

**Local Hub on Strengthening Cooperation
for Implementing Sustainable Development Goals**

Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) Lithuania
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Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, a non-governmental organisation, consists of a team of experts that carry out activities in environmental policy-making and stakeholder involvement, projects in education, the management of natural resources, climate change, energy efficiency, sustainable rural development as well as promoting voluntary public initiatives. Since 2003 BEF Lithuania has belonged to an international BEF Group with offices in Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Russia. The BEF Group is a network around the Eastern Baltic Sea Region of five independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisations. Offices in Hamburg, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and St. Petersburg cooperate and engage in joint activities from the international to local level.

Educational/capacity building components including the preparation of publications, handbooks, training materials are integrated into project activities and voluntary initiatives; special public education and awareness raising is also on the agenda of BEF Lithuania. In the projects BEF brings the right actors together – from public authorities, science, business, industry or civil society by organising round tables, seminars, workshops, conferences and study visits to discuss different interests, to broaden the perspectives of relevant stakeholders in order to increase knowledge and bring forward sustainable solutions.

Since 2013, BEF Lithuania has been involved in RCE Lithuania, a certified member of the global network of Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs), including RCEs in the BSR, that represents the global initiative in ESD of the United Nations University at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), Japan.

The main long-term objectives of *REC-Lithuania* are to: (1) develop methodology and implement activities to mainstream ESD at different levels of the education system including formal and non-formal education; and (2) contribute to the sustainable development of specific territories by mobilising local resources as well as capacity building and innovation for a better quality of life.

Goal and aims of the HUB: SDGs are challenging, particularly for researchers and educators, in translating global targets to local contexts including policy, organisational and personal capacity levels. Thus, the goal of the hub is to initiate a dialogue on the role of higher education institutions and schools and the specific activities to be implemented in promoting and implementing SDGs.

Activities and achievements of the HUB: The main activities of the hub are the following:

1. Round table discussion that provided discussions for 52 stakeholders about the role of formal education promoting SDGs, organised on 26 May, 2016.
2. Consultations with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, Education Development Centre, National Agency of School evaluation and Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The main focus was the 1st objective of the Global Action Programme for ESD, i.e. *Reorienting education and learning so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the values, skills and knowledge that empower them to contribute to sustainable development*.
3. Preparation of recommendations for policy makers and practitioners for promoting SDGs within the formal education system based on desk analysis and conclusions of the round table discussion. Analysis of the strategic documents and regulatory frameworks for secondary education and higher education in relation to SDG 4 (*to ensure inclusive and*

equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) has been worked out based on this round table discussion. Recommendations have been developed for translating global targets to the national level including policy, organisational (*whole-of-institution approach*) and personal capacity levels. An informative letter with recommendations has been disseminated to the main stakeholders of the formal education system. All participants have been encouraged to present and discuss the recommendations in their institutions according to their interests. Recommendations have been sent to the Committee for Education, Science and Culture of the Lithuanian Seimas (the Parliament). A comprehensive discussion on SDGs is planned in the Seimas in September 2016.

The main achievement is that the network of organisations and individual actors has been identified at the national level in order to promote education for sustainable development and citizenship education. They are to be invited to take part in future activities according to their interests in the activities of the Baltic Sea region. The three priorities of the Global Action Programme are to focus on promoting education for sustainable development in Lithuania, i.e. “Advancing policy”, “Building the capacity of educators” and the “whole-of-institution approach” (including quality assurance)” involving both secondary and higher education.

Target groups of the HUB, structure and collaboration: Three target groups representing formal education were identified as the most important: (1) representatives of the expert institutions of the formal education system that supports decision-making processes; (2) representatives of secondary schools; (3) representatives of higher education institutions (universities and colleges). Representatives of these target groups were to a different extent involved in all stages of the project, i.e. consultations, round table discussions and the development of Recommendations. Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science were involved in the stage of consultations.

The activities of the hub are organised together with partners: National Commission for UNESCO and Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre, providing a continuation of the networking projects implemented by the partners dedicated to sustainable universities and sustainable schools. Activities of the hub strengthen stakeholder cooperation coordinated by RCE Lithuania.

Local, national, global and conceptual context of the HUB:

Link to SDGs: Currently, activities on the translation of SDGs into national strategies are initiated by the Prime Minister’s office, involving all Ministries. Developed Recommendations will be immediately presented to the Governmental working group via representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science; a comprehensive discussion is planned in Parliament in September 2016. Recommendations will also be implemented in the networks of sustainable universities and sustainable schools.

Link to the BSRESND strategy: RCE Lithuania (therein represented by BEF Lithuania) will share experiences within BSR compatible with GAP on ESD priority areas, particularly local sustainable decisions, ‘whole-of-institution approach in ESD’ and developing competences of educators.

Being involved in international ESD/SD networks as well as coordinating several thematic networks at the national level, RCE Lithuania will contribute to BSRESND by sharing information and experiences and promoting dialogue among regional/local stakeholders for ESD.

Sustainability of the HUB: RCE Lithuania and BEF Lithuania in particular are rather sustainable. RCE partners have different expertise and may join efforts for more complex initiatives and objectives towards sustainable development as well as establish multiple partnerships based on different networks.

As the follow-up of the project two working groups have been planned: (1) at the Ministry of Education and Science for developing guidelines for the integration of education for sustainable development and citizenship education into the National Curriculum, and (2) at the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for updating Methodology for the Assessment of Higher Education Institutions.

Multiplication and publicity of the HUB's initiatives: Members of RCE Lithuania are going to be active actors within BSRESND and contribute to common strategy and specific activities. Publicity of the project outputs will be ensured by several sources and means:

- Announcement about the event and main summaries of the round table discussion will be published through BEF Lithuania and relevant stakeholder's websites, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn).
- Announcement about the event will be directly distributed to relevant stakeholders.
- As the topic is relevant to current strategic trends, the main outputs will be sent to several thematic media.