communities, schools, researchers, teacher trainers and governments,

In the areas of teaching and learning, ENSI endorses:

- students increasing their control in determining the nature and content of their learning experiences
- the shift from authority based to negotiated learning experiences
- the use of content (knowledge or ideas) as resources for reflecting about personal experiences of the environment and for undertaking intelligent and responsible action towards it
- the shift from institutionally based monitoring/assessment of learning experiences to personal self-monitoring or assessment based on reflection and feedback from the community.

In the area of school – community relations, ENSI supports the:

- shift away from the classroom as a learning site towards the community as a learning site
- use of the school as a learning resource for the community, and the community as a learning resource for the school
- development of a flexible and dynamic curriculum for all students which focuses on sustainable development in the local environment, and is responsive both to the need of students to make sense of their personal experience in the world outside school and to the social and economic needs being voiced within the local community, through the school playing a pivotal role.

Finally, in using research as an integral part of development, ENSI:

- treats development activities as experiments to be tested through gathering the perspectives of a range and variety of participants involved in the development process within the community (comprising students, teachers, parents, community representatives, employers)
- addresses research questions initiated by the parties involved in the development process
- involves participants in being accountable for their work at the local level
- constructs reflective accounts of the development process as it operates, metaphorically, in the swampy lowlands as well as adopting a helicopter perspective
- participates in the production of comparative studies of the development process in different local and national contexts, as a means of stimulating public debate.

ENSI's Vision

- In practical terms ENSI is a learning organization with a common identity and focus with agreed pedagogical principles and content. Its identity is based on a

systematic reflection on practice and a well researched learning perspective. Its focus is on participation and change beyond behavioural change. It sees change as a condition of learning that goes beyond the key messages of sustainability but regards ESD as a cross cutting theme in research.

- ENSI captures and reflects on its members' experiences so that we can 'practise what we preach' and develop a portfolio that showcases our work and can be used for partnership purposes. ENSI also influences government agencies and continues to develop links between research groups, schools and authorities. In reality ENSI strengthens its impact beyond school development and professional development and therefore targets change in government policies.
- ENSI now endorses a strategic direction which includes a 5 Year Plan that addresses issues related to extending its partners and having regional networks, creating a new generation of researchers, increasing its income and activities and increasing its products and methods of dissemination.
- ENSI sees schools as the centre for learning and ultimately influencing their communities. It focuses on schools as systems and intends to map the role of schools in creating sustainable communities.

In brief, ENSI is a highly credible network involving internationally renowned experts alongside policy shapers, researchers, active sustainable schools and teacher training institutions in its member countries.

It has a strong track record, from as far back as 1986, of effective partnership with the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation and is now in official relationship with UNESCO, with intensive cooperation around the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

UNESCO Partnership and its implications

UNESCO has sought influential and credible partners with specific expertise and experience to operationalise its policies and activities around the Education for All programmes and the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. From UNESCO's perspective these are indivisible.

ENSI's substantive experience in relation to environmental education as a platform for school and community development is an important niche that can contribute significantly to UNESCO's work and can also support national developments in member countries in these areas over the coming years.

This cooperation will revolve around two overarching themes:

1. First, to transpose ENSI experiences and expertise on the interface between environmental education and school development, inclusion and participation within an ever-evolving community, to initiatives promoting ESD as a platform for school and higher education institute development,
2. Second, to promote synergies between ENSI's primary focus of environmental education and other tenets of sustainable development.

Based on our experience of the last 20 years, ENSI will contribute to new research initiatives and 'research consolidation', transferability and the

'multiplier effect' of research in the framework of the Decade.

ENSI will oversee a dedicated series of workshops, seminars and conferences on specific aspects of the Decade relating to environmental education and to contribute actively to multidisciplinary activities, projects and programme planned in the framework of the Decade in its member countries.

Other possible areas of collaboration include:

- Contribution to an interdisciplinary 'monitoring' and evaluation system at national level re the implementation of the Decade in accordance with quality criteria.
- Reflection on strategies to mainstream 'tried and tested' pilot work undertaken in the framework of the Decade (influencing policy instruments, guidelines, wide scale dissemination).
- Trans-national comparative analysis regarding selected elements of the national action plans on the Decade relating specifically to environmental education, and synergies with other tenets of sustainable development.
- A pool of leading ENSI experts on environmental education as a tool for school and community development to present and moderate during relevant external interdisciplinary Decade meetings.
- Focus point or think tank for preliminary discussions / reflections on policy development/ enhancement based on the ongoing outcomes/ outputs of the Decade.
- Information conduit to core target groups re. ongoing developments in the framework of the Decade.

Welcoming new members

ENSI is an open organisation and welcomes new member countries worldwide that are committed to environmental education for school development and its role within education for sustainable development. ENSI is very keen to extend its membership base to new regions and new countries, beyond our previous focus on OECD countries. There are currently 20 countries world-wide that are members of ENSI or work in close cooperation in specific fields of activity.

The document ' The ENSI's role in the global environment' gives a historical overview of some of the benefits of being member countries, as documented over the last 18 years following an in depth survey.

Essential benefits listed by member countries of being a member of ENSI

- Access to an international exchange of data and experiences.
- Ability to compare school systems across countries
- Ability to gain access to foreign researchers in environmental education and EfS.
- Access to publications
- Access to network groups for professional development

- Ability to develop cooperative action research projects as a basis for professional development
- Ability to benefit from the design of the WHO network project *Healthy schools* (1991).
- Access to a range of country coordinator meetings and conferences
- Facility to combine the attention of policy-makers with the practical projects carried out at the school level.
- Facility to combine the work of participating researchers with teachers involved in innovative programs
- The use of an international body to help launch, manage and mainstream many environmental education developments
- Facility to support new ways of thinking, especially in the interaction and communication between government, private partners and schools in such areas as the interaction between school buildings, school environment and school administrative procedures.
- Possibility to develop national research on Environmental Education and to stimulate international discussion groups ranging from research to simply exchange of ideas

As part of the survey, long-term member countries of ENSI were asked what gaps would emerge if ENSI ceased to exist. The following responses reveal the true value of ENSI to its members:

- A forum to share experiences in the field of environmental education would disappear (e.g. Sweden).
- A network of key persons from authorities, teacher training colleges, researchers and schools across countries working in environmental education would be weakened severely (Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Norway, Switzerland, Austria).
- Pioneering work in curriculum innovation in environmental education would cease (Australia, Hungary, Norway).
- Supporting the cutting edge of international thinking and practice in environmental education would cease, including comparative studies (Australia, Germany, Austria).
- There would be a diminution of influence on government policy (Germany, Austria)
- There would be a breakdown of government-based school development teacher education research and action research (Germany, Denmark, Switzerland).
- A loss of international workshops and conferences would occur (Denmark)
- A reduction in case studies, evaluations, reports and publications would result (Denmark).
- An organisational network that involves both school communities with teachers and pupils, ministries, educational institutions and research establishments, within the member countries and partner institutes, would disappear (Denmark, Norway, Switzerland).
- An experienced network has been created which can be used in the next decade of Education for Sustainability and there is a possibility for international exchange with people who share years of reflections on their own theoretical and practical image of what environmental education can be. (Italy)

The role of ENSI in serving as an effective network, sharing experiences and linking all stakeholders in research and innovative action, were seen as top priority areas. All member countries agreed that the dissolution of ENSI would weaken, and probably destroy, these valuable global benefits.

How to become a member country

ENSI is a government-based network. Only governments, or non- governmental organisations, institutions or associations with a mandate from their government can become full members of ENSI on behalf of their countries

Institutions, associations or non-governmental organisations can become associate members of ENSI.

The attached ENSI constitution explains in further detail full membership and associate membership eligibility.

If you wish to become a member of ENSI, you are invited to write a formal letter of interest to the ENSI secretariat to set the procedure in motion.

The responsibilities of an ENSI member country

National Country Co-ordinator

Each member country is required to appoint a country coordinator to act as the liaison, coordination and information conduit for that country, and work closely with the ENSI international secretariat to this effect.

The average time commitment this entails is approximately 12 hours per month in addition to participation and contribution to an Annual General Meeting and other international activities and projects of particular interest to that member country.

The national coordinator should have a strong pedagogical, research and/or policy background in environmental education and/or school development in his/ her country.

S/he should have a commitment and interest in international cooperation and its contribution to the ESD agenda.

S/he should have a good understanding of spoken and written English as this is the official language of the network.

On the basis of a mandate, s/he will be responsible for creating a network of professionals involved in ENSI activities and projects at national level and the appropriate space for critique and reflection.

S/he will be responsible for collating and sharing information on ESD in the country concerned both in relation to political development and significant innovative research, project work and examples of good practice.

S/he will be responsible also as an ENSI national coordinator to participate in key national level meetings in the framework of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development and other political and programmatic meetings addressing environmental education.

S/he will be responsible for representing his/ her country at ENSI governance meetings, and representing ENSI at other meetings when mandated by ENSI.

Hosting ENSI activities

Over the years, many ENSI member countries have hosted ENSI activities – international conferences, workshops, seminars etc. that provide valuable opportunity of sharing national priorities and advances with an international and influential platform and audience.

The secretariat of ENSI provides considerable support concerning the logistics, content and policy orientation of such events, in close cooperation with the national country coordinator.

Payment of an annual membership fee

In addition to the 'contribution in kind' in relation to the national coordinator's role, and participation / hosting of selected ENSI activities, all members of ENSI contribute an annual fee agreed at the Annual General Meeting. At present this fee is 4.000 EUR.

Support from the ENSI Secretariat

As a member of ENSI, you will receive regular mailings on news, work in progress and key developments in relation to ENSI's work programme and ESD in general, and opportunities to participate and contribute.

You will have access to the ENSI intranet to be able to share news and views with other members of the ENSI network. And you will be able to post relevant material and web links on the ENSI website that has a much wider outreach to non-ENSI members and significant players in the world of ESD.

The secretariat will also provide you with specific support on request, in relation to questions on the state of play in other countries, international or EU policy issues

More information?

Should you have further questions – please do not hesitate to contact Adry Nienhaus van Lint at the ENSI secretariat – A.NienhausvanLint@slo.nl

CONSTITUTION

AIMS OF ENSI

Environment and School Initiatives (ENSI) is a decentralised international network

ENSI brings together school initiatives, educators and other stakeholders in countries *worldwide* to promote and understand activities promoting sustainable development in schools and their communities.

ENSI supports educational developments that promote environmental understanding, active approaches to teaching and learning, and citizenship education, through research and the exchange of experiences internationally.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

ENSI's main areas of work in the field of environmental school initiatives include:

initiating, co-ordinating and supporting research and school development activities; publishing and disseminating these activities.
promoting international exchange, understanding and co-operation, including co-operating with other international organisations and programmes;
making policy recommendations and/or statements as appropriate.

Under the above main areas of work, ENSI undertakes activities such as:

developing and sharing research and school development strategies and tools;
organising international workshops, seminars and conferences;
disseminating approved experiences and researched programmes.

MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership

ENSI is a government based network. Only governments or non governmental organisations, institutions or associations with a mandate from their government can become full members of ENSI. To become a member, countries:

inform the ENSI Secretariat,
nominate a country co-ordinator,
pay the financial contribution as determined annually by the Annual General Meeting.

Associate membership

Institutions, associations or non governmental organisations can become associate members of ENSI. Associate members:
can participate in ENSI activities,
are heard, i.e. can bring in their ideas and proposals, but have no voting right,
pay an amount of 50 % of the actual ENSI annual membership fee.
The ENSI executive retains to have the right on the eligibility for membership. Under special circumstances the membership fee may be determined by the ENSI executive.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ENSI has the following organisational structures:

Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Executive Committee
International Decentralised Secretariat

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM is the highest decision-making body of ENSI and is composed of the Co-ordinators appointed by the member countries.

The AGM shall annually draw up and review ENSI's Programme of Work and its financial matters.

It shall also:

elect the Chairperson and the Treasurer.
decide on the seat of the ENSI Secretariat based on proposals from participating countries.

A decision-making quorum within the AGM is reached when at least one half of the members are present. Decisions are taken by a 2/3 majority.

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee manages ENSI business in collaboration with the Secretariat.
The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson, and the Treasurer form the Executive Committee.
the Vice Chair is held by the Co-ordinator of the country which hosts the Secretariat.
The Treasurer should be held by a representative from a country which does not host the Secretariat.

The International Decentralised Secretariat of ENSI

The Secretariat executes the decisions of the AGM and the Executive Committee;
The Secretariat has its seat in one of the ENSI member countries, for a minimum period of two years.

FUNDING

The funds include the contributions of the Member countries participating in ENSI. The ENSI Secretariat is authorised to hold an account for the purpose of implementing the programme.

ENSI's fiscal year is on a calendar year basis; the payment of the financial contribution is annual.

The ENSI Secretariat is authorised to incur the expenditures necessary to carry out the ENSI Programme of Work up to the limit of the amounts held in the account.

