



THE GREEN PACK EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

NATIONAL CATALOGUE OF INNOVATIONS
IN ALBANIA

IDEASS - Innovation for Development and South South Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

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Air pollution is a major environmental issue in the big cities of Albania, especially the capital, Tirana. The sharp increase in air pollution in big cities resulted from a sharp increase in cars' ownership and decrease of urban greenery. There is no plan or strategy to combat air pollution, except for some local strategies, which give limited results if not coordinated with other strategies and central and local authorities (INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, "Albania's Struggle to Meet EU Environmental Criteria and Public Perception" Tirana, November 2010).



Starting from this premise, the environmental education for children becomes fundamental. Environmental education in early childhood is a holistic concept that encompasses knowledge of the natural world as well as emotions, dispositions, and skills.

According to Ruth Wilson (1994), environmental education in early childhood includes the development of a sense of wonder; appreciation for the beauty and mystery of the natural world; opportunities to experience the joy of closeness to nature; and respect for other creatures. It also includes the development of problem-solving skills and the development of interest and appreciation of the world around us.



These goals acknowledge that learning is more than a cognitive process and that emotions play a particularly important role (See Harlan and Rivkin, 2008). Therefore, early childhood educators should provide opportunities for children to experience peace, joy, and fascination with nature because these emotions undergird their developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Gardner, 1999).

Green Pack was developed by Regional Environmental Center (REC) in cooperation with a number of Bulgarian, Hungarian, Albanian, and Polish educators and environmentalists.

Environmental education refers to organized efforts to teach about how natural environments function and, particularly, how human beings can manage their behavior and ecosystems in order to live sustainably. The environmental education has become a very important part of the civic education in Albania.

REC Albania, is actively engaged in the field of education for Environment and Sustainable Development, and is especially focused on environmental education and promotion of public environmental awareness. Based on these efforts, the "Green Pack" was produced and was made part of school curricula, since academic 2006-2007.

The Albanian Education system has a vast need of Environmental Education materials and products such as Green Pack. The development of different alternative (environmental) education products was considered unanimously a contribution to Albanian education system and the general development of the country. It seems that, so far, environmental education activities rely mainly on scientific and technical approaches rather than on active citizen participation, addressing desirable change in human behavior, and consequences of consumption and production patterns.

Strong partnerships are developed in all levels (national, regional and local) among REC and Ministries (MES and MoEFWA), Institute of Education Development, Regional Education Directorates and Offices of Education, Regional Environmental Agencies. The process of introducing Green Pack in Albanian schools is made possible by the full engagement of the Ministry of Education and Science and several Institutes. Their role was/is to integrate the environmental curricula in the existing education system.

The Green Pack product contributes to country efforts on European integration (the EU Sustainable Development/Lisbon Strategy as well as the Education Council's efforts to promote education to reverse unsustainable trends. The Green Pack counts as a step forward in the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014 and supports the goals of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

WHAT PROBLEM DOES IT SOLVE?

The environmental problems are often key issue for several socio-economic problems and in this frame perception and resolving those issues needs a better integration of our capacities. The numerous environmental problems in the world and specifically in Albania carried out the need for environmental education. For this reason, the preparation of this education kit needed the approach of environmental education in schools. Environmental education is one component of environmental awareness. The environmental awareness remains in the agenda of the environmental stakeholders, especially Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Administration of Water, environmental NGOs and recently local government.



Environmental Education through Green Pack in Albania is a process that helps teachers/students/individuals to gain experience on teaching and learning methodologies on the environment and human impact. The environmental education curriculum is developed based on the educational system in Albania, which allows the use of Green Pack in different ways: either as a) Cross curricula; b) Extra curricula, or c) Specific Curricula.

The introduction of the environmental education pack as the “cross – curricula”, would need higher level of teachers’ qualification, knowledge of the whole school program, involvement of all teaching personnel in the training program, etc. Nevertheless, each teaching method requires continuous efforts on adopting new knowledge, skills, values, experiences, enabling them to act - individually and collectively - to solve present and future environmental problems.

The Green Pack for environmental education

After the dissemination of Green Packs in 9-year- schools, REC Albania undertook some specific actions to prepare the Albanian teacher for this innovative tool on environmental education. The teacher’s qualification structure for environmental education is missing in Albania. In order to fulfill this vacuum, REC Albania and Institute of Curricula and Teachers Training worked together, on expert basis, on development of training agenda and the evaluation scheme of this intervention to school program.

Parallel to Green Pack distribution to each school, training workshops for teachers and inspectors of RED and EO are organized all over the country. These training courses are held in RED premises with proper training conditions and facilities. The training courses were prepared and delivered in cooperation with experts and trainers of MES, Institute of Curricula and Standards (ICS), National Centre of Training and Qualification (NCTQ), Regional Education Directorate instructors. The training agenda is developed to match teachers’ needs and expectations, mainly addressing the question how to use the Green Pack on environmental education themes related to education programs of the school. All these steps that were undertaken made the environmental education program a functioning tool in Albanian schools.

Qualitative and specific tailored training courses are designed for teachers, institutions’ staff and other individuals and organizations, which gear their activities to the school environmental education curricula. For more than 7 years, REC Albania persistently had organized teacher training on GP and environmental education. Until now, more than 1500 teachers have passed through this training program. Approximately 100.000 students of 7th grade pass through the Green pack lessons every academic year.

Through REC Albania efforts and the generous support of different donors, nowadays, the Green Packs are at the hands of teachers and pupils.

This education package is referred as one of the most needed products for the Albanian education system. Therefore, REC engaged the best environmental expertise in the country to give to the Green Pack, the proper Albanian dimension. This education kit enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making skills, and teaches individuals to weigh various sides of an environmental issue to make informed and responsible decisions. Environmental Education through Green Pack is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experiences, and also the determination, which will enable them to act - individually and collectively - to solve present and future environmental problems. The Green Pack educational materials interpret the sophisticated political messages of the “Environment for Europe” process in relation to the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in the context of democratization in countries in transition.

The Green Pack adapts these messages for targeted groups of educators, teachers and students:

- Specific challenges are presented in their global, national and regional contexts, as well as at the individual level (the role of each citizen in supporting the sustainable development of society).
- The challenge of sustainability is conveyed in a compelling, accessible way and in multiple formats. Students follow lesson plans that are accompanied by complementary videos, role-playing exercises, an interactive dilemma game and additional information from a CD-ROM with Internet links).

- Emphasis is placed on the formation of new values and the establishment of new models of behavior at school, at home and in society, rather than simply on the accumulation of knowledge. Students are, above all, partners with their teachers in activities, discussions, role-playing exercises and decision-making.
- Students are encouraged to take a proactive approach to environmental challenges and are asked to share their newfound knowledge and skills with members of their family.
- Discussions on ways to achieve sustainable development are initiated with local community stakeholders.



This topic area supports the dissemination of the main outcomes of the “Environment for Europe” process and the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (SESD). Within this political framework, and based on the results achieved during the implementation of the REC’s Green Pack educational kit, the team aims to strengthen sub-regional cooperation and to encourage a multi-stakeholder approach to environmental education and education for sustainable development.

The long-term support and contribution of a wide range of agencies (international, NGOs, etc) is essential in ensuring the sustainable implementation of the environmental education process. It brings not only experiences (cross national, regional, European), but it also helps on mobilizing more resources of teachers training and outdoor activities.

Prospective and role of universities

In addition, the challenge remains to engage in horizontal cooperation state agencies and institutions under different Central Governmental Bodies, such as REAs and REDs.

Based on REC Albania survey and monitoring process of new teacher in training courses, it was noticed that the role of Universities remains undefined in concrete terms of environmental education. REC Albania supported the extension of the intervention to University level, by piloting and then introducing one specific subject of Environmental Education in the curricula for teachers-to-be faculties.

THE GREEN PACK, IN PRACTICE

Structure of Albanian Green Pack

The Green Pack is a multi-medium environmental education curriculum kit to teach children about environmental protection and sustainable development.

After 2.5 years of work by REC and nearly 65 experts from Albania and numerous international experts, the Albanian edition of the educational toolkit “Green Pack” is disseminated at all secondary schools of Albania in early 2007.

The Green Pack covers 22 topics related to environmental protection and sustainable development, divided into five chapters, for example:

- Environmental components: air, water, soil and biodiversity.
- Threats to the environment: urbanization, noise, waste and chemicals.
- Human activities and impacts: energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and tourism.
- Global challenges: climate change, ozone depletion, acidification, and issues affecting seas and oceans.
- Values: consumerism human health and environment, citizens’ rights, and responsibility for the Earth’s future.



Each of the main Green Pack components - the CD-ROM, teacher’s handbook, film collection and dilemma game - follows the same structure.

The Teacher’s handbook

The core elements of the handbook are the lesson plans, which can be combined with the other components of the Green Pack, such as the film collection, CD-ROM and dilemma game. Each of the environmental topics is covered by one or more of the lesson plans, which are structured in such a way that provide users with information about the main concept, related subjects, required materials, lesson location, ideal timing, objectives and methodology.

The introduction presents basic information on the issue and users are advised to look for further information in the relevant section of the CD-ROM. Before beginning an activity, teachers can photocopy and distribute the fact sheets and handouts that are included at the end of each lesson plan. A summary table presenting information on which of the lesson plans apply to which environmental topic and their appropriateness to the different school subjects, as well as the recommended films and clips to accompany the lessons, can be found at the end of the handbook.

The activities described in the handbook have a guiding, rather than compulsory character. They are intended to stoke the teacher's imagination and lead to the organization of events similar to the ones suggested, but corresponding to the particular needs and abilities of the students.

The CD-ROM

The CD-ROM provides information on all the environmental topics and is structured as follows: general information on the topic in its context; a description of the challenge and how to overcome it; case studies; and what each of us can do. The information is presented in texts, pictures, photos, maps, tests, interactive tables and illustrations, and film clips. Useful links of international and national websites are also provided throughout the CD-ROM. The PDF files of the lesson plans, which are the same as those in the handbook, can be downloaded and used during classroom activities.

The film collection

The three- to five-hour film collection, presented in various formats, comprises between 30 and 50 video clips, educational films and documentaries. Information about each environmental topic can be found in the summary table at the end of the teachers' handbook.

The Dilemma game

There is one case study for each environmental topic, presented in the form of a dilemma game. Each case study focuses on a particular problem and offers a number of possible ways of addressing it, as well as comments on the positive and negative aspects of each response. By working through the dilemmas, teachers and students are able to engage in in-depth discussions on particular aspects of the conflict between environmental protection and economic development and train themselves to understand and respect different opinions and build consensus.

The Website

The Green Pack website: <http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/Greenpack> is available and has been developed to further support and promote the implementation of the Green Pack.

The Green Pack is foreseen as an extra-curricular subject for Albanian 7th grade of secondary school. After the dissemination of Green Packs, trainings of teachers (45 training courses in 25 cities) are organized for more than 1500 teachers all around the country.

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In addition, certain flexibility of the teacher on selected topics/activities/example is important to respect region differences, natural values and environmental problems. Early involvement of these Central Institutions is crucial for ensuring support and cooperation at the implementation stage.

Development Methodology of Green Pack

The methodology applied by the REC during the development Green Pack includes close cooperation:

- at the national level with national authorities responsible for economic, social and environmental development;
- at the professional level with institutions, organizations, universities and NGOs with expertise in the field of sustainable development;
- at the individual level with distinguished educators, scientists, politicians and decision makers involved nationally or internationally in the practical implementation of sustainable development; and
- at the international level with political, business and not-for-profit organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Toyota, the Television Trust for Environment and British Petroleum, which promote sustainable development worldwide.

This methodology encourages the active involvement of local partners in the adaptation and upgrading of the Green Pack and allows them to take charge of teacher training and Green Pack dissemination. Therefore local

partners are motivated to improve the quality of the materials, produce subsequent editions and train new groups of teachers.

RESULTS

Secondary schools

Since early 2007, the “Green Pack” is being used in secondary schools throughout the country. Based on REC monitoring, supported by RED and teachers' feedback, the “Green Pack” is being used by different teachers (different subjects) in approximately 1500 secondary schools throughout the country, reaching 2,000 teachers and 100,000 students for the each academic year. (2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012).

Environmental education through Green Pack is now established as an Extra-Curricular subject. Based on the level of knowledge and links to the other existing curricula, it is introduced in the 7th grade with 24 teaching hrs (2 hrs/week). Timing and mode of implementation was specified and announced officially to REDs by MES official memo. This is based on the assessment of other Extra curricula-s (introduced and under implementation in the 5-9 grade system) and the link with Biology subject (6th grade: Ecology).



Since the first introduction of GP in our school, REC Albania had made continuous monitoring and evaluation of GP implementation. All the monitoring data allowed us to say that this has been a successful intervention, which has exceeded almost all indicators.

One other positive development was that the Center for Teachers' Qualification included the environmental education, as a training course with reference to REC Albania, as resource info center for delivering and provides support and materials.

Universities

REC organized for each university one week course on environmental education. These environmental lectures helped students to combine University curricula with Environmental Education elements, therefore maximize student learning and enable them to increase practical and pedagogical skills and knowledge on environment. Therefore, Environmental Education topics/curricula were incorporated into University Curricula for the first time in the academic year 2009-2010. This initiative helped on the reformation of the university curricula by introducing specific subjects on education for sustainable development and on establishment of multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnership with four main Universities (Geography faculty, Natural Science Faculty, Elbasan University, Shkodra University) on environmental education issues in Albania.

Teacher training

It is important to be mentioned that the teacher training on env. education, organized by REC Albania, is estimated by National Institute of Curricula and Teacher Training with one credit certificate (1 credit is equal with 20 hours training and individual work for teacher and completion of the assessment instrument at the end of training course). This initiative is an investment made in time and at proper direction but different actors should nurture that in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the intervention.

INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

The Green Pack has been produced in 14 national and regional editions, each one adapted substantively, in collaboration with national education and environmental ministries, to the particular country's environmental context and translated into the relevant language or languages.

In 2001, a pilot version of the Green Pack project was supported in Poland. Based on the initial success of this project, and after 10 years of project implementation, the Green Pack has been introduced in 18 countries in the Western Balkans, Europe and Asia. Since 2001, around 30,000 teachers and over 3 million students have been educated, fundamentally changing the way in which the teaching of sustainability is approached.

National versions have appeared in Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czech, Slovakian, Russian, Albanian, Turkish, Macedonian, Azerbaijani, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, and a general European version has been produced in English.

Each project has been developed in cooperation with businesses, governments and NGOs in order to foster community support across a broad spectrum of society.

The Green Pack has been presented at many international forums, including the Fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Kiev in May 2003, the Green Week initiative of the European Commission in Brussels in June 2003, and the European Parliament in Brussels in 2007.



TO KNOW MORE

For some parts of the Green Pack, materials and information for experts have been borrowed from:

- Connections, Teachers manual, ECO Education, Saint Paul, MN, USA.
- The Green School Program, Center for Environmental Education, Pacific Palisades, CA, USA.
- Environment And Development Kit — the Global Perspective, Visual inform, A.S., Oslo, Norway.
- State of the World, Lester Brown, World Watch Institute Reports, 1995-2000.
- 101 Ideas for Environmental Activities, Borrowed Nature, Bulgaria, 2000.
- The Frog and the Ox, Borrowed Nature and Living Earth (UK), 1999.
- Caring for our Future, Action for Europe's Environment, European Commission, 1999.
- Europe's Environment: the Dobris Assessment, European Environmental Agency, 1995.
- Europe's Environment: the Second Assessment, European Environmental Agency, 1998.
- Environment in the European Union at the Turn of the Century, European Environmental Agency, 1999.
- Living in the Environment, Ninth Edition, G.Tyler Miller, Jr., 1996.
- Plani Kombetar i Veprimit per Mjedisin, Ministria e Mjedisit, Tirane, Nentor 2001.
- Mjedisi ne qytetin tim, Qendra Rajonale e Mjedisit-Shqiperi, Shtator 2004.
- Edukimi per Zhvillimin e Qendrueshem, Dokumenta Nderkombetare, Qendra Rajonale e Mjedisit-Shqiperi, 2005.

It is suggested to visit <http://www.rec.org> and <http://www.greenpackonline.org/> webpages as circulation and access to Green Pack is free of charge.

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