



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 March 2023

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

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

Thirteenth meeting

Geneva, 25 and 26 May 2023

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the final draft of the workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025

Workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, held on 5 October 2022 within the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia 5–7 October 2022), ministers and heads of delegation considered progress in implementing the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2017 to 2019 with a view to adopting a new framework for the implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development up to 2030, focusing on education's special role in addressing the unprecedented challenges currently faced by the planet and human society.

At the Third High-level Meeting, ministers and heads of delegation adopted the Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10) and the Draft Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.2) providing a way forward for the Strategy's implementation in the region up to 2030. Bearing in mind that the mandate of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development was extended until 2030 at the Second High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Batumi, 8–10 June 2016), participants requested it to prepare, with the secretariat's support, a workplan and budget for the Strategy's implementation for an intermediary period up to the end of 2025, that could be considered as the fifth implementation phase covering the next five years (2021–2025).

The present draft workplan was prepared by the secretariat on the basis of the outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission



for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/4) elaborated by the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning in consultation with the Chair and the secretariat and endorsed by the Steering Committee's seventeenth meeting (30–31 May 2022), which was in turn prepared on the basis of the framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 adopted at the Third High-level Meeting (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10). As the present draft workplan could not be approved before the Steering Committee meeting in 2023, it focuses on the remaining three years (2023–2025).

The Steering Committee is invited to consider the draft workplan for adoption

I. Introduction

1. At its thirteenth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 May 2018), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) held discussions on priority action areas and concrete issues beyond the completion of the fourth national mandatory reporting cycle (2017–2019),¹ as well as setting up an ad hoc advisory group – the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning – for discussing current challenges and future priorities for the Committee’s work and formulating strategic proposals for further promotion of ESD in the region until 2030.²

2. During the period 2018–2021, the Ad Hoc Group held several in-person and online meetings to develop the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, which was subsequently finalized and included in the document entitled “Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030” (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3). The Framework included section VIII entitled “Recommendations and proposed selected activities for the draft workplan for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development for the period 2022–2024”, which was used as a basis for elaborating the outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/4) elaborated by the Ad Hoc Group in consultation with the Chair and the secretariat and endorsed by the seventeenth Steering Committee meeting (Geneva, 30–31 May 2022).

3. The purpose of the workplan was to establish a road map of activities to be undertaken during the next implementation phase, following the anticipated decisions of the Nicosia High-level Meeting on furthering the Strategy’s implementation at the national and international levels, based on the Steering Committee’s mandate, which had been extended until 2030 at the Second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Batumi, 8 June 2016), as articulated by education and environment ministries.³

4. At the Third High-level Meeting, ministers and heads of delegation considered progress in implementing the fourth phase (2017–2019) of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/7) and adopted a new Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (Nicosia Framework), focusing on education’s special role in addressing the unprecedented challenges currently facing the planet (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10). The high-level participants also adopted the Draft Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (Nicosia Statement) (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/11), as a joint commitment of member States that would guide the member States and all involved partners in implementing ESD in the region up to 2030.

5. The representatives of ECE education and environment ministries at the Third High-level Meeting recognized the importance of continuing to implement all the Strategy’s objectives, stressing in particular the importance of advancing the four priority action areas outlined in the Nicosia Framework, i.e.: (a) quality education and ESD; (b) whole institution approach and ESD;⁴ (c) digital education, information and communications technology and ESD; and (d) entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD. They agreed to support the continuation and stepping up of efforts for the Strategy’s implementation until 2030 at the regional (ECE) level, in synergy with relevant efforts undertaken at the global and subregional levels (e.g., by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

¹ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/2, paras. 14–50.

² *Ibid.*, para. 53.

³ ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/11, annex II.

⁴ *Note:* Referred to in original framework document as *Whole institution approach/Institutions as communities of transformational change*.

Organization (UNESCO), the European Union/European Economic Area) and at the national level.

6. At the Third High-level Meeting, the Steering Committee was requested to prepare, with ECE secretariat support, a workplan and a budget for the Strategy's implementation for a period up to the end of 2025. The workplan was to include targeted assistance activities, taking into account the results of the latest fourth evaluation report (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/3) on the Strategy's implementation, and the needs identified by the subregional and national capacity-building activities held in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean during the past decade and those expressed by the member States.

7. The present document proposes a set of activities to be undertaken during the three remaining years of the next implementation phase (2021–2025) aligned with the mid-term review of the ESD for 2030 global framework "Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)", which was set for 2025, to further the Strategy's implementation at the national and international levels. The draft workplan's initial outline was prepared in 2021 with the aim of beginning 5-year implementation phase in 2021 but officially launched at the Third High-level Meeting, postponed from 2021 due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It outlines various concrete activities focused on: (a) coordination; (b) capacity-building and experience sharing ; and (c) review of implementation. Information about the resources required to support the implementation activities will be provided in a separate information document.

8. The activities outlined aim to address the needs and challenges identified across the ECE region during the Strategy's implementation as from its adoption in 2005, reflected in the evaluation reports of the previous three reporting cycles, with particular attention to the fourth phase of implementation (2017–2019). Outcomes from phase IV indicated that further effort is needed in coordinating policies promoting ESD in member States and facilitating implementation of the relevant policies through national plans; therefore, the present draft workplan focuses on continuing implementation of practical actions intended to advance the ECE ESD agenda, building on achievements over the past 15 years.

9. Given the resource constraints, it will be necessary to prioritize the proposed activities, many of which will need additional financial and human resources to enable their implementation. A prerequisite for the Strategy's successful implementation is the availability of a structured plan of action at the national level and the possession of competence in ESD, as highlighted in the workplans for the previous phases of implementation during the period 2005–2019.

10. As with the Strategy's earlier phases, the workplan will be implemented in consultation with UNESCO, and in line with its ESD for 2030 education programme and other relevant international organizations and processes. In particular, it will be aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development process (with its Sustainable Development Goals as a means of implementation) to ensure synergies and mutual benefits, as a contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7 and as an instrument for achieving all 17 Goals.

11. Subject to the availability of resources, ECE will continue to provide secretariat services for the workplan's implementation. Member States and groups of member States, jointly with relevant international organizations, are encouraged to spearhead the implementation of particular workplan activities. Partnerships, involving national, subnational and local authorities, the business community, academia, media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interested stakeholders, are encouraged for the implementation of the activities.

12. The Steering Committee is invited to consider and adopt the draft workplan proposed herein.

II. Proposed activities

A. Coordination at the international and national levels

1. International level

13. At the international level, annual meetings of the Steering Committee should remain the main mechanism for the efficient coordination of activities, experience sharing, provision of assistance to implementation and review of progress achieved. To ensure efficient regional governance and communication, member States should reconfirm or nominate new focal points for ESD within education and environment ministries, as well as in other departments/ministries, as appropriate, to participate in the ECE ESD process. The Environment for Europe process should continue to be used as a platform for the regional high-level coordination of the Strategy's implementation.

14. There should be further focus on strengthening synergies and links between ESD and other relevant processes, with the aim of emphasizing the added value of ESD in attaining sustainable development. In this regard, the Steering Committee should promote and coordinate the Strategy's implementation in line with the UNESCO ESD for 2030 Framework and its road map and in consultation with UNESCO and other relevant international activities and processes, such as the 2030 Agenda process, seeking synergies and avoiding overlaps. The Steering Committee should provide a platform for sharing experience and good practices, particularly those reflecting specific facts and figures, demonstrating the role of ESD in facilitating the effectiveness of sectoral policies related to sustainable development.

15. The Steering Committee should also strengthen synergies with other global and regional processes aimed at achieving ESD and sustainable development, including: the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan; the Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education,⁵ the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all,⁶ the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the ministerial pledges on education made during the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 31 October–12 November 2021), the Kunming Declaration “Ecological Civilization: Building a shared future for all life on Earth” made at the fifteenth meeting (part I) of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Kunming, China, 11–15 October 2021),⁷ as well as the outcomes of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) process; and other relevant international, regional and national processes.

2. National level

16. At the national level, each member State should be encouraged to review its progress on ESD and identify the critical success factors, including mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement, both across government departments and among external groups. National activities should focus on addressing challenges and obstacles that persisted throughout the fourth implementation phase (2017–2019) and also the previous decade of the Strategy's implementation, as outlined in the fourth and third evaluation reports' major findings. These challenges were taken into consideration when drafting the current Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

⁵ United Nations Transforming Education Summit (New York, 16–19 September 2022), “Transforming Education: An urgent political imperative for our collective future”. Available at www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/sg-vision-statement.

⁶ World Education Forum 2015 (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 19–22 May 2015), available at <https://iite.unesco.org/publications/education-2030-incheon-declaration-framework-action-towards-inclusive-equitable-quality-education-lifelong-learning/>.

⁷ CBD/COP/15/5/Add.1.

Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3, ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10), taking also into consideration the previous Framework for the Strategy's future implementation (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/11). Regarding the Nicosia Framework, representatives of ECE education and environment ministries gathered at the Third High-level Meeting reconfirmed the relevance and importance of all (horizontal and vertical) issues and themes identified in the Strategy for ESD, while committing to focus joint efforts, promote and achieve concrete progress on advancing the following four priority action areas/strands of policy⁸ identified by the Steering Committee and on strengthening the role of youth within these strands to ensure that youth are more active in planning and integrating ESD policies and actions at the national and regional levels:

(a) *Quality education and ESD*. Linking ESD with quality education by embedding ESD into quality standards, framework mechanisms and resources associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews and effectively involving all those who oversee quality enhancement and have responsibility for this agenda in education at the national/international level;

(b) *Whole institution approach and ESD*. Implementing ESD across all educational and training programmes in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings, through the whole institution approach, which aims to strengthen the sustainable development aspect of the overall culture of learning institutions through appropriate learning programmes, governance, infrastructure and relationships with societies and networks within and outside the institutions; capitalizing on lessons learned on the whole institution approach in the ECE region; providing competent and coherent frameworks for its promotion; involving educators and all stakeholders, particularly youth, in whole institution approach plans to promote ESD in their respective institutions; and strengthening cooperation between formal and non-formal education;

(c) *Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD*. Assuring, through appropriate institutional and operational frameworks and means, that digital education and information and communication technologies are developed and used in systematic, balanced and blended ways to support the processes needed to enhance learning and ESD, particularly by removing barriers to access to digital technologies and through enhancement of opportunities for blended learning and accessing open educational resources and practices, while highlighting the positive, critical and potentially negative impacts that technology, and information and communications technology in particular, can have on learning for a sustainable future;

(d) *Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD*. Connecting ESD with economic and social development, addressing entrepreneurship, employment, business, financial and policy areas that influence the sources of welfare and well-being by identifying functional approaches, guidelines, projects and organizations that support the required knowledge, values, attitudes, qualifications and skills for new jobs related to green and circular economy and green technologies, as well as contribute to the necessary green transformations and sustainable development.

17. The member States should further the implementation of national strategies and action plans on ESD developed during the previous four implementation phases. Countries are invited to update their national ESD strategies in accordance with the new implementation framework 2021–2030. While all member States should focus on the practical implementation of their national plans and strategies in accordance with the priorities identified in the recently adopted Nicosia Framework, some of the priorities identified in the workplans for the previous four phases remain valid, including: building stronger partnerships between authorities and stakeholders (e.g., academia and NGOs) and among different departments, in particular between education and environment ministries; and fully engaging Governments in the Strategy's implementation through public budget allocations and/or economic incentives to support ESD.

⁸ ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10, para. 42 (a)–(d).

18. The member States should continue regular reporting to ECE on national progress in the Strategy's implementation within the established reporting mechanism,⁹ updated in accordance with the priority areas of the new implementation framework 2021–2030, and based on the experience from the previous monitoring and evaluation methodology, while also allowing for the comparability of reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises.

19. The member States are encouraged to:

(a) Develop synergies and networks of collaboration by sharing ideas, good practices and projects, based on the key priority areas of the new implementation framework 2021–2030;

(b) Enhance multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration on ESD at all levels of governance with ministries of education and environment, collaborating with all other ministries that have an impact on sustainable development, to ensure the whole-of-government approach that is critical for ESD implementation in all countries regionwide;

(c) Strengthen the UNECE ESD Youth Platform by appointing youth national focal points and to support youth activities on promoting ESD at the regional, subregional and national levels.

B. Capacity-building and sharing of experience

20. As outlined in the workplans for the previous implementation phases, the following issues need to be addressed to continue the Strategy's implementation in the ECE region: (a) general capacity-building, including expert assistance; (b) practical application of educator competences in ESD; (c) research and development of ESD-related materials and tools; and (d) awareness-raising. While most of these were identified in the workplans for the four previous implementation phases, the focus on policy development and the lack of financial resources in phases II–IV led to the de-prioritization of capacity-building activities. With the shift of focus to practical implementation, capacity-building and experience sharing should be allocated the highest priority in planning and resource allocation at the national and regional levels.

21. The above-listed priorities could be addressed through activities during the fifth implementation phase (2021–2025) (see annex II below for tentative timeline of fifth phase), to be continued also during the following phases, as set out below.

1. General workshops, trainings and expert assistance

22. The workplans for phases II–III of the previous implementation plans identified subregional workshops as particularly effective, not only in ensuring experience sharing and in keeping ESD on national and subregional agendas, but also in strengthening subregional cooperation and networking. Subject to the availability of funds, at least one workshop per subregion should be organized in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia for the relevant policymakers, educators and experts involved in curriculum development in cooperation with UNESCO, intergovernmental, non-governmental and subregional organizations working in the field of sustainable development and ESD. Such workshops should aim to promote networking, partnership, synergies and experience sharing at the subregional level.

23. At the national level, following the pattern of previous implementation plans, educator training remains a priority that should be addressed strategically, including through national ESD strategies and action plans, as well as practically, through capacity-building events targeting educators, particularly those involving educator trainers and curriculum developers.

24. Requests for direct support for the Strategy's implementation were made by countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the previous

⁹ Format for reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2021–2025) (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/4).

implementation phases, including at Steering Committee sessions and in national implementation reports. With the focus shifting from policy development to practical implementation, expert assistance for the implementation of national action plans and strategies was and remains particularly required. The practical focus of the current phase (2021–2025) needs to reflect and address these needs by facilitating such assistance at the request of interested countries. The Committee at its meetings should consider a framework for such assistance, including issues such as coordination and funding.

25. The assistance framework might include assistance to national focal points for ESD in monitoring and evaluating the Strategy’s national level implementation, including development of their respective national progress/implementation reports and completion of the template for reporting provided in the document “Format for reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2021–2025)” (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/4), which was recently updated by the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators with the purpose of updating the existing format for reporting for the next implementation phase from 2021 to 2030 in correspondence with the four priority areas of the new framework for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2021–2030, adopted at the Third High-level Meeting in Nicosia in 2022 (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10).

26. The assistance framework could include, subject to the Steering Committee’s decision, establishing a “support group” for monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy’s implementation, comprised of Steering Committee experts and experienced national focal points, which would assist member States in realizing their monitoring and evaluation process through capacity-building activities, such as organizing advisory workshops (in-person and online) at the regional, subregional and national levels, with the latter particularly targeting interested countries’ specific needs. Funding for organizing such workshops and provision of assistance by external experts could be provided through member States’ financial or in-kind contributions.

27. Assistance to be provided to member States might also include, subject to the Steering Committee’s decision and priority planning, establishing working groups to coordinate implementation of activities and outputs planned for the implementation of the four priority areas or strands of the new implementation framework, presented in the outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the Strategy from 2021 to 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/4; see also annex I below).

2. Educator competences in education for sustainable development

28. The ECE Expert Group on Competences, established by the Steering Committee at its meeting in 2009¹⁰ and active between 2009 and 2012, developed a set of ESD competences for educators and policy recommendations for promoting those competences across the education system. The resulting Expert Group report, “Learning for the future: Competences in education for sustainable development” (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2011/6), has guided various ECE member States in strengthening educators’ competences, and has had significant influence globally. Following a mandate provided by the Steering Committee in 2012, the Expert Group also developed a standard workshop concept and designed a toolkit entitled *Empowering Educators for a Sustainable Future: Tools for Policy and Practice Workshops on Competences in Education for Sustainable Development*¹¹ to be used regionwide to promote educator ESD competences and to organize workshops, aimed mainly at policymakers and educator trainers.

29. With the conclusion of the expert work on ESD, activities to develop educator competences shifted towards practical capacity-building at the national and regional levels. Since 2012, the toolkit has served as training material for one subregional workshop in Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28–30 June 2012) and a series of national workshops in Central Asian countries (Tashkent, 26–28 November 2013; Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan, 8–10 December 2013 and 30 March–1 April 2015), Minsk (25–26 April 2016), Yerevan, (19–20

¹⁰ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/2, para. 33.

¹¹ Available from www.unece.org/index.php?id=35136.

April 2018), Tbilisi (5–6 April 2019) and Baku (20–21 April 2021, online), which helped to build capacity and ensure educator capacities and coordination among countries of the region. At the Steering Committee’s request, the workshops held in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan focused on one of the priority action areas of phases III and IV (respectively, 2011–2015 and 2017–2019), introducing ESD into technical and vocational education and training to support sustainability, in consultation and partnership with industry sectors and technical and vocational education and training institutions.

30. Educators’ ESD competences were systemically reviewed throughout the European Union region at the higher education level, resulting in the development of the *State of the Art Report: Mapping Opportunities for Developing Education for Sustainable Development competences in the [University Educators for Sustainable Development] Partner Countries*¹² and the *Leading Practice Publication: Professional Development of University Educators on Education for Sustainable Development in European Countries*¹³ on behalf of 33 European countries and an online platform of ESD resources.¹⁴

31. According to the fourth evaluation report (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/3), ESD is incorporated into initial teacher training; however, further research is required on tertiary level programme content. Teachers’ competence development is further strengthened by legislative changes regarding teacher certification and, in some countries, ESD is a required part of teacher training. There is also an emergent need to reinforce government support to create synergies addressing leaders and administrators, equipping them with competences to facilitate ESD implementation, enabling them to better monitor it at the school level.

32. As during the previous implementation phases, one of the first priorities at the national level remains to continue bringing the outcomes of the Expert Group’s work to the attention of policymakers and educator trainers with the help of national focal points for ESD, i.e. ministries of environment and education, which should take responsibility for this task. This includes: (a) translating the Expert Group’s report into national languages; (b) identifying relevant policymakers and bringing the report’s policy recommendations to their attention; (c) making the document available at any relevant meetings or forums where education and sustainable development policies or legislation are discussed; and (d) creating multi-stakeholder forums or using existing ESD multi-stakeholder working groups to discuss the application of the Expert Group’s recommendations at the national and local levels. Similarly, the report, and in particular its sections related to educator competences in ESD, should be brought to the attention of educators, in particular those responsible for educator training, both initial and in-service. It is particularly important to utilize the document in any national or local capacity-building initiatives. Member States may also wish to consider organizing specially tailored workshops for teacher training institutions, policymakers, curriculum development agencies and experts.

33. Member States and other stakeholders should also consider how the issue of educator competences in ESD can be brought to the attention of actors working in non-formal and informal education. In this connection, NGO involvement in any national capacity-building activities on competences in ESD is very important.

34. At the international level, the first priority regarding the recommendations and the toolkit produced by the Expert Group on Competences is also related to active dissemination. While the Steering Committee itself plays an important role in this process, it is its individual members who have a unique opportunity and responsibility to ensure that the toolkit is brought to the attention of various international forums and organizations other than ECE in which they participate, such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, Environment and School Initiatives, the Live and Learn Environmental Education network, the European Training Foundation, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and other relevant ESD processes.

¹² Marlene Madder and others (Cheltenham, University of Gloucestershire, 2014).

¹³ Dana Kapitulčinová and others, eds. (Prague, Charles University, 2015).

¹⁴ See “University Educators for Sustainable Development: ESD Professional Development Resources”, available at <https://ue4sd.glos.ac.uk/>.

35. Referring to the outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the Strategy from 2021 to 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/4), endorsed at the Steering Committee's seventeenth meeting (see annex I below), one of the proposed activities aimed at implementing the fourth strand "Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development" of the 2021–2030 implementation framework is focused on providing a guiding framework for twenty-first century competences for innovation and entrepreneurship, which would require planning and implementing relevant targeted activities that may be identified by the potential donor or the Steering Committee.

3. Education for sustainable development tools, materials, research and good practices

36. The Strategy for ESD considers the availability and the quality of ESD teaching tools and materials to be important in regionwide implementation of ESD. Similarly to the phase III report (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2016/3), the fourth evaluation report refers to various tools/materials used by member States, such as student textbooks, curricula and learning outcomes guidance materials and training materials, reflecting the importance placed by the Strategy on the availability and quality of teaching tools across the region. Although progress has been achieved since the previous report, national strategies in several member States seem to lack provisions for support for development/production of tools/materials for ESD and for establishing quality control criteria.

37. Other challenges highlighted by some member States refer to: the need to establish programme and materials assessment (identifying learning outcomes and possible mechanisms) and a materials evaluation mechanism for all education levels; and disseminating materials and training educators in their use. Formal education should be more closely connected to the informal, non-formal and NGO systems, since the productivity of the latter two in ESD is strong, often very innovative and of high quality.

38. To address the above-mentioned challenges, it is important to establish universal quality control mechanisms across countries and to coordinate evaluation mechanisms across member States. Also, there is a need to further train educators to use the materials referred to in paragraph 37 above.

39. The UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development website,¹⁵ with its Global Action Programme Clearinghouse,¹⁶ and the ECE education for sustainable development website¹⁷ continue to provide information on global and regional activities, measures and materials related to ESD. Steering Committee members are encouraged to make use of the available information and to inform other relevant stakeholders at the international, national and local levels of the information available.

40. At the national level, development of national ESD websites and portals should continue. These could be used to share information on practices, materials, tools and other resources available in national languages and to facilitate networking among ESD experts, educators, NGOs and other stakeholders. Steering Committee members and observers are invited to link their national ESD websites or portals to the ECE ESD website.

41. As for the previous phases, the fourth evaluation report highlights the importance of addressing the need for ESD, monitoring and evaluation. Research on ESD conducted in member States is mostly focused on the content and methods of ESD and less on evaluation of Strategy implementation outcomes. For the first time, research programmes oriented towards needs in the national context are being implemented in some member States. One major challenge reported is the introduction of research policies horizontally within State sectors/departments. Also, there is currently a gap between theory and practice.

42. It was recommended that more research should be conducted on the evaluation of Strategy outcomes and more funding allocated to both research and dissemination of good practices. To this end, member States point out the need for increased networking opportunities and sharing of knowledge across the ECE region.

¹⁵ See www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development.

¹⁶ See <https://en.unesco.org/gap-esd-clearinghouse/about>.

¹⁷ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/education-sustainable-development>.

4. Awareness-raising

43. At the international level, national focal points need to continue promoting the UNECE Strategy for ESD and the UNESCO ESD for 2030 framework within various relevant international forums. The ECE secretariat will also continue to play an active role in promoting ESD at the international level.

44. At the national level, countries should proceed with awareness-raising strategies identified in national ESD action plans and strategies to raise awareness with regard to ESD not only among the relevant experts and educators, but also among the general public.

45. At the regional level, the ECE ESD secretariat has played a central role in promoting ESD among member States and maintaining the focus on the Strategy over its implementation period starting from 2005 up to the current time. The Steering Committee should:

- (a) Continue keeping the member States engaged and accountable;
- (b) Promote research into key issues, such as ESD indicators and teacher competences;
- (c) Provide essential guidance to member States on implementation of the next phase's priority areas;
- (d) Foster information-sharing among member States.

46. The nature and purpose of regional cooperation has ranged from the exchange of expertise and sharing of lessons learned to financial support for research and implementation projects. Legislation and frameworks have been reviewed through cooperative efforts, teaching and curriculum support materials developed, capacities of teachers and trainers strengthened through workshops and exchanges, and good practice guidelines compiled.

47. The Steering Committee should continue promoting cooperation with other global and regional forums and organizations across the ECE region and beyond, such as UNESCO, UNEP, UNFCCC, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Global Education Network Europe, the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, the Union for the Mediterranean and other relevant regional organizations that have also proven to be important arenas for advancing ESD interests.

48. The secretariat should ensure that information on projects and activities made available by partner organizations is regularly updated and made available on the ECE ESD website. The Steering Committee should keep progress in the coordination of capacity-building under ongoing review.

C. Review of implementation

49. During the first decade of the Strategy's implementation, the reporting frame for the review of implementation was set in three phases – phase I (2005–2007); phase II (2008–2010); and phase III (2011–2015) – followed by respective evaluation reports produced in 2007, 2010 and 2015. The following phase (considered as phase IV) lasted from 2017 to 2019 and resulted in the fourth evaluation report produced in 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/3). The framework for assessment used in the four evaluation reports followed the Guidance for Reporting on the Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (Guidance for Reporting) (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/5) and the “Criteria to assess successful implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development” developed by the ECE Expert Group on Indicators and annexed to the Guidance. The reporting format was updated by the secretariat in consultation with the Expert Group on Indicators and later the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators to meet the reporting needs of each phase.

50. According to the fourth evaluation report, 34 out of the 56 ECE member States submitted a national implementation report to the ECE secretariat for the fourth reporting period. Although member State participation slightly decreased over the previous reporting rounds, with 35 member States submitting reports in 2007, 36 in 2010 and 38 in 2015, it is

important to note that six countries that had not participated in the third reporting cycle, successfully participated in the fourth evaluation cycle. Specifically, the member States concerned were Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tajikistan and the Russian Federation (Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia group), Italy (European Union, other Western European countries and North America group) and Israel (Western Asia group). Eleven (11) countries that had submitted national implementation reports for phase III did not submit reports for phase IV. Additionally, due to the late submission of the national implementation reports from Ukraine (October 2020) and Armenia (December 2020), it was not possible to incorporate data from these member States into the fourth evaluation report.

51. Following the reporting pattern of the previous phases, the information from the evaluation report to be prepared for the intermediary phase (or the fifth phase) lasting from 2021 to 2025 of the Strategy's new implementation framework (2021–2030) should facilitate discussions on the achievements of the countries in the region and any follow-up that the Committee may wish to consider. To enable such informed discussions, implementation should be reviewed and national reports prepared as early as during the second half of 2023. National implementation reports, to be prepared pursuant to the agreed procedure, including through an interactive consultative and multi-stakeholder process, should be submitted to the secretariat by 15 January 2024.

52. The reporting format (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/10) on which the first three reporting exercises relied was used as a basis for the preparation of the updated format for reporting (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/4) to meet the reporting needs for the next round of reports to be collected in 2023. In addition, the guidelines for the process of reporting (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/5) were prepared as a complementary document to the reporting format, and as a supplement to the initial Guidance for reporting on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/5), developed by UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for ESD with a view to facilitating reporting exercises for the previous reporting cycles in 2010, 2015 and 2018.

53. The updated reporting format (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/4) encompasses the priorities of both the Strategy (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1), as adopted at the First High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005), and the Framework for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030. This updated reporting format focuses on the Strategy as a whole, particularly on the new priorities as formulated for the first or intermediary phase (2021–2025) of the next implementation period from 2021 to 2030, and is based on the frame and procedure agreed in the first phase of the review of implementation of the Strategy. The reporting format also takes into account the previous reporting exercises in 2010, 2014 and 2018, the related reporting templates (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2009/10, annex, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2014/5, annex, and ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/4, annex I, respectively) and the feedback from countries following those exercises on the workability and feasibility of the indicators and the requested information for reporting.

54. According to the new Framework for the Strategy's implementation up to 2030, it is important to coordinate reporting with the 2030 Agenda and to align future monitoring and evaluation work as much as possible with the new UNESCO "ESD for 2030" monitoring framework and the annual reporting mechanism of the Sustainable Development Goals (including Goal 4), while allowing for comparability of reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises.

55. As for the previous phases, the regional reporting exercise should provide for an overview of the Strategy's implementation and allow for the sharing of examples and practices between the countries. It is therefore essential that a more ongoing periodic review take place at the national level.

56. According to the updated terms of reference adopted at the Batumi High-level Meeting in 2016, the ECE Steering Committee constitutes the principal decision-making body for the activities carried out under the Strategy for ESD in the ECE region. The

Committee was mandated to continue to decide on the Strategy's implementation and to review the progress of implementation.¹⁸

D. Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development after 2025

57. The current intermediary or the first phase (considered also as a fifth phase counting from the Strategy's launch) of the new framework for implementation from 2021 to 2030 runs until 2025. This coincides with the end of the mid-term review of ESD for 2030 global framework, which was set for 2025. The Committee may wish to set up the process for considering possible follow-up measures for the next phase, with a view to discussing them at its last meeting of the fifth phase in 2025. Such a process should be carried forward by the Bureau or a specially set up body and should be based on input from member States and other stakeholders, including the national implementation reports to be prepared in 2023/24.

III. Financial arrangements

58. In their joint Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development, ECE ministries of education and environment invited stakeholders and bilateral and multilateral donors to continue contributing to and supporting the implementation process for the Strategy.¹⁹

59. Effective implementation of the Strategy depends, inter alia, on the availability of sufficient financial and human resources. There is a need for stable and predictable sources of funding, while a fair sharing of the burden should be the guiding principle of any financial arrangements established for this purpose.

60. The availability or lack of financial resources underpinning implementation measures determines their success. Financial constraints have been reported by a number of countries with regard to ESD activities at the national and local levels. In this regard, the Steering Committee should include in its deliberations information from its members concerning regulatory and practical arrangements to address the allocation of funds for priority ESD activities in State budgets, and also the identification of possible external sources of funding.

61. As for the previous phases, the implementation of the process at the regional level relies entirely on voluntary contributions from ECE member States, international organizations, the private sector and international financial institutions, as agreed at the First High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.²⁰

62. A number of important contributions were made by member States during implementation phases I–II. However, as can clearly be seen from the financial reports provided to the Steering Committee's successive meetings, summary contributions received from the member States during phases III–IV, as compared with the previous phases, have been significantly lower, with only a few exceptions.

63. The level of contributions fell consistently short, not only of the full-scale budget, but also of the minimum budget required to cover the costs of core activities under the Strategy. This had a negative effect on areas such as the development of a more user-friendly website, timely submission of the planned publication, the Bureau meetings and, most importantly, Professional staff support for running activities under the Strategy.

64. Under these circumstances there is a probability that, while technical facilities and support (e.g., the meeting venue and interpretation service during the meeting, technical processing and translation of documents and the provision of travel assistance to eligible participants) will still continue to be available at no direct cost, the Steering Committee may have to operate with decreased secretariat support for prolonged time periods and may need

¹⁸ ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/11, annex II, para. 4.

¹⁹ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/7, para. 10.

²⁰ The scheme of contributions envisaged "big" countries or interested organization donors expected to contribute €20,000 or more, "medium" donors €2,000 or more and "small" donors €200 or more, in cash or in kind.

to adapt to such a minimum level of Professional staff support. This may, for example, affect the Committee's ability to produce, consult and negotiate substantial documents, and eventually its ability to make, implement and monitor decisions. The Steering Committee may also consider holding an online meeting every other year (and also an online Bureau meetings), taking into account both environmental and financial considerations. A clear link needs therefore to be developed, and annually reviewed, between the proposed activities and available resources. Each Steering Committee meeting may hold a special session to review and revise the prioritization of activities in the workplan.

Annex I

Outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025

Strand 1

Quality education and education for sustainable development

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Funding resources</i> | <i>Timeline</i> | | <i>Estimated cost (Euros)</i> |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | | <i>for implementation</i> | <i>Partners for implementation</i> | |
| Develop quality criteria frameworks/benchmarking tools for embedding ESD into each educational level | Activities would include convening meetings of working groups; research and trialling of quality criteria; development, trial and publication of guidebooks | Explore possibilities of funding through joint submission of proposal by UNEP/UNESCO/ECE to EU and private sector | 2023–2025 | Establish international and sectoral working groups for developing quality criteria for each level | 30,000 |
| Develop professional development programme for education quality professionals, authorities and agencies | Development of series of national workshops across ECE region to support stakeholders in embedding ESD into quality education polices and institutions | Explore possibilities of funding by a member State or as part of funding obtained from the above activity | 2023–2025 | Establish working groups for developing quality criteria | 100,000 |

Whole institution approach and education for sustainable development*

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Funding resources</i> | <i>Timeline</i> | | <i>Estimated cost (Euros)</i> |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | | <i>for implementation</i> | <i>Partners for implementation</i> | |
| Develop a practical guide for implementing whole institution approach to ESD, supported by a self-assessment tool | Guide will include specific questions and set of quality criteria that will facilitate tailored reorientation of organizations and institutions to whole institution approach to ESD at institutional, governmental, and organizational levels. Quality framework will be accompanied by self-assessment tool for supporting organizations/institutions to assess their progress on application of whole institution approach to ESD and undertake remedial measures for improvement | Explore possibilities of funding by a member State or jointly with other organizations (financially or in-kind) | 2023–2025 | Establish expert group from ECE region that will work exclusively on developing practical guide | 100,000 |
| Develop a toolkit with ideas, questions and activities that will promote strengthening collaboration between stakeholders on applying whole institution approach to ESD | Creation of flexible, user-friendly toolkit for sharing ideas and responding to meaningful questions to guide design of effective learning activities, which will facilitate application by stakeholders from various sectors (schools, universities, Governments, private sector, local communities, NGOs, etc.) of whole institution approach to ESD. Toolkit will focus on various components of ESD and WIA frameworks | Explore possibilities of funding by a member State (financially or in-kind) | 2024–2025 | Establish expert group from policymakers, practitioners, teachers, NGOs, academia for drafting proposal and developing toolkit | 50,000 |

* Note: Referred to in original framework document as *Whole institution approach/Institutions as communities of transformational change*.

Strand 3

Digital education, information and communications technology and education for sustainable development

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Funding</i> | <i>Timeline</i> | | <i>Estimated cost (Euros)</i> |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | | | <i>For implementation</i> | <i>Partners for implementation</i> | |
| Develop a framework based on the three-pronged approach “digital education, information and communication technology and ESD” aimed at systematizing the use of digital tools with the purpose of enhancing the current potential of ICTs by combining formal, non-formal and informal learning | Framework would focus on implementing strategy aimed at developing digital technology in all fields of education, training and information: define digital content and resources for learning; support and train teachers and others to better share and analyze information; develop digital governance; carry out evaluation of processes implemented within entire population | Explore possibilities of funding (financially or in-kind) by launching appeal to public and private sectors | 2023–2024 | Establish group of public and private experts to define and implement strategic framework | 50,000 |
| Develop media literacy and toolkits, and organize workshops to help young people and adults to be able to analyse information related to sustainable development. In addition, to combat “illectronism” by setting up courses intended to provide underprivileged populations with the appropriate intellectual and technical knowledge | Beyond implementation of systems aimed at generalizing integrated use of digital tools and resources, it is important to adopt generalized digital governance through digital education as an asset for reducing inequalities and encouraging better synergy between learners, teachers and society | Explore possibilities of funding (financially or in-kind) by launching appeal to entire population, including public and private sectors in charge of continuing education and information | 2024–2025 | Establish group of experts from dedicated public structures and media | 35,000 |

Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Funding</i> | <i>Timeline for implementation</i> | <i>Partners for implementation</i> | <i>Estimated cost (Euros)</i> |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Provide a guiding framework for 21st century competences for innovation and entrepreneurship | To connect core subjects and 21st century competences, it is necessary to compile information on publicly accessible tools in support of entrepreneurship, employment and innovation, and ESD (DigComp, EntreComp, sharing of reports like GEM report, etc.). (Links to these documents/tools can be published on ECE website) | Explore possibilities of funding by a member State or jointly with other organizations (financially or in-kind) | 2023–2025 | Establish expert group from ECE region working in fields of innovation and entrepreneurship | 50,000 |
| Develop a toolkit with functional educational approaches that support the required skills for the development of entrepreneurship, employability and innovation, especially for youth | Toolkit will be developed on project-based approach and problem solving aiming to help educators and learners to develop entrepreneurship ideas based on sustainability. Additionally, it will include learning scenarios for empowering youth to develop their green skills | Explore possibilities of funding by a member State including by public and private sectors (financially or in-kind) | 2023–2024 | Establish expert group from policymakers, practitioners, business sector, vocational education and training specialists, NGOs, academia for drafting proposal and developing toolbox | 35,000 |

Abbreviations: DigComp, Digital Competence Framework for Citizens; ECE, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; EntreComp, European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework; ESD, education for sustainable development; EU, European Union; GEM, Global Education Monitoring; ICT, information and communications technology; NGO, non-governmental organization; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; WIA, whole institution approach.

