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

Seventeenth meeting

Geneva, 30 and 31 May 2022

Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda

Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development: progress in implementing the Strategy

Proposed topics for reporting on progress in the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2022 informal country reporting)*

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

By its terms of reference, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee for Education for Sustainable Development is charged with monitoring progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (CEP/AC.13/2005/4/Rev.1, annex I, para. 4 (b)). The mandate of the Steering Committee as the principal decision-making body for the activities on the Strategy in the ECE region, responsible for giving guidance and strategic directions to the implementation of the Strategy and monitoring progress in its implementation, was extended until 2030 by ministers and heads of delegation at the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries held on 8 June 2016 in Batumi, Georgia, in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.2, para 10).

In line with its renewed mandate, and according to the established practice, in addition to the mandatory national progress reporting carried out at the end of each implementation phase, countries are asked to submit informal reports to the Steering Committee on the progress achieved and the challenges encountered in implementing the Strategy. The secretariat will subsequently review all the reports submitted and prepare a presentation,

* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

which will identify the major themes and interesting developments with regard to the implementation of education for sustainable development in the ECE region.

To facilitate this process, the secretariat, together with the Chair of the Committee and in coordination with the Bureau, has prepared the present document — a brief questionnaire on progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Strategy since the last mandatory reporting exercise undertaken in 2018 and the informal reporting exercise undertaken in 2021. Countries are kindly requested to fill in the questionnaire and submit it to the secretariat before 13 May 2022.

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 seventeenth 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 sixteenth Steering Committee meeting (Geneva, 10 and 11 May 2021).
3. In the below questionnaire, particular attention is paid to the main priority strands of the Strategy's new implementation framework (2021–2030) (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3), focused on:
 - (a) quality education and ESD;
 - (b) whole institution approach and ESD;
 - (c) digital education, information and communications technology and ESD;
 - (d) entrepreneurship, employability, innovation and ESD; and youth and ESD.
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 **13 May 2022**.
5. The secretariat will review the information submitted and deliver a brief synthesis presentation at the Steering Committee's seventeenth meeting. The presentation will be followed by an interactive discussion.
6. Countries will be invited to complement the secretariat's presentation with interventions on outstanding activities and initiatives implemented since the sixteenth Steering Committee meeting (Geneva, 10 and 11 May 2021), in particular regarding 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 2022 informal country¹ reporting on the implementation of the priority action areas of the newly drafted framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030²

Advances made and challenges encountered since the sixteenth Steering Committee meeting in May 2021

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

- The sustainable development (SD) is reflected in the principles of the Romanian system of education included in the *National Education Law no. 1/2011*: equity in access to education, respect for national cultural identity and intercultural dialogue, conservation of the national identity and cultural values of the Romanian people, rights for ethnic minorities.
- In January 2022, the environmental and entrepreneurial competencies were introduced as key competencies in the national education law. A new discipline, education for environment, will be studied starting with the next school year.
- For the 2021-2022 school year, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education revised the national quality standards and the assessment methodology in order to focus assessments on the progress and performance in learning, individual and institutional development and on the schools capacity to achieve the expected results.
- The SD is a transversal component of the study programs in higher education; higher education (HE) institutions are assessed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education according to performance indicators which include SD criteria.
- The new set of reforms adopted in 2021 in the Recovery and Resilience National Plan (RRNP) addresses important challenges, in particular: reducing early school leaving and reforming compulsory education by increasing the autonomy of schools; a network of sustainable, environmentally friendly green schools, curriculum including environmental education; developing inclusive and quality early child education and care; a comprehensive path for VET and smooth access to technical higher education; new skills adapted to current labour market challenges; language and transversal skills, including entrepreneurial and digital skills; environmentally friendly, safe and quality infrastructure.

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

Yes No

- In Romania, the main providers of initial and continuous training are the Departments for Teachers Training of the universities and Teachers Houses (Casele Corpului Didactic - accredited by the Ministry of Education - ME).
- The initial and continuous teachers' training is mandatory. The legislation imposes two levels of initial training for the future teachers: level 1, which targets the teachers for the mandatory education; level 2, in which are trained teachers to acquire competencies needed for secondary, post-secondary and higher education.
- The trainings offered by Teachers Houses are annually approved by the ME.

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

² See 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). Available from https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/ece_cep_ac.13_2022_3_adv_edited.pdf

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

- During the period 2021-2022, various national projects continued to provide support to teachers to improve the quality of blended and online learning, to adequately use ICT technologies and move toward hybrid teaching and assessment.
- *The European quality assurance framework project for VET National Reference Points (EQAVET-NRP-RO) 2019-2021*, funded by Erasmus +, provided support for the implementation of a performance-focused school quality system, including initial and in-service training of VET teachers. The project also contributed to the implementation of SELFIE, which is a free tool developed by the European Commission to support schools in using digital technologies in the teaching and learning process and to conclude partnerships with companies for the internships of the students, in piloting work-based learning. The application of SELFIE tools will become an important indicator in the quality assurance process.
- Thus, the procedures for accreditation of in-service teacher training programs have been adapted and restructured. A new *normative framework regarding the initial pedagogical training to access the teaching career* was elaborated (Order no. 4812/2020) and a framework for initial and continuous training, and the new program for teachers master's degree and career mentoring mechanism was approved (*Methodology for the establishment and organization of didactic master programs approved by Order no. 4524/2020*).
- The didactic master degree is an initial training program for teachers, has a duration of two years and is addressed to graduates with a bachelor degree or equivalent, interested in obtaining double specialization - in the main field and that of teacher. In this context, the ME implements the project "*Start in career through the didactic master (MaD)*", which aims to improve the level of teachers skills. For the academic year 2021-2022, 41 programs of master's degree from 8 public higher education institutions were approved, in order to support 400 master's students.
- Romania will participate in the calls for the creation of the *25 Teachers' Academies by 2025 of the Erasmus + program 2021-2027*, as networks for teachers training. These partnerships aim to develop and jointly test different models of mobility (virtual, physical and mixed) in initial teacher training and as part of the continuous professional development of teachers.

II. Priority action area (b)

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

1. Has there been any significant advancement made in your country in the field of governance, curriculum, leadership, teachers' professional development, teaching methods, collaborations, facilities and infrastructure for promoting application of WSA/WIA to ESD in formal education?

Yes No

- In the context of the post-pandemic recovery, the new structural funds programming cycle and the RRNP, the new country project-*Educated Romania*, include reforms to improve the quality of the ET system, to reduce school dropout and for inclusion, as it follows:
 - support for students from at-risk groups who have not been able to access online schooling, fair access and transition to digital education: *Tele-school program, remedial courses, digital content*.
 - support for high schools and universities for the maintenance and successful completion of studies by pupils and students belonging to groups at high risk of dropping out of school: *remedial activities, counselling, school and career guidance and personal development – particularly, the ROSE project*.
 - Continuation of the national curricula reform, and the teachers' professional development: *Relevant Curriculum, Open Education for All - CRED project*.
 - For the period 2021-2025, the RRNP will finance the implementation of the *Early Warning Mechanism in Education (MATE)*, to reduce school dropout in 2,500 schools with a high risk of school dropout, also measures such as remedial courses, social programs, school after school program and hot meals programs, school transport reimbursement, support for children with
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disabilities, second chance programs, increasing access to tertiary education, developing early child education and care system, VET reform and development of 10 regional consortia with 10 integrated VET campuses, governance reform and professionalization of school education system.

- At the same time, the RRNP includes a set of measures for the development of school infrastructure in order to become environmentally friendly: to use ecological standards for green and smart buildings; to buy 3,200 green minibuses to transport students from remote areas, especially from rural areas; to rehabilitate education units to become green schools.

- Transition to sustainable environment, and climate-neutral economy is a strategic priority for all member states which adopted on 18 February 2021 *the Resolution of the Council of the European Union on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training with a view to further achieving and developing the European area of education 2021- 2030*.

- In 2021, in line with European priorities on environmental protection and climate change, the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, has set up the Working Group on Education on Climate Change and Environment. The working group prepared the report Education on Climate Change and Environment in Sustainable Schools a first step towards a national strategy.

Starting with the school year 2022 - 2023:

- environmental education is introduced in the national curriculum (according to law no. 14/2021 amending the National Education Law no. 1/2011, republished with subsequent amendments);

- is organized a week of extra-curricular activities dedicated to environmental protection: "Green Week".

2. Does your country face challenges and has particular needs in its implementation of WSA/WIA in formal and non-formal education?

Yes No

- Schools and HE institutions need to enforce their human and infrastructure capacities in order to access all the available reimbursable and grants to implement the ESD agenda.

- Investments in the future of education through Romania's approved RRNP are important - 3.6 billion euros (12% of the total of 29.2 billion euros).

- The key leverages to move forward in the green and digital transitions are teachers and school leaders, universities, and partnerships with local communities, economic and associative sector, as key actors to ensure the necessary support and transformations, to develop inclusive and quality education, and infrastructure.

- The envisaged investments to ensure access to early child education and care will continue for the next seven years with an allocated budget of 350 million euros.

- The national school dropout reduction program will have a budget of 530 million euros.

- Another national priority is the reform of dual VET through the development of 10 regional consortia and the development of 10 integrated VET campuses.

- Investments of 600 million euros are foreseen for the green transition, and 1.1 billion euros for the digital transition. Investments in the digitalization of education will include equipment for schools internet connection, teacher training programs to acquire digital skills, consolidation of digital skills of students with disabilities and those hospitalized, contents and digital educational tools, digital centres for the hybrid learning campuses in higher education and setting up technological alliances.

- Last but not least, in order to make all these reforms possible, we will increase institutional capacity and professionalize school management.

3. Have there been any monitoring processes (for instance, self-assessments) in your country that support formal and non-formal institutions and organizations when assessing their progress regarding application of WSA/WIA to ESD?

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

III. Priority action area (c)

Supporting ESD within ICT and digital education

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

Yes No

- At national level, implemented measures focused on improving the educational infrastructure, curriculum flexibility, digital skills, creating materials adapted to digital learning, training teachers for new learning-assessment methods, suitable for online learning, etc.
- Urgent measures have been taken to avoid the loss and delays of students, especially in rural areas, which lack the capacity to ensure access to online learning - remedial courses, including during the summer holidays in 2021 were organized.
- Teachers have shown great adaptability during this period, looking for the best ways to work with students, choosing the most appropriate e-learning platforms. However, according to the study *One Year of Online Schooling - Premises for Educational Innovation*, published in February 2021, teachers mainly faced a lack of tools for classroom management, feedback, and assessment. Both students and teachers had problems with provision of a sufficiently high-performance computer and had limited internet access.
- In this context, the Ministry of Education continued its efforts to support access to inclusive and quality education: combining face-to-face and online learning environments, and various digital and non-digital work tools, investing to modernize education, providing IT equipment with internet connection for students and initial and continuous training for teachers - within national large scale projects (the national program *Home School*, projects financed from reimbursable funds, *ROSE project*, *CRED project*, *MaD project*).

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

Yes No

- The national support projects providing training, mentoring and coaching for teachers, school leaders, inspectorates, are funded from non and reimbursable funds: *ROSE project*, *CRED project*, *MaD project*.
- *ROSE project (Romania Secondary Education Project - ROSE)* is a project funded with a loan of 200 million EUR from International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is a complex intervention to reduce the early school leaving rate, to improve the transition from high school to college and to increase the retention in the first academic year in the institutions. On the other hand, it should be noted that the years 2020 and 2021, turned into online the project activities. The project also provided electronic equipment to schools - over 60,000 laptops made available to students without their own equipment, over 5,700 video conferencing rooms and over 4,300 interactive whiteboards in a collective effort to adapt the teaching-learning-assessment process to the challenges of the pandemics.
- To ensure the quality of training, including in the blended and online learning system, support measures have been introduced for pre-university teaching staff, such as continuing education with the involvement of county school inspectorates, psychological counsellors and mentors / education experts, Teachers' Houses, through the "*CRED project - Relevant curriculum, education open to all*". Since the beginning of the pandemics, approximately 38,000 teachers have been trained to familiarise with ICT technologies, educational platforms and open educational resources, and contributed to the creation of the LIVRESQ virtual library.
- The *Career Master in Teaching (MaD) project* aims at initial teacher training for pre-university education, improving the level of skills of tertiary university teachers, in terms of innovative educational content, modern and flexible learning resources. Financial support for 2 years is provided for 400 students enrolled in master degree programs, piloted in 8 universities. In addition, 80 tertiary teachers will be trained in innovative and flexible educational content and learning resources.
- The national program *Educated Romania* planned support for training and mentoring for school managers and inspectors (approx. 6,176 principals, 2,924 deputy principals and 900 inspectors with management positions), which will be funded by NRRP. The training program will enforce the schools capacities to raise the students' performance, in the context of digitalization of education.

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

- Yes No
- All the projects are implemented at national and local level with educational experts from public and private sector, trainers and mentors, professors from universities. These experts developed methodological and pedagogical guides for coaching, tutorship and personal development, implementation of the new curricula focused on competencies, inclusive education, and use of ICT.

IV. Priority action area (d)

1. Are there changes in curricula focused on developing (new) skills, aimed at increasing levels of entrepreneurship and the greening of economies (e.g. in TVET and higher education programs)?

- Yes No
- In January 2022, the environmental and entrepreneurial competencies were introduced as key competencies in the key-competencies framework of the national education law.
 - A new discipline, education for environment, will be studied in the next school year.
 - The topics related to social entrepreneurship are implicitly approached in the formal and non-formal education, entrepreneurial education being a compulsory item in upper secondary education. Free of charge textbooks for entrepreneurial education classes are available.
 - All professional qualifications in initial VET system (levels 3, 4, 5, corresponding to the National Qualifications Framework) include the development of entrepreneurial skills (critical thinking and problem solving, interpersonal relationship management, professional career development, starting a business, working in the team) and environmental education (rules of conduct, global human-nature interaction). An example of a specific competence that students acquire in middle school and high school is “*the promotion of a technological environment conducive to sustainable development*”.
 - VET high schools prepare students for green professional qualifications, in fields such as forestry, food industry, agriculture, agro-tourism: environmental and environmental protection technician, agronomist, hydro-meteorologist, veterinarian, etc. There are qualifications in the VET system preparing graduates for sustainable development/ecology/environmental protection, for example: “Worker in organic farming”(3 EQF), “Technician in organic farming”(4 EQF), “Technician in ecological and environmental quality protection”(4 EQF), “Agro-tourism worker”(3 EQF), “Forester”(3 EQF), “Technician in forestry and logging”(4 EQF), “Hydro-meteorological technician”(4 EQF), “Technician in plants protection” (5 EQF), “Technician for mountain agro-tourism activities” (5 EQF), “Laboratory technician for environmental quality protection” (5 EQF), “Chemist foreman in the treatment of technological water in power plants” (5 EQF).
 - In the technological high schools - *Services profile*, the *training firm* is a teaching method, which aims to develop students' entrepreneurial skills by simulating the internal processes carried out in a real company and its relationships with other companies and institutions.

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

- Yes No
- In the VET high schools, it is annually organized the national contest, public funded, *Business plan*. The competition is organized at the local, regional and national level, and contributes to developing entrepreneurial students' competencies, with almost 2,000 students involved annually.
 - During 2020 - 2021 school year, the National Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (NCTVETD) activated a high number of virtual *training firms* on the national platform ROCT (www.roct.ro). Out from a total of 1,285 training firms, 1,130 are in initial VET at pre-university education level and 155 at HE level. The training firms' main domains of activity are: Agriculture, Commerce, Hotels, Production, Restaurants, Services, Transport, and Tourism.

- Romania participates with 8 other countries in the Erasmus+ funded project "*Skills4Smart TCLF Industries 2030*" with a duration of 4 years, which brings together over 20 partners in the fields of Textiles, Clothing, Leather, and Footwear - TCLF. The project is the first step towards a new dynamic and sustainable community of different private / public actors. 8 new curricula for 8 new qualifications in the field of TCLF will prepare for professions such as Sustainability Technician in the use of ecological materials and sustainable. This project will set up an "EU Fashion Virtual Campus" in the field of fashion to attract the workforce, to strengthen partnerships. Through this project, 8 occupational profiles will be developed, which will acquire the necessary skills
- In higher education, the legal and financial framework stimulates the *Student entrepreneurial societies (SES)* to organize trainings and mentoring to guide students to set up a start-up, business incubators, and simulated enterprises, to encourage mentor-student collaboration, business ideas, and to attract funding.

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

- Yes No
- In dual education, which is a form of work-based learning vocational education, in i-VET, fiscal facilities are granted to companies involved in traineeships. In the school year 2021-2022, 105,617 students were registered in 17 fields of i-VET (3EQF level).
 - Students in dual education receive financial support of 200 lei per month (the National Social Protection Program "Vocational Scholarship"). In addition, the students receive a scholarship from company where they practice, at least at the level of the one granted from public funds.

V. COVID-19 and ESD

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

- Yes No
- The Covid-19 pandemics impacted the education system at all levels – management, performance of students and teachers, infrastructure, attendance and attainment rates.
 - Financial measures have been taken to support pre-school units, schools and higher education institutions in order to implement physical distancing in face-to-face activities, online learning and health safety equipment.
 - The extent to which pandemics impacted the main targets in education area will be monitored and assessed within the monitoring framework approved by the *Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)*.

2. Are there any lessons learnt in your country from COVID-19, which, in 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
- Several Romanian studies after two years of pandemic shown that adaptation of teaching, especially the way of evaluating pupils and students, was the main lesson learnt.
 - The transition to online courses has allowed teachers to provide students with more applied feedback, more focused on each individual needs. Going online meant a re-evaluation and reconsideration of education and learning paradigm.
 - Teachers have begun to become creators of digitized content, interactive materials, videos, etc.
 - The pandemic produced not only improvisation (in the positive sense of the word), but also creativity, and obliged teachers to adapt teaching strategy.