

Dr Michael Peters recently participated in and presented a paper at the 10th Conference on Environmental Education in Europe (CEEE), held at the University of Malta 15th – 18th October 2008. It was organised by the European Foundation for Education & Sustainable Development (European ESD-net) and was entitled 'Thinking and acting outside the box – a European contribution to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development'.

CEEE has traditionally attracted different actors in environmental education – from national governmental bodies to local authorities to grassroots movements to academics – helping in bringing together different interests and concerns and acting as a crucible for emerging challenges and trends.

CEEE 2008 had the aim of providing an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of current educational practice in line with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) principles. CEEE 2008 acknowledges that the environmental education community is getting aware that its contribution to a more sustainable world has to be made more concrete. The delegates (25 in total from 13 countries) worked together on yielding the results that have been promised over years of discussion and debate. Using specific issues in a combined effort, such as climate change, poverty eradication and biodiversity, this was enabled via the following mechanisms at CEEE 2008:

- Meeting with colleagues in order to define more clearly the role of environmental education in specific fields of sustainable development (sectoral approach, social learning etc.) and sharing experiences of good practice;
- Considering the lessons of complexity in the field (systems approach) and exploring how they are being addressed;
- Analysing and discussing the application of approaches from and cooperation with other fields of education
- Identifying how to cooperate between different cultures and spheres of interests in society; and
- Listing a set of actions that need to be undertaken in order to develop further environmental education in Europe.

With regard to the last point above the CEEE 2008 delegates collectively developed a written Manifesto for environmental education in Europe, which was presented to the Maltese Government's Minister of Resources and Rural Affairs, the Hon George Pullicino, during the final day of the conference. If you would like a copy of the Manifesto please contact Michael Peters (m.peters@surrey.ac.uk). One final point worthy of note was that CEEE 2008 joined in the Stand Up Pledge – a symbolic action of standing up in support of the eradication of extreme poverty. By performing this action delegates joined thousands of people in over 100 countries who, between 17th and 19th October doing the same. The action across the world was counted as part of an official Guinness World Record for the most number of people to simultaneously stand up against poverty. Michael Peters was asked to read the Official Pledge to the assembled CEEE 2008 gathering while standing, which concluded with the following words:

“We, participants of the 10th Conference on Environmental Education in Europe, as diverse as we are, STAND UP in unity with the rest of the world to demand justice for the millions that unnecessarily die every day due to extreme poverty.

We are six billion voices. We want justice now not more excuses. We will not stand for them.”