

Strategies and challenges for education for sustainable  
development in higher education  
– focus on the Baltic Sea region

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Kofi Annan:

“..Education should provide students with the skills, perspectives, values, and knowledge to live sustainably in their communities. It should be interdisciplinary, integrating concepts and analytical tools from a variety of disciplines. Few successful working models of education programmes for sustainable development currently exist.”



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## Background 1:

- 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm
- 1983 UN World Commission on Environment and Development
- 1987 "Our Common Future", the Brundtland-report
- 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21
- 1992 UN Commission on Sustainable Development
- 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg

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## Background 2:

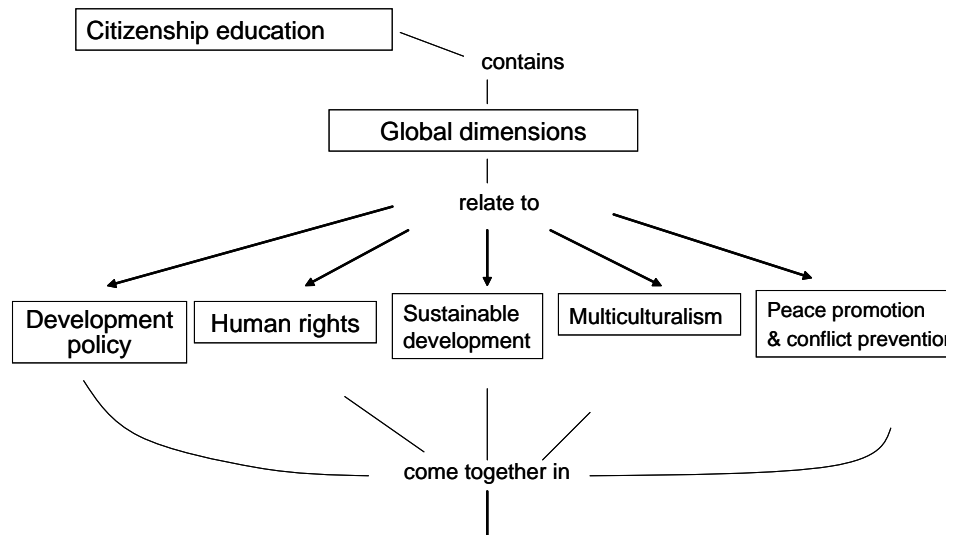
1990 Education for All (EFA), Jomtien

2000 UN World Summit Declaration

2000 The World Education Forum, Dakar

2002 The Maastricht Global Education Declaration

2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development,  
Johannesburg





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## The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014.

Phase 1: National and regional strategies, guidelines, action plans

Phase 2: Implementation through projects, networks, good practices, competence development, study materials etc

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- The Baltic 21, or the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, is advancing sustainable development in the region in cooperation with the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS).
- The Baltic 21 Education sector was launched in 2002 together with a strategy for education for sustainable development (ESD). The Education sector has enhanced the work with national strategies, action plans and curriculum development on ESD.



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- Baltic 21 Education - Haga declaration 2000
- Definition of ESD:
- *"ESD should be based on an integrated approach to economic, environmental and societal development and encompass a broad range of related issues such as democracy, gender equity and human rights. This broad approach should be recognised in both natural science and social science, and should complement and build on existing initiatives on environmental education."*



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Baltic 21 E – goal for higher education (2002):

The individual learners should have such skills and competence relevant to their future professions and future roles as decision-makers. Higher education should also play an active role locally, nationally, and internationally in enhancing knowledge and action competence regarding sustainable development through research and education in cooperation with surrounding society.

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DESD in Europe:

2002 Baltic 21 E – Strategy

2005 European DESD strategy, Vilnius

The overall vision for education for sustainable development is that sustainability should be integrated in curricula at all levels and in every subject



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Baltic 21 Education sector Lead Parties, Finland and Lithuania (2005-08), have advocated for Baltic University Programme to become a permanent expert organ for the Baltic21.

Baltic University Programme has national focal points/centres in all countries. The centres coordinate the activities in their countries and participate in the development of the programme together with the secretariat at Uppsala University. Over the years the centres have developed considerable expertise in SD. Centres are supported by hosting university.

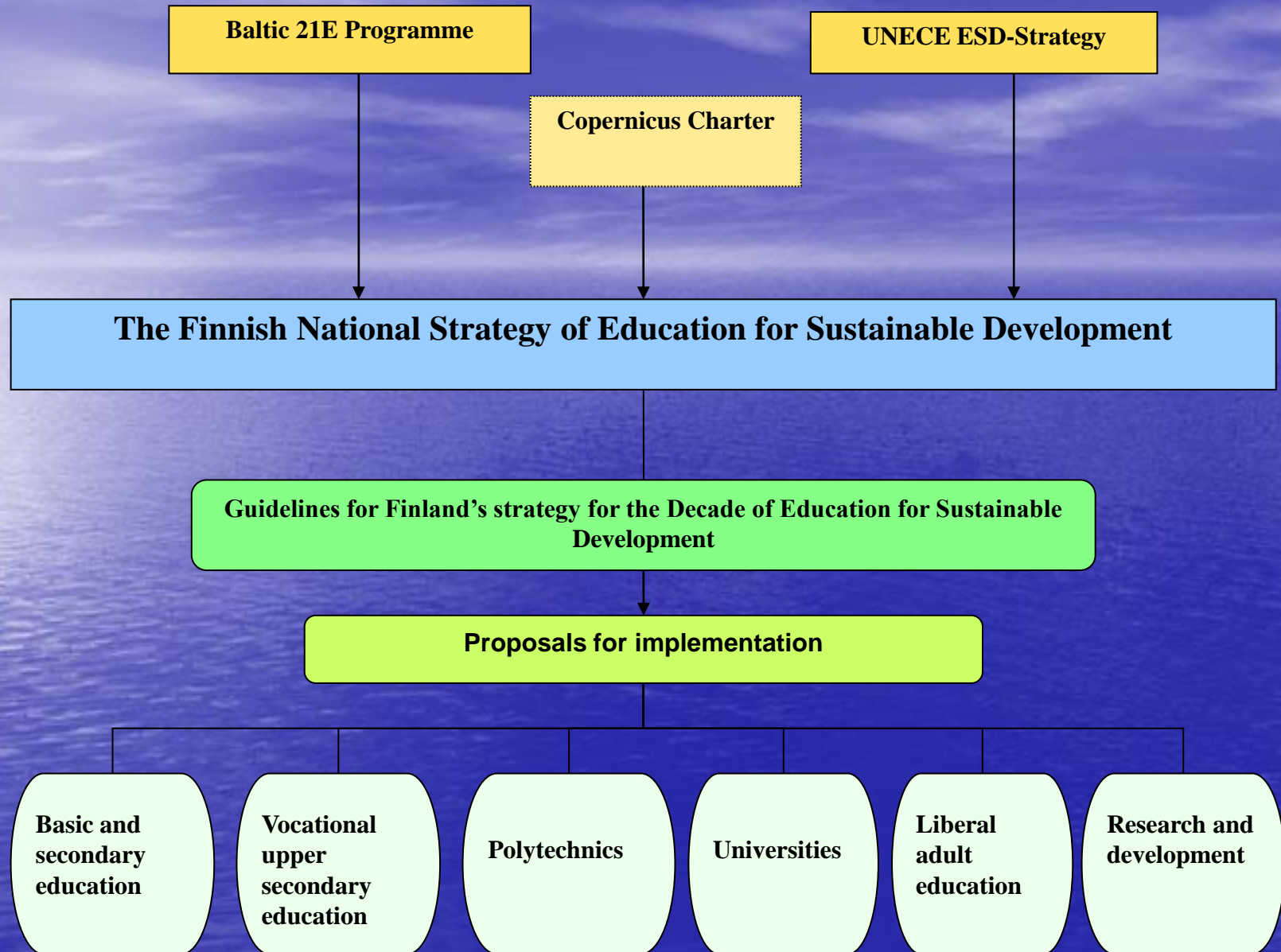
Strengthening of centres in each country will increase impact and visibility of ESD and the centres could become ESD resource centres in HE. Finland has supported the centre with project funding 2004-06 and 2007-09.

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The Finnish vision and strategic lines for ESD in the education systems are based on:

- national education policy documents
- the ESD strategy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- the Baltic 21E programme
- university charters for sustainable development.





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- **Short overview of ESD in Finnish higher education:**
- EE in all IHE
- SD Study programmes in universities of applied science
- Courses, lectures at universities
- Masters ' Programmes
- Focus on natural sciences
- – challenge: to involve humanities, social and economic sciences
- Challenges - Bologna process:
- Bachelors and Masters ' programmes



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- **The university perspective on ESD (1)**

### **ESD – just a new label on Environmental Education?**

- Focus is still very much on *environmental* issues
- Difficulties to involve i.e. humanities, social science

### **ESD – course arrangements at university**

- Multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary
- Too many courses at the introduction level, and too few specialization courses.
- Problems: materials, teaching and learning methods, and - traditions

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- **The university perspective on ESD (2)**

**ESD – learning outcomes at university**

- **In education for SD, the competencies needed include resource management, demand management and competence to handle conflicting interests**  
**AND**
- **Communication of uncertainty and risk, whereas traditional evolution of knowledge aims at minimizing uncertainty.**

**ESD – as part of the 3rd mission?**

- **In line with national legislation for HE, or eg. the Copernicus charter universities have a third mission in parallel with research and education and which commits them to knowledge and technology transfer to other target groups.**



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## ● SWOT for ESD in universities

### **Strength**

- closeness to development in society

### **Weakness**

- absence of academic traditions, lack of materials

### **Opportunity**

- new teaching and learning approaches

### **Threat**

- status of non-academic activities



Thank you!



