



Baikal Information Centre  
„GRAN“ Ulan-Ude

## Intercultural Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

By organising Programs of German-  
Russian Youth Exchange of NGOs  
from Osnabrueck, North-West Germany  
and the Baikal Region



Background: The cooperation between the „Association for Ecology and Environmental Education Osnabrueck“ (AfE) and the Baikal Information Centre GRAN in Ulan-Ude originated from an International project under the title "Experiencing Environmental Education and Internet" of GRAN. At the end of this project an International youth camp (Ecoweek) was carried out in July, 2004 at the Lake Baikal - the deepest, oldest and largest lake of the world and a World Natural Heritage Site of UNESCO. As academic representative of Environmental Education and ESD (University of Osnabrueck) and as the chairperson of the AfE, Gerhard Becker participated in this youth camp and was impressed by the activities. The cooperation was then being continued by a three week tour through the fascinating Baikal Lake Region in the Russian Republic of Buryatia: On this occasion, existing contacts were intensified and extended by lectures, sightseeing trips and numerous discussions. In return a buryatian delegation visited Osnabrueck in 2005 which led to a cooperation agreement between GRAN and the AfE and the working group "Environmental Education of the Local Agenda 21 Osnabrueck" (WG EE)

**GLOBAL DENKEN**



**LOKAL HANDELN**

Lokale Agenda 21 Osnabrück

The major aim was to set up a long-term cooperation that potentially covers the total area of education with special focus on subjects referring to Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development (Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)). Due to the fact that both GRAN in Buryatia as well as AfE and the WG EE in Osnabrueck maintain and pursue intensive networking with schools, other educational actors and respective local universities the project started under most favorable conditions.

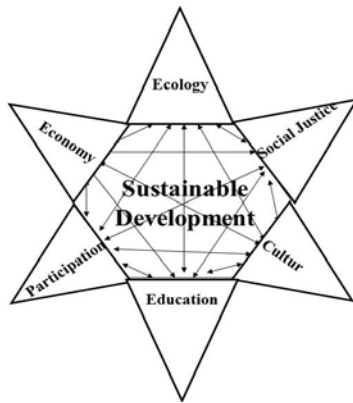
Since 2007, exchange visits of German and Russian young adults take place at a regular annual basis, both in Buryatia as well as in the Osnabrueck region with approx. 30-35 young persons from both partners in order to implement the proposed aims of an intercultural BNE (see below). Focus of each exchange project are topical regional subject fields relevant for future, e.g., urban life, waters, nature (in particular wood and animal world), also food / agriculture, garbage, regenerative energy, mobility, ecological, regional and cultural diversity. Additional activities include excursions to interesting sceneries (e.g., island Langeoog in the mud flats of the North Sea, National Park at Lake Baikal), visits to cultural locations (e.g. museums), to religious sights (e.g. Buddhist temples and holy places) or visits to local companies of industry and commerce in order to gain insights into the professional world of work.



Lake Baikal 2008

With all these new impressions, the young guests might feel in the beginning that they are being overwhelmed with strange and new experience as part of a foreign country, culture and different forms of social behavior. Therefore, discussions and exchange of ideas and concepts as well as explanations in form of intercultural communication are a vital and most inspiring part of the project. In addition,

intercultural exchange is further reinforced by accommodation offered in guest families in Osnabrueck or at Ulan Ude respectively, or in form of joint lodging during the period of leisure activities, e. g. during the one-week stay at the Environmental Education Center 'Noller Schlucht' in the vicinity of Osnabrueck or at Lake Baikal which proved to be very effective. ESD under an intercultural perspective is a very innovative educational approach which employs many creative methods with cultural educational focus. Furthermore, including the individual interests and particular background settings of the often very heterogeneous youth groups is a very challenging aspect which requires thorough preparation before and methodical evaluation after the exchange.

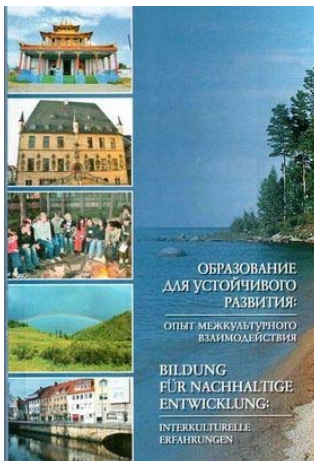


Star of Sustainable Development' (Becker)

For both partners, the guiding principle focuses on "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)". With regards to contents, this implies for the Osnabrueck actors an integrated view of ecological, social, economic, participatory democratic as well as cultural dimensions of the topics and also the inclusion of aspects of international and intergenerational justice. Another objective is to promote a competence of action (in German: Gestaltungskompetenz), i.e. the disposition to create sustainable development at all levels of actions - from the individual to the political level, from the local one to the worldwide level (s. bibliographic recommendations below). The didactic-methodical instruments were derived from practical experience, tested during the course of six exchange programs and are continuously being improved accordingly.



Since the very beginning of our cooperation we unanimously agreed in our major aim, i.e. to make an International contribution to the UN decade "Education for Sustainable Development" in 2005-2014. In this context we succeeded so far as the AFE was praised twice (2009-2012) and the WG EE even four times (2005- 2012) as "Official German Projects for the UN Decade ESD" for our successful and intensive International cooperation and for other projects of AfE /WG EE in Osnabrueck by the German National Committee for the UN Decade.



In 2009 an interim balance was drawn and published in form of a bilingual book in which all partners had their say: *Becker, Gerhard / Dagbaeva, Nina (Hg.): Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung – interkulturelle Erfahrungen, Osnabrück/Ulan-Ude 2009*. Recent publication: *Becker, Gerhard: Interkulturelle Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung in der internationalen Jugendbildung. Theoretische Grundlagen und didaktische Fragen. In: Overwien/ Rode (Hg.): Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung: Lebenslanges Lernen, Kompetenz und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe. 2012, p. 185-216 (in print).*

New conceptual impulses for the forthcoming youth exchange programs in 2013 and 2014 will be gained from the Expert and Team leader Conference for Youth Exchange, the first part of which was held from 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012 to 2<sup>nd</sup> of July in Osnabrueck and the second part being scheduled for 2013 in Buryatia. For the past ten years, our cooperation was always also extended to the academic and expert level, a fact that is reflected by several publications and contributions in the conferences (e.g. Baikal conference in 2009, DRJA conference in 2011).

We owe it to the financial support of the German-Russian Youth Exchange Foundation (DRJA) and other financing institutions in Germany and Russia that we are able to carry out such projects.

**Further information and contact addresses:**

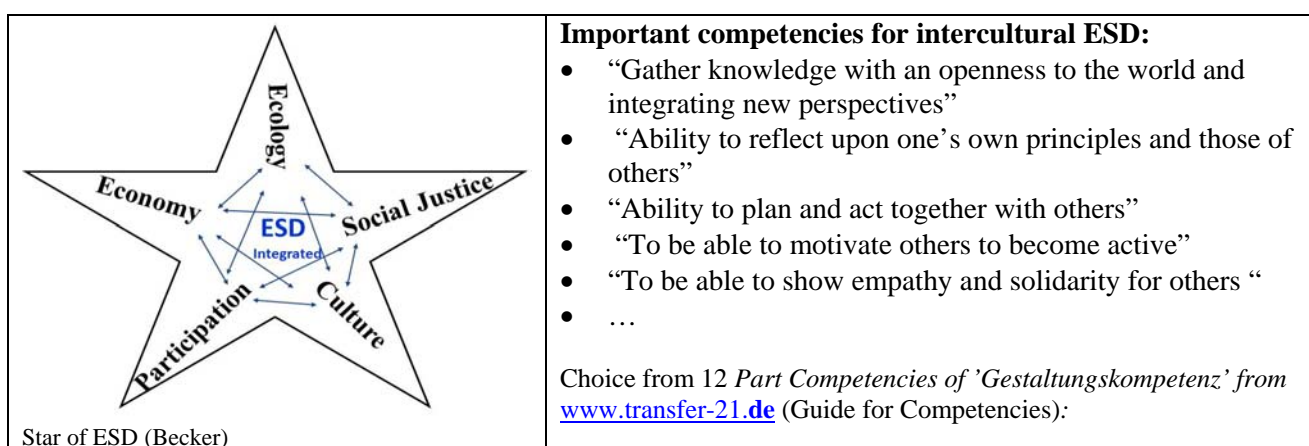
Web page on the Cooperation in German Russian-English language: <http://www.baikal-osnabrueck.net>  
 Association for Ecology and Environmental Education Osnabrueck“ (AfE):<http://www.umweltbildung-os.de/verein>  
 WG EE (“Environmental Education of the local agenda 21 Osnabrueck”): [www.umweltbildung-os.de](http://www.umweltbildung-os.de)  
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**Dr. Gerhard Becker, UBINOS, c/o Universität Osnabrück**  
**Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and International Youth Exchange: Didactical Issues <sup>1</sup>**

For the organization and planning programs of youth exchange or long-term cooperations, NGOs are well advised to consider the following didactical aspects and questions implied.

**1. Dimensions of ESD**

- Theoretical model for ESD: Which dimensions are chosen for precise planning of ESD-projects of the international youth work /Youth exchange? I prefer Economy, Ecology, Social Justice, Culture and Participation (s. 'Star of ESD and 'Star of sustainable Development' on the page before)
- Which consequences are implied by the chosen multidimensional model for sustainable development for generating and planning of ESD projects of International Youth Work and/or Exchange?
- Which subjects and contents are particularly suitable to be dealt with in relation to the chosen dimensions?
- Which of the subject-related phenomena can be observed, experienced or practised on site from the youthful participants?
- How can we ensure that the selected aspects of a subject are both comprehensive as well as feasible during the limited time period of the youth exchange program.



**2. Competencies of ESD**

- When planning BNE projects of International Youth Work and/or Exchange: which are the particular competencies that should be formulated in form of objectives for individual modules, particular sections of the program or the entire program.
- Which are the competencies that should be developed for a better human relationship with nature
- Which are the moral and ethical competencies that should be promoted under the aspect of ESD?
- Which are the fields and levels of action (private, local up to global) that the competencies should be addressed to?

**3. ESD and Intercultural Education**

- To which of the different levels and meanings of culture should the other dimensions of ESD be related and experienced? Suitable examples?
- How can young adults be made aware of the social-cultural character of human relations to nature and environment? Suitable examples?

<sup>1</sup> These theses are found in similar formulation in my article: Interkulturelle Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung in der internationalen Jugendbildung. Theoretische Grundlagen und didaktische Fragen. In: Overwien/ Rode (Hg.): Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung: Lebenslanges Lernen, Kompetenz und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe. 2012, p. 185-216 (in print). I have explained them before in a similar form on the IJAB conference in the 10/14/2011 in Saint Andreasberg / Harz

- Which particular sections of the program in these fields are highly suitable for initiating and promoting processes of intercultural or transcultural learning. And which are the objectives and measures of intercultural learning, either in organised forms or by informal learning processes?

#### **4. Culture of every-day life**

- How can intercultural learning be promoted in the daily life of events of International Youth Exchange, in particular under the aspect of (non-)sustainable forms of behaviour, life styles and the moral values implied?

#### **5. Biological and cultural diversity**

- Are there any relations between biological and cultural diversity, and in which manner and by means of which phenomena are these to be detected?
- On the one hand: How can the Protection of cultures and their diversity (UN Convention 2005) be made central subject of discussion within the within the scope of sustainable development?
- On the other hand: How can a modified further development of existing cultures be initiated if necessary for sustainable development (task for transcultural ESD)

#### **6. ESD as holistic education**

- How is it possible to use a holistic concept of education when planning ESD projects of International Youth Work and/or Exchange in view of the entire program or in relation to parts of it, i.e. individual modules?

#### **7. Participation**

- In which way is it possible to include the participation of the young adults in the preliminary planning processes?
- Which are the individual parts of the programme that are in particular suitable for young adults' participation in practical implementation?

#### **8. Information about the participants in the Youth Exchange**

- What are the characteristics of the young adults that participate in the ESD project of International youth exchange: Age, gender, level of (school) education, linguistic competence, previous experience with international youth programs and meetings, personal motives,...
- Which previous experiences and knowledges have the young adults the on subjects of the whole intercultural ESD-Program?
- In which way would it be helpful to have preparatory activities organized by the respective partner organizations in order to prepare the young adults in an adequate manner for their exchange visit?
- How can Internet facilities be best employed to promote communication and mutual understanding amongst the young participants from the partner countries before, between and also after the actual encounters during the exchange program?

#### **9. Competencies of the responsible NGOs**

- Do the Responsible Agencies of each side dispose of a sufficient number of competent actors in order to implement the program on the whole or in parts in a successful manner?
- What kind of external experts and trustworthy partners of cooperation could be won for the programme?

#### **10. Common Approach for ESD?**

- How will it be possible for the different partner organizations involved to develop a common approach to ESD?
- Is a common approach to ESD an indispensable precondition for organizing projects of international Youth exchange?