



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

17th meeting, 30 and 31 May 2022

Information Paper No. 1

Outline of the peer learning round table (session 2) on Sustainable Development Goal 4 – *Rebalancing people, planet and prosperity:* *ESD as key enabler for the 17 SDGs and Agenda 2030*, organised in the framework of 2022 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda:

Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development:
Regional framework of cooperation for sustainable development: participation in the 2022
Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and outcomes of the peer learning round table
on Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education, organized by the UNECE Steering
Committee on ESD in the framework of the Forum and in collaboration with UNESCO and
UNEP

Prepared by the Secretariat¹

¹ This information document was not formally edited

1. The secretariat will inform the meeting about the outcomes of the peer learning round table “Rebalancing people, planet and prosperity: ESD as key enabler for the 17 SDGs and Agenda 2030”, organised in the framework of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD 2022) (Geneva, 7 April 2022).
2. The concept note, programme and summary notes of the round table are provided below.
3. The weblink to the event including the recording is available at the following address: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Education-for-Sustainable-Development/events/367710>

RFSD 2022 - Peer Learning Round Table on SDG 4: Quality education (Session 8)
“Rebalancing people, planet and prosperity: ESD as key enabler for the 17 SDGs and Agenda 2030”

Concept Note

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses in our education systems and compelled us to innovate to make education systems more resilient to future disruptions. It has focused attention on the key interconnections between societies, economies and environment. SDG 4.7 recognizes the central role of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to empower and equip people with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to take informed decisions needed for the transformational changes for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society.

UNESCO’s landmark Futures of Education report calls for forging a new social contract for education as a critical step towards reimagining our futures together. It calls for urgent rebalancing of our relationships with each other, nature and with technology, as well as for pedagogies of collaboration, cooperation and solidarity that treasure and sustain diversity and pluralism.

Various initiatives are thus underway to reimagine education to better address the planetary crisis. Building on the global ESD for 2030 framework and its Roadmap, the 2021 Berlin Declaration on ESD, the new UNECE Strategy for ESD implementation framework (2021 – 2030), this roundtable aims to showcase how ESD can help to scale up the role of education to tackle future crisis, reorient learning to empower learners of all ages to act for environmental integrity, economic viability, a more just, equitable society, and a healthy and sustainable planet.

The session highlighted global and regional ESD policy actions, including the upcoming High-Level Education and Environment Ministers meeting in Cyprus, and illustrated how ESD strategies can help advance, amplify, and scale up transformative education for sustainable development and strengthen cooperation between the education, environment and other sectors to prepare learners for the future.

Programme

Thursday, 7 April 2022, 10:00 – 12:00

10h00 - 10h05	Welcome (moderator: Mr. Wondwosen Asnake Kibret , UNEP)
10h05 - 10h15 [15 min]	Introductory remarks by the co-organizers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Vibeke Jensen, Director, Division for Peace and Sustainable Development, UNESCO • Mr. Bruno Pozzi, Director, UNEP Europe Office • Mr. Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, UNECE
10h15 - 10h35 [20 min]	Commitments of governments to make ESD a core element of education programmes to accelerate 2030 agenda and build forward better <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Kakha Khandolishvili, Head of International Relations and Strategic Development Department, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, [<i>progress since the Batumi meeting of the Education and Environment Ministers and ESD in the VNRs</i>] • Mr. Hannu Vainonen, Senior Ministerial Adviser, International Relations, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland [<i>Integration of ESD in National Sustainable Development roadmaps</i>] • Mr. Roel van Raaij, Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, The Netherlands, [<i>Whole institution approach to ESD as a driver to advancing 2030 Agenda</i>]
10h35 - 10h50 [15 min]	Engagement of youth in ESD and in building a sustainable future for all <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Vladislav Kaim, UN Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change [<i>What are the systems and tools needed to effectively engage young people in sustainable development issues?</i>] • Mr. Simon Herteleer, UNECE ESD Youth Platform [<i>The role of ESD in facilitating cooperation and exchange among youth, and in promoting active, informed and responsible citizenship</i>] • Dr. Jan Činčera, Masaryk university, Czech Republic [<i>The importance of ESD in creating climate positive futures, lessons learnt from the 11th World Environmental Education Congress</i>]
10h50 - 11h10 [20 min]	Multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaboration on ESD, and cooperation between the Education and Environment sectors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Maja Rentrop-Klewitz, Policy Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Germany [<i>How did the German multi-stakeholder process come about and at what stage is it at today?</i>] • Ms. Deirdre Hodson, Policy Officer, European Commission [<i>How do we use ESD to increase resilience and preparedness of society for the for the green transition and to take action on environmental sustainability at the rate and scale needed?</i>] • Ms. Aravella Zachariou, Chair of the UNECE Steering Committee for ESD [<i>How to strengthen new framework for the implementation of UNECE Strategy for ESD 2021 – 2030</i>]
11h10 - 11h25 [15 min]	Good practices in the implementation of education in the areas of sustainable development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungary, Ms. Monika Reti, Policy Officer, Ministry of Human Capacity • Israel, Dr. Gilmor Keshet-Maor, Director of science and mathematics Division, Ministry of Education [<i>Challenges in Education for Sustainable Development</i>] • Denmark, Ms. Sille Stidsen, Department Director, Human Rights and Development, The Danish Institute for Human Rights, [<i>ESD for advancing human rights</i>]

11h25 - 11h50 [25 min]	<p><i>Second round of Questions – up to 10 countries will be given a slot, if time permits</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. What commitment(s) can you make between now and RFSD-2023 to ensure ESD becomes a core element of education programmes?</i> <i>2. What will you commit to do different to empower young people as change agents for sustainable development?</i> <i>3. Name one action/step you would take to strengthen the culture of peace and sustainability in partnership with another ministry or stakeholder, and why?</i> <i>4. Name one action/step you would take to ensure ESD becomes a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society business?</i>
11h50 - 12h00 [10 min]	<p><i>Wrap up of the Peer Learning Round Table and concluding remark.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Zaal Lomtadze, Chief of Section, Environment Division, UNECE

Summary notes and recommendations

The ever-increasing crises of climate, mass biodiversity loss and pollution; the rise of conflicts and violent ideologies and the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic on a generation of students worldwide clearly calls for an immediate action. Education for sustainable development is a pre-eminent tool to address these global challenges.

Education must prepare learners to navigate uncertain futures and help them create a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. Our education systems urgently need to move beyond literacy and numeracy, and inculcate values, knowledge and skills that promote peace, sustainable development, human rights and democracy.

Sustainable development is truly possible and achievable through a worldwide shift of society towards transformed behaviour, production and consumption patterns. We must rethink and reimagine the purpose, content and outcome of education. The outcome must be none other than creating a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future for people and planet.

Education for sustainable development is a driver of change and cooperation at multiple levels. We must invest in it, not in words, but in deeds. We need to engage and invest in young people to design and co-create sustainable solutions. The COVID-19 crisis had a disproportionate impact on young people's life satisfaction and mental well-being compared to older groups. There cannot be sustainable development without peace, there cannot be prosperity without protecting the very foundation of our existence – “nature” that enhances our wellbeing and provides for our survival.

It is vital to integrate climate change and environmental issues into national development policies, strategies, action plans and particularly in school curricula to equip all learners and the public with skills and values required to contribute to more sustainable societies and healthy environment.

At the UNESCO 2021 World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, governments committed to ensure environmental and climate action as a core curriculum component in all education systems.

Multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary cooperation on education for sustainable development must be promoted at all levels to prepare learners for the future, between formal and non-formal education stakeholders, and with other sectors, including culture, sports, arts and youth activities. Additional efforts are also needed to strengthen training programmes, support whole institution approaches, and support local communities to become hubs for sustainable development.

Whole school approaches are key means to implement education for sustainable development and offer schools opportunities and perspectives to reposition themselves within their local communities, as

engines of transformation, initiators of local evidence-based decision-making and meaningful actions as well as incubators of youth involvement.

Youth are environmentally conscious and, if anything, they are leading a generational movement to take positive action on climate change. They ask to be heard, they want to participate, and they want to be empowered. They are demanding to adapt our education systems to current world realities, to promote action-based, participatory approaches to make real changes in their environment and lives.

The world does not need more frameworks, rather fully implement the existing frameworks and commitments through collective action of all relevant actors, including UNESCO, UNECE, UNEP, European Commission and other key stakeholders.

We need to strengthen and integrate human rights education to realize the ambitious visions of the 2030 Agenda for transformation our societies into more just and sustainable ones. We must fully utilize the transformational power of education for sustainable development to tackle the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity and pollution, and must Make Peace With Nature.

The upcoming High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in Nicosia, Cyprus (5-7 October 2022) and its follow up must provide a unique opportunity to communicate, and exchange information and good practices on how education for sustainable development strategies can help advance, amplify and scale up transformative actions and strengthen cooperation between the education, environment and other sectors to prepare learners for building sustainable future and help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Investing in education for sustainable development is not just the right thing to do, it is the smartest investment to put people on a path towards a sustainable future, to help promote and guarantee the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, to build a culture of peace and global citizenship for sustainable development. Invest in it.

We do not only need to build back better from COVID-19, but also build forward better and together.