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Template for GreeNET's Best Practices

Institution:

Title of the Best Practice (BP): Educating for Sustainability: the Barcelona School Agenda 21 Programme

Summary: *The Barcelona School Agenda 21 Programme (PA21E acronym in Spanish) is an initiative addressed to schools, which acts in consonance with the city's Agenda 21. The PA21E was designed in the year 2000 in the then recently created Environmental Education and Participation Division in Barcelona City Council's Environment Department, whose main responsibility was to develop the Local Agenda 21.*

Aims: *This program encourages and supports schools in designing, implementing and assessing action plans, starting with its immediate environment: the school and its neighbourhood.*

Main activities: *Schools integrate in their environmental management and in their educational program, the principles of sustainability.*

End user: *All non university level schools of Barcelona (from 0-18 years) and teachers.*

Involved actors: *Barcelona City Council, Environmental Department, Municipal Institute of Education, other City Council Departments and actors of the Local Agenda 21.*

Location: *Mostly at school and in the neighbourhood, but also in other places of the city (depending on each project).*

Connection with the curriculum: *Connection to the curriculum depends on each specific project developed by individual schools.*

Languages available: *Material is mostly in Catalan and Spanish, some materials available in English.*

Where to find the application or case: www.bcn.cat/agenda21/a21escolar/

Duration: *Duration of individual projects is one year (September to June)*

Additional information or resources:

<http://www.hamburg.de/contentblob/3429708/data/presentation-barcelona.pdf>

Please include high quality photos (included in presentation)

Content:

Give a narrative description of your Best Practice (~500 words up to 1page)

The Barcelona School Agenda 21 Programme (PA21E acronym in Spanish) is an initiative addressed to schools, which acts in consonance with the city's Agenda 21. The PA21E was designed in the year 2000 in the then recently created Environmental Education and Participation Division in Barcelona City Council's Environment Department, whose main responsibility was to develop the Local Agenda 21.

The PA21E has been running for 9 school years. Through this programme, the educational communities are involved in diagnosing, providing solutions and undertaking commitments to make a more sustainable city, beginning with their immediate environment, the school itself. A slogan that could summarise the philosophy of PA21E is:

"Many small people, in small places, doing small things, can change the world." Eduardo Galeano.

Schools are an extremely important element in the advance towards more sustainable cities because of their function of educating pupils and because of their multiplying effect in the community and especially in families. All non-university level schools participate in the PA21e: nursery (0-3 year olds), infants (4-6 year olds), primary and junior (7-12 year olds), secondary (13-18 year olds) and all levels of special education schools. This school year (2009-10) there are 326 schools involved.

Thanks to this programme, in Barcelona the number of schools participating in its practice, in environmental management and in curricular development is increasing year after year, reflecting a philosophy that is in accordance with the principles of sustainability. In the participating schools, which watch out for the coherence between theory and practice, pupils play a leading role and other collectives of the community are usually involved as well.

The Barcelona School Agenda 21 Programme is a pioneering initiative in Spain, where there had previously been no precedents of environmental education projects addressed to the overall set of schools. In the wake of the Barcelona experience, this programme has spread to other Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Latin American cities.

Please describe **how** the criteria of your Best Practice are met. The more criteria are met, the better the Best Practice. Please give a short description how they are met in more than one sentence.

Give a short explanation how each criteria which is included in your Best Practice it met.

10 important criteria to follow when doing Best Practices

1. Relation to a green topic and curriculum

In the school year 2008/09, a total of 264 projects of very diverse subjects and of very different types have been carried out: energy and water savings, impairment of noise, paper saving, waste prevention, composting, "caminos escolares" and sustainable mobility, naturalization of courtyards and gardens, creating habitats, organic gardens, promoting biodiversity, responsible consumption, improving communication, building participation and coexistence, and so on.

2. Being interdisciplinary: Drawing upon many academic disciplines and teaching methods

The main objectives are:

- to strengthen environmental education.
- to promote improvements in the school environment.
- to strengthen the creation of networks among schools and with community organisations committed to sustainability.

3. Relevance to the daily life of students

In PA21E, it is understood that environmental education for sustainability is not an education for understanding and acquiescing but for understanding and acting. It is an education that strengthens participation, personal and collective responsibility, moral and intellectual autonomy, and communication and cooperative working. The schools are advancing, although slowly, along this path.

4. Based on accurate and factual professional expertise

Strategies of the programme:

- Permanent support of teaching staff through personalized advice, online communication, specific training, documentation service and other resources.
- Acknowledgement of effort and stimulation of progress.
- Exchange of experiences as a basis of learning.
- Medium- and long-term work based on instructive appraisal.
- Coordination with the municipal management areas: Environment, Districts, neighbourhood experts, etc.
- Interdisciplinary coordinating team attentive to the needs of each educational centre.

5. Connections to professions in the green labour market

We wish to point out an aspect which we consider a success, namely, the existence of a common framework of reference, the Barcelona Local Agenda 21 and the People's Commitment towards Sustainability, which provide a horizon towards which we are advancing and which lend collective sense to the individual work of each one of the actors: the City Council, enterprises, NGOs, universities, trade unions, etc. and, at the same time, schools. Every actor becomes involved voluntarily and the others respect the degree of commitment, the style and the pace that each organisation can lend and wishes to lend to its action. Exchange in the network is a source of mutual enrichment and learning.

6. Learning by research and inquiry

PA21E spreads the idea that education should help us to understand the world in which we live in order to be able to face the complexity of its problems and democratically to build well-informed solutions.

The big change for the schools lies in internalising the idea that the objective is not limited to changing habits (saving energy, respecting animals, etc.) but rather in empowering pupils for the critical analysis of the environment and the design and unfolding of alternative actions. The quest for effective mechanisms to ease this change continues to be a challenge.

7. Activation of the students by hands-on

PA21E is a program of education, participation and civic action, so the different projects like composting, orchards or organic gardens are focussing on the activation of the students by hands-on. The implementation of the action plan in each school and the connections with city's Agenda 21 activate the student's interest and curiosity about local problems and boost to search solutions by incorporating hands-on experiences in science instruction.

8. Enhancement of student's ICT-Tools

The Project has a specific support website: <http://www.bcn.cat/agenda21/a21escolar/>. The use of ICT-Tools depends on each individual project carried out by the schools. Various exchange opportunities are offered to both teaching staff and pupils. These can be more or less formal and structured. The end of the school year is one of the liveliest occasions. There are two closing events: one for primary and junior schools, of a more entertaining and fun nature, and one for secondary schools, when pupils present, in a mini-congress format, the projects they have been working on. Ongoing seminars for teaching staff are held throughout the school year.

9. Support of the development of social skills

PA21E enhances participation, accountability, cooperation and autonomy in a learning process that develops skills for socially critical citizens able to deal with complex issues. The aim of the program focuses on the social, structural and institutional change, in addition to the personal and individual changes, to create a sustainable future. Also, the established network of schools helps to share knowledge in a learning process and to work towards common sustainability objectives.

10. Adaptability of the programme

In general, we have learned the importance of maintaining a constantly observing and critical attitude that allows continuous improvement by trial and error. Each day we face new challenges to which new solutions must be found. Moreover, in step with the growth and development of the programme, we have adapted instruments and redimensioned resources. It has been very useful for us to endow ourselves with a very flexible organisation that is capable of learning and transforming itself constantly.