

Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE RHINE-MEUSE

Geography

The geographical scope of the RCE Rhine-Meuse is the triangle of Eindhoven in the Netherlands, Leuven in Belgium and Cologne in Germany. The Rhine Meuse region has a population exceeding 4 million people and is set to become a Region of Top Technology.



Regional challenges

The Eindhoven – Leuven – Cologne triangle has a very high density of knowledge institutions. Reputed institutions in the area include the Eindhoven University, the Maastricht University, Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Technical University of Aachen, Catholic University of Leuven, Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, and the University of Liege. Several industrial global players including Philips and Bayer are involved in the region's progress. The triangle has an international flavour due to the meeting of different cultures, and the European Commission often organises trans-border experiments in the area. Its complex environment makes it an ideal testing ground for Europe.

The region also faces several problems. One such problem is that of aging population. Although young people are attracted to the booming economy and ideal conditions for innovative entrepreneurial starters that the area presents, the population in almost all the sub-regions is rapidly aging. By 2020, a large part of the population will not be active in the labour process anymore.

Another problem the region faces is that of transformation from a coal mining region into a modern economy. This changeover has not been accomplished successfully in all the sub-regions, implying that unemployment in these parts is above average.

RCE Rhine-Meuse's perceived role in the region

The RCE Rhine-Meuse considers itself

A knowledge intermediate

The region Eindhoven – Leuven – Cologne is a region with high standards of scientific know how and technological progress. Knowledge related to ESD has also developed in the past few years. The RCE will organise intensive research to find out what applicable knowledge is available and where. One of the RCE's projects is the construction of a database of existing know how in ESD. Societal partners—governments, companies, NGOs – will be enabled to use this knowledge for their own policy purposes.

A process innovator

Partners in society are invited to develop project ideas related to ESD. The RCE Rhine-Meuse will help partners to realise feasible project ideas and aid in finding the funding for it. New methodologies and good practices from other regions will be introduced in the region in order to stimulate technological progress on ESD.

Houses in Cologne



Goals of the RCE

- To raise awareness on the dominant regional themes with respect to ESD.
- To organise collaborative actions and projects with regional stakeholders.
- To bring about improvement in the dominant regional themes.
- To bring about inter-regional collaboration with other RCEs.

Organisations involved

Most of the potential educational partners in the region, Fachhochschule Cologne, Technical University Aachen (RWTH), Fachhochschule Aachen, Open University of the Netherlands, University of Maastricht, Hogeschool Zuyd, Catholic University of Leuven and the Association of Catholic University of Leuven consisting of 12 polytechnics, are members of the RCE Rhine-Meuse. Apart from these partners, other important knowledge-organisations such as Wuppertal Institut fuer Umweltforschung, Algemeen Burgerlijk Pensioenfonds and VEBEGO International are involved.

Decision-making structure

The legal body of the RCE Rhine-Meuse is a foundation according to Dutch law, with a board of governors. The RCE has a six-member board of governors governing the foundation, a two-member board of coordinators responsible for the everyday functioning of the RCE and a 15-member Strategic Planning Group to determine the strategic priorities of the RCE. The Strategic Planning Group is also expected to carry out goodwill actions on behalf of the Centre.

Activities

The RCE is currently working on raising awareness on predominant issues in the region related to ESD. A network of regional government bodies and educational institutes is being built. In 2006, this network will be reinforced with private companies, particularly small and medium size enterprises since these have considerable problems in setting their own SD standards. Moreover, these companies have fewer possibilities to develop a specific institutional policy on ESD.

The societal debate with top-down and bottom-up approaches will be organised with opinion leaders in the region taking the lead in starting public discussions on relevant issues. Conferences and seminars will be organised to involve larger groups in the process of raising awareness. The opening session of the RCE took place in January 2006, for a relatively small group of insiders. A thematic seminar will be organised for all member parties in the Euro region on 3rd April 2006, and an international conference is planned in 2007. In collaboration with the Philips Research and Flevum Network, RCE Rhine-Meuse is organising an international forum in October 2006 entitled Managing innovation on a global scale.

Five projects – an ESD database on the current know how in the region, From Waste to Energy, an Engineering Centre for Sustainable Energy, Bachelor plus Sustainable Development and Orientation for Young People on Society – are also currently under development. The last three are educational projects to raise awareness.

Achievements

The RCE Rhine-Meuse has produced *Natuurlijk Ondernemen* (Natural Entrepreneurship), a book of essays. An opening session, to which all regional partners were invited, has been organised to present the message and rationale of the DESD. The event also acted as the start of a public debate, stimulated by numerous interviews in regional newspapers and on regional radio talk shows.

For more information

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