Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Steering Committee on Education
for Sustainable Development

Fifteenth meeting
Geneva, 19 and 20 (a.m.) October 2020
Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda
Outcomes of the three meetings and of the
subsequent work of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning:
Draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework

Information paper no. 7

Draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework [1]

Prepared by the UNECE Secretariat

[1] This document was not formally edited

Final Draft for the New Preamble

1. Learning our way out of crisis

1. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" said Nelson Mandela. He never could imagine the enormous crisis that holds our world as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first half of 2020 the entire world faced not only a serious health crisis with a relative new disease, with over 30 million infected people and over a million dead, but also society was in lock-down, social contacts were restricted to minimum, schools were closed, economies were locked, millions of jobs lost, and significant travel restrictions as a result.

2. When drafting outlines for further development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for the next decade 2021 - 2030, these circumstances urge us to rethink and reconsider the challenges, but also the opportunities and needed changes. In order to capitalize on the current social disruption and to 'build back better' we must engage with futures thinking and collaborative decision making which is necessary to speed up the necessary transformations.

3. Also, relevant is the global commitment made to deliver the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals over a timeframe that coincides with that of our own strategic plan. The Sustainable Development Goals provide focus as well the momentum needed to align national and regional efforts towards a measurably better future for all.

4. We should seize the extraordinary opportunity for regional collaboration offered by the SDGs and the needs accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis to strengthen and enhance ESD at the national level. ESD can be a powerful catalyst that can assist our transition towards a more resilient systems and future and to the benefit of current and future generations.

2. COVID-19 as another, but urgent, wake-up call?

5. It is too easy to wait for this pandemic to pass, hoping that things will go back to "normal". Unfortunately, many people, including leaders, may follow this path. They will tend to consider COVID-19 as yet another "nightmare to be forgotten" as we have virtually eliminated from our memory, teachings and strategic planning the "Spanish flu" pandemic, which affected 500 million of people out of the less than approximately 1.7 billion of the then global population and killed an estimated 20 to 50 million victims. There are others who say that we should "never waste a good crisis"[2] and that this momentum can, indeed become the start of a fundamental transition.

6. The COVID-19 crisis proved how vulnerable our societies are and how technological and scientific advances, economic models, military and defence systems, failed to provide us with the protection and security they promise. This pandemic provided us with a fast-forward experience of what our life could be under other, but mostly less visible but not necessarily less urgent, crises as climate change and loss of biodiversity.

7. Well considered, we have several crises at the same time: health, environmental, social and economic. This calls for an education which is appropriate and able to effectively contribute to a realistic transformation of our world in a more healthy, stable, peaceful and fair place for living and wellbeing.

8. This is why we need to make sure that the present extraordinary situation will remain in our collective memory as a strong wake-up call, requiring a thorough, deep re-examination of the root causes behind this situation, providing lessons for appropriate changes in our behaviour and, consequently, indicating transformations in education and learning which is a key process contributing to social change.

[2] Sir Winston Churchill

9. Without denying the considerable progress obtained during the last 100 years in medical and pharmaceutical research and the improvement of health conditions in large parts of the world, we should admit that infectious diseases, and the underlying causes, were largely underestimated. For many years scientists have warned of the potential danger from enhanced human exposure to unknown and emerging new viruses and zoonosis[3], mostly as result of neglecting the biosphere we all live in. However, governments and politicians concentrating for years on visible pressing current challenges and issues, downplayed or postponed proactive and precautionary approaches necessary for safeguarding the crucial fundamental causal relationship between biosphere and the overall natural and cultural environment.[4]

10. The aforementioned reactions are symptoms of the more general lack of clarity about priorities. Globalization, a blind-eye focus on economic growth, destruction of ecosystems, supply-driven high technology, excessive media development without social control and a linear economy, to some extend have led to a loss of a sense of what is important vs unimportant, facts vs fiction and essential vs irrelevant. Under these conditions, the natural links of our lives to their biological roots, history and culture have been damaged, while accelerated confusion prevails what is real progress vs modernity or what are basic values and needs.5 This represents the urgency to strengthen the fourth pillar of sustainable development – the culture of doing what is right, and the relevance of value-based education for sustainable development.

11. This is why it is crucial to view the current situation not only as a health issue, but also as an opportunity to comprehend the unveiled failure of the overall system we live in, and to raise fundamental and systemic questions related to sustainable development. By addressing these questions, hopefully we will be able to enrich and strengthen the very content and pedagogy of ESD in addressing the critical for the future decade to 2030.

3. Major questions that arise from our current state of affairs

12. Major questions that might start with health and go deep into ecology, governance, economy and education, may include the following:

(a) "How do we address COVID-19 and how will we capitalize on lessons learned in order to revisit and reassess the relationship between society and nature, as we see that biodiversity and natural habitats are under serious risks and an increasing animal-human contact is the root cause of serious infections through zoonosis and other poorly understood transmission pathways?"

(b) "How do we make a coordinated transition towards healthy diets and sustainable food systems as we see on the one hand that people with obesity and diabetes are the most vulnerable to COVID-19 and on the other hand, that the prevailing food production and distribution/marketing systems destroy biodiversity, while leaving millions of people in hunger?"

(c) "How we can address the above two questions without improving the situation where 40 percent of the global population has no access to safe, clean water and sanitation, knowing that effective prevention requires at least frequent hand washing?".

(d) "How do we address the nexus of water, energy, food, ecosystem security without sound policies and lifestyle adjustments to mitigate and adapt to climate change?"

(e) "How can we connect these kind of questions in the broader context of sustainable development, as this is not only a health or ecological approach?"

3 Preventing the next pandemic - Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission: https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/preventing-future-zoonotic-disease-outbreaks-protecting-environment-animals-and

4 Footnote to warning reports

5 Footnotes to reports as Climate, WWF, …

(f) "How do we approach the critical issues of inclusion and equity, as we observe that many 'trade-offs' regarding health, nutrition, livelihoods and education affect mainly the most vulnerable and marginalized people, especially women, children and youth since sustainability goes deeply beyond environmental issues?"

13. Regarding these questions, the COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the need for learners to develop a different set of skills that helps them to overcome crises. In this regard, some questions of a different nature are also raised:

(a) "How do we prepare educational institutions and organizations to adopt transformative pedagogies that prepare learners for change?"

(b) How do we develop our quality standards and support systems for educators and education administrators so that ESD is embedded as a core concern?

(c) "How do we pay attention to the role of digital learning, distance learning and ICT based education as integral tools of ESD, as the quarantine unveiled both strengths and weaknesses and demonstrated needs related to digital education systems in many countries."

(d) "How to make sure that digitalization and life-long learning are available for all, since currently very large groups of the most vulnerable people are virtually excluded from this type of education?"

(e) How do we deal with the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 to young people forced to quarantine and go through confusion, anxiety, helplessness, etc and what is the long-term impact for this particular generation of young people?

14. All the above - and many more - questions extending from the prerequisites for healthy lifestyles to socioeconomic issues, conditions affecting vulnerable groups in slum areas, areas under armed conflict and refugees, international cooperation and institutions, etc., call on those who deal with education to learn from the crisis and use the momentum created by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) strengthening the connection between SDGs, ESD and value-based education in general.

4. The consequences for education per se.

15. The pandemic has also "shocked" education per se. The education system, as such, was under great pressure, with temporary closure of schools, impacting more than 90% of the students worldwide and close to 1.6 billion children and youth being out of school, leaving children without access to education for months in parts of the world, and with a sudden transition to 'distance learning' and ICT based education in other parts of the world. But not only the organization of education changed. The questions raised, because of the situation point to the need for revisiting and adjusting the very content of education.

16. Thus, the questions about 'quality education' (SDG 4 and in particular SDG 4.7 both from the ESD perceptive, as well as greater relevance of global citizenship education, and combined with SDGs 12.8 & 13.3 on information and awareness on impact of our lifestyles and climate change) are now more relevant than ever, as we hope that in a post – COVID-19 society, things will not be 'back to business as usual', as the momentum of this crisis raises many fundamental questions frequently asked but not adequately or efficiently addressed (e.g. properly applying the "learning to learn, be, work with others and act approach) and greater, new ones about sustainable living, healthy lifestyles, society, values, purpose of work and consumption, symbols of success, global situation, new economy and institutions, modernity vs tradition, jobs, etc.

17. UNESCO has started a very timely global initiative on the 'Futures of Education' that asks the question 'education for what?'. Can we use education for a more sustainable, just and healthy world? Which transitions are needed to reach that and who will lead us? What has to be replaced and what new possibilities might emerge? Can and will educational institutions and regulations be prepared, open and able to eventually re-invent themselves and appropriately adapt their curricula, pedagogy, methodologies, governance structures, operations and infrastructures to meet the challenge of sustainability as a compass? Do the aforementioned questions require a more urgent answer under the current conditions? Can

we strengthen and reorient education through a lens of change in the post-COVID-19 period and beyond?

18. It is noteworthy that, while we were talking about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) distance learning, and other ICT's for years, in many countries within a few weeks complete learning and educational systems have been innovated and are now web-based; many educational tools are digitalized, teachers are in contact through tele-conferences with students and other audiences. However, the issue of accessibility to technology by disadvantaged groups is intimately related to issues concerning e-learning.

19. What became clear in this period is also inherent inequalities this rapid shift has brought also: access to digital infrastructures (computers, internet) as well as rural/urban divide.

20. So, there are still many questions to answer about what kind of education is NOT suitable for ICTs and how transparent and reliable ICT based learning can or cannot be. Are we "penny wise, pound-foolish"? or just hit by a transition by disaster? For ICT based education to succeed both SDGs 7 on access to reliable energy and SDG9 on resilient infrastructure needed. Breaking the cycle of "Energy Poverty" is the solution. This means investing in renewables, tackle climate change and heal the planet.

5. The role of Youth

21. It is said that the present generation of youth is the first generation that can see the accumulated impact of crises in climate change and loss of biodiversity in the full scale, but also, perhaps, the last generation that can turn the tide and set compass for the needed transitions. This not only requires that they have to be appropriately educated, equipped and prepared for transitions towards a more sustainable world, but their active participation aspirations and creativity is needed now, during the formulation of critical policies, as major decisions of today will influence and, to some extent, will define their future, their role, their impact, and finally the shape of the world in which they will live in and are expected to manage. Young people cannot be the victim of our "growing first and cleaning up later" policy and it is not an option anymore.

22. For this reason, youth should actively participate and be engaged in the different levels of decision making that directly and in directly affect them. Policies and their implementation should be made with youth, not only for youth. Therefore, intergenerational dialogue is necessary to challenge the enormous problem of 'ageing 'in some parts of the world and the growth of youngsters in other parts. We should benefit from wisdom and experience of elderly people (i.e. cultural heritage) and benefit from the energy and innovation of young people.

23. This is broader than what traditional forms of education can offer: This extends in providing young people an enabling learning environment in which, while preserving their individual identity, are encouraged to act jointly for the community and make personal and collective choices for the needed changes and social transformation . In the process of change – and especially for the change of education systems towards ESD-based learning, the role, participation and enthusiasm of youth are essential for formulating the most sustainable pathways forward. This vision also refers to Global Citizenship Education,

6. The Process of the UNECE Strategy for ESD 2021 - 2030

24. Under these circumstances, the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning (SPG) for 2030 has produced the present focus document. The drafting started upon the mandate given by the High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in Batumi (2016) to the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development to continue its work in stimulating cooperation on ESD across the region until 2030, aligned with other global commitments including the ESD for the 2030 Agenda of UNESCO6 and the Agenda for

[6] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215.locale=en

Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)7, and other agendas like the Climate Change Agreement[8] and the initiative of integrating environment and health considerations into healthy school settings[9]

25. The Ad Hoc Group considered the UNECE Strategy for ESD per se (2004), with its seven objectives that reflect not on sustainable development contents as such, but on what are the prerequisites to deliver education for sustainable development that meets the need for change. Furthermore the Ad Hoc Group considered the six priority actions from the previous framework for implementation (2015-2019) that were organized in three vertical strands (whole institution approach (WIA) school plans; ESD in teacher education; strengthening TVET in support of sustainable development) and three horizontal ones (integration of ESD in policies; linking ESD in formal, informal and non-formal education; the role of networks).

26. As part of the process of constructing a new strategic plan, national focal points and experts of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD, met in a series of meetings hosted by the Netherlands (The Hague, November 2018) and Cyprus (Nicosia, September 2019 and online in March 2020) and produced the draft document presented here for further consultation and approval.

27. The Ad Hoc Group also took in consideration the UNESCO preparations within and beyond the new "ESD for 2030" framework for the period 2021 to 2030 to be formally launched in Berlin in May 2021 (date postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis) and through a series of regional online launching events starting in October 202010. "ESD for 2030" provides a new global program for ESD, where UNECE can and will contribute by sharing the collective experience of the region which has a very significant tradition and work on ESD, as compiled and crystalized through the work of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD and its working groups. Obviously, the aim of "sharing" the UNECE experience is to benefit not only the region and its neighbours but also other regions and parts of the world. This also offers an opportunity to use the knowledge gained through the ESD process to influence and strengthen the work of the different Issue-Based Coalitions (IBCs)11 under the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to which UNECE, UNEP and UNESCO are active members.

28. Particular emphasis is given by UNECE to closely link ESD with the SDGs, beyond SDG4 for Education (and specifically SDG 4.7 for ESD) and SDG 17 (for promoting international efforts and cooperation, partnerships and knowledge platforms). This association presents unique opportunities for synergies among educators and various stakeholders at all levels, from global to national and local. This is becoming increasingly evident by the fact that both problems and solutions on environment and development having complex socio-cultural and economic consequences are to a very large extent of regional nature and dimensions rather than global or national ones.

29. The importance of regional approaches has been recognized also in recent Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the UN Rio Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification (Para's on CEPA: Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness)12 , while efforts for Sustainable Futures are also taking place at regional or sub-regional level; further examples of significant regional approaches are e.g. the ambitious new "Green Deal" of the EU13; a regional cooperation as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development under the Barcelona Convention and the relevant Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Agendas, or the cooperation in CAREC region.

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7 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

8 https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf

9 WHO (2019). Integrating environment and health considerations into healthy school setting, background paper

10 https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/ESDfor2030-workshops

11 Environment and climate change, Health, Youth, and Gender equality http://www.unece.org/runcwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html

12 Make references to the right para in the conventions (e.g. CBD, article 13) ….

13 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal:content/EN/TXT/?qid1588580774040&uri=CELEX:52019DC0640

30. Given this context, the UNECE ESD Strategic Planning for 2030 should be ambitious, but fully aware of the 'momentum of change and crisis' we are in. It needs to respond to many known and new challenges in a very rapidly changing world and political and socioeconomic developments, both at national levels and global levels.

31. In the UNECE region, many efforts are inspired by knowledge, innovations and good practices of the ESD and SD communities, also recognized worldwide, despite the relative resource limitations of the regional framework within which the Strategic Planning is developed and operates.

7. Towards Four Strands

32. Under the current COVID-19 time and beyond, the Committee has decided to focus on a limited number of priority areas of regional, national but also global importance where UNECE expertise could trigger and facilitate adequate transformative mobilization and change.

33. Apart from the substantial sustainable development issues connected with the major questions raised in part three that need to be reflected in the content and pedagogy supporting ESD, the Strategy addresses:

(a) What are the regional priorities and agreed way forward for ESD in the next ten years?

(b) How do we strengthen the position of ESD in educational systems and in learning beyond schools, colleges and universities?

(c) How do we continually assess national and regional progress and propose tangible ways to improve as well as learn from the experience of member states?

(d) What are drivers and opportunities for advancing the countries advantages and opportunities of ESD as a methodology, approach, and means of implementing SDGs through inter-sectoral cooperation?

(e) How do we identify realistic and measurable targets that that helps us advance our commitment to ESD during this decade?

(f) How do our current lifestyle and economic models support the needed rapid change towards sustained futures, and how do our educational systems support sufficiently well the necessary changes to address with optimism a safer and more sustainable post-COVID-19 era.

(g) How do we build collaborative platforms and initiatives with UNEP, UNESCO and UNFCCC to take forward our joint ambitions in education and learning for sustainable development? And What should be the way forward until 2030 within the regional context?

34. In 2019, four strands were selected on the basis of discussions in the UNECE Steering Committee, a prioritization process through the expression of interest from members and subsequently, the work of four sub-groups of experts from countries, international organizations and stakeholders for each strand. The four strands that reflect the major needs for ESD to be an integral part of educational systems and society as a whole, to enable people to learn, live and work in a planet that is more prosperous, just, creative, healthy and sustainable, are the following:

A. Quality Education and ESD.

B. Whole Institution Approach/ Institutions as communities of transformational learning.

C. Digital Education, ICT and ESD.

D. Entrepreneurship, Employment, Innovation and ESD.

35. These strands will be elaborated in the next pages.

Strand A:

36. Quality Education and ESD goes beyond new content and new pedagogy; it encompasses all actors, institutions and policies in a process of reorienting education towards sustainable development. This strand adopts a lifelong and life wide learning perspective and focuses on the transformative edge of ESD that encourages learners to reflect on their mind sets and responses while empowering them to transform themselves and their communities. Specifically, the strand develops frameworks and support systems for educators, curriculum developers and education administrators with responsibility for quality and standards. It ultimately, seeks to embed ESD into national and transnational quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms and processes, ESD expands the traditional concepts of education and considers every community of practice that leads to sustainability as a learning community. ESD facilitates each person's individual and collective efforts to become an active change agent to achieve a sustainable quality of life.

STRAND A: Quality Education and Education for Sustainable Development
Policy Framework
Education institutions have internal and external assessment mechanisms that assure quality of the educational experience and/or qualifications that are attained. There are qualified professionals that oversee this agenda in education and who work in pre-schools, schools, colleges and universities, government authorities or national agencies. They are trained to recognise good practice, support educational change and ensure equal opportunities across the educational systems they are responsible for. Most have not encountered ESD and have had limited engagement with SDGs but are committed to improving learning and teaching experiences more broadly in education. This stakeholder group is of core interest to the proposed strand of work. The intention would be to embed ESD into standards, frameworks and resources which inform peer learning and expert visits associated with quality assurance and enhancement. There are a handful of national initiatives that have brought together ESD and quality education issues. If this strand of work is adopted by the Steering Committee, it is proposed that these efforts are considered in detail and that colleagues who led the work are invited to participate in an advisory capacity.
Context (problems and challenges)
Multiple challenges underpin this strand. Firstly, as with other strands, there is always the issue that ESD is misunderstood or superficially interpreted as the adding of thematic content into the existing curriculum. In reality, addressing ESD requires revising the 'how' or pedagogical and assessment approaches, as well as the 'what' or content and learning outcomes. It also requires education institutions to model ESD in their management, practice and relationships with the community so that students have a lived experience in ESD. The initiatives emerging from this strand of work may find it difficult to get traction with those who interpret ESD as simply environmental oriented education. Bringing in the SDGs into the core of any work progressed by this strand will be important. Another challenge is to ensure that the efforts promote a whole-institutional approach to ESD and engage those with

learning, as well as those with management, responsibilities in the quality education sector. To achieve this will be a major challenge. It is recommended that a list of head of national quality agencies is developed and that a meeting is convened in Geneva to involve them in efforts from the start. Finally, the biggest challenge is finance. These efforts will need funding and identifying a grant authority, a donor or several donors from the different components of this strand will be vital to successfully attaining the outcomes outlined above.

Vision (past-present-future), including goals and objectives

This strand of work has the following vision and goals:

1. The engagement of education quality professionals, systems and authorities in ESD dialogues.
2. The presence of ministries of education at the meetings of the Steering Committee and the strengthening of cooperation in ESD between the ministries of education and research, environment and other relevant ministries.
3. The carving of a unique and impactful ESD pathway that will assist the Steering Committee regain its voice in ESD international dialogues.
4. The embedding of ESD into education quality systems.
5. To contribute to the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of UNECE member states on the implementation of SDG4.7 at the national level

Expected Accomplishments (activities) (2021-2025)

The focus would be on the development of the following tools via a participatory process that creates ownership and embeds good practice:

(1) Quality criteria frameworks for embedding ESD into each educational level - early childhood, schools, colleges (TVET) and universities [14]. This could consist of learner attributes that are discipline based and that are accompanied by guidelines for integrating ESD into learning experiences; For a two-year period, efforts will focus on one of the above sectors.

(2) A benchmarking tool to assess practice;

(3) An ESD/SDG professional development programme for education quality professionals (including curriculum developers, teacher trainers, assessment organizations), authorities and agencies as well as education managers and leaders for a better alignment of curricula, pedagogy and assessment in implementing ESD.

(4) Partnerships: Colleagues at the Hague meeting of the Ad Hoc Group agreed that the Steering Committee should join forces with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNESCO in promoting this strand of work and invite the European Commission for collaboration on this agenda. Also, of interest are international agencies with responsibility for educational quality. For example, at the higher education level, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the International

[14] (e.g.) UNESCO's ESD learning objectives book could be helpful to advance the reflection. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444.locale=en

Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (INAQAAHE) are pertinent. Both organizations bring together national agencies that are engaged in political decision-making processes associated with quality education. The intention is to form an alliance with stakeholder organizations that have a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance and enhancement of education.

Strand B:

37. To achieve Quality Education, the concept of a whole school approach needs to evolve into the concept of a **Whole Institution Approach (WIA)**, which embraces not just formal education settings, but also settings that are not necessarily associated with pedagogical practice such as institutions providing non-formal education and informal education in public and private sectors.

38. In fact, WIA has to prepare learners for a "whole system" view, opening the minds for systemic thinking, willingness and ability to conduct policies for addressing problems and act accordingly. It is based on the UNECE ESD Strategy, responses positively to the Rio+20 recommendations and the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 and aligns with the new ESD for 2030 framework of UNESCO (2021-2030) which has identified the WIA as one of its Priority Action Areas.

STRAND B: Whole Institution approach and ESD
Policy Framework
The ECE Steering Committee acknowledged the importance of a Whole Institution Approach (WIA) in the promotion Sustainable Development principles (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1; para. 29). The outcomes of the third phase of the evaluation report of the ESD Strategy implementation in the Member States in the UNECE Region, considered a WIA as "a highly effective means to instil the knowledge, skills and choices for learners to live and work sustainably" (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2016/3) (p.9). While the majority of countries reported progress to the adoption of a WIA, this was mainly in relation to schools (primary and secondary) rather than all institutions of formal, non-formal and informal education (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2020/6). The need for a WIA has been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed the need for the development of healthy learning environments and institution settings that can prepare every individual for emergency situations. The ECE Steering Committee's efforts to promote a WIA is in line with and meets the challenges of other UN policies (e.g. WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change, 2019; UNESCO Associated Schools) that envisage the development of each institution into a community of learning for SDGs, weaving sustainable development principles within the institution's management policy and progressively incorporating these principles within the institution's ethos, making each institution a microcosm of sustainability. The intention is to implement ESD as an integrated component across educational and training programmes together with the sustainable management of the institution and its interface with the local community. This is achieved through system-wide interventions where youth (as agents of change) will have the knowledge, competences and support to lead their

institutions and communities to a more sustainable, just, resilient and healthy future.
Context (problems and challenges)
(A) Adopting a WIA implies orienting an institution's strategy and ultimately its culture towards sustainable development. This implies that each institution reviews its own actions in the light of sustainable development principles regarding the four overlapping spheres characterising this approach: Governance (compatible with sustainability principles); Infrastructure; Learning Programme and Community (external relationships). Achieving these targets requires overcoming these challenges: clarifying the definition, aims and actions conducive to a WIA and its implications, thus ensuring that countries, organizations, stakeholders, etc. can successfully adopt this approach within their respective national and local frameworks, contexts and realities when implementing ESD and the SDGs. (B) addressing, explaining and describing the generic areas of a WIA as a concrete framework that can be adapted to a variety of institutions, organizations, sectors and contexts which are implementing ESD and the SDGs. (C) identifying and describing (i) the intrinsic elements that are vital for internal and external stakeholders in an institution/organization and (ii) the obstacles and appropriate measures that can be taken to promote a WIA. (D) identifying the (internal and external) stakeholders that can jointly develop a shared vision for the implementation of ESD through a WIA according to Agenda 2030 (particularly SDG 4.7). (E) supporting youth as transformation agents by structurally integrating their energy and creativity into a WIA to ESD.
Vision (past-present-future), including goals and objectives.
Our vision is to recall our commitment for promoting sustainable development by providing appropriate policies, measures and resources that facilitate institutions and organizations in formal, non-formal and informal sectors, at local, regional and international levels to reorganize and transform themselves through a WIA. More specifically the objectives of a WIA are: (a) To provide a competent and coherent framework that fosters a participatory approach that promotes commitment, ownership and responsibility for promoting a WIA in diverse contexts. (b) To use the lessons learned and the expertise gained in the field of ESD and WIA's in the UNECE region, for creating a self-assessment mechanism that can support every institution and its members to adapt sustainability in the framework of WIA. (c) To strengthen UNECE ESD SC synergies between organizations, mechanisms and networks (e.g. UNESCO, EU and WHO) that develop policies for a WIA.

(d) To provide the tools and the resources that facilitate every citizen (particularly youth) and institution to participate in a whole institution transformation. (e) To mobilize and gives opportunities to youth to participate actively in the design of ESD WIA plans in their institution and undertaking a leading role for integrating through it SDGs and especially SDG4.7 (f) To contribute to the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of UNECE member states on the implementation of SDG4.7 at the national level.
Expected Accomplishments (activities)
Based on the rationale, challenges, vision and objectives of a WIA, the expected actions and activities proposed for the period 2020-2025 are: 1. Creation of a whole institution framework based on areas of generic interest including: (i) Leadership at the learning place; (ii) Quality assurance - any place of learning needs to have a vision of how it wants to develop, i.e. how to use ESD as a transformative process and what kind of monitoring and evaluation need to be established; (iii) Involving youth as part of the participatory processes; (iv) ESD for staff development; (v) Opportunities for further training for everyone; (vi) Developing sustainable infrastructures such as waste management practices, energy conservation, purchasing policies, etc.; (vii) Innovation – being open to change and collaboration with other entities through networking opportunities at local, regional and international levels; and (viii) Communication networks within and outside the institution. 2. Developing an evaluation scheme or a set of quality criteria for institutions seeking to adopt a WIA to help them identify what they have achieved, what they still need to work on, what obstacles they face and how to overcome them, and how the adoption of the approach is improving the quality of life in the institution. 3. Creating a guide that mobilizes and supports youth in the design, development and implementation, in close collaboration with all interested parties, a WIA plan to promote ESD, within their respective institutions.

Strand C:

39. **Technologies and ICT's** develop fast in times of accelerating change. This can give both positive and negative impacts, particularly when little attention is paid on how 'modernity' can be compatible with sustainability. The challenge is to use them in a proper way to support the necessary transformations towards more sustainable futures, both within formal education and non-formal settings, as well as in various learning schemes (such as TVET) to respond adequately to (green) job requirements and employability of young people[15]. Although the recent increase in use of ICTs and other delivery mechanisms due to the COVID-19 crisis, was to a large extent successful, many key questions still remain about the limitations of digitalization: the appropriate learning and expression tool mix (e.g.

[15] https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4

avoidance of the dominance of image against abstract thinking, etc.); various issues related to the access of disadvantaged groups to ICT use and consequently e-learning programs; and the ways ICTs will help education and sustainable changes.

STRAND C: Digital Education, ICT and ESD
Policy Framework
Digital transformation brings along significant changes in the skills needed in personal and professional life and the proper use of these digital technologies is also a key factor in achieving the SDG's. In order to cope with the changes and challenges brought by the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT) in all areas and levels of education, training and information structures, it is essential to reconsider the processes of access to science, technology and innovation, particularly with regard to ESD. The educational process must therefore engage in profound educational and organizational transformations which require mobilizing all the players in order to build the future and thus enable everyone to succeed. Digital technology represents a powerful lever for transformation to support the UNECE policy in all dimensions of ESD in order to meet current and future needs, whether in general education, vocational training or information.
Context (problems and challenges)
The systematic and updated use of ICT and all digital tools and resources constitute one of the main levers for promoting the reality of new educational practices facilitating access to knowledge for everyone throughout life by offering everyone the possibility of capitalizing on knowledge and know-how. In addition, ICT also responds to the many challenges faced by many education systems, such as lack of teachers, lack of skills in the implementation of digital tools and lack of infrastructure or access to digital tools, without forgetting the insufficient training of personnel of all kinds. The advantages of digital technology are therefore remarkable, particularly when it comes to teaching sustainable development and rethinking the processes implemented to develop ESD capable of responding to the current and future challenges of our societies: (i) for the benefit of learners who can thus have a personalized learning environment; (ii) for the benefit of teachers who have the opportunity to develop new pedagogies; (iii) for the benefit of researchers who will contribute to new educational policies; (iv) for the overall management of the education system and its actors through the statistical use of data to assess practices and model changes. and moreover: (v) develop procedures to combat 'illectronism' (electronic illiteracy) and thus enable everyone to use digital tools and access digital resources; and (vi) develop media education to give everyone the ability to understand and appreciate, with a critical sense, the various

digital content dealing with sustainable development, to comment on it and to exchange views.

Vision (past-present-future), incl. goals and objectives

Education during and after COVI-19 should fully embrace the opportunities, the benefits and potential provided by technology and ICT to reduce inequalities and improve access for all.

If we consider pedagogical innovation, digital development for ESD should help change the practices of teachers by helping them recommend content or resources or assisting in the assessment of learners while students have the opportunity. to train, to self-assess, to participate in the development of diagnoses based on resources adapted to their levels or their needs.

The possibilities offered by DLT (Distributed Ledger Technology) and blockchain technology generate new opportunities for updating and valuing open resources, while ensuring their traceability. This technology can simplify the process of improving and verifying the database; it is also possible to manage the teaching staff more effectively in order to optimize the available human resources.

The main objective of technology and ICT for ESD should be to reduce the barriers that persist in education whilst providing qualitative thresholds for educators that must be attained. Digital technology provides a unique method that, when implemented correctly, is capable of removing many barriers learners face.

Teacher training should also benefit greatly from the contribution of digital technology to supporting and strengthening their skills as they make it possible to improve the duration and modalities of training courses and jointly provide training using digital technology and delivered digitally. As a result, the training of these teachers is in line with the issues addressed and thus contributes to a better transfer of knowledge and development of appropriate skills to learners.

Expected accomplishments (actions and activities)

Faced with the challenge of acquisition of transversal key competences for sustainability, ICTs, and more widely digital methods, benefit from a wide range of applications that facilitate innovative pedagogies for learning ESD:

1. Systematize the use of digital tools to enhance the current potential of ICTs by combining formal, non-formal and informal learning;
2. Identify and address educational barriers related to access to digital technology.
3. Generalize e-learning and blended learning that combine face-to-face training and e-learning;
4. Strengthen the production of and access to Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) which is a key factor in facilitating ESD;

5. Apply Learning Analytics and other AI techniques to ESD in order to measure, collect, analyse and process data associated with learners and their environment;
6. Develop social networks as a key instrument, knowing that these social networks are totally useless without an educational goal and framework;
7. Integrate an Open Science framework allowing the use, reuse, creation and sharing of Open Educational Resources and good practices at all levels of training;
8. Identify new qualifications and skills in the field of sustainable development in order to integrate them into new professional profiles;
9. Develop media education in order to help young people and adults develop the capacity to critically understand and appreciate the different aspects of the media contents; This is also important to fight misinformation to e.g. climate change and sustainable development as a whole.
10. Combat the 'illectronism' of those who do not have the keys to the use of electronic resources in accessing, manipulating or understanding digital information.

Strand D:

40. ESD should enhance **entrepreneurship and employment** opportunities for people – especially youth – to develop their creativity by providing them with competences and learning conditions where they can develop their personalities and contribute to personal and community change and transformation towards sustainable development. Starting with rethinking the current socio-economic conditions and their relationship to our eco-systems, there is a need for young people to be ultimately enabled and given proper space to develop their potential. Employment, entrepreneurship and innovation can lead the way to a radical shift of our consumption and production choices towards sustainable models in the framework of a green and circular economy. In such a framework, well-articulated entrepreneurship and innovation could become significant job creating motors but also the output of an enlarged ESD approach, assisting learners to answer the questions of what kind of society and economy we want to live and work in.[16] The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR 2019)[17] states: building the capacities and skills of the next generation of researchers and change makers is one of the biggest leverage points towards sustainability at humanity's disposal.

STRAND D: Entrepreneurship, Employability and Innovation
Policy Framework
The need for fast transformation on a global scale according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report [18]and the COP21 Agreement[19] and other relevant UN initiatives[20] requires radical changes which can be brought about

[16] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html

[17] GSDR 2019: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

[18] (IPCC, 2018)

[19] (UN, 2015),

[20] UNCTAD Entrepreneurship Policy Framework and Implementation Guidance https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship-Policy-Framework-and-Implementation-Guidance.aspx ; The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/databases-platforms/global-initiative-decent-jobs/lang--en/index.htm

through innovation, entrepreneurial activity and new employment routes. Employment or the lack of, has an important economic, social and environmental impact. A sustainable transformation will see jobs disappearing and new jobs coming into play (Frey & Osborne, 2017), as the economy transitions into more digital and less carbon intensive ventures and services, creating gap in skills and competencies. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, there is an urge for even faster digital transformation and agility in the workforce.

ESD will play a crucial role in both the creation of new prospects as well as the social transition due to this change. Hence, both innovation and entrepreneurship are bound to be important in ensuring sustainable employment in an ever-changing world by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, and making the transition just and inclusive for all. This transition requires the inclusion of all the workforce, regardless of gender. Increasing gender equality is crucial in meeting the Agenda-2030 Targets (UN, 2015), and for Sustainable Development overall.

Systemic innovation, as highlighted in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015), needs to be evident at local authority and community level. Local education efforts in systems innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset are essential. Systems innovation is necessary to boost efforts in the transition while ensuring that people are adequately trained to be employable in an agile, future and competitive job market (including green skills and the promotion of green economy), since unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern (UN Agenda 2030).

Identify new qualifications and skills in the field of sustainable development in order to integrate them into professional profiles and facilitate effective integration of learners, in initial training as well as in continuing training, in particular by developing cooperation with UNEVOC-TVET which provides TVET stakeholders with a platform for exchange and helps them to meet current challenges and better response to technological, social and environmental changes (e.g. BILT program).

Context (problems and challenges).

The challenges for achieving Sustainable Development through Entrepreneurship, Employability, and Innovation are:

1. **The lack of connection between education, research, policy and the market needs.** Due to the lack of communication between educational institution, businesses and policymakers, there is little understanding of future market needs, failing to equip the workforce with the necessary skills and competences. Furthermore, in some cases the business sector is not able to accurately predict their needs in terms of competencies of the workforce, due to the rapid and far-reaching changes that need to be made to the current production model.
2. **The lack of required competencies** leads directly to the creation of a workforce which lacks such competencies. To overcome this challenge, major re-skilling and up-skilling are required, especially in the case of the younger generation

of educators. It is necessary to pay increased attention and support further education and training of all teachers for the development of required skills of students in the process of formal education, which will help students to develop entrepreneurship skills and increase their employability. If students' development of these skills is to be part of their education, teachers must have sufficient professional support, methodological materials, information and competences to develop them further.

3. **The lack of entrepreneurial ecosystems.** Entrepreneurial ecosystems include supporting legislations, platforms of interaction and funding mechanisms that enable entrepreneurial and intra-preneurial activity.
4. **Gender inequality** is a horizontal challenge which trickles down through all aspects of ESD. Increasing gender equality will boost employability for all, also through entrepreneurship.
5. Lack of intergenerational approach and focus on inclusive education for people with disabilities and marginalised groups. Fast technological advances help to reap the fruit of the economic progress and improve the social situation of many but on the other hand more and more people are excluded from these benefits and social and economic differences are growing due to unequal availability of education opportunities.
6. Insufficient preparation of students for the labour market already during the formal education process. Most of the knowledge that students acquire in primary and secondary education is not sufficient for the current, rapidly evolving labour market. Students lack practical subjects that would develop their skills for employability and entrepreneurship. It encompass the ability to take responsibility for one's own decisions, develop sense of initiative, soft skills, critical thinking, basic economic and legal education and the ability to solve problems, ability to actively search for, sort out and engage in various opportunities for their personal development (competitions, projects, etc.).

Vision (past-present-future), including goals and objectives

The COP21 agreement and UN Sustainable Development Agenda push for an ambitious transformation that requires addressing current and future global complexities. Whereas significant technological advances across many fields have increased welfare globally, many communities across the world cannot cope with this change whether that involves the economy (e.g. new economic models), society (alternative jobs) and the environment (climate change). Educating and re-educating people to address these challenges is becoming of utmost importance.

Using the experience and practices of the past, sporadic point innovation and entrepreneurial activity cannot deliver the change required for the transition fast enough and a systems approach within the context of ESD is more appropriate. As highlighted by the European Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ 2018/ C 189/01) there is a need to embed elements of systems innovation and

entrepreneurial mindset to develop 21st century skills and competences for a rapidly changing employment environment. Specifically:

1. **"Green" (sustainable) digital skills:** Individuals should be able to constantly learn, develop their knowledge about "green" and ICT technologies, enable the exchange of experiences, techniques and tools, build capacity and develop new skills and values and, finally, make effective, environmentally friendly decisions for the sustainable future.
2. **Systemic innovation:** Mapping and understanding of the stakeholders and social/economic/environmental challenges and drivers can be crucial in applying innovative solutions and disrupting the current state of practice (EIT Climate-KIC, 2019), bringing about lasting solutions. Sustainable development is not viable with isolated innovation actions.
3. **Entrepreneurial mindset:** Entrepreneurial skills extend beyond learning how to run a business, focusing on finding needs and delivering value propositions to meet new and changing demands (Osterwalder et al, 2014). Thinking like an entrepreneur is a competence that allows individuals to "learn, unlearn and relearn" enabling them to solving problems and adapt in a radically changing environment whether being in business by themselves or within a company or an organization.
4. Reform of formal education: Support practical educational subjects/programs, minimize the amount of theory to the necessary level and general overview (for specific subjects), actively involve practitioners in the process of education and create conditions for the possibility of verifying the acquired knowledge and skills of students in practice.

Expected Accomplishments (activities)

Based on the rationale, challenges, vision and objectives on entrepreneurship, employability and innovation, the proposed activities for the period 2020-2030 are the following:

1. Launch an initiative to call upon all countries, institutions and businesses to apply their creativity and innovation and commit to tangible results pertinent to the UN SDGs.
2. Create guidelines and an assessment tool to benchmark the level of institutional readiness in infusing/ encompassing entrepreneurial skills and innovation to support employability competences.
3. Establish a funding mechanism to support regional partners across the globe, to increase awareness on the importance of ESD, to facilitate networking among stakeholders and local communities with the aim to develop an ecosystem to champion agile employability, entrepreneurship and innovation. Create synergies with global, regional and local initiatives (e.g. Covenant of Mayors) on tackling environmental, social and economic challenges at local level, by enhancing the role of local governments in developing and implementing local policies and strategic

actions. Work with SDG Accelerator hubs at the national level.

4. Promote, at the level of relevant state institutions, proven and functional educational approaches, projects and organizations that support the required skills for the development of entrepreneurship, employability and innovation. This support can have various dimensions – financial aid, time (provide more classes), professional help, etc. Create conditions (technical, material and time) for schools to educate teachers and students so that they can develop these necessary skills.

Concluding Remarks

41. All the above should be developed within a framework of a 'pedagogy of hope' which inspires and motivates people to use their abilities for their own benefit and the benefit of society and the world.

42. With these four work strands which complement the work already going on in implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD along with the work of other parallel international and regional (UNESCO, UfM, EU Green Deal, UN SDGs) processes, mechanisms and initiatives on ESD[21], we can continue to champion ESD as a contribution to a more resilient society with a stronger global community, more opportunities for properly educated youth and all the relevant changes our world needs to make Earth a more sustainable planet for humans and nature to live more harmoniously together.

21 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215 (INCLUDE ALSO OTHER References for other processes)