

School Theme: Children Leading Change

The next 4 pages present 2 school initiatives in the energy field started over the last 3 years. Both raise awareness of energy and the environment. They act locally; yet both have ambitions of networking in Europe and globally. One is a Norwegian initiative which has been adopted in 10 European countries, mainly in Eastern Europe. The other is a Danish initiative, which achieved substantial success in Internet communication with school children. It started a cooperative project with Thai schools and is working with an English network to develop the ideas further.

We hope that these articles will inspire the creativity of our readers to work on education in this field. We are open to review more such examples in the next issues.

Editors

The logo of
School Energy Forum

50,000 Children SPARE

A European school project succeeds in changing behaviour. Launched from Norway to Eastern Europe. The children bring awareness to their families



By Tore Brænd energy and climate specialist (left) and Kåre Olerud, information officer (right), Friends of the Earth (FoE) Norway

More than 2,000 classes and 50,000 school children from 10 European countries are participating every year in the SPARE project. This highly successful energy-education project started in 1996. The project's name, SPARE, is an abbreviation of "School Project for Application of Resources and Energy". In the first year, the project was partly funded by the European Union's SAVE program. Finland and Scotland were the first EU countries to join. Eastern Europe is well represented, with participating schools from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

Children as Agents of Change

The purpose of SPARE is to fight climate change and to stabilize CO₂ emissions by reducing the total energy consumption. As an energy-saving project in schools, SPARE has achieved two goals:

- It has increased the knowledge and raised the awareness of pupils, students, teachers, and parents by reaching out to many people, both in schools and in homes.
- It has consolidated good energy habits at an early stage in its young participants' development, thus contributing to permanent changes in behaviour.

The project stimulates the introduction and continued use of practical energy-saving measures in school buildings. We have

seen that a reduction of 5%-10% can be achieved in the energy consumption of a school. The most successful schools have reduced their energy use by 25%.

The 11-to-16-year-old school children are involved through activities at their schools. They take their new knowledge, commitment, and practical skills home with them, introducing new attitudes and stimulating changes in their own homes.

The SPARE project aims to establish a network of participating schools in Europe and, through the use of this network, to test new methods of reducing energy consumption on a large scale.

Information Spreaders

Friends of the Earth Norway is the initiator and organiser of SPARE, but the project is locally run. In each of the participating countries we cooperate with a local organization and sign a contract with a national coordinator, who is responsible for recruiting participants, sending out the project material, and following up with the schools.

It is up to each coordinator or school to follow up on the implementation of the ideas, improving and adapting them to national or local conditions. Giving SPARE a national angle in an international setting has proven so successful that we believe SPARE is a major step towards more sustainable energy systems in Europe.

Project packs are sent to participating classes. Each includes a self-instructing, easy-to-follow project manual; a poster; a project report for all countries; and a penpal offer. A lot of these classes have joined the twin-class project, exchanging experiences and making new friends in other countries.

The knowledge is disseminated by the school children and teachers to other children and parents; from teachers to other teachers; etc. The students also influence their local authorities, both through direct contact and via the media. We expect that this project will continue to recruit over 50.000 new information-spreaders throughout Europe every year. It is our ambitious goal to introduce the project throughout Europe, and later also globally.

More information: SPARE Project, FoE Norway. P.O. Box 342 Sentrum 0101 Skippergata 33, 3rd fl., Oslo, Norway. Ph: +47-22402400, fax: +47-22402410 e-mail: spare@naturvern.no, naturvern@naturvern.no, <http://www.naturvern.no/english/>. The web site includes a huge list of 'Energy-Saving Ideas' and a 'Gallery of Drawings' all sent by the participants.

Child drawing from Estonia



SPARE

Child drawing from Lithuania



Participating countries 98/99

Project period: November - May.

Estonia	145 classes
Latvia	135 classes
Lithuania	200 classes
Russia	500 classes
Poland	800 classes
Scotland	208 classes
Finland	50 classes
Czech Republic	286 classes
Hungary	73 classes
Norway	146 classes



From the SPARE Report '99 of Friends of the Earth (FoE) Norway to the Participants

"Once again, we have to thank you for the fantastic work you have all done during this project period. It is wonderful that so many are committed to this very important issue. We are impressed with the way the different countries have developed different tasks and carried out the dissemination process. SPARE has become a huge success in its third year. More than 50,000 school children in 10 countries were taking part. Together you have contributed to a huge reduction of the energy consumption."

"Thank you again for all the letters, for the vast amount of drawings and comments you have sent us. We are grateful for your interest, inventiveness and enthusiasm. Your contribution is important if we are to make a better, non-polluted world. The knowledge of energy saving and the transition to renewable energy resources can solve some of our serious environmental problems."

"We challenge you to keep up the excellent work. By doing this together, you will make a difference. Don't forget to spread the message:"

**Save Energy - Save Money
- Save the World!
No one can do Everything but Every-
body can do Something!**

Poland

More than 800 classes in Poland participated. The coordinator has done a magnificent job, and the activities were numerous and successful. It is fun for us here in Norway to see that the students' creativity and research spirit is so highly developed. Hundreds of energy-saving tips and lots of great drawings arrived at our office in Oslo. This sparked off several small exhibitions of students' work, and we are planning a bigger exhibition later this autumn.

Estonia

145 classes participated in SPARE and provided us with lots of energy-saving ideas. Many schools have just used selected parts of the project or worked with some of the tasks. 40 schools have had interesting project years, including different kinds of seminars, exhibitions, small conferences, energy measurements at school and at home, research, and discussions.

The drawings show that there is an enormous interest in wind energy in Estonia. Some of the schools are familiar with using the Internet to send data from measurements and calculations. We hope that in the future we can include the possibility of using the Internet more.

Lithuania

200 schools participated in Lithuania. Vast numbers of excellent drawings reveal the seriousness and determination of the schools' involvement in promoting renewable energy and the ways in which it can contribute to the energy supply.

By measuring electricity consumption, the students were motivated to conserve energy. There was certainly no lack of understanding, motivation, or good proposals concerning heating, water conservation, and economizing on electricity. 184 students from ecology clubs participated in a one-week summer camp. They performed practical tasks involved in energy-saving, produced their own scientific reports, and held their own conferences.

Hungary

73 participating schools returned the task sheets from Hungary. Students had grasped the importance of the notion of energy-saving, and had suggested new ideas and tasks for the future.

It turned out to be a barrier that generally there is no common interest of the schools and local councils in advocating energy-saving. The schools, which are the users of public buildings, are not the parties who run those buildings, and are therefore not interested in the savings. However, it should be interesting for both parties, especially if the money that they save could be allocated and used for the improvement of the educational environment. Even so, in 2 little village schools, children managed to reduce school energy bills by more than 20%.