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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

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

##### Nineteenth meeting

Geneva, 29, 30 and 31 May 2024

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

##### Final proposal for developing a toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development

### Final proposal for developing a toolkit on “Whole institution approach and education for sustainable development”

#### Note by experts supervised by the Steering Committee

##### *Summary*

At its eighteenth meeting (Geneva, 25–26 May 2023), the Steering Committee adopted the Workplan for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025 (document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2023/3) with the amendments (as in the “Revised document as of 23 May 2023”). The workplan includes a road map of activities to be undertaken during the implementation phase of 2021–2025, focusing on the remaining three years (2023–2025), along the four priority strands: (1) quality education and education for sustainable development; (2) whole institution approach and education for sustainable development; (3) digital education, information and communications technology and education for sustainable development; and (4) entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development.

At the same meeting, the Steering Committee was informed about the proposal for developing an outline of activities for implementing the second strand on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development outlined in the draft workplan and a toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development.

The present document contains a final proposal for a toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development.

The Committee will be updated on the progress in developing a toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development.



## Background

1. As a part of its objectives, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) highlights the importance of providing the necessary tools to the ECE region for supporting countries in implementing education for sustainable development effectively.<sup>1</sup> As noted in the Strategy: “Materials for [education for sustainable development] at all levels need to be developed, both for general courses and specialist education and for self-study and be adapted to the local conditions and needs.”<sup>2</sup> The development of a toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development is vital for implementing the whole institution approach (or whole school approach) and education for sustainable development, across formal and non-formal education, but also as an intrinsic part of the integration of the new implementation framework of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030 in member States of ECE.<sup>3</sup>

2. The whole institution approach is an integral concept that is based on a holistic approach. It connects and brings together a given institution’s vision, building management and operations, education (curriculum, pedagogy, didactics and professional development) and cooperation with the surrounding environment (the parties in the vicinity of the institution: parents, companies, organizations, municipality, etc.), as well as culture, youth participation and monitoring.

3. This proposal focuses on developing a toolkit on whole institution approach because it covers a range of formal, non-formal and informal education institutions for students of all ages. The whole institution approach is for every institution that is active in the field of education for sustainable development; it offers everyone a wider perspective on education and cooperation thereon with other bodies, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), training institutes, universities, companies and municipalities.

4. The whole institution approach provides questions for each segment, allowing institutions to engage with it. However, the real challenge lies in establishing connections between these segments in order to facilitate crossovers, for instance, connecting a given school’s business operations with its educational processes. Through this approach, institutions can evolve into exemplary sustainability and sustainable education hubs. Through this shift, institutions can avoid inadvertently sending the wrong message through poor business practices, while also educating actors as to how operations can be more sustainable. The whole institution approach aims to bridge these disparate worlds for the betterment of youth and society.

## Mandate

5. During the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5 October 2022), the ministers agreed that, under the leadership of Cyprus and the Netherlands, an expert group would be established, the terms of reference of which would allow it to develop the workplan activity for the second priority strand on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development in the ECE region. The expert group will work in close collaboration with the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD and the leading countries for developing the tools, as well as the capacity-building activities that will facilitate the effective implementation of the toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development by member States of ECE. The toolkit will be developed by taking into consideration the policy framework for the second priority strand outlined in the Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030, which is also part of the workplan activities for integrating the second priority strand.

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<sup>1</sup> CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, para. 7 (d).

<sup>2</sup> *Learning from Each Other: The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development* (ECE/CEP/159), para. 56.

<sup>3</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3, para. 56.

## Synthesis of the expert and support groups

### Expert group

6. In order to advance the work on the development of a whole institution approach framework that can be used in a wide range of contexts within the ECE region, an expert group was established consisting of individuals with extensive experience of and knowledge on whole institution approach in relation to education for sustainable development and the development of educational tools. The expert group is responsible for the development of the toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development, which will be aligned with the policy framework for the second priority strand outlined in the Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030. The expert group, chaired by Mr. Hak van Nispen tot Pannerden (General Director, SME, Netherlands), will be assisted by experienced practitioners in the field of education for sustainable development from the formal and non-formal education sectors from Cyprus and the Netherlands and by a support group comprised of professionals from the ECE member States represented on the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD.

### Support group

7. The support group will provide suggestions, comments and feedback on the documents. The ECE secretariat to the Committee will send an invitation to the member States and observer organizations to declare their interest in participating. The selection of the members of the support group will be based on specific criteria related to their experience with whole institution approach and education for sustainable development, as well as in authoring tools for the education for sustainable development field.

## Purpose and objectives of the toolkit

### Purpose

8. The purpose of creating a toolkit is to develop ideas and activities on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development that will support the member States in the ECE region, as well as other regional processes, stakeholders and parties who are engaged in education for sustainable development across the formal, non-formal and informal sectors, in transforming their institutions to sustainability based on whole institution approach.

### Objectives

9. The objectives of the toolkit are to:
- Provide a practical resource on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development that will support all the interested parties in integrating in a more flexible way whole institution approach into their organizations.
  - Support stakeholders (and youth) to understand their role in whole institution approach and be intrinsic and active members of an institution that aims to achieve its sustainable transformation based on whole institution approach.
  - Present good ideas and practices in each dimension of whole institution approach and education for sustainable development that will facilitate more effective adaptation of whole institution approach by the members of a given institution according to their particular needs.
  - Operate as a networking and collaboration tool between the member States in the ECE region, with member States learning lessons on its use from each other.

- Help the stakeholders of the member States in the ECE region to understand how whole institution approach is applied in practice regarding education for sustainable development.
- Support institutions of the ECE member States in implementing whole institution approach as a holistic concept in policy and practice.
- Help parties in and related to education to develop a common “language” on whole institution approach and to communicate to all interested parties the importance of education for sustainable development as quality education.

## Deliverables of the toolkit

10. The toolkit based on the strategic directions and goals of whole institution approach and education for sustainable development as described in the new Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030<sup>4</sup> will be developed taking into consideration the Strategic framework on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development, which is the first deliverable for the second priority strand. The toolkit includes:

(a) A general description of whole institution approach that includes the underlying holistic perspective, aiming to instil a certain mindset and foundational knowledge of the concept and its potential. Whole institution approach will be introduced as a concept for a comprehensive view of or a holistic approach to quality education (target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals), encompassing the seven components and interventions, such as change and youth participation. The wider perspective of sustainability as presented in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals related to education for sustainable development – the toolkit will continue to show the linkages, systemic and interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, the understanding of which is a prerequisite for any institution pursuing sustainability;

(b) The competences on education for sustainable development, based on the ECE competences in education for sustainable development,<sup>5</sup> the European Union “A Rounder Sense of Purpose” framework<sup>6</sup> and other mechanisms such as the European Union “GreenComp sustainability competence framework”;<sup>7</sup>

(c) The specific dimensions included for whole institution approach and education for sustainable development in the new implementation framework of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030:<sup>8</sup>

- (i) Leadership in the learning place;
- (ii) Quality assurance – any place of learning needs to have a vision of how to use education for sustainable development as a transformative process and what kinds of monitoring and evaluation need to be established;
- (iii) Involving youth as part of the participatory processes;
- (iv) Education for sustainable development for staff development;
- (v) Opportunities for further training for everyone;
- (vi) Developing sustainable infrastructures such as waste management practices, energy conservation and purchasing policies;

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., paras. 55–56.

<sup>5</sup> *Learning for the Future: Competences in Education for Sustainable Development*, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (Utrecht, Programma Leren voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling, 2012), pp. 13–17.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://aroundersenseofpurpose.eu/>.

<sup>7</sup> G. Bianchi, U. Pisiotis and M. Cabrera Giraldez, *GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3, para. 78 (a).

- (vii) Innovation – being open to change and collaboration with other entities through networking and opportunities at all levels;
- (viii) Communication networks within and outside of the institution;
- (d) The ideas of education, for instance, that formal, non-formal and informal education are needed to work on qualification, socialization and personal development and that other didactics are also required. This will be presented as part of a general concept on pedagogy and didactics;
- (e) The process of initiating work with whole institution approach. This will be outlined to enable a given institution to commence the process and ensure its continuity. This will include an overview of a potential process, questions to consider, methods for establishing partnerships, conditions and examples. The potential process may involve the following steps: setting ambitions; forming a working group; engaging with society; defining goals and criteria; integrating activities into the curriculum; implementing and evaluating; and communicating outcomes;
- (f) Elaboration of each of the six components of whole institution approach (vision, building management and operations, curriculum, pedagogy and didactics, professional development and institutional environment). This will allow institutions to start implementing the Strategic framework on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development. The toolkit for each component will serve as inspiration for taking subsequent steps and exploring opportunities for integration and cross-collaboration;
- (g) Tools, examples and inspiration for implementing whole institution approach will be provided. These resources encompass multiple aspects of whole institution approach but will focus on one of them as a starting point, similar to the exemplary practices showcased at the International Conference on the implementation of the whole institution approach in education for sustainable development (Lunteren, Netherlands, 28–30 March 2022). Literature: an overview of relevant and inspiring literature and sources on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development;
- (h) Training: Designing of a training course on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development based on the toolkit that can be used by the member States in their context and according to their particularities;
- (i) Networks: A list containing information on international, regional and national networks active on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development;
- (j) Guidelines and feedback: Guidelines on how to use the toolkit in different countries and translate it into different languages: Feedback opportunities.

## **Suggested forms for development of the toolkit**

11. The toolkit could be developed in various forms, to be decided on jointly by the expert group, members of the project team and the supporting group. Possible forms include:
- (a) A website with all the information on activities and use of the toolkit;
  - (b) A video with a general introduction to the whole institution approach and education for sustainable development, as well as the toolkit, in English;
  - (c) A binder with information per part/subject;
  - (d) A set of dialogue cards for all the dimensions related to the whole institution approach and education for sustainable development, featuring questions for discussion. These cards would not only cover the different components of whole institution approach but would also facilitate crossovers and touch upon other elements of a holistic view of quality education, including sustainability. The box would include cards with integrated examples and practices.

## Translation

12. The toolbox will be translated in the three official languages of ECE (English, French and Russian), published by ECE and made available for each country to translate into its national language(s).

## Pilot implementation of the toolkit

13. Member States in the ECE region will be invited to participate in a pilot phase regarding the toolkit's application in practice. Countries expressing an interest in participating in the pilot phase will be invited to take part in a webinar, at which the guidelines for the pilot application of the toolkit will be presented.

## Proposed timeline

	2024				2025				2026
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Start-up expert group, project team and support group		X							
Online and in-person meetings with expert group and support group to agree on toolkit formation (structure, content, format, development)				x		X		x	
Online and live meetings of the project team		x	X	x	x	X	x	x	x
Online meetings with contractors and one in-person meeting		x		x		X		x	x
Research and analysis				x	X				
Pedagogical concept; general and specific elements				x	x	X			
Architecture and design of the toolkit					x	X			
Development of the tools and interventions for change						X	x	X	
Selection of examples and inspiration							x	x	
Draft version								x	
Regional conference "How to use the toolkit on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development", hosted by member State								x	
Final version									x
Publication by ECE									x
Project management and control	X	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	x
Capacity-building and dissemination activities			X	x	x	X	x	x	x

## Capacity-building and dissemination activities

### Capacity-building activities

14. The following is a list of capacity-building activities:

- (a) Online workshops or a regional capacity-building activity in Geneva, held back-to-back with the meeting of the Committee;
- (b) International conference held in a volunteer host country;
- (c) Workshop(s) run by a volunteer host country(ies);
- (d) Joint events with other regional mechanisms such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or Global Education Network Europe;
- (e) Regional- and national-level training events (in-person and online) could be organized “on demand”. The team behind the toolkit’s development would be available to act in an expert/trainer/coach capacity to support these processes;
- (f) Regional meeting in the ECE region aiming to provide first-hand experiences to various stakeholders of the member States on how to use the toolkit;
- (g) Webinars aiming to inform member States, organizations and other stakeholders of and familiarize them with the toolkit.

### **Dissemination activities**

15. Throughout 2024, 2025 and 2026, the progress of the development of the Strategic framework on whole institution approach and education for sustainable development and its products will be shared via social media and key websites, regional events and conferences.

### **Countries supporting the initiative**

16. Cyprus and Netherlands are the lead countries regarding this deliverable. Both of those member States currently support the development of the toolkit through in-kind and financial contributions.

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