

**3-LENSUS Final Conference and stakeholder workshop, University of Macedonia,  
Thessaloniki, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010**



**Seminar Minutes**  
**Virtual Learning for  
Sustainable Development**

**Joint findings of 3-LENSUS, RCEs and partners**



**VIRTUAL LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The seminar 'Virtual Learning for Sustainable Development' took place in the framework of the 3-LENSUS final conference and stakeholder workshop at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

<b>Agenda</b>		
09.00 – 09.15	Welcome and introduction	Clemens Mader
09.15 – 10.00	Virtual learning experiences – <b>The SUN project</b> (Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods)	Dirk Habils, Dirk Knapen, Pieter Valkering
10.00 – 10.30	How virtual learning fosters regional development – <b>The Globally Integrated Village Environment (GIVE)</b>	Franz Nahrada (via Skype)
10.30 – 11.00	Break	
11.00 – 11.30	Intercultural learning of students in regional contexts – <b>INEX</b>	Philipp Schöffmann
11.30 – 12.15	Discussion	all
12.15 – 12.30	Conclusion & results	Clemens Mader



## INPUT SESSIONS

The seminar contained three different input sessions on virtual learning for sustainable development. The aim of the workshop was to address how virtual learning can support sustainable regional development processes and share experiences about success factors as well as limitations of virtual learning.

### VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES – THE SUN PROJECT (SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS)

by Pieter Valkering, Dirk Knapen and Dirk Habils

The European INTERREG IV A project ‘Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods’ (SUN) runs from 2009 until 2011. It involves cities from the Rhine-Meuse Euregio from Germany, Netherlands and Belgium, several universities as well as expert organisations. Objective of the project is to engage these urban neighbourhoods in a sustainable development process. Activities deal with *local economy* (economic enhancement of participating neighbourhoods), *greening* (participative greening of public spaces), *energy* (increase of energy performance of private housing buildings) as well as the *community* (strengthening the social cohesion) (SUN Euregio 2010).

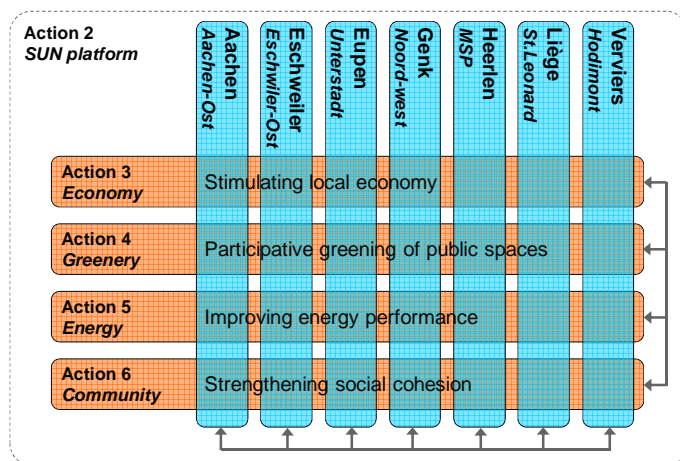
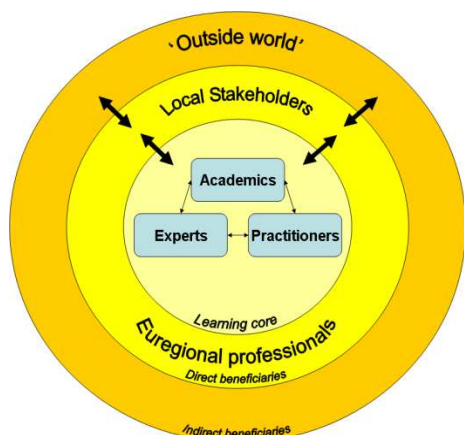


Fig. 1 shows the platform of the SUN project and where interactions take place. On the one hand networking and exchange takes place between the cities, but on the other hand also between particular activities.

Fig. 1: SUN – project structure (SUN)

As an example activities concerning improving the energy performance in the city of Genk, Belgium, were presented. The activities within this work package focus on raising awareness about climate change and energy consumption of buildings, as well as on energy efficient renovation measures of residential buildings. For example an ‘energy challenge’ has been set up, where several households have been provided with smart meter. The challenge of the households is to reduce their energy consumption by 8% in one winter. They are supported with tips and tricks and the smart meters allow them to monitor their energy consumption and compare it with other households. These newly won perspectives about energy consumption should lead to behavioural changes of the tenants. Another project addresses renovation purchasing groups. Information and consultation is provided as well as support regarding purchasing renovation materials as well as applications for subsidies.

Learning plays an important role within the SUN project and presented a main focus of the presentation.



**Fig. 2: Learning within the SUN project (SUN)**

Three groups of learners have been identified within the project (see Fig. 2). The ‘learning core’ represents all people who are directly involved in the project: academics, experts and practitioners. ‘Direct beneficiaries’ of the project form the second group of learners, which exist of local stakeholders as well as local professionals. ‘Indirect beneficiaries’ are described as the outside world. All three groups interact and exchange information and experiences.

Learning activities within SUN are described with regards to target groups and are clustered into practical knowledge, common understanding and capacity building. The learning challenges within this project are on the one hand cultural and language barriers between the partners as well as different starting situations within the neighbourhoods. The exchange among various stakeholders can be defined as a success factor. In collaboration within the 3-LENSUS project an online platform has been developed to support networking activities as well as the exchange of know-how and experiences.

For more information please visit: [www.sun-euregio.eu](http://www.sun-euregio.eu) and [www.learn4sun.eu](http://www.learn4sun.eu)

## **HOW VIRTUAL LEARNING FOSTERS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – GIVE (THE GLOBALLY INTEGRATED VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT)**

by Franz Nahrada

The presentation of the Globally Integrated Village Environment (GIVE) took place on a virtual basis. First a video was shown where Franz Nahrada talked about virtual learning within regional development processes. The idea of GIVE is similar to Wikipedia. Wikipedia has changed education as it has allowed thousands of participants to contribute to the body of knowledge; change and complement information. Hence cooperation is seen as a very effective tool. The vision of the project by GIVE is to interlink educational institutions and their (online) lecture materials so that students from all over the world can access the best available learning kits in each study program. That should look like a ‘learning video Wikipedia’. GIVE started this vision with one small village in Austria – Kirchbach, which is shown in the video sequence. The association KB5 was established there, which serves as a seminar and event location, and as a service and office centre. For example speeches at the University of Graz are live broadcasted to Kirchbach. Especially for peripheral regions video conferences present a valuable tool for gathering information and offer lifelong learning for their inhabitants. Additionally people can get inspired by certain topics, like by a speech about humus and organic farming. This fosters local social cohesion as common interests and activities can be combined.

Afterwards Franz Nahrada discussed questions with the seminar participants via Skype.

For more information about the video please visit: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1115065278070024444&hl=en#> or about GIVE: [http://www.give.at/give/e\\_index.html](http://www.give.at/give/e_index.html)

## INTERCULTURAL LEARNING OF STUDENTS IN REGIONAL CONTEXTS – INEX (INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE)

by Philipp Schöffmann

Philipp Schöffmann, founding member of the Austrian NGO 'INEX' – the International Network for Educational Exchange, presented their organisation and approach to learning for sustainable development. INEX's mission is to *'identify, inspire, educate and empower thousands of change makers by 2014'* (INEX 2010). The organisation is based in Vienna and exists of an advisory board, ten administrative staff as well as student ambassadors and an alumni network. Their activities focus on capacity building, networking as well as transforming higher education towards sustainability. Besides the organisation of public speeches and workshops INEX conducts several projects, such as the university course 'Sustainability Challenge', a summer university in Vienna about 'Green. Building. Solutions' or a summer university in Costa Rica. The course 'Sustainability Challenge' is an interdisciplinary and inter-universitary lecture series that deals with certain aspects of sustainable development. The course takes place at four universities in Vienna – the University of Vienna, the Technical University, the University of Economics and Business and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. Topics such as climate change, ecological economics, sustainable building and energy as well as socio-ecological politics are being addressed. 90 students from 50 different study curricula participated in the summer term 2010. The summer university in Vienna 'Green. Building. Solutions' will first take place in 2011. It deals with sustainable building and living and combines academic sessions and practical know-how. Another summer university that is organised by INEX takes place in Costa Rica – for the eleventh time in July 2011. This program has been awarded by the Austrian UNESCO Commission for its contribution to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Students participate in academic courses about sustainable development, in Spanish language courses as well as excursions and fieldtrips to local companies. By means of this summer university INEX aims at 'learning for change' (Fig. 3).

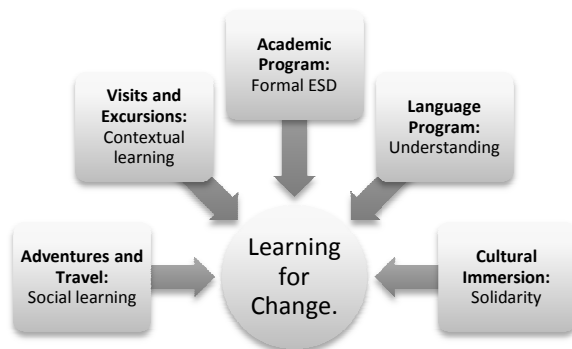


Fig. 3: Learning for change approach (by Schöffmann)

The learning for change approach should lead to paradigm shifts – by personal experiences, contextual as well as social learning, understanding and the activation of all human senses.

For more information please visit: [www.inex.org](http://www.inex.org)



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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24 people participated in the seminar on Virtual Learning for Sustainable Development. Twelve participants are part of the 3-LENSUS team, and twelve people are regional partners from Austria, the Czech Republic, Serbia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Greece. Two acknowledged RCEs and two interested RCEs attended the seminar as well.