Environmental Education in Portugal: Appraisal and perspectives on the role of non-scholar organizations

1. Introduction

Once the domain of governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in social mobilization and the awakening of modern society to environmental issues, environmental education had for some time gained space inside the institutional universe of educational systems in more advanced societies. Environmental education has progressively opened up to, and interacted with, other, perhaps more encompassing, inclusive spheres of educational activity, such as citizenship, health care and civility. At the same time, the urgency and permanence of environmental problems in contemporary societies and their connections with particular scientific areas, such as the more obvious case of nature sciences, has assured to them an undisputed place in basic educational formation of citizens in modern societies, if nothing else a propos pedagogies based on experimental observation or playing while learning.

Likewise, while the environment has come to be a specific sector of collective and public action, as well as a sphere of state administration, environmental issues turn on a problem of development, which must encompass together with the economy and other socio-political equilibriums and rights to be sustainable. Hence also, as we shall discuss later, the more comprehensive notion of "education for sustainable development" has imposed itself, though without total consensus.

Let us say, then, that environmental education has gradually emerged from the logics of propagandistic essentialism of early environmental activism to definitely impose itself as an undeniable formative and civic dimension of modern education for the modern citizen, where it reaches a new status and social significance. However, it seems there is still the need to initiatives, mobilization and intervention of non-scholar actors in environmental education or, let us say, in education for sustainable development.

This paper aims to, precisely, the characterization and balance of the role of non-scholar organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, private and public, in environmental education in Portugal, bearing in mind the subtle movement for change that also in Portugal is emerging, both in the sense of a greater intensification of the school system's role in the environmental education of citizens, and in the sense of a greater articulation, if not fusion, of environmental education with other areas of education for citizenship.

The following analysis is based on a systematic inquiry applied to organizations which promote educational initiatives and projects we may include in an enlarged notion of environmental education or education for sustainable development, but acting from outside the institutional field of the formal educational system. It explicitly excludes scholar institutions, which are being studied by a complementary inquiry still on course within the same research project, aiming at covering a universe of about 15, 000 schools spread out through the whole national territory.

In this paper, we try to do an analytical characterization of the contribution of non-scholar organizations to environmental education and education for sustainable development now in Portugal, addressing in particular the trends to changes in this area, while looking also to difficulties and assertiveness strategies of these organizations in this field of social action. Since it is crucial to perspectives on environmental education discussed in this paper, we will spotlight the analysis of the contents and subject matters of formative and educational activities carried out by such organizations, in order to find out how environmental education in Portugal is more close or far to conceptions more centered on the idea of citizenship.

2. From Environmental Education to Education for Sustainable Development: a critical discussion

The concept of Environmental Education (EE) comes from to the 60's, emerging with the growing evidence of environmental degradation and non-sustainable consumption of natural resources and of its connections to the growing ability of techno-scientific advancements to interfere with nature and ecological systems.

Nowadays, the awareness of such issues as the destruction of the ozone layer, global warming, contamination of water streams, air pollution, devastation of forests, destruction of natural habitats and the consequent reduction in biodiversity, etc. is no more at stake. However, in order to overcome them, it is urgent to change attitudes and behaviors so as to allow a more responsible management of resources and a true social equity inside intra- and inter- generations. This means more justice in availability and use of natural resources not only for nations and social groups, but also for different generations (that is, aiming to insure the satisfaction of needs for present generations without compromising the possibility of future generations to satisfying theirs too).

To achieve this, the way is open to the rise of a new area in the formation and education of citizens. In general, Environmental Education is understood as a process of permanent learning which seeks to improve information and public knowledge and awareness of environmental problems, while promoting the critical sense of populations and their ability to intervene in situations that, one a way or another, affect the environment and their living conditions. It means

this process must be continuing and comprehensive one, allowing an integrated interpretation of the environment that also includes the role of citizens within the society-environment complex of relationships and the consequences of human activities in the eco-system.

However, ecological imbalance and environmental degradation are, at least in part, a consequence of diverse and maladjusted consumerism conditions of modernity, as well as of poverty and endemic inequalities that still plague most of the world population. Hence, a balanced and sustained ecological development requires, according to the Bruntland report, "that satisfaction be given to the basic needs of everyone, and everyone may have the possibility of satisfying their aspirations to a better life" (CMAD, 1991 [1987]:55).

This excessive stress on issues of development, which too many times means economic growth, leads some authors to reject the replacement of the idea of Environmental Education (EE) by a more comprehensive concept of Education for Sustainable Development (EDS), now arising in conjunction with the UNESCO initiatives for a Decade of Education For Sustainable Development. From this point of view, EE would serve better the proposed objectives, because it is less connected to a world *status quo* which, in name of the Sustainable Development idea, still remains predatory and ignores the real issues of sustainability, thereby perpetuating the same patterns of economic growth (Boff, 2004).

Our perspective, as proposed along this paper, however, sustain that both denominations have meet the most important dimensions which, from our point of view, must be fulfilled by education in view of enhancing environmental performances of modern societies: civic education to promote participation and the will to achieve balance both in relationships between society and the environment, and between the different human communities, rich and poor, developed and developing ones. After all, the balance of the first pair depends also on the balance between the latter.

This is more so if one considers the Portuguese case, whose development model shows some particularities within the European context. The fact that Portugal went straight from an impoverished rural society (though without great environmental damage) to truly a simulacrum of modernized society (that is, lacking in reality important patterns and benefits pertaining to the development model adopted) ended up creating a special sensitivity to social and economic issues in Portuguese society (Schmidt, 2005).

In Portugal, EE arose at least in an informal way about thirty years ago. However, only by the mid- 80's did it gain more formal and institutionalized patterns, while entering the scholar

curricula by virtue of European influence. Notwithstanding, its impact seem still too tenuous two decades later. A study carried out in the 90's proved how EE kept showing very low performances, fundamentally due to the lack of expertise among teachers, lack of articulation within the scholar curricula, and non-evaluation of educational activities (Cf. Martinho, 2003, p. 81). That is, EE weak performances were not only due to the classic reasons of systematic lack of means by organizations doing it, but also to chronic institutional problems of non-articulation and lack of planning and continuity of educational activities, which adds to functional inability cope with the galloping spread and growing of importance and scale of environmental problems in the country and around the world.

In spite of this, inquiry outputs from questionnaires applied in 1997 and 2000 to samples of the population show that very strong concerns with the environment has immensely increased among young people, while, paradoxically, the level of information, knowledge, and civic participation about it showed to be very low (Almeida, 2000 and Almeida 2004). The famous EE seems to have fallen into the bottomless pit of general illiteracy undergone by the Portuguese (Benavente, 1996). Hence the urgency of systematic studies on the issue, in order to provide systematic information on what kinds of projects, subjects, and protagonists are in the field and what aims are being achieved or failed.

In this moment, when a strategy for Sustainable Development at both the European and national scale is being prepared, and when the UNESCO is devoting the next decade to Education For Sustainable Development, there is true need for Portugal to know very well the panorama and main characteristics of EE in the country, so as to make use of the opportunities of this conjuncture and to establish new perspectives and guiding lines for the millennium.

The task is, thus, to evaluate from diagnosis perspective the current situation in schools and non-scholar institutions that promote or develop programs of EE/ESD, which may help to determine constraints and potentialities and delineate lines of public action in this area. At the end, it is also about giving visibility to the dynamics and sustainability of educational projects and programs in course, be them due to the initiative of either (i) public and private schools, at all levels of learning; (ii) environmental and developing-aid NGOs; (iii) central and local administration organizations; (iv) or companies of the environmental sector.

To achieve these objectives, it was necessary to make use of multiple techniques and methods of research and data collection. Mainly, one has to mention (i) documental research and collection of data in relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations (e.g. Education Ministry, Environment Ministry, local administrations, NGOs, companies, and so on); (ii) interviews to

both experts and leaders of model cases of EE/ESD initiatives; (iii) finally, two inquiries by questionnaire applied to non-scholar organizations that do or promote EE/ESD (NGOs, local administration organizations, associations, companies, etc) and to basic and high schools.

3. The contribution of non-scholar organizations to Environmental Education

In this communication we seek to report on the results of an inquiry applied to non-scholar institutions which allows a first characterization of the dynamics of EE/ESD in Portugal, since these institutions sustain, direct and stimulate a good portion of the projects carried out in the country, inclusively in schools.

To make that possible, the starting typology we adopted in the approach to these institutions was ambitious, and as exhaustive as possible. Persistently we approached the Local Administration (all the Portuguese municipalities) and many bodies in Central Administration (areas of environment, urbanism, education, security, social solidarity…). We inquired the environment and Development NGOs, environmental Education Equipments (theme parks, Zoos, Ecotecas, "Live Science" centers…), companies in the sectors of water, residues, energy, tourism…, as well as members of business associations for sustainable development (BCSD Portugal – Business Council for Sustainable Development; GRACE – Reflection and Support Group for Entrepreneurial Citizenship; and RSE Portugal – Portuguese section of CSR Europe). We also contacted universities, museums, foundations, as well as entities connected with the Catholic Church (Parishes, charities).

Graph 1– Response with or without projects and non-response rates by groups of entities
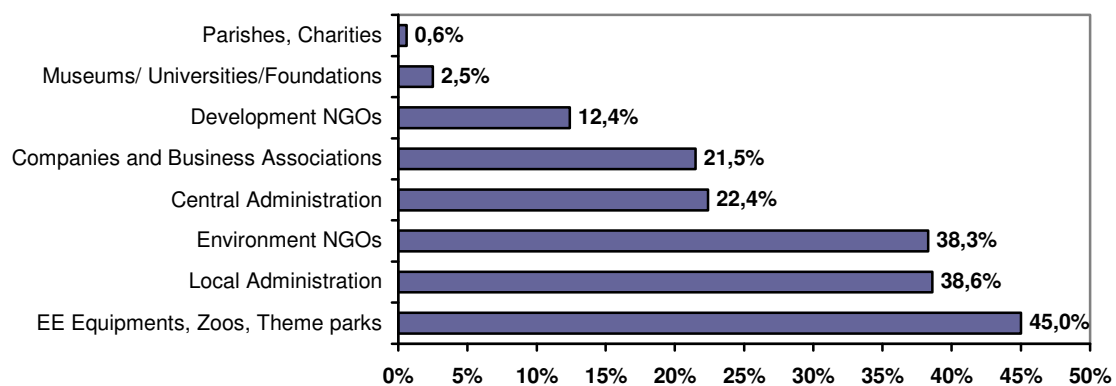

Among the groups of entities with greater number of ongoing projects, on the spot, according to their social object, are EE equipments (45%), local administration (38,6%) and environment NGOs (38,3%).

5

With values still above the global average are central administration bodies and companies and business associations. Finally, with less expressive frequencies, we have institutions connected with the Catholic Church (parishes and charities), which, despite their great mobilizing capability in social voluntary work, seem remote from environmental and sustainable development priorities (0,6%). The group formed by museums, universities and foundations, which doesn't rise above 2,5%, and development NGOs, with 12,4% of projects, also seems more attuned to other causes and motivations.

As graph 2 makes clear, local administration answered the inquiry with greater number of projects developed per institution (2,92, with almost all municipalities having more than three projects each). Such fact can't be alien to the responsibility delegated in municipalities to assure the fulfillment of international compromises (EU) and consequent need to improve environmental performances such as selective deposition and recycling – problems specifically dependent on their action.

Graph 2– projects by group of entities
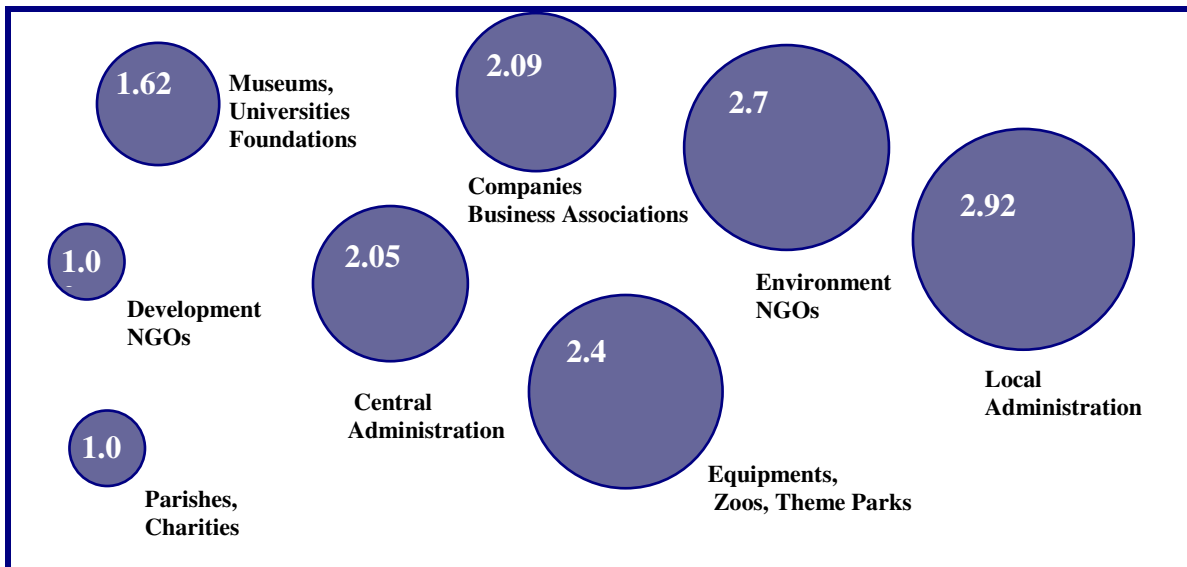
The dynamics and level of effort each institutions shows in the promotion of EE/ESD projects are consequently diversified, and stem, in large measure, from their own social object. Hence that right next are environment NGOs (2.7) and equipments and theme parks related to environment issues (2.4). Companies (2.09) and central administration (2.05) are the groups that come next, that position being justified, in large measure, by the reduced number of entities which answered affirmatively. In the case of central administration, it is the bodies and services more connections

to environmental themes (above all, the Protected Areas) that accumulate more EE/ESD activities.

With social objects traditionally less connected to environmental questions are groups of institutions like Universities, Museums and Foundations (1.62), Development NGOs (1.00) and Parishes and Charities (1.00).

According to graph 3, regarding the territorial reach, and as would be expected given the predominance of responses from municipalities, the recorded EE-ESD projects happen mainly on the local context (72% of the total), with very few on a wider scale.

If we analyze the project's reach according to the kind of promoting entity, we notice that institutions more connected to local life are those who tend to limit their activities to this area: local administration (89.1%), development NGOs (76.9%) and institutions connected to the Church (parishes and charities with 75%).

Graph 3 – Project reach according to promoting entity
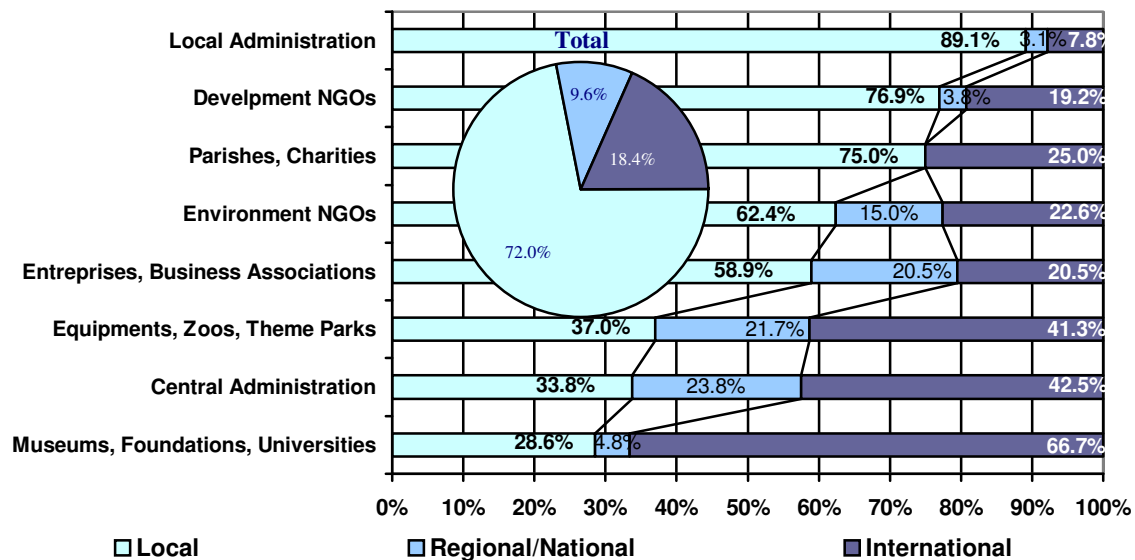

In contrast, still according to graph 3, museums foundations and universities (66.7%), central administration (42.5%) and equipments and theme parks (41.3%) bet mostly on the international reach. Finally, national and/or regional reach is in the minority in any of the cases, the greatest frequency being reached with central administration (23.8%), equipments (21.7%), companies (20.5%) and, though still with slightly lower value, environment NGOs (15%).

As for partnerships in projects (Graph 4), almost half the recorded projects have no partners. In the other half, of those who assume partnerships as a development strategy in the projects they

support, the spot falls on a first institutional group with greater weight: local administration (almost 40% of the answers), central administration (34%) and companies (27.4%).

That is, a good part of the projects seem to recruit partnerships among the same groups which before rose as promoters of EE/ESD projects. There are, however, new protagonists or protagonists with rather larger relative weight: companies (27.4%), the school community (18.1%), development NGOs and local associations (13.2%). Though moderately, EE/ESD appears to be giving signs of greater penetration in more diversified areas of civil society.
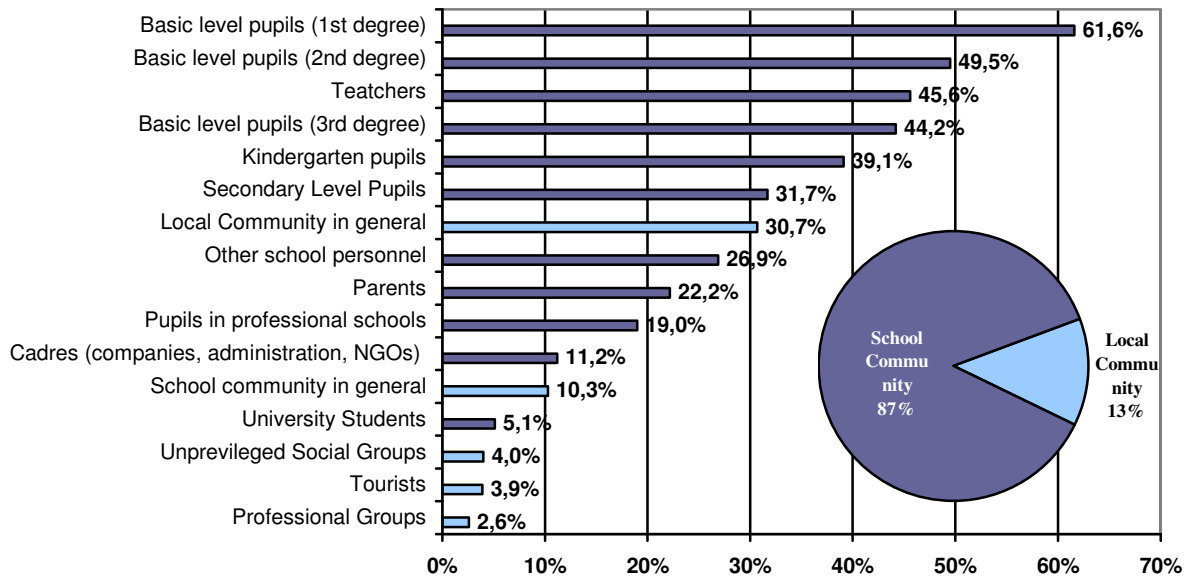
Graph 4– Partnerships and partners
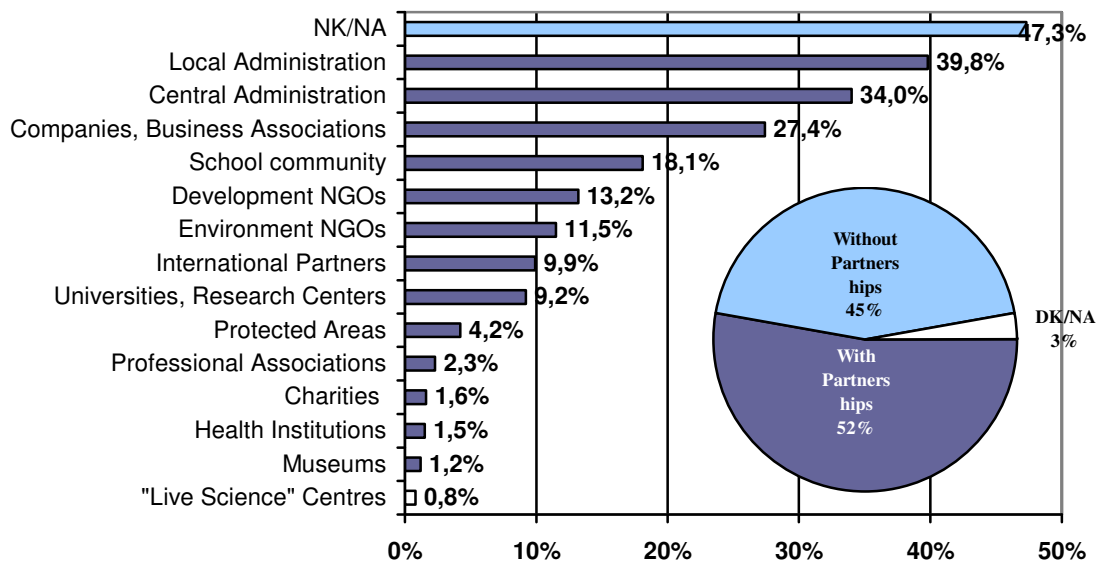
And the targets? As far as we can conclude by looking at graph 5, the projects' targets are, in general, the school community, with preponderance of basic school pupils, and, among them, those at the elementary level with 61.8 % of answers. University students stand apart for the opposite motive: the weak investment of institutions in this kind of students, which don't go over 5.1% of replies. In fact, as the schooling level increases (and consequently, also age) the investment of promoters of Environmental Education projects tend to diminish drastically.

On the side of the extra-school community, we'll mention the 30.7% referred to the community in general, or the 10.3% that point to cadres in companies, administration and NGOs and privileged targets; projects addressed to specific non-scholar groups tend to be residual.
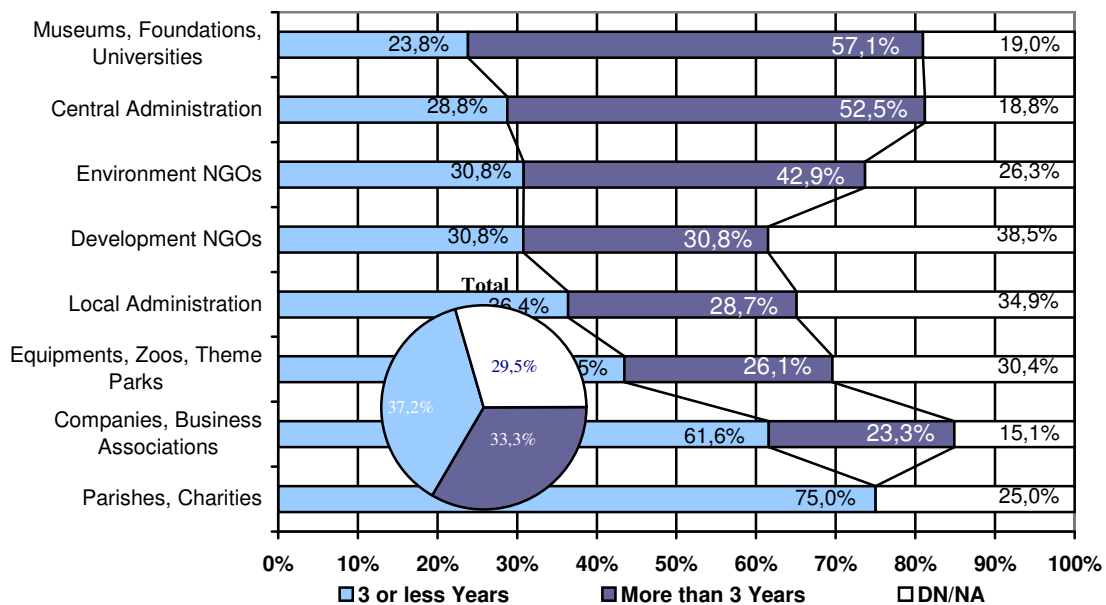
Globally, however, most of the recorded projects point, on the one hand, to the exclusivism of the school community (87%) and, on the other hand, to the groups of younger pupils, leaving a somewhat depressing void among the non-scholar populations and among post-teen or pre-adult pupils, in theory harder to mobilize.

Graph 5 – Projects' target groups

Target group	Percentage
Basic level pupils (1st degree)	61,6%
Basic level pupils (2nd degree)	49,5%
Teatchers	45,6%
Basic level pupils (3rd degree)	44,2%
Kindergarten pupils	39,1%
Secondary Level Pupils	31,7%
Local Community in general	30,7%
Other school personnel	26,9%
Parents	22,2%
Pupils in professional schools	19,0%
Cadres (companies, administration, NGOs)	11,2%
School community in general	10,3%
University Students	5,1%
Unprevileged Social Groups	4,0%
Tourists	3,9%
Professional Groups	2,6%

Pie chart:
- School Community 87%
- Local Community 13%

When we analyze the projects by declared years of duration (graph 6), we notice that, in global terms, only about a third last more than three years (33%). A few more date the beginning of project from less than three years ago. Finally, in 30% of cases, there was no concluding answer, but the "non-answers" allow us to guess that the projects are recent or, in the best hypothesis, have a structure that's not systematized enough to be able to answer.

Graph 6 – Project duration by kind of institution

Institution	3 or less Years	More than 3 Years	DN/NA
Museums, Foundations, Universities	23,8%	57,1%	19,0%
Central Administration	28,8%	52,5%	18,8%
Environment NGOs	30,8%	42,9%	26,3%
Development NGOs	30,8%	30,8%	38,5%
Local Administration	36,4%	28,7%	34,9%
Equipments, Zoos, Theme Parks	43,5%	26,1%	30,4%
Companies, Business Associations	61,6%	23,3%	15,1%
Parishes, Charities	75,0%		25,0%

Total pie chart:
- 3 or less Years 37,2%
- More than 3 Years 33,3%
- DN/NA 29,5%

As regards the promoting institutions, it is clear that museums, foundations and universities (57.1%), central administration (52.5%) and environment NGOs (42.9%) carry out the oldest projects, potentially more resistant to setbacks and daily constraints and, therefore, more sustainable. NGOs of Development and Local Administration, in turn, tend to divide between older and more recent projects, but are distinguished, above all, by the greatest rate of "non-response" (38.5 and 34.9 %, respectively).

And how about evaluation? The well-known national tendency to leave this question for a more timely moment has basically implied the absence of any kind of evaluation, or evaluation strategies limited to a minimum.
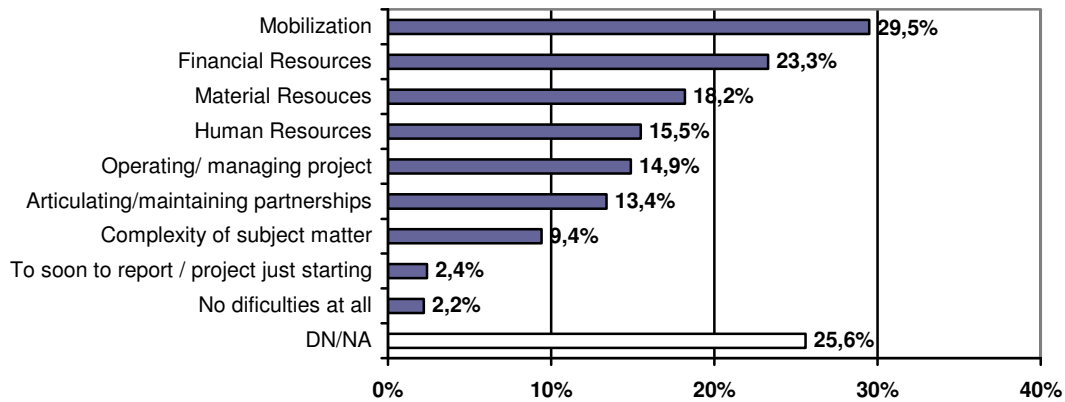
Graph 7 – Evaluation practices
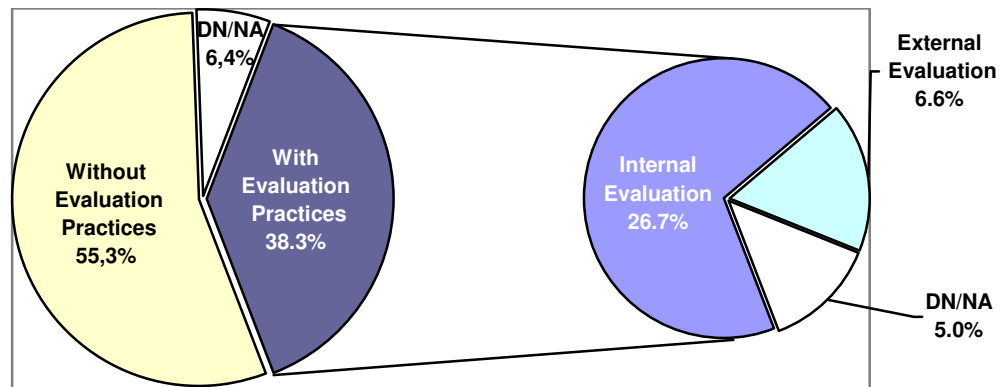
Project sustainability implies the ability to evaluate performance. What's been done, what went well, what went less well, what can we do better? The tradition of non-evaluation which, we think, extends to other areas and activities in Portuguese society appears to gain even more weight in EE/ESD projects. Few are those who seek to evaluate their practices, and when they do it, they restrain themselves to the less demanding standards. An external evaluation with guarantees of impartiality and objectivity attains only residual levels among the recorded projects.

In fact, only 38.3 % of projects declare any kind of evaluative practice, and, of these, 26.7% limit these practices to internal evaluation (frequently not very structured or objective). Only 6% refer external evaluation, and in this case the annual report to the Institute for the Environment (which allows access to support subsidies for the Environment NGOs) is considered a form of external evaluation (graph 7).

To mobilize participants and targets for projects to be developed or already ongoing seems to be, according to graph 8, the first great difficulty felt by promoters of EE/ESD projects.

Graph 8 – Most frequent difficulties in development of projects

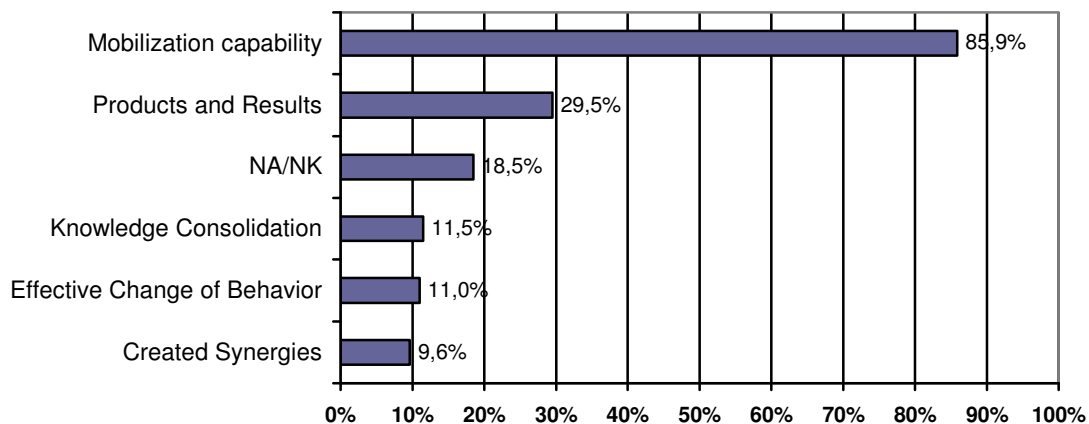| Category	Value
Mobilization	29,5%
Financial Resources	23,3%
Material Resouces	18,2%
Human Resources	15,5%
Operating/ managing project	14,9%
Articulating/maintaining partnerships	13,4%
Complexity of subject matter	9,4%
To soon to report / project just starting	2,4%
No dificulties at all	2,2%
DN/NA	25,6%

Almost 30% of answers mention this category specifically, which indicates a lack of will and interest towards issues of environment and sustainable development in general. When the results are parsed, this difficulty appears even more among teachers. More than students, more than civil society itself, maybe the need to include and conquer teachers to insure the success of projects in schools justifies this value that overtakes all the other groups.

The second great group of difficulties has to do with lack of resources. Financial resources first of all (23.3%), but also availability of teaching or work materials (18.2) and in human resources with the adequate technical know-how to overcome daily problems (15.5%).

The third group of problems has to do with questions of project organization. At the head are difficulties in operating and/or managing the project (14,9%), followed by difficulties in articulation and/or maintaining partnerships (13.4%) and, finally, of complexity of subject matters (9.4%).

Graph 9 – Most satisfying results

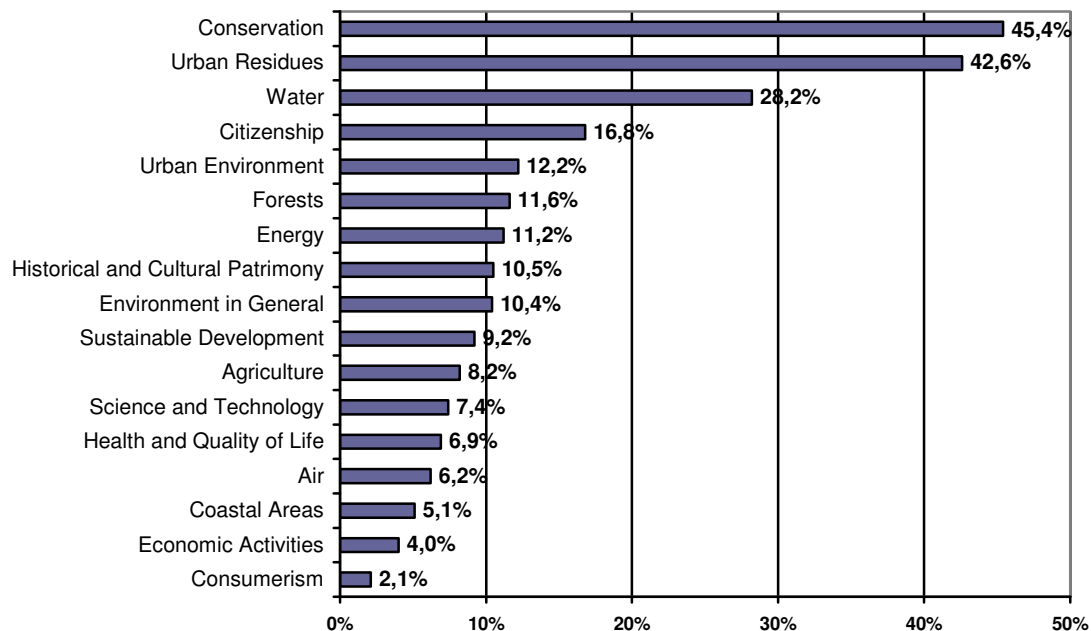| Category	Value
Mobilization capability	85,9%
Products and Results	29,5%
NA/NK	18,5%
Knowledge Consolidation	11,5%
Effective Change of Behavior	11,0%
Created Synergies	9,6%

Seeing the difficulties, what may be the most satisfying results pointed out? According to graph 9, they seem to relate to the first kind, since the most satisfying results reside in the mobilization capability, especially among young men (30.3%) and teachers (10.5%). Apparently the successes reached in this area, however small they may be, become trophies that are instantly named, coming together as two faces of the same coin.

In the category of references to products and results proper, stands out, given the quality attained (11.7%), the number of participants (5.5%) and showing the importance given to issues of RSU, the promotion of recycling and selective deposition in communities and schools (4.2%). Effective change of behavior and consolidation of knowledge, despite being explicit objectives in most of these projects, are not judged positively by more than 11.5% of the respondents. Finally, let us mention that for 9.6% of the respondents, the synergies created by this kind of projects (which stresses its results and transforming capacities) are evaluated positively by almost 10% of the respondents.

4. The Environmental Education and its contents: from environmental problems to citizenship issues?

Early on, environmental degradation will have stimulated environmental activism. What themes remain today in EE/ESD? What bridges are launched towards the promotion of a citizenship capable of acting for the environment and the quality of life?

Graph 10 – Themes of projects

Theme	Percentage
Conservation	45,4%
Urban Residues	42,6%
Water	28,2%
Citizenship	16,8%
Urban Environment	12,2%
Forests	11,6%
Energy	11,2%
Historical and Cultural Patrimony	10,5%
Environment in General	10,4%
Sustainable Development	9,2%
Agriculture	8,2%
Science and Technology	7,4%
Health and Quality of Life	6,9%
Air	6,2%
Coastal Areas	5,1%
Economic Activities	4,0%
Consumerism	2,1%

Let's start with the subjects and problems selected to develop EE/ESD projects. To start with, four thematic areas stand out: Conservation (45.4% of recorded projects), Residues (42.6%), Water (28.2%) and issues of Citizenship (16.8%). On a second level, let's refer Urban Environment, Forests, Energy, Historical and Cultural Patrimony, and the Environment in general. Finally, with values below 10% are thematic areas like Sustainable Development in general, Agriculture, Science and Technology, issues of Health and Quality of life, the Air, Coastal Areas, Economic Activities and, finally, the issues of Sustainable Consumerism.

Since the data behind graph 10 resulted from a preliminary treatment of answers to open questions, let us see which questions are included in some of these great areas like "Conservation", "Citizenship", and "Environment and Sustainable Development in general".

Graph 11- Questions included in thematic group "Conservation"
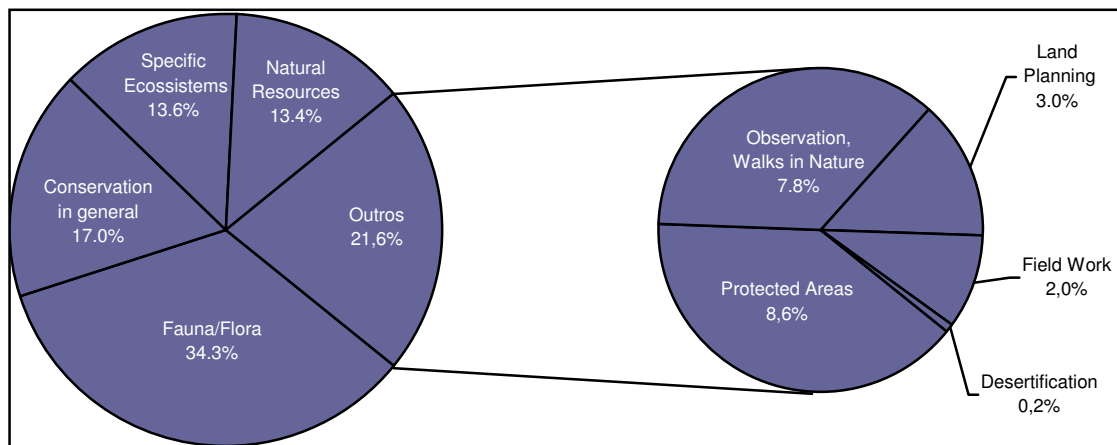
In the thematic group we called "Conservation' (graph 11) there is a wide variety of subsystems with special focus on issues of fauna and flora (34.3%). Next comes the theme of conservation in general, without other specifications (17%). Let us note, however, that in a country with innumerable Protected Areas and an area of Rede Natura corresponding to 22% of the territory, very few EE/ESD projects had to do with these classified areas as specific ecosystems.

The preference goes much more to the (almost playful) question of fauna and flora, such as, in the theme of residues, what is dealt with is, by and large, the 3Rs policy. This, while the country suffers from many problems related to the lack of treatment of dangerous industrial residues (which actually generate recurrent polemics).

Graph 12 - Questions included in thematic group "Citizenship"
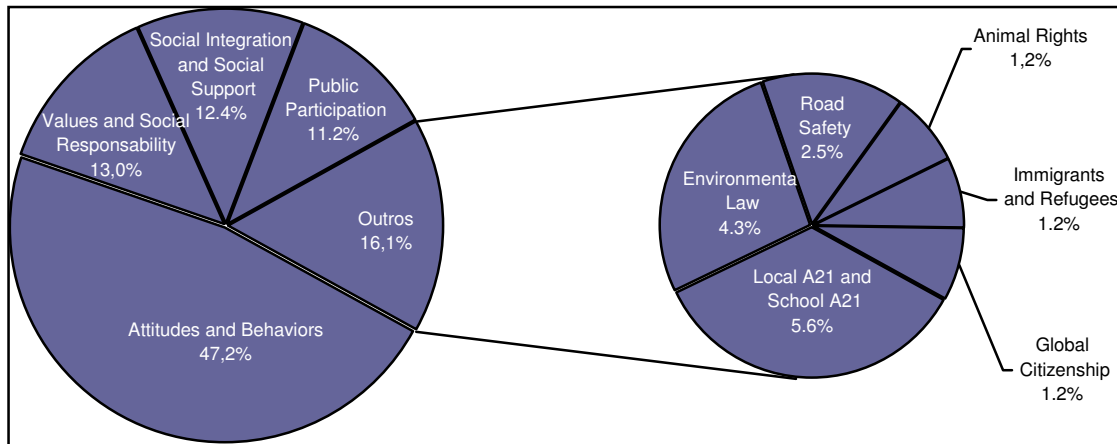
The thematic area of citizenship is another group deserving some additional reflection. Being an open question, aggregates results from a choice that, forcibly, implies some subjectivity. What is meant by citizenship is, above all, "change of attitudes and behaviors" pointed explicitly in almost half of the projects group in this thematic area (47.2%). With rather less expressive values comes the question of adoption of new values and social responsibility (13%), of actions of social integration and support (12.4%), of promotion of public participation in the life of communities (11.2%). All pressing subjects in a society that, in European terms, keeps the lowest levels of civic participation, whether organized or not, of short or long duration.

Finally, with little more than residual values, come the rights of animals, of immigrants and refugees and global citizenship. (graph 12).

Graph 13 – Questions included in thematic group "Environment and Sustainable Development"
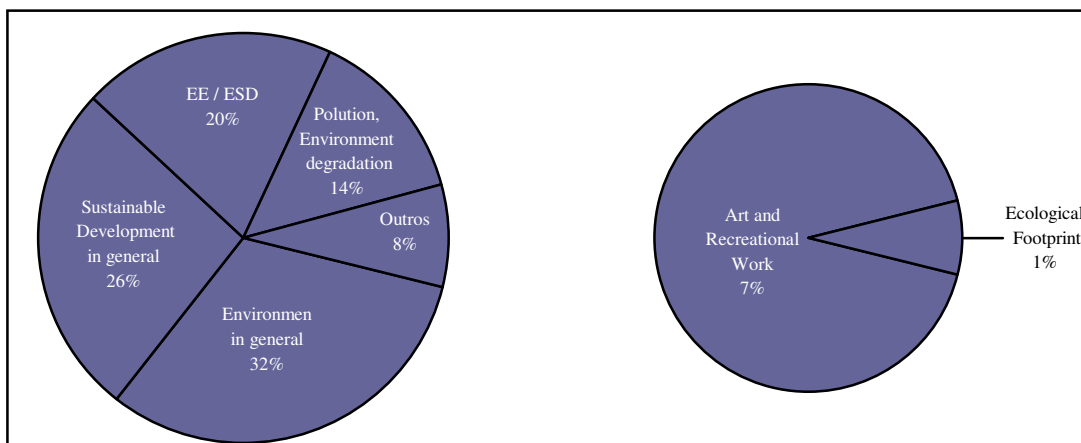
The thematic groups "Environment in general" and "Sustainable Development in general" result, as we mentioned, from a generalized, and perhaps not too rigorous application of concepts. In many cases, and as we can see in graph 13, it isn't possible to distinguish as understand what type of problems are really at stake in the respondents answers. It is the case of he category "Ecology, Environment in General" which, with 31.7%, aggregates phrases or vague ideas about the environment and environmental issues. The same procedure, in fact, may be mentioned for the second and third more important categories in this thematic group: "sustainable Development in general" (26.2%) and "Environmental Education and education towards Sustainable Development" (20.1%). The ambiguity and imprecision of answers didn't allow a better clarification of themes, which will mean, quite probably, a not very deep exploration of the themes. The slightly more concrete question and rather less frequent: pollution (14%), artistic and/or playful work about environment (7.3%) and, with residual weight, ecological footprint that doesn't go beyond 0.6% of the answers grouped in this thematic area.

Besides the more frequent themes, we should underline some question what would deserve much greater attention in the national context. In fact, in a time especially abundant in forest fires and long periods of drought (16.5%), not even those connected with fires and the forest (6.6%) have deserved attention. This when we know that both problems point to the need of acting at the most elementary pedagogical levels (Schmidt and Lima, 2005).

Outside the "ranking of the more frequent subjects" remained also the global problems in general. Neither climate change, nor the destruction of the ozone layer, nor the loss of diversity were highlighted among the respondents. Apparently the environment is mostly treated as a local problem with local repercussions, with little connection being made with the global consequences of those problems.

5. Conclusions

To conclude with, in view of these observations and commentaries, one would say that EE and ESD in Portugal is characterized, in the first place, as being more vertical than transversal, be it either in the sense of territory incidence or theme contents. In fact, the place of action is essentially space of the school. Action is confined to scholar walls, rarely penetrating or, even less, involving the community. Though we only analyzed questionnaires applied to non-scholar organizations that promote EE/ESD, non-scholar educational projects or, in general, those aiming for targets in the surrounding community don't go over 13% of the total studied. And even on projects developed inside the school, it isn't very common the presence of transversal actions

covering the entire scholar community (that is, including students, teachers, auxiliary and administrative staff, etc.).

Partnerships, on their turn, have little expression, and are at large recruited among local and central administration sectors currently connected to the environmental field. Other important sectors, such as health or social services, for instance, remain outside this effort, which seems to obstinately self-restrict to certain areas of social life, thereby ending up as largely inglorious. From sector self-restriction also come difficulties to integrate educational networks. The majority of environmental education projects have, in effect, merely a local reach that seldom spreads to the regional or the nationwide (much less) level.

Also, in what concerns the most mentioned theme contents, we perceive the predominance of very limited, and in some way traditional, set of subjects: fauna, flora, and the 3Rs policy. For instance, conservation of nature, which lies at the rising of the environmental movement in Portugal some decades ago, and still remains as an important anchor of action and orientation of many movement organizations, seems to have thereby occupied the EE/ESD field too. One can understand the emphasis on the recycling and 3Rs policy issue, since it is related to the need, both at local and national level, to achieve goals and compromises at the European level, whose organizations promote and fund EE projects on these issues. Hence the systematic and relatively voluminous production of teaching materials and the promotion of this thematic area by public organizations of local and central administrations and by companies acting in this area. What happens is that, besides being limited and approached in a very restrictive, non-transversal view, these two issues are relatively secondary in the panorama of the actual environmental concerns of the population.

The inquiry whose results we are analyzing was launched after a particularly punishing season, due to forest fires and drought – in particular, after two consecutive years of numerous and calamitous forest fires that reduced to ashes a good portion of forest in Portugal while lack of precipitation reach values there is no memory of. At the same time, the National Plan for Water announces the highest levels of pollution in rivers. Despite that, both water pollution and, principally, forest fires did not receive notorious attention by EE promoters.

The case is that we are facing the same kind of narrowing that is rising limitations to enlarging and integrating EE/EDS activities to further thematic areas that play a strategic role in sustainable development. To name a few, see the case of economic activities, social protection issues, health and quality of life, in other words, the articulation of social and economic dimensions with environmental issues, which together are at the core of global sustainability.

Within such a panorama, the prevalence and persistence of focus on the ecological question in itself to the detriment of its articulation to civic and citizenship issues – remember that Portugal is known among the EU nations by its low levels citizenship and participation in collective action – is at odds to the need to strengthen an essential feature of the Education For Sustainable Development Decade promoted by the United Nations.

A second feature of EE/ESD in Portugal we have to highlight relates to the target groups of EE initiatives. The weight of students and younger groups is smashing, pointing to a certain kind of what one may call "infantilization" of EE/ESD, which means an essentially recreational, playful tendency of EE/EDS activities in Portugal. The very difficulty of EE/ESD in penetrating scholar curricula is a symptom if this situation. This is also derived from as trend of institutional disarticulation between the ministries involved. After all, we are facing the missed encounter between a fundamentally curricular vision of education issuing from the Ministry of Education and a practice ingenuously but persistently based in the more recreational aspects of environmental education by the Ministry of Environment. The organizations of the Ministry of Environment that successively had in charge the promotion of EE had developed an essentially marginal, non-articulated, and non-curricular view of environmental education. By contrast, the Ministry of Education has verticality sought to insert programmatic elements of the environment and ecology in the curricula, after the European Union guidelines, with no worrying about articulating learning and civic dimensions of environmental issues, and its role to citizenship formative dimensions. One and the other, however, hardly met with their and the other objectives in what concerns the EE practices. After an old tradition of the administration in Portugal, both ministries pursued their own, parallel tracks, following their own, different registers: the curricular via by the Ministry of Education, the more ingenuous, recreational one by the Ministry of the Environment.

A third characteristic, which stems from the previous ones, has to do with the very "unsustainability" of EE/ESD initiatives themselves. This may be found, for example, in difficulties to give continuity to educational programs and project actions. Projects are born, according to most answers to our questionnaire, with objectives of assuring continuity, but reality quickly puts limits to their ambitions. Most of them, as we saw, don't hold for more than three years and, even if it is a momentary portrait of reality, the majority EE projects have begun less than one or two years ago.

A clear factor of this "unsustainability" has to do with mobilization obstacles, mobilization of civil society actors in general – to which won't be alien the apparent distance between

educational projects developed and communities – and of the very school community, starting with the difficulty in convincing and involving teachers in environmental education projects. Be it due to school organization features and the support of school director to this kind of educational activities, or be it by pure and simple lack of motivation, a good part of EE/ESD promoters complain about the difficulty in gaining professors to the cause of environmental education. Bearing in mind the conditions of mobility and insecurity in the work of many teachers in public teaching, it is frequent that, with the exit of a certain teacher, environmental education projects just die by inaction or lack of interest by other teachers.

Closing de circle, what lack is the ability to mobilize partners and participants that can, in a gradual, continuing way, give meaning and coherence to the actions and initiatives of EE/ESD. Projects that imply, as should be, a surplus effort in view of the necessary articulation with local communities, and with Portuguese society in general, something that the competent authorities (read the administration and governmental organizations in particular) have been ignoring as a crucial dimension of EE/EDS.

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