

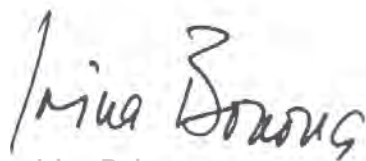
Foreword

by Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO

The Rio+20 Conference reaffirmed that universal access to primary education and quality education at all levels are “essential for achieving sustainable development.” For this, it recognized the vital importance of Education for Sustainable Development. This has strengthened my conviction in UNESCO’s role as lead agency for the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development* and all our work to develop new approaches to quality education. It confirmed also my intention to seek to transform the Decade into an institutionalized process beyond 2014.

This is the wider context for this publication on ***Education for Sustainable Development in Biospheres Reserves and other Designated Areas – A Resource Book for Educators in South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean***. This book illustrates the power of UNESCO when it acts across its mandate, combining work in education and the sciences within the scope of the Man and the Biosphere Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves. This showcases our action to promote holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development in meaningful ways on the ground.

This book is destined to find an audience across the world, with teachers and students, with managers and researchers, with all those interested in practical work for sustainability. Education for sustainable development is essential for laying the foundations for the future we want for all. This principle guides all UNESCO’s work.



Irina Bokova

Introduction

This Resource Book is the result of a large team work that has the ambition to effectively promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the field and in particular in Biosphere Reserves (BRs) of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme of UNESCO, as well as in other designated areas that share some fundamental features with MAB BRs. The combination with attempts to get a “win-win” result is: ESD can be well developed and demonstrated in such areas while ESD activities extended beyond the schooling system bring substance, interest and support to the management and protection of Biosphere Reserves.

ESD is an innovative type of education that incorporates the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability, challenging the prevailing current economic development models that have led, on the one hand, to the global economic crisis and, on the other, to complex global and local environmental problems such as resources depletion, climate change, biodiversity loss, etc. Addressing such issues with the interdisciplinary, holistic and comprehensible approach of ESD is a key principle applied for the development of the current training material.

The history of this publication goes back to 2008 - when the first material on ESD in Protected Areas was produced in Greece by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE). The UNESCO Venice Office expressed its interest in supporting its adaptation in order to address the needs of ESD educators from other South Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. This was made out of the conviction that Biosphere Reserves are sites where sustainable development is being implemented in practice. Designated areas with a similar type of national or international status are not so many and are privileged places where innovative ESD approaches should be developed and tested in favour of multiple audiences. During the period 2008-2012, the Greek material has been translated into English, enriched with examples from various countries of the region, tested “in the field” by ESD practitioners and repeatedly evaluated by experts. The milestones of its production included:

- *November 2008*: First evaluation of the draft English material by a group of experts (Prof. G. Arapis, Agricultural University of Athens; Ass. Prof. M. Biasutti, University of Padova; Mr. N. Benessaiah, MED WET, Greece; Mr. V. Kouroutos, MB of Sporades Marine Park; Prof. T. Neyisci, Akdeniz University; Mr V. Psallidas, educator; Prof. M. Ricard, University of Bordeaux; Prof. M. Scoullos, University of Athens; Ms. A. Trikaliti, Science Consultant, Greece; Ass. Prof. A. Valavanidis, University of Athens).
- *June 2009*: Presentation and testing of the amended material during a 3-day training Workshop, in Lavrion (Greece), which was attended by 41 participants.
- *June - December 2009*: Piloting parts of the material during a 6-month period by ESD field experts, who gave useful evaluation inputs, collected mostly through questionnaires.
- *May 2010*: Development and launch of the project webpage (www.mio-ecsde.org/protected-areas/), and opening of the electronic form of the material for consultation with invited experts.
- *September 2010*: Development of an eLearning tool (demo) based on chapter 4, dedicated to the management of designated areas (<http://elearning.mioecsde.org/>).
- *November 2010*: Final Evaluation of the material during a special experts’ meeting which provided the final guidance and comments for the material produced a few months later. (Experts: Mr. V. Drobenov, REC CEE – Bulgaria; Mr. R. Mc Merty, USA; Ms. T. Mitrofaneko, UNEP / Vienna Office; Mr. V. Psallidas, educator; Mr. P. Pypaert UNESCO Venice Office; Prof. M. Ricard, University of Bordeaux; Ms. C. Roniotes, IT expert, Greece; Prof. M. Scoullos; University of Athens; Mr. R. Sedola, Lands NGO).

- *April 2011*: The UNESCO Venice Office officially adopted the material and engaged professional editors, co-ordinated by Mrs. H. Gille, France, to incorporate new inputs from UNESCO experts and to finalize its publishing.

Developed within the “UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development” (DESD 2005-2014), this material aims to address the acknowledged limited capacities of trainers to design and implement innovative and authentic educational projects, in MAB BRs and other designated areas, thereby using them as “ESD laboratories.”

The material is structured into two closely interrelated parts. The first Part focuses on key ecological principles and concepts, as well as on contemporary sustainable development challenges, and describes how MAB BRs and other designated areas function and/or should operate to address them properly. The second Part presents ESD concepts, methods and ideas, tailored-made to the particularities of South Eastern European and Mediterranean countries.

The material specifically targets all types of educators, trainers, “environmental interpreters” and relevant officers of MAB BRs, Environment Centres, Nature Parks, Eco-museums, NGOs, etc. within all kinds of designated area in South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean area. Eventually, it can be used by all those involved in implementing awareness-raising programmes in the field, within the formal or non-formal education systems.

We would like to sincerely thank all the contributors to this effort, the authors, the experts, the evaluators, and most of all the field practitioners that tried it out and provided useful comments so as to reach the final stage of publishing. Particular thanks go to Ms. Iro Alampei, Project officer of MIO-ECSD / MEDIES and Mrs. H el ene Gille, Consultant to UNESCO, who have coordinated the production of this publication. We hope that the readers will find it useful for their work. Enjoy the reading!

Prof. Michael SCULLOS, MIO-ECSDE Chair

Mr. Philippe PYPAERT, UNESCO Venice Office