Are you wired?

The Course for Sustainability alumni extranet went live in May and several alumni have already visited, updated their profiles and accessed the site’s various resources. But it doesn’t stop there! Why not contribute to the discussions area or upload photos you have from modules you attended?

Whether it is your first time or you are a return visitor, log in at <alumni.sustainablecee.net> and join the alumni community. If you did not receive the e-mail with instructions and your account information, you may request it at sustainablecee@rec.org.

Todd Schenk departing

The Course for Sustainability project manager from the Regional Environmental Center, Todd Schenk, leaves the REC at the end of July. He is grateful for all he learned from the rest of the project team and course alumni over the past three years. Todd is moving to the United States to pursue graduate studies in urban planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Hristina Brogli moves to Finance

Hristina Brogli of Bulgaria (Course III alumni) was recently appointed to the Ministry of Finance of Bulgaria as an expert in the Strategic Investments Department, Management of European Union Funds Directorate. In her new job, she will coordinate and monitor environmental projects.

Mission possible

Action on climate change easier now than later, report says

DEEP TROUBLE: Low-lying population centres such as Venice can expect to face the brunt of devastation wrought by climate change.

By Richard Filcak

Reaching global consensus on the science and economics of climate change is one of the main goals of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Reports produced by the panel every six years are the key elements in the global discussion about what is happening to our climate and how to address the problem. From humble beginnings, each successive report reveals evidence more alarming than the last. This year, the IPCC published three parts of its fourth report. The first two parts, focused on the science of climate change and its global impact, make for depressing reading despite the fact that some of the final findings and the general urgency of the key messages were smoothed over at the demand of the biggest world polluters, including the United States and China. However, the message is clear: The climate is getting worse, human activities are responsible, and most regions are going to suffer from the impacts. On top of it, we will see a rather unequal distribution of the impacts, as the resulting natural disasters will predominantly affect the poor.

On May 4, the IPCC released the third part of its report. This section focuses on mitigation and approaches to changing greenhouse gas (GHG) emission trends. On the bright side, if we want to, we have a good chance of averting disaster if we heed the report’s evaluation of possible mitigation measures across different economic sectors in the short and medium terms (until 2030), and in the long-term (beyond 2030). Policies, measures and instruments to mitigate climate change are often relatively cheap, and even if some approaches cost money now, they will save many times more than that in the
When environmental leaders meet for the Sixth Environment for Europe Conference this fall in Belgrade, one thing they’ll do is take stock of Serbia’s progress in sustainability education.

Along with several other countries around the world, Serbia is in the midst of implementing the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). A steering committee in charge of monitoring progress on the strategy’s implementation will have its final meeting at the Belgrade ministerial conference, scheduled from October 10-12, 2007.

The UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development was based on the precept that education, in addition to being a human right, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, and an essential tool for good governance, informed decisionmaking and the promotion of democracy.

Education for sustainable development develops and strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organisations and countries to make judgments and choices in favour of sustainable development.

The groundwork for the strategy’s preparation lies in the conclusions and decisions of the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002; the Fifth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe (EfE) held in Kiev, May 2003; and the declaration of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2015.

The strategy aims to encourage UNECE member states to develop and incorporate education for sustainable development into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, and into non-formal and informal education as well. This will equip people with knowledge of and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident and increasing their opportunities for acting for a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity.

The strategy’s main objectives are to:

• ensure that policy and regulatory and operational frameworks support education for sustainable development;
• promote sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
• equip educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching;
• ensure that adequate tools and materials for such education are accessible;
• promote research on and development of sustainability education; and
• strengthen cooperation in this work at all levels within the UNECE.

Each country is responsible for the implementation of the strategy while taking into account the country-specific state of affairs and needs.

Activities supporting the implementation of the strategy in Serbia include:

• translation of the strategy into Serbian;

PIN-UPS: Students study insects during a sustainable development seminar at the Djerđap National Park in Serbia.
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future. The message is that the sooner we start the less it will cost. The approaches range from demanding better insulation and banning wasteful incandescent light bulbs to taxing and internalising the external costs of energy production. The question is no longer why, but increasingly when and at what cost. Countries are rather divided in their understanding of mitigation measures, but even the United States is beginning to consider the idea of pricing carbon, either nationally or regionally. California, for instance, has legislated binding emissions reduction targets. A major uncertainty is how the developing world will deal with its entitlements for growth and development vis-à-vis climate change. The exercising of those entitlements will most strongly impact the very same countries. The European Union has become a leader in the global discussion on climate change and is increasingly pushing forward domestic responses to the problem. The European Commission was upset with the results of the first round of the Emissions Trading Scheme and has slashed national allocation plans for the second stage (2008-2012), plans that were backed by the industry and practically useless. Average emissions should be cut by 7 percent in the period. The European Climate Change Programme provides a framework for activities, and the European Commission recently proposed several measures. These include a proposal for including air transport into the scheme; a survey on car emissions reduction; developing carbon capture storage; and merging the environment and transport in the White Book on Transport. The European Energy Strategy aims to reduce energy consumption by 20 percent by the year 2020 (comparing to a no-action scenario), and to promote widespread renewable energy production. But achievements to date have been disappointing. Emissions in the EU-15 have decreased by only 0.9 percent since 1990. Fast-growing economies in new member states will soon face problems balancing growth with environmental protection. Europe aspires to be the world leader in addressing climate change. To do so, it must unite member states, provide examples of best practices and show that it seriously means what it says.

Useful Links:

- European Climate Change Programme http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/ecchp.htm

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- Strengthening cooperation between the education and environment ministries;
- Initial implementation of the strategy through the establishment of a working group;
- Draft work plan for the multi-stakeholders working group;
- Initial preparation of a national action plan for implementation of the strategy;
- Reflection of education for sustainable development in national legal and strategic documents; and
- Collection of initial examples of direct implementation of the strategy for posting on the relevant UNECE webpage.

Some of the main results of implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development are: economically, a shift towards a more sustainable relationship between consumption and production, and the valorisation of natural resources and goods; socially, the strengthening of civil society, shifting decision making in favour of sustainability, promoting equity, integrating knowledge and skills, poverty reduction, balancing urban and rural development, and promoting cultural diversity; and, environmentally, fostering the sustainable consumption of natural resources.

Indeed, we hope that this strategy will be a crucial milestone in the proper inclusion of sustainable development issues into education and for introducing sustainability as an integral part of our everyday lives and ways of thinking.

Miroslav Tadic has bachelor’s degree in environmental biology and works as an advisor in the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia. He may be reached at miroslav.tadic@ekoserb.sr.gov.yu.