



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

16th meeting, 10 and 11 May 2021

Information Paper 1

Proposed topics for reporting on progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda:
Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education
for Sustainable Development: Progress in implementing the Strategy

Prepared by the Secretariat

Note for your attention: This questionnaire is not a formal reporting, but an intermediate informal reporting exercise to report on the current situation in your country at the beginning of the period 2021-2030, particularly regarding new policy developments with regard to progress on SDGs and impact of COVID-19.

Some questions follow the updated format for reporting which is currently in progress of finalising and the four strands of work which were discussed during the recent meetings of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD. A formal format for reporting will be finalised as soon as the new concept note for strategic planning 2021-2030 is approved and the questionnaire/format for reporting is brought further in line with the UNESCO scheme for reporting.

1. National reporting on the progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development offers a valuable opportunity for countries to learn from each other and to share newly produced resources and materials within and beyond the ECE region.
2. In preparation for the sixteenth meeting of the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, countries are requested to fill in the questionnaire below, informing on progress made and challenges encountered in working on priority action areas after the fourth mandatory reporting cycle carried out in 2018 and since the fourteenth Steering Committee meeting (Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2019).
4. Countries are kindly requested to submit this information in writing to the secretariat via e-mail (nona.iliukhina@un.org and esd@unece.org) by **20 April 2021**.
5. The secretariat will review the information submitted and deliver a brief synthesis presentation at the Steering Committee's sixteenth meeting. The presentation will be followed by an interactive discussion.
6. In the below questionnaire, particular attention is to be paid to: (a) the priority action areas of the proposed newly drafted concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework (quality education and ESD; whole institution approach and ESD; digital education, information and communications technology and ESD; entrepreneurship, employability, innovation and ESD); (b) the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on ESD implementation.
7. Countries will be invited to complement the secretariat's presentation with interventions on outstanding activities and initiatives implemented since the fourteenth Steering Committee meeting (Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2019), in particular with regard to how the implementation of national strategies for ESD contributes to the new developments and challenges for ESD in the region. Given the limited time available, countries will only have up to three minutes each for interventions from the floor.

Questionnaire for 2021 informal country¹ reporting on the implementation of the priority action areas of the newly drafted concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework²

Advances made and challenges encountered since the fourteenth Steering Committee meeting in May 2019

I. Priority action area (a)

Encouraging countries to embed ESD into quality standards, frameworks and resources associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews

1. Are there currently any national or subnational quality assessment/enhancement systems that address ESD in your country?

Yes No

- In pre-primary and primary education a school self-assessment mechanism has been established, which is based on the whole school approach aiming for each school to become sustainable in the long term and systematically. The Ministry of Education, Culture, through the Unit of EESD, in cooperation with the Departments of Education and the Universities, has designed a quality assessment system for ESD implementation in schools and for SEEP integration. It is a school self-assessment report based on qualitative criteria. It is completed by schools at the end of each year, aiming to help schools to identify the degree of achievement of their SEEP, its gaps and weaknesses and to take remedial measures the following year to make progress on ESD. The education assessment tool on ESD is for school self-improvement on integrating ESD and not for ranking schools. The self-assessment tool covers the administrative, technical, pedagogical, organizational and social level of the school and examines the achievement of: a) the ESD learning objectives that were set, b) the school subjects used, c) the activities organized, d) the pedagogic approaches and teaching techniques applied, e) the type of collaboration with the local community, the local populations, the governmental services and the non-governmental organizations, f) the utilization of the external environments and the ways in which they were used, g) the students' participation.

It is noted that despite the self-assessment mechanism for ESD for Schools though a substantial quality assessment mechanism addressing ESD in Cyprus Educational System is missing.

- Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

2. Do quality frameworks exist in your country, for integrating ESD/SDGs in teachers' professional development?

¹ Countries with a federal structure are free to provide several inputs or questionnaires from different states or entities, if appropriate.

² The latest draft (to be updated for the upcoming 16th meeting) is available from http://staging2.unece.org/net4all.ch/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/15th_Meeting_SC/Doc/Informal_documents/Information_Paper_No._7_-_Draft_concept_note_post-2019_implementation.pdf

Encouraging countries to embed ESD into quality standards, frameworks and resources associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews

Yes No X

- *Please specify*
 - *Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic*
-

II. Priority action area (b)

Promoting the whole institution approach (WIA) in every institution of formal, non-formal and informal education

1. Has there been any significant advancement made in your country for promoting WIA in formal education?

Yes X No

1. • The establishment of the "Sustainable Environmental Education Policy of Schools" based on the whole school approach, as a mandate for pre-primary and primary education and as a "Unified School Plan for School-Self-improvement" in Secondary Education considered as an important innovation because all schools design their own sustainable environmental education policy as part of the formal operation of the school and the school curriculum, based on its own needs and priorities, which ensures ownership, active involvement of all actions and changes in the school with a view to making it sustainable. This innovation is very important because it was introduced with the aim of making all schools sustainable and establishing them as learning communities for sustainability, in an integrated and not fragmented way, as was the case with the voluntary participation of schools in various environmental programs.
 - *Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic*

2. Has there been any incentives in your country for integrating WIA in formal, non-formal and in-formal education?

Yes X No

- *Especially for integrating WIA in formal education incentives that given in schools related with the financial support to schools mainly within the project "THGANOKINISI", where schools according with the used cooking oil that collect they reimbursed financially. The money that return to schools are used for the schools for integrating their sustainable actions, which identified in their school Sustainable Environmental Education Policy (SEEP).*
- *Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic*

3. Has there been any initiatives in your country for integrating WIA in non-formal and in-formal education?

Yes X No

- *Within the establishment of the Permanent Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development*

schools are supported and guided to integrate WIA with school based seminars for teachers on how to design and implement the school SEEP. Also, for facilitating schools to integrated WIA in school specific guiding tool develop, which provide ideas and good examples to schools on how to transform their school based on WIA.

Recently another initiative that established in Cyprus for facilitating schools to achieve WIA is the project PEDIA. The project is funded by the EU program Horizon and aims to improve the school settings in order to transform to energy zero buildings. Within this project is achieved one of the dimensions of the WIA which related with the school infrastructure and the creation of healthy, resilient and schools settings. Another initiative that related with the WIA and the school setting is the project that recently established in Cyprus "Greening the school-Greening the neighborhood" which aims to improve the schools landscape and provide to students better climate conditions.

X Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

III. Priority action area (c)

Supporting ESD within ICT and digital education

1. Did COVID-19 importantly change ICT and digital education used for teaching and learning on ESD in your country?

Yes X No

Yes. Most of the ESD courses for students and teachers transmitted from physical teaching to distance learning. Interactive tools such as mentimeter, padlet, tricider, Microsoft forms, kahoot, sway used for organizing the ESD contents on-line and provide to students interactive learning activities such as Quiz, justification, discussion, avatar, interactive games etc. For example an on-line educational kit for common agriculture policy developed (<https://capgeneration.com.cy/educational-toolkit/>), as well as interactive lesson plans for students in various SDGs. Additionally, in collaboartion with the CyBC Chanell we organize the Educational TV, where the stuff of the Unit of EESD organized and teach with TV education lessons for students for climate change, biodiversity, the wild life, the water, the consumption and production etc (<http://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/monada-perivallontikis-ekpaidefsis>).

Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

2. In your country, do there exist any programs that support educational actors (teachers, mentors, inspectors etc) to integrate ICT and digital education in ESD?

Yes X No

Yes a series of an on line education courses offered from the CPI which is the responsible organization for professional development in Cyprus for familiarizing teachers, mentors and inspectors with the distance education. Specific seminars on how to use on-line platforms organized as well as on-line courses on how to use interactive digital tools in teaching and learning. Complementary to these courses a series of on line workshops and on-line conferences for distance education offered <http://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/tile-diimerida-ex-apostaseos-ekpaidefsi-scholiki-pragmatikotita>. Also, centrally to the official web-site of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, organized the web-site “Distance education” which provides to teachers, inspectors and mentors guidance on how to organize their lesson plans online <http://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/>, as well as useful information for on-line learning for student, teachers and parents.

https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3111&Itemid=510&lang=el

Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

3. Is any assistance provided on national level for embedding ICT and digital education on ESD/SDGs?

Yes No

The assistant that provided for embedding ICT and digital education on ESD/SDGs is part of the wider assistant that provided for all the subjects and horizontal issues in education as ESD/SDGs. Please see the answer to the above question (2)

Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

IV. Priority action area (d)

Enhancing entrepreneurship and employment within ESD

1. Do you have in your country ESD programs that support students/youth entrepreneurship?

Yes X No

Remarkable project for integrating green skills in the SVET curriculum is the YENESIS Project which is funded by EU and is developed by the Energy Cyprus Office, the Frederick University, the Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. Within the project a guide on green skills and sustainable development competences developed. The aim of this guide on sustainability competences for green jobs is to help VET students who will be deciding on their education and career path. It is to provide fundamental information to secondary and VET students who are in the process of deciding or have already decided that they will follow a green career path. This guide explains what exactly a green job is and how this type of employment can prevent them from becoming

young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) and can secure their future as active members of their society. Furthermore, the horizontal skills that are necessary for a green worker are presented. This guide also aims to present to VET students potential job positions that they can pursue in the fields of Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Mobility. The importance of each field and its contribution to the development of the green market is also explained. Finally, some links for green job hunting are provided to the students, as well as some personal stories of people who have successfully established themselves as green workers for drawing inspiration (<https://youthemploymentmag.net/2019/11/28/genesis-guide-on-sustainability-competences-for-green-jobs-to-be-disseminated-in-secondary-schools/>).

X Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

2. Are there any mechanisms on national level that strengthen students/youth entrepreneurship competences related to ESD?

Yes No

Yes, the new curricula offered by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, as they have been amended during the recent revision, are an example of good practice as far as the student – focused, competence – based approach to learning is concerned. The main philosophy behind the new curricula is the acquisition of key competences, through the combination of theoretical teaching with practical training, and the vocational orientation of students.

Through practical training and industrial placement, students are given the opportunity to develop mathematical competences, as well as basic competences in science and technology, since each technical subject encourages them to implement fundamental mathematical principles and procedures in everyday working conditions.

Furthermore, through technological subjects, students are acquainted with technology and technological products and procedures, and are in a position to understand and evaluate the impact science and technology have on our world in general, and on the respective branch of study students follow in particular. In other words, the development of environmental awareness is promoted through the delivery of technological subjects, since pupils are systematically informed about the technological dimensions of modern civilization and their impact on the environment.

Through the pluralism that can be observed in the Secondary Technical and Vocational Education curricula (theoretical subjects, technological/laboratory subjects and elective subjects) students are given the opportunity to develop their native language, foreign languages and ICT skills.

The application of theoretical knowledge and the development and enhancement of existing knowledge through technological subjects contribute to the effort of acquiring meta-cognitive competences.

Moreover, through the school culture and the relatively good relationship between teachers and students that is achieved in Technical Schools, the social skills of students are developed, as

well as their initiative, cultural knowledge and expression. Finally, through technological subjects and the selection of the respective branch of study, a sense of entrepreneurship is developed in each student.

Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

3. Are there any incentives for ESD on national level which prepare students/youth for the sustainable entrepreneurship and green jobs?

Yes No

Please specify

Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

V. COVID-19 and ESD

1. Has COVID-19 impacted the implementation of UNECE Strategy for ESD in your country?

Yes X No

Despite the efforts that undertaken for not being suspended the actions of the UNECE ESD Strategy, though many of them has been “frozen” because of the schools closure and the transition of education in an on-line teaching and learning.

- The Governmental Network of Environmental Education Centers remains closed because of the pandemic. This constitutes an important hindering factor for ESD successful implementation and disconnect students and teachers from the environment.
- Most of the schools interrupted the environmental activities that implemented in their schools (programs, actions, initiatives), since the priority was based to respond to the learning outcomes of the main subjects (maths, language).
- Reduction of the interest from schools to integrate their Sustainable Environmental Education Agenda (SEEP) and integrating the ESD curriculum because of other emergencies because of Covid-19.
- Despite the fact that ESD is a priority of the MoECSY, though the emergencies of Covid-19 replaced the education policy priorities in order schools to respond to the emerging challenged

X Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

2. Does your country face specific challenges for integrating ESD on the national level during COVID-19?

Yes No

- Due to the pandemic, many of the initiatives covering these sectors have been either postponed, cancelled or implemented in digital forms. Special issues arise regarding access to learning and access to digital learning. Among the basic challenges of the crisis, was the exacerbation of the gap between the pupils from more advantaged and less advantaged socio-economic and/or geographical backgrounds. A critical challenge in the Cyprus education system was the pandemic and the emergencies that resulted due to the rapid transition to distance learning. This has been and is a very big challenge for the implementation of ESD given the fact that as an approach it is based on cooperation and learning in real life environments. Despite the fact that they many courses have been organized and transferred to an online learning environment, and despite the fact that teacher training is implemented online, however in no case can they make up for the benefits of "live" learning.

X Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic

3. What are the lessons learnt in your country from COVID-19, which, to your opinion, would strengthen the role of ESD in the national context as a vehicle for empowering youth and citizens to be more resilient in future emergencies?

Yes No

Covid-19 used as the best experiential lesson for revealing the importance of the ESD as a key driver for creating societies that are more resilient. Covid-19 provided opportunities to become more creative on how to use ESD more effectively in these circumstances for empowering Youth and Citizens. For example, we tried through the ICT and on-line education to support families during the lockdown period to learn about SDGs within a series of simple interactive activities, which applied with the parents and their children at home. This facilitates families during the period of isolation to learn creatively and with simple ways SDGs. Also, to strengthen families psychologically after one year of isolation and social interaction we organize special environmental outdoor programs for the weekends in various fields, following all the health protocols, aiming to provide them with alternative opportunities of enjoyment and connection within the environment and using the environment as a place and tool of learning. Additionally, we learn and elaborate various learning and teaching ways to support schools after their reopening. Since the Governmental Environmental Centers are still not working we have elaborated all the environmental education programs that were offered in the EECs in such a way to be transferred in schools and as a Unit of EESD we are offering a new series of programs called "The Environmental Education Centers are traveling to Schools" Schools can express their interest by selecting a specific program and non-formal educators visit schools and implement the program on a school basis. The programs' duration is 2 hours and they are implemented in groups of 20 students, which are divided into subgroups of 5 for each non-formal educator. The programs are implemented with specific health protocols that are approved by the Ministry of Health. Also, it seems that is the right time: a) to reconsider how we support schools within the WIA for being examples of healthy, resilient and sustainable schools, b) to re-examine the learning contents and the teaching methods to the direction of SDGs and competence based teaching, c) to reconsider the mechanisms and process of youth engagement on issues that impacted their quality of life, d) to re-assess the existing policies and programs that support and reorient youth green

jobs and sustainable entrepreneurship.

X Please indicate if you wish to make a presentation on this topic
or if there is an outstanding initiative in your country on this topic
