



## **Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference**

### **High-Level Meeting of Ministers for Education on Education for Sustainable Development**

**6 October 2022, 9:30-14:00**

**Venue: KERYNIA HALL-FILOXENIA CONFERENCE CENTER, Nicosia, Cyprus**

### **Concept note and agenda**

#### **Background**

Humanity and the planet Earth are facing times of crisis: the recent pandemic was a warning sign of undesirable effects of globalisation. Climate change, extreme weather conditions, instability, conflicts, and the war in Ukraine show that global understanding, peace education, citizenship education, and raising environmental awareness have still a long way to go. These events only reveal some of the threats invoked by unsolved global challenges. It is a key question to all of us whether we will achieve the goals set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, while the Sustainable Development Goals may still not guarantee that humanity will accomplish sustainability in a short term, failing to reach them might mean that we must prepare to face serious consequences. Education for sustainable development (hereinafter: ESD) has a key role in achieving the goals. The only alternative we seem to have is to rethink our lifestyles, to change our frames of mind and to understand that achieving sustainability is the only solution for living in harmony with ourselves, others, and the planet.

The new implementation framework (from 2021 to 2030) of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (entitled “Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030”) is an ambitious plan, reflecting the way forward until 2030 while being fully aware of the current “momentum of change and crisis”. It aims to respond to many known, as well as new challenges in a rapidly changing world, with the aim to encourage and to support member States to enhance their actions and their collaboration on ESD on the regional level, as well as to strengthen the position of ESD in their educational systems and in learning within and beyond schools, colleges, technical and vocational education and training and universities.

The new implementation framework (from 2021 to 2030) of the UNECE Strategy for ESD was developed along the following four strands:

- (1) Quality Education and ESD;
- (2) Whole Institution Approach: Institutions as communities of transformational learning;
- (3) Digital Education, ICT and ESD;
- (4) Entrepreneurship, Employment, Innovation and ESD.

These strands highlight learning points from the recent challenges, and they are hoped to lead to better understanding of sustainability and more commitment to action at personal and community levels. The new implementation framework accentuates the relevance of youth involvement, making it obvious that without the intergenerational dialogue, without mutual, cumulative knowledge building, or without collaborative actions, no progress seems achievable. Youth needs to be involved in discussions and action as they are the ones that face the effects of those challenges, and they will be the ones to account for them with generations to come.

UNECE countries reported several policy measures and good practices in the field of ESD. Most countries have taken measures to embed ESD in their national curricula. Many countries have taken steps to improve teacher education and the professional learning of educational staff. Albeit establishing whole-institutional learning communities for sustainability is a challenging task, a number of countries report progress in this field too. There are numerous good examples on integrating digital pedagogy in ESD while critically reflecting on meaningful use of technology. Various countries implement projects on green entrepreneurship and innovative solutions – linking circular economy, bioeconomy, and other initiatives to education. These accomplishments provide hope that the aims set by the new implementation framework are attainable and that countries are willing to collaborate to pave the way forward with a vision beyond 2030.

Collaborative platforms and initiatives with UNESCO, UNEP, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development can take forward joint ambitions in education and learning for sustainable development.

### Concept

Humankind needs a viable environment – and the environment needs trustworthy and accountable humankind.

The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference is a great opportunity to establish a stronger collaboration among countries, regional and international organizations, processes, and mechanisms that put ESD at the core of every aspect of our life.

This High-Level Meeting of Education Ministers coincides with the wider international and regional initiatives on ESD. Additionally, it has a special meaning and importance since it will give the opportunity to education ministers to reflect on the new implementation framework (from 2021 to 2030) of the UNECE Strategy for ESD, to develop networks and multilateral collaborations, to discuss and share experiences on such key issues of ESD as the whole institution (or whole school) approach, monitoring and evaluation, innovation, the situation of youth and their active participation in decision making.

The format of the high-level meeting is based on the three interactive discussions. The high-level officials will have the floor to intervene and express their views, initiatives, and positions on a series of questions. These questions are related to the implementation of the ESD in the region, to the next steps and the future of ESD, to the role and the synergies amongst various mechanisms supporting ESD, and to the engagement of youth in various regional and national processes on ESD.

The new implementation framework reflects on international and regional strategies – such as the UNESCO's new global framework on ESD called ESD for 2030, the European Green Deal, the Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development – and it intends to improve the transformation towards a more sustainable region. In UNECE countries, there are considerable initiatives on ESD, but more emphasis on mainstreaming good practices and meaningful collaboration across countries are needed. For this, the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference is not intending to showcase champions, but to draw attention to adaptable local practices that can be used for implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD and to focus on regional collaboration and learning for sustainability.

The first High-level Meeting of Education Ministers on ESD in the UNECE region creates a bridge to work together for mobilizing the processes for ESD as the key driver for the future of education. Ministers of Education, high-level officials and other stakeholders from Europe, Asia, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean will meet in Cyprus, a crossroad of three continents (Europe, Asia, Africa) for a common task: to transform the plans on ESD that will transform out PLAN-ET.

## Agenda

- 9:30–9:40 **Welcome message from the Chair**  
*Mr. Prodromos Prodromou*, Minister of Education of Cyprus
- 9:40–9:55 **Keynote address on “myths and truths” on ESD**  
*Ms. Georgia Liarakou*, Assistant professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
- 9:55–10:10 **Keynote address on the role of educators in learning for sustainability**  
*Mr. Wim Lambrechts*, Associate professor at the Open University of Belgium and the Netherlands
- 10:10–11:20 **Countries' interventions on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD**  
Panel coordinator: *Mr. Paul Pace*, Professor at the University of Malta  
Ministers of Education reflecting on the existing obstacles, challenges, and needs, and on the measures to overcome these regarding the accomplishment of the new framework of the Strategy's implementation.  
Leading questions:
  - How is ESD integrated in the country's policy context? Which obstacles does your country face in implementing the ESD Strategy?
  - What concerns do you have about successful implementation of ESD in your national context?
  - What policy measures and practices do you envision to tackle these challenges?
  - How can the UNECE Strategy for ESD be used in your country for improving education by creating resilient, healthy, creative, and “open” learning environments in your national context?*Ms. Ester Vilarrubla Escales*, Minister of Education and Higher Education of Andorra  
*Mr. Vahram Dumanyan*, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia  
*Mr. Mikhail Chkhenkeli*, Minister of Education and Science of Georgia  
*Mr. Ionel Florian Lixandru*, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Education of Romania  
*Ms. Anamarija Viček*, State Secretary at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia
- The floor will open for 3 minutes interventions*
- 11:20–11:50 **Messages from international organisations**  
Panel coordinator: *Mr. Wondwosen Asnake Kibret*, Policy and Partnership Coordinator at the Europe Office of United Nations Environment Programme

International organisations expressing their views about the relevance of the new Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030 to their processes, policies, and their plans to work together with UNECE for the implementation of ESD in the countries.

Leading questions:

- How do you envision the role of UNECE region with regards to international efforts towards completing SDG targets and the promotion and implementation of ESD?
- How can the new implementation framework from 2021 to 2030 of the UNECE Strategy for ESD act as a mechanism to support international efforts in ESD?
- How do the four strands of the new implementation framework from 2021 to 2030 of the UNECE Strategy for ESD fit in the processes and the plans of your organisation regarding ESD?
- In which ways does your organisation envision collaboration with the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD?
- Who else should be involved in the process?

*Ms. Monika Linn*, Chief of Sustainable Development and Gender Unit and Principal Adviser to the Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

*Ms. Sylvie Motard*, Acting Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

*Ms. Ana Luiza M. Thompson-Flores*, Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Liaison Office in Geneva and UNESCO Representative to the United Nations in Geneva

*Mr. Nasser Kamel*, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean

*The floor will open for maximum 2 minutes interventions*

11:50–12:10 **Refreshment break**

12:10–13:10 **Plenary discussions along questions concerning needs, collaboration, and youth involvement in and across countries**

Panel coordinator: *Mr. Simon Herteleer*, Coordinator of the UNECE ESD Youth Platform

Interventions from countries. The floor will be given first to the countries (Ministers of Education or High Level Officials) that expressed a priori their interest to intervene along these topics and then the floor will open to other countries (Ministers, High Level Officials, youth representatives, civil organisations and other stakeholders).

Countries and organizations can choose on which of the issues listed below they are interested to intervene.

Leading questions:

- How can youth be strengthened and empowered to become active players on ESD?
- What challenges and needs emerge regarding youth engagement to the implementation of the new framework for implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD?
- How can CSOs (civil society organizations) contribute to ESD implementation?
- What benefits have your country experienced from an increased youth involvement?
- How do you envision the way forward in youth involvement in ESD programmes?

*Ms. Adriana Cazacu-Țigaie*, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Research of Moldova

*Mr. Zafar Makhmudov*, Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)

*Ms. Jeanine Rühle*, representative of the Youth Delegation for Education for Sustainable Development in Germany (youpaN)

*Mr. Rares Voicu*, Board Member of Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

*The floor will open for 3 minutes intervention*

13:10–13:40 **Plenary discussion about UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development as a mechanism of collaboration on ESD in and across countries**

Interventions from countries. Countries are invited to express their views about and/or highlight their commitment to collaboration on ESD in the UNECE region. The floor will be given first to the countries (Ministers, High Level Officials, national focal points, academics, civil society organisations, youth representatives, and other stakeholders) that expressed a priori their interest to intervene along these topics and then the floor will open to other countries.

Delegates and participants can choose on which of the issues listed below they are interested to intervene.

Leading questions:

- How can regional collaboration on ESD be strengthened or promoted in the UNECE region?
- What challenges or obstacles your country/organizations facing in working towards more effective collaboration on ESD among countries in the UNECE Region?
- Which future steps – by countries, organisations, or other stakeholders – can you identify to enhance collaboration on ESD?
- How could the UNECE ESD process be improved or transformed for boosting capacity building and networking on ESD in and among countries, organisations, and other processes or mechanisms?



- In which ways has your country or organisation benefited on ESD from the collaboration in the UNECE region?

Brief introduction by *Ms. Aravella Zachariou*, Chair of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD

*The floor will open for maximum 3 minutes interventions*

- 13:40–13:55 **Reflections by Panel Coordinators on the main findings in sessions**
- 13:55–14:00 **Chair's reflection on the accomplishment of the Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030**