



Erasmus Thematic Network Project
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"We must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and the future wellbeing of the human family and the larger living world."
The Earth Charter

Responsibility: top-down commands or bottom-up initiatives?

At the second annual international gathering of the Consumer Citizenship Network, held May 26-27, 2005 at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia, 147 participants from 35 countries came together to examine the question of how to identify criteria for responsible action in the marketplace. The record breaking heat-wave in the city did not stop the participants from spending evenings as well as daytime eagerly discussing together issues of government, corporate and individual responsibility. Guest speakers at the conference came from the USA, Canada, Argentina and Italy and spoke of the challenges of the placing of responsibility where it belongs, the dynamics of shared responsibility and the burden of bearing responsibility. 50 presentations were made describing research and development work about topics such as: peer pressure and self-image; acquiring knowledge of consumer rights; risk perception and labelling; ICT as tools for citizenship; Agenda 21 and consumer citizenship; corporate and consumer social responsibility; health and illness alienation; and teaching responsibility. Conference consultations focused on: how mature civic involvement can affect the development of a more just and caring global society. Participants also exchanged experiences about how "taking responsibility" can be taught in higher education particularly in relation to consumer citizenship education. With feathers flying, water dripping and eggs breaking open on the floor, some even tested out concrete didactical methods during the pauses in the program. The Sustainable Everyday Project exhibition provided both the CCN conference and the public in Bratislava with an extensive, interactive presentation of scenarios, projects and real cases of sustainable solutions for responsible lifestyles. The exhibition described (via texts, pictures and videos) scenarios of everyday life functions. Participants were able to provide feedback and comments. A brief pictorial report of the conference has been made and is being sent to all conference participants as well as all CCN partners. A book of the best papers presented will be published and a cd will be made and sent to all conference participants and CCN partners. The conference committee would again like to express its sincere thanks to University of Bratislava for hosting the conference.

Public Appeal

The participants at the CCN conference in Bratislava reviewed the draft of a public appeal to educational authorities and leaders of institutions of higher education. It was suggested that CCN partners present the appeal, (which will be forwarded to CCN partners per email) to the heads of their institutions as

well as the political authorities in their city. Presentation to national educational authorities or to the press should be coordinated among the CCN partner institutions in each country. It was recommended that the first institution in each national listing in the CCN partner index on the CCN website could consider taking on this task.

Present activities and new developments

The pedagogical predicament

The Consumer Citizenship Network partners have, during the two years since the start of the network, discussed and debated the concepts of sustainable development and consumer citizenship education. This has been done in thematic group meetings, at conferences, in online discussions and through a curriculum survey.

The cumulative impressions, in brief, have been that numerous aspects of sustainable development and consumer citizenship are taught but that there is a general lack of cohesiveness and innovation. On the conceptual level, the understanding of the vision of sustainable human development is vague or lacking. On the level of course content, some of what is presented is based on outdated material and models which haven been proven to function poorly in real life. On the didactical level, teachers struggle to combine theory, research and practice, finding it difficult to connect the course content to the everyday lives of the students. And on the level of student motivation, teachers encounter disillusionment, passivity, fatalism and a sense of powerlessness.

CCN's teaching/learning guidelines

The first volume of the CCN teaching/learning guidelines, which is at the moment in the process of final editing, tries to provide examples of ways of bringing together diverse approaches to consumer citizenship education. It highlights the universal need for common awareness of the implications of "improved quality of life" and of the consequences of present consumption patterns. The guidelines emphasize the value of developing quality courses in higher education which support the Bologna process by enhancing the relevance of European higher education to society's present needs as well as being compatible with the Lisbon strategy by contributing to the adaptability and responsiveness of higher education. Although the guidelines are valuable and necessary, such handbooks alone are not sufficient to create significant changes.

Important areas of further focus

There is a general consensus amongst the CCN partners that the items mentioned below can contribute to improving the quality and

comprehensiveness of education for sustainable development:

- Continued networking and transdisciplinary inquiry between academicians, researchers and representatives of civil society so as to continuously bring together different competences and knowledge about sustainable development.
- A greater emphasis on teaching generic competences related to communication skills, information handling, and social involvement.
- Increased inclusion of value education in all aspects of consumer citizenship in order to stimulate the taking of responsibility.
- Strengthening the processes of identifying social innovation, evaluating promising cases, clarifying the conditions requiring such innovations and reflecting on the consequences of such initiatives.
- Improving the use of ict and multimedia to raise awareness of relevant cases of social innovation.

Other CCN initiatives

The CCN has taken a number of practical steps in an attempt to stimulate some of the above items. The CCN has been:

- encouraging staff and student exchange between CCN institutions
- encouraging the use and translation of UNESCO/UNEP's YouthXchange materials
- disseminating a public appeal to educational authorities and leaders of institutions of higher education
- contributing to the planning and developing of modules on consumer citizenship related topics in higher education
- establishing cooperation with researchers, academicians in higher education and representatives of civil society organizations from continents other than Europe
- preparing for the creation of a Mobile Mediatek for the UN Decade for education for Sustainable Development
- strengthening collaboration between initiatives dealing with "learning to learn" and initiatives concerned with learning to be a critical, aware, consumer citizen

New approaches

Of the above mentioned steps, it is particularly the last two (e and f) which provide opportunities for involving teacher trainers and student teachers with hands-on experience which they can replicate in their classrooms.

Proposed pilot project: LOLA

The CCN will carry out a pilot project focusing on: *searching for cases of social innovation as a didactic process to raise sustainability awareness*. This will be called Looking for likely alternatives (LOLA) and aims to adapt to the needs of higher education and specifically to the needs of consumer citizenship education, the results of the FP6 project "Creative Communities": EMUDE (Emerging user demands for sustainable solutions: social innovation as a driver for technological and system innovation) (<http://www.indaco.polimi.it/emude/>) and the experiences of the Sustainable Everyday Project (www.sustainable-everyday.net).

This will be done in a two part program by first involving 3 to 5 teacher training schools in the process of collecting cases of social innovation, documenting the didactic process (web based) and maintaining an open discussion on the experience amongst the CCN members (web based). The second part of the program will involve the visualisation and presentation of the results in order to further replication of the process and extensive use of the cases. This will involve an analysis of the open discussion and a written synthesis, a presentation at the forthcoming CCN conference and printed material to be displayed on the SEP exhibition at the coming CCN conference. If your institution is interested in participating, contact the CCN Core Unit.

Plans for coming 3 year cycle

The Consumer Citizenship Network is preparing a pre-proposal for a second three year cycle. During the coming three years there is the possibility of continuing and expanding the work of the CCN. The CCN will try to preserve the best of the present network and move forward on new fronts. The publication program will continue, with further Guidelines and handbooks for consumer citizenship education. These will be adapted for publication in an online version. Plans for promoting a European Masters in Consumer Citizenship Education will be made. A number of the CCN partners have expressed interest in developing the pilot project, LOLA, further. There will also be a parallel application to Erasmus Mundus in order to create a firmer platform for cooperation with institutions from other continents. Work connected to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development will be focused on (strategies, campaigns, teaching materials, etc).

Development of criteria for a set of indicators for responsible consumer citizenship is one of the major challenges of the new three year period and there are several concrete approaches to this which the thematic groups have suggested. The Network will also attempt to cross the public / private divide through increased involvement of business.

The third CCN Conference

Catalyzing Change

**May 15-16 2006
Hamar, Norway**

CCN Conference

The third CCN international conference will take place in Hamar, Norway and focus on consumers as agents for change. In addition to the presentation of CCN partner research and development there will be several new features this year: more time for bringing forth and discussing special issues, an exhibition of cases of sustainable consumption created by CCN partners involved in LOLA, and an international reference library with examples of teaching materials related to consumer citizenship. Details about the focus topics and guest speakers will be sent to you soon. But please begin to look for inexpensive flights to Oslo.

Some practical things to note: The conference participants are expected to arrive on Sunday afternoon the 14th of May. A joint dinner will be arranged for Sunday. The conference opens on Monday morning the 15th and ends Wednesday at 17pm the 16th. The 17th of May is the Norwegian national day and is celebrated in a unique manner, quite unlike any other country. The participants of the thematic groups and steering group will have their meetings on Thursday afternoon from 13-17 pm (the morning and evening of the 17th will be available to participate in the traditional Norwegian festivities. Please also note that if you take a flight to Oslo South Torp airport you will have to take a bus and then a train (total trip of about 4 hours) whereas the main Oslo (Gardemoen) airport is only 60 minutes from Hamar.

can be sent to the CCN Core Unit.
ccn@hihm.no

International CCN partners

The CCN has received numerous requests from institutions of higher education, research centres and civil society organizations outside of Europe who wish to join the network and participate in the CCN activities. At the moment CCN has associated partners in India, Malawi, Namibia, USA, Canada, Ukraine, Argentina, and Kenya. This is an important expansion of the work CCN does. Economic and social conditions outside of Europe are integrally connected to consumer citizenship and consumer citizenship education. Understanding the interrelatedness of social and economic development is essential when dealing with issues of global responsibility. Having partners from Africa, Asia, South and North America with which to discuss and exchange experiences can enrich the CCN work. See the CCN website for an update including the contact information of these associated partners.

Staff and student exchange

How does one initiate and coordinate staff and student exchange between institutions of higher education, or between research centres or civil society organizations? This question has been posed repeatedly. Although staff and student exchange has increased between CCN partners within areas related to consumer citizenship, there is still uncertainty as to who to contact, what to do and how to pay for such exchanges. Some of the CCN thematic groups have begun preparing a small handbook with practical suggestions and information. This will be sent to all CCN partners as soon as it is completed.

Student study trips— a consumer citizen's nightmare?

A handbook about student trips in third world countries from the perspective of consumer citizenship is being prepared. This will include tips and suggestions to teachers in higher education about how to prepare and carry out visits in a manner which stimulates the student's understanding of the complexity of issues related to lifestyles, resource management, international trade and respect for diversity. Contributions to the handbook are welcome and

Communication strategy

The CCN partners have compiled the following suggestions for increasing the visibility of consumer citizenship and influencing decision-makers on its importance and relevance.

1. Spread as widely as possible the available printed material about the Network
2. Include descriptions and links of the CCN Network on your own institutional website.
3. Write articles in local/national professional journals about consumer citizenship.
4. Inform the media (press, radio, tv) about CCN events (thematic group meetings hosted by your institution, international conferences, etc) Invite representatives from your national Socrates office to open the meetings.
5. Mention the CCN activities in connection with presentations/lectures you give in your own institution or as a guest lecturer at conferences or other institutions.
6. When you initiate cooperation between CCN partners for research and development work, inform your institutions as to where and how this came about.

Please send the Core Unit a copy of each article, website, etc and a short description in English as to the contents.

Dates for you to remember

- October 2, 2005 Thematic group 4 – Global solidarity in Lisbon, Portugal
- October 3-4, 2005 Steering group in Lisbon, Portugal
- October 7, 2005 Thematic group 5 – Involvement in Beja, Portugal
- October 14-15, 2005 Thematic group 3 in Rzeszow, Poland
- October 28, 2005 Thematic group 1 – ethical challenges in Helsinki
- Dec. 1, 2005 Abstracts for conference in May
- May 15-16, 2006 Third CCN conference
- May 17, 2006 steering group and thematic group meetings

Sustainable development thematic group

A sixth thematic group will convene during the third year of the CCN activities. This group will meet in Helsinki on the 28th of October as well.

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