



Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Environmental Policy****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Steering Committee on Education
for Sustainable Development****Seventeenth meeting**

Geneva, 30 and 31 May 2022

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Update on the outcomes of the work**of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning:****framework for the implementation of the****United Nations Economic Commission for****Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030****Framework for the implementation of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for
Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030*****Note by the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning***Summary*

At its thirteenth meeting (Geneva, 3 and 4 May 2018), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development discussed the future of education for sustainable development with a view to providing innovative suggestions, tools and recommendations for bridging gaps and giving new impetus to education for sustainable development and the role of the Steering Committee at both the regional and the national levels beyond 2019 and after the completion of the fourth national mandatory reporting cycle (2017–2019). To address those issues, the Steering Committee agreed to set up an ad hoc advisory group (Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning) made up of its interested members, with the purpose of formulating concrete strategic proposals for the further promotion of education for sustainable development in the region until 2030^a.

The Ad Hoc Group was given the task of drafting the concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework of the Strategy, which was elaborated during the two in-person meetings of the Group (respectively, The Hague (Netherlands) 27–28 November 2018, and Nicosia, 27–28 September 2019). The third meeting for finalizing the draft concept note, scheduled to take place in Nicosia in March 2020, was postponed due to the coronavirus

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

disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Ad Hoc Group continued to work on the document remotely, holding a number of online meetings in the course of 2020 and 2021 to discuss emerging issues and to take into consideration the new challenges faced by the global education for sustainable development community in the current circumstances.

The present document contains a draft concept note for the framework for the implementation of the Strategy from 2021 to 2030, prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning during the above-mentioned period, which includes the preamble and the four strands or priority areas. The pre-final draft of the concept note was discussed and approved at the online meeting of the Bureau in January 2022 and agreed to be submitted for approval at the seventeenth meeting of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is expected to consider this document at its seventeenth meeting and decide on the next steps.

^a ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/2, paras. 50–53.

Background

1. At the Second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, held in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), the member States assessed the progress made under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and strongly supported the continuation of its implementation at the regional level beyond the first decade (2005–2015). The High-level Meeting then adopted the framework for the future implementation of the Strategy,¹ which followed on from the Vilnius implementation framework adopted at the First High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005) and reconfirmed at the Sixth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007). It was then agreed that the next implementation period of the framework for the future implementation of the Strategy, adopted in Batumi, Georgia, would align with the first five-year phase of the Global Action Programme on ESD, which was due by the end of 2019 and the second phase to be aligned with the next phases of the Global Action Programme.²

2. At its thirteenth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 May 2018), the Steering Committee on ESD agreed to set up an ad hoc advisory group (Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning) with the purpose of identifying future issues of interest, or priority action areas, for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD after the completion of the fourth national mandatory reporting cycle (2017–2019), and to formulate concrete strategic proposals for the further promotion of ESD in the region.³ It was highlighted that the future issues should be selected from the six priority action areas outlined in the framework for the future implementation of the Strategy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/11) adopted at the Second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, which was held in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), and set out in the Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.2). It was emphasized that those priority action areas should align with the priority areas of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Action Programme on ESD, bearing in mind that the first phase of the Plan would run through the end of 2019 and that UNESCO was preparing a framework for subsequent action with a focus on certain thematic priorities.⁴

3. The present document contains the draft concept note for the framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030, prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning during the period 2018–2020, when the Ad Hoc Group held two in-person meetings (respectively, The Hague (Netherlands), 27–28 November 2018, and Nicosia, 27–28 September 2019), followed by the two online meetings in 2020 (due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic), working on the elaboration of the draft of the concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, which included the preamble and the four strands or priority areas.

4. At its sixteenth meeting (Geneva, 10–11 May 2021), the Steering Committee considered the pre-final draft of the concept note, which had not been finalized on time due to the general delay in conducting important international meetings, and especially the corresponding decision-making on ESD, reflecting the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, by ECE partner organizations such as UNESCO, whose relevant policy decisions had to be reflected in the draft concept note. The presented draft document was updated and finalized by the Ad Hoc Group after the sixteenth meeting, taking on-board the final comments received from members during and after the meeting. It was agreed that the final draft of the concept note would serve as a basis for the framework for the

¹ ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2, para. 24.

² ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.2, para. 1.

³ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/2, para. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 50.

implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030 and would be further presented for adoption as the main policy document to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022).⁵ The pre-final draft of the concept note was discussed and approved at the online meeting of the Bureau in January 2022 and agreed to be submitted for approval at the upcoming seventeenth meeting of the Steering Committee.

5. The Steering Committee is expected to consider the below draft concept note for the framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030 at its seventeenth session and decide on the next steps.

I. Learning a way out of crisis

6. Nelson Mandela said that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”⁶ He could, perhaps, never have imagined the enormous crisis affecting the world as the result of the pandemic, which, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), as at 27 March 2022, had resulted in over 470.8 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including more than 6 million deaths.⁷

7. Since 2020, the entire world has been facing a grave health crisis the result of a relatively new disease. After more than a year and a half, people in 235 countries, areas or territories remain in lockdown, social contacts are restricted to a minimum, schools are either closed or partially open, economies have been ruined, millions of jobs lost, and significant travel restrictions still prevail.

8. In drafting outlines for further development of ESD for the next decade (2021–2030), these circumstances call for a rethink and reconsideration of, not only the challenges, but also emerging opportunities and the changes required. In order to consolidate the lessons learned from the current social disruption and to “build back better”, actors must engage with future thinking and collaborative decision-making; both are necessary to speed up the needed transformations.

9. The strategic planning time frame coincides with the global commitment made to deliver the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, which provide both the focus and the momentum needed to align national and regional efforts towards a verifiably better future for all.

10. Efforts must be made to seize the extraordinary opportunity for global and regional collaboration offered by the Sustainable Development Goals and the needs accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis to strengthen and enhance ESD at all levels. ESD can be a powerful catalyst for the transition towards more resilient systems and futures for the benefit of current and future generations.

II. Coronavirus disease as another, but urgent, wake-up call?

11. Given its impacts, it is naive to think that this pandemic will just “pass by” and that things will go back to “normal” as if nothing has happened. Unfortunately, many people, including some leaders, may follow this path, approaching the pandemic as yet another “nightmare to be forgotten” in the same way that the “Spanish flu” pandemic – which affected 500 million people out of the then-global population of approximately 1.7 billion, and claimed an estimated 20 million to 50 million lives – has been virtually eliminated from the collective memory, teachings and strategic planning. Some have pointed out that it is

⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/2, para. 63.

⁶ Nelson Mandela, speech, Madison Park High School, Boston, United States of America, 23 June 1990.

⁷ World Health Organization (WHO) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 27 March 2021, available at <https://covid19.who.int/>.

important to “never waste a good crisis” and that this momentum can, indeed become the start of a fundamental transition.

12. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the vulnerability of human societies and how technological and scientific advances, economic models and military and defence systems failed to provide the protection and security they promised. Instead, the international collaboration schemes that could have put in place strong precautionary mechanisms of solidarity and preparedness were never supported adequately to provide the needed “safety net”. The COVID-19 pandemic offered a fast forward experience of what life could be under other, perhaps less “visible” but not necessarily less urgent, and eventually much graver crises, such as climate change and loss of biodiversity.

13. The world is currently simultaneously experiencing a number of major, ongoing health, social and economic crises. This situation calls for innovative and adaptable education and training systems, which are appropriate and able to effectively contribute to a realistic but rapid transformation of the world towards a more healthy, stable, peaceful and fair place offering well-being with conditions encouraging creativity and ensuring sustainable futures.

14. Thus, steps must be taken to ensure that the current extraordinary situation remains in the collective memory as a clear wake-up call, requiring a thorough, deep re-examination of the root causes of the current crisis, providing lessons for appropriate changes in human behaviour and, consequently, indicating transformations in education and learning, a key process contributing to social change.

15. While not denying the considerable progress achieved over the last 100 years in medical and pharmaceutical research and the improvement in health conditions in large parts of the world, it should be admitted that infectious diseases, and their underlying causes, have been largely underestimated. For many years, scientists have warned of the potential danger from enhanced human exposure to unknown and emerging viruses and zoonoses, mostly as the result of neglecting the biosphere. However, Governments and politicians, who have concentrated for years on visible, pressing, current challenges and issues, downplayed or postponed proactive and precautionary approaches necessary for safeguarding the crucial and fundamental causal relationship between the biosphere and the overall natural and cultural environment.

16. The above-mentioned reactions are symptoms of a more general lack of clarity regarding priorities. The prevailing modes of globalization are characterized by a blind focus on economic growth and linear economy models, resulting in the destruction of ecosystems. Furthermore, attractive, frequently useless supply driven products of cutting edge technology, promoted through aggressive advertising and excessive media development without social control, have greatly contributed to the loss of a sense of what is important versus unimportant, fact versus fiction and essential versus irrelevant. Under these conditions, the natural links of human lives to their biological roots, history and culture have been damaged, while accelerated confusion prevails regarding what is real progress vis-à-vis modernity and what basic values and needs actually are. Thus, there is an urgent need to strengthen the fourth pillar of sustainable development – the culture of doing what is right, and the relevance of value-based ESD.

17. Consequently, it is crucial to view the current situation not only as a health issue, but also as an opportunity to comprehend the unveiled failure of the overall system in which humans live, and to raise fundamental and systemic questions related to sustainable development. By addressing these questions, hopefully it will be possible to enrich and strengthen the very content and pedagogy of value-based ESD in addressing the critical issues for the future decade to 2030.

III. Major questions arising from the current state of affairs

18. Major questions, which might start with health and go deep into ecology, governance, economy and education and provide an entry into ECE work on promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals, may include the following:

(a) How can COVID-19 be addressed and how can lessons learned be capitalized on in order to revisit and reassess the relationship between society and nature, as it becomes clear that biodiversity and natural habitats are under serious risks and increasing animal-human contact is the root cause of serious infections through zoonosis and other poorly understood transmission pathways?

(b) How can a coordinated transition be carried out towards healthy diets and sustainable food systems as, on the one hand, people with obesity and diabetes are the most vulnerable to COVID-19 and, on the other hand, the prevailing food production and distribution/marketing systems destroy biodiversity, while leaving millions hungry?

(c) How feasible is it to address the above two questions without improving the situation whereby 40 percent of the global population has no access to safe, clean water and sanitation, knowing that effective prevention requires at least frequent hand washing?

(d) How can the nexus of water, energy, food, ecosystem security be addressed without sound policies and lifestyle adjustments to mitigate and adapt to climate change?

(e) How can these kind of questions be connected in the broader context of sustainable development, as this is not only a health or ecological approach, but is closely linked to a fairer global distribution of resources so that people can get out of poverty and get access to basic needs such as water, food, health services and education?

(f) How should the critical issues of inclusion and equity be approached, given that many “trade-offs” regarding health, nutrition, livelihoods and education affect mainly the most vulnerable and marginalized people, especially women, children and youth, since sustainability goes deeply beyond environmental issues?

(g) How can the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development Goals be used to build a culture of collaboration around ESD and focus minds on the systems changes needed to deliver educational outcomes relevant to sustainable development?

19. Regarding these questions, the pandemic has also highlighted the need for learners to develop a different set of skills that helps them to overcome crises. In this regard, some questions of a different nature are also raised:

(a) How can educational institutions and organizations be prepared to inform their teaching contents by high quality scientific knowledge, complemented by ethical values and indigenous/endogenous knowledge and how can the above be reflected in transformative pedagogies that prepare learners for change?

(b) To what extent can emerging partners (e.g., business sector, civil society organizations) be more closely involved in ESD addressing, at the same time, the needs of youth for work and their aspirations for a better future world?

(c) How can quality standards and support systems for educators and education administrators be developed so that ESD is embedded as a core education concern?

(d) To what extent can the traditional predominant culture of accountability, performance, maintaining and evaluating in education be adjusted, including more values in teaching and learning, and highlighting ESD competencies (e.g., system thinking, anticipatory, normative, strategic and collaboration competencies, and critical thinking) that are not always measurable in quantitative terms?

(e) How can attention be paid to the role of digital learning, distance learning and information and communications technology-based education as integral tools of ESD, as the quarantine unveiled both strengths and weaknesses and demonstrated needs related to digital education systems in many countries?

(f) How can the actors concerned ensure that digitalization and life-long learning are available for all, since currently very large groups of the most vulnerable people are virtually excluded from this type of education?

(g) How can the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on young people forced to quarantine and go through confusion, anxiety, helplessness, etc. be dealt with and what is the long-term impact for this particular generation of young people?

20. All the above – and many more – questions, extending from the prerequisites for healthy lifestyles to socioeconomic issues, conditions affecting vulnerable groups, for example in rural areas, in economically disadvantaged areas, slum areas, in areas affected by armed conflict and refugees, issues related to international cooperation and institutions, etc., call on those who deal with education to learn from the crisis and use the momentum created by the Sustainable Development Goals, strengthening the connection between the Goals, ESD and value-based education in general.

IV. Consequences for education per se and the way forward

21. The pandemic has also “shocked” education per se. The education system, as such, was under great pressure, with temporary school closures affecting over 90 per cent of students worldwide and close to 1.6 billion children and youth being out of school, leaving children without access to education for months in some parts of the world, and with a sudden transition to “distance learning” and information and communications technology-based education in other parts of the world. However, it was not only the organization of education that changed. The questions raised because of the situation point to a need to revisit and adjust the very content of education itself.

22. Indeed, UNESCO has launched a very timely global initiative entitled “Futures of Education”⁸ that asks the question “education for what?” Can education be used to achieve a more sustainable, just and healthy world? Which transitions are needed to reach that and who will lead the way? What has to be replaced and what new possibilities might emerge? Can and will educational institutions and regulations be prepared, open and able to eventually re-inventing themselves and appropriately adapting their curricula, pedagogy, methodologies, governance structures, operations and infrastructures to meet the challenge of sustainability as a compass? Do the above-mentioned questions require a more urgent answer under current conditions? Can education be strengthened and reoriented through a lens of change in the post-pandemic period and beyond?

23. Thus, the questions about “quality education” (Sustainable Development Goal 4 and in particular its target 4.7, both from the ESD perspective, as well as with greater relevance for global citizenship education, and combined with targets 12.8 and 13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals on information and awareness of the impact of lifestyles and climate change) are now more relevant than ever, as the hope is that, in a post-pandemic society, things will not go “back to business as usual”. The momentum of this crisis raises many fundamental questions frequently asked but not adequately or efficiently addressed until now (e.g., properly applying the “learning to learn, be, work with others and act” approach) and greater, new ones about sustainable living, healthy lifestyles, society, values, purpose of work and consumption, symbols of success, global situation, new economy and institutions, modernity versus tradition, jobs, etc. This requires also rethinking curricula, underlying values and the appreciation of “human capital”. Addressing the above-mentioned issues lies at the heart of what education is for.

24. It is noteworthy that, while massive open online courses, distance learning and other information and communications technologies were talked about for years, in many countries, within the space of a few weeks, complete learning and educational systems have been innovated and are now web-based; many educational tools are digitalized, teachers are in contact through teleconferences with students and other audiences. However, the issue of accessibility to technology by disadvantaged groups is intimately related to issues concerning e-learning.

25. What also became clear in this period are the inherent inequalities this rapid shift has brought, for example, regarding access to digital infrastructures (computers, Internet) as well as the rural/urban divide.

26. Thus, there are still many questions to answer about what kind of education is not suitable for information and communications technologies and how transparent and reliable

⁸ Further information available at <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>.

information and communications technology-based learning can or cannot be. Is this a case of being “penny wise, pound foolish” or just of being hit by a transition by disaster? For information and communications technology-based education to succeed, substantial and rapid progress in both Sustainable Development Goals 7 (access to reliable energy) and 9 (resilient infrastructure) is needed, including in breaking the “energy poverty” cycle (this means investing in renewables, tackling climate change and healing the planet).

V. Role of youth

27. It is said that the present generation of youth is the first that can see the full scale of the accumulated impact of the climate change and loss of biodiversity crises, but also, perhaps, the last that can turn the tide and set a course for the needed transitions. This requires that youth be appropriately educated, equipped and prepared for transitions towards a more sustainable world; it also means that their active participation aspirations and creativity are needed now, during the formulation of critical policies, as major decisions of today will influence and, to some extent, define their future, their role, their impact, and lastly the shape of the world in which they will live and are expected to manage. Young people cannot be the victims of the current “growing first and cleaning up later” policy, which is no longer an option.

28. For this reason, youth should actively participate and be engaged in the different levels of decision-making that directly and indirectly affects them. Policies and their implementation should be made “with” and not only “for” youth. Therefore, intergenerational dialogue is necessary to address the enormous problem of “ageing” in some parts of the world and the rapid increase in the number of young people in other. Society should benefit from synergies between the wisdom and experience of the elderly (i.e. tangible and intangible cultural heritage) and the energy and innovation of youth. ESD should systematically cultivate these synergies.

29. Traditional forms of education and what they have to offer cannot be relied on to achieve many of the above-mentioned aims by themselves: this requires new horizons in providing young people with an enabling learning environment in which, while their individual identity is preserved, they are encouraged to act jointly for the community and make personal and collective choices for the needed changes and social transformation. In the process of change – and especially the change of education systems towards ESD-based learning – the role, participation and enthusiasm of youth are essential in formulating the most sustainable pathways forward. This vision also refers to Global Citizenship Education.

VI. Process of Strategic Planning 2021–2030 for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

30. Under the circumstances described above and in carving out a renewed and impactful ESD pathway that could also assist the Steering Committee in ESD international dialogues, the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning has produced the present core document. The drafting started following the mandate given by the Second High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries to the ECE Steering Committee on ESD to continue its work on promoting ESD through demonstrated successful cooperation across the region until 2030,⁹ aligned with other global commitments including the UNESCO ESD for 2030 road map, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and other agendas such as the Paris Agreement, the Council of the European Union Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning,¹⁰ the most recent work on the Communication on the European Skills Agenda for sustainable

⁹ ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.2, tenth preambular para. and operative para. 10.

¹⁰ Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 189 (2018), 1–13.

competitiveness, social fairness and resilience,¹¹ the European Union Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027), and the Environment and School Initiatives, designed to integrate environmental and health considerations into healthy school settings.

31. The Ad Hoc Group considered the UNECE Strategy for ESD per se (2005), with its six objectives that reflect not on sustainable development contents as such, but rather on the prerequisites for delivering ESD that meets the need for change.¹² Furthermore, the Ad Hoc Group considered the six priority actions from the previous framework for implementation (2015–2019) that were organized in three vertical strands (whole institution approach school plans; ESD in teacher education; strengthening technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development) and three horizontal ones (integration of ESD into policies; linking ESD in formal, informal and non-formal education; the role of networks).¹³

32. As part of the process of elaborating a new strategic plan, the national focal points and experts of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD held a series of in-person and online meetings during the period 2018–2021 and produced the present draft document further to consultation and approval.

33. The Ad Hoc Group also took into consideration the outcomes of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Berlin, 17–19 May 2021), as well as a series of preparatory and follow-up regional meetings that provided a new global programme for ESD, to which ECE can and will contribute by sharing the collective experience of the ECE region, which has a very significant tradition of work on ESD, as compiled and crystalized through the work of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD and its working groups. Obviously, the aim of “sharing” the ECE experience is to benefit not only the region and its neighbours (as is the case with the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development) but also other regions. This also offers an opportunity to use the knowledge gained through the ESD process to influence and strengthen the work of the different issue-based coalitions under the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, of which ECE, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNESCO are active members.

34. Particular emphasis is given by ECE to the close link between ESD and the Sustainable Development Goals, beyond Sustainable Development Goals 4, on education (and specifically target 4.7 on ESD), and 17 (on promoting international efforts and cooperation, partnerships, capacity-building (target 17.9) and knowledge-sharing (targets 17.6 and 17.16)). This association presents unique opportunities for synergies among educators and various stakeholders at all levels, from global to national and local. This is becoming increasingly evident due to the fact that both problems and solutions on environment and development have complex sociocultural and economic consequences and are, to a great extent, regional in nature and dimensions rather than global or national.

35. The importance of regional approaches was also recognized at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 31 October to 13 November 2021), the outcomes of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Kunming, China, 11–15 October 2021) and the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (New Delhi, 2–13 September 2019), while efforts on sustainable futures are also taking place at the regional or subregional level. Further examples of significant regional approaches are: the ambitious new European Union European Green Deal; regional cooperation initiatives such as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and the

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2020) 274 final, Brussels, 1 July 2020.

¹² CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, para. 7.

¹³ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2016/4, para. 4 (b) and (c).

relevant Union for the Mediterranean agendas; and cooperation in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme region.

36. Given this context, the UNECE ESD Strategic Planning 2030 should be ambitious, in alignment with major global, European, Mediterranean and other regional initiatives on ESD, and fully aware of the current “momentum of change and crisis”. It needs to respond to many known and new challenges in a very rapidly changing world, with considerable political and socioeconomic developments both at the national and the global level.

37. In the ECE region, many efforts are inspired by knowledge, innovations and good practices of the ESD and sustainable development communities, also recognized worldwide, despite the relative resource limitations of the regional framework within which the Strategic Planning is developed and operates.

VII. Towards four strands

38. During the current pandemic and beyond, the Committee has decided to focus on a limited number of priority areas of regional and national, but also global, importance, where ECE expertise could trigger and facilitate adequate transformative mobilization and change.

39. Apart from the substantial sustainable development issues connected with the major questions raised in section III above that need to be reflected in the way forward until 2030 within the regional context and in the pedagogy supporting ESD in each member State, the present document aims to encourage and promote:

(a) Regional priorities and agreed ways forward for ESD in the next ten years (until 2030) in synergy with and in support of the outcomes of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and the Berlin Declaration on Education on Sustainable Development;¹⁴

(b) Ways to strengthen the position of ESD in educational systems and in learning within and beyond schools, colleges, technical and vocational education and training and universities;

(c) Systematic monitoring and assessment of progress at the national and regional level;

(d) Tangible ways to improve ESD teaching and learning processes and sharing of experience among ECE member States and other stakeholders;

(e) Drivers and opportunities for advancing stakeholders’ efforts on ESD as it concerns methodology, approaches and means of achieving Sustainable Development Goals through intersectoral cooperation;

(f) Realistic and measurable targets that could help to fulfil and advance collective commitments for ESD in the coming decade;

(g) Needed educational interventions for accelerating the necessary changes of lifestyles and economic models towards sustained futures and a safer and more sustainable post-COVID-19 era;

(h) 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 to take forward joint ambitions in education and learning for sustainable development.

40. In 2019, four key regional priorities/strands were selected on the basis of discussions within the ECE Steering Committee and an equal number of subgroups were formed, based

¹⁴ Available at <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/esdfor2030-berlin-declaration-en.pdf>.

on expressions of interest by experts from countries, international organizations and stakeholders.

41. These strands reflect in a combined and complementary way many of the issues and needs for ESD identified above and earlier on and may contribute to improving educational systems and other mechanisms to enable people to learn, live and work on a planet and in a region that are more prosperous, just, creative, healthy and sustainable.

42. The above-mentioned strands are the following:

- (a) Quality education and ESD;
- (b) Whole institution approach/Institutions as communities of transformational learning;
- (c) Digital education, information and communications technology and ESD;
- (d) Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD.

A recognized urgent priority: Climate change

43. Climate change is undoubtedly among the top global challenges to be urgently addressed. In 2021, in the ECE region, devastating fires in the south and unprecedented catastrophic floods in the north, occurring almost simultaneously, demonstrated the urgent need for action accompanied by appropriate education. Although “Climate change education” has been proposed or included in various agendas worldwide, the ad hoc group of experts for preparing the UNECE ESD strategy implementation framework 2021–2030 is convinced that it should not be singled out as a “separate” branch of ESD. Climate change is interlinked with nearly all the Sustainable Development Goals and should be further integrated into them; therefore, it requires synergy among all policies and strategies of the United Nations, the European Union (see, e.g., the “European Green Deal”) and other organizations and bodies. It is therefore emphasized that, in the present document, the climate change issue permeates all four strands.

Strand A: Quality education and education for sustainable development

44. This strand emphasizes the need for actors responsible for the formulation, enhancement, assessment and quality controls of educational systems to be on-board in taking responsibility for addressing the urgencies and connecting ESD content and processes with formal, informal and non-formal learning at all levels. While great strides have been made in transitioning education practices towards sustainable development, changes to education systems are taking place at a much slower pace. Educational quality processes and supporting measures could provide effective pathways for changing learning systems, aligning them with sustainable development.

45. While efforts continue to focus on teacher education and curriculum development, until now less attention has been paid to quality assurance and enhancement systems. The present document recognizes the need to tackle this important aspect of education and the importance of doing so. Similarly to Sustainable Development Goal 4 and UNEP, the UNESCO strategy “ESD for 2030” has “quality education” as a major objective; further alignment and (international) cooperation on this strand is needed, including inviting the European Commission on-board. Also of interest are international agencies with responsibility for educational quality; for example, at the higher education level, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies are pertinent. These organizations bring together national agencies engaged in political decision-making processes associated with quality education. Thus, further elaboration on this strand requires both national and international actions.

Vision

46. The intention is to embed ESD in quality standards, frameworks, mechanisms and resources (including available tools, etc.) associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews in all ECE member States and in international standards. Educational

institutions have internal and external quality assessment mechanisms that add value to the educational experience of students and maintain standards. To ensure ESD will be a part of the thinking and work on quality education, there is a need to work closely with the qualified professionals who oversee quality enhancement and assurance and have responsibility for this agenda in education. Such professionals include those who work in pre-schools, schools, colleges and universities, government authorities or national agencies and are trained specifically to recognize good practice, support educational change and ensure equal opportunities across educational systems. Many of these quality professionals have not encountered ESD so far and have had only limited engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals but are committed to improving learning and teaching experiences more broadly in education. This stakeholder group is of great interest regarding this strand.

Policy framework

47. Despite wide diversity across the ECE region in quality control and mandates/responsibilities of the respective professionals, educational institutions have, in general, internal and external quality assessment mechanisms that add value to the educational experience of students and maintain certain standards and conditions. This strand seeks to encourage ECE member States to effectively involve in ESD all those who oversee quality enhancement and assurance and have responsibility for this agenda in education, both at the national and the international level.

48. There are some examples of national initiatives that have brought together ESD and quality education concerns. These efforts could be considered in detail to serve as good practices and inspiration to others.

Strategic directions and goals

49. The following is a list of strategic directions and goals:

(a) Engage education quality professionals, systems and authorities in ESD dialogues and capitalize on the results to ensure quality education at all levels;

(b) Advocate the presence of ministries of education at the meetings of the ECE ESD Steering Committee and the strengthening of cooperation in ESD between ministries of education, environment and other ministries involved in educational activities related to Sustainable Development Goals for the development of a joint approach to quality management in education, taking into account specific ESD needs;

(c) Embed ESD in education quality systems, for example in “benchmarking tools” to assess practice, and invest in quality criteria frameworks for each educational level – early childhood, schools, colleges, technical and vocational education and training and universities;

(d) Establish or strengthen ESD/Sustainable Development Goal professional programmes for education quality professionals, authorities and agencies, as well as education managers and leaders;

(e) Form an ad hoc expert group or international alliance with stakeholder organizations that have a demonstrable interest in the quality assurance and enhancement of education, carving a unique and impactful ESD pathway that will assist the Steering Committee in connecting to quality education in ESD in international dialogues.

Strand B: Whole institution approach/Institutions as communities of transformational learning

50. This strand is to assure that ESD is more than a “cerebral educational exercise” but requires equal attention to behaviour and connection with policies, maintenance, audiences, networks and partnerships throughout the various organizations, especially schools. ESD should also “walk the talk” in all aspects of management and operations of schools and other organizations.

51. The “whole institution approach” concept embraces settings of all levels of formal education and institutions providing formal, non-formal and informal education in the public and private sectors. This learning process is fundamental for quality education in all aspects: learning programme, governance, infrastructure, connection to community and society. It is noteworthy that, while the majority of ECE countries reported progress in introducing the whole institution approach, this concerned mainly primary and secondary schools rather than other formal, non-formal and informal education institutions. The pandemic revealed the need for healthy learning settings in which countries and individuals can be prepared for emergency situations.

52. The intention is that, through the whole institution approach, learners be prepared for a “whole system” view, opening their minds to systemic thinking, and fostering the willingness and ability to conduct policies for addressing problems and act accordingly.

Vision

53. The intention will be to implement ESD as an integrated component across all educational and training programmes, together with the sustainable management of the institution and its interface with the local community and system-wide interventions where youth (as agents of change) will acquire the knowledge, competences and support to undertake a more central role in leading institutions and communities to a more sustainable, just, resilient and healthy future.

Policy framework

54. The “whole institution approach” concept is based on the UNECE Strategy for ESD. Its importance was acknowledged and reconfirmed by the ECE ESD Steering Committee in 2016. It responds positively to the Rio+20 recommendations and Education 2030 - Incheon Declaration: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all and aligns with the new UNESCO ESD framework (2021–2030), which identified the whole institution approach as one of its priority action areas. ECE ESD efforts to promote a whole institution approach are also in line with and meet the challenges of other United Nations policies (e.g., the 2019 WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change; UNESCO Associated Schools Network) that envisage the development of each institution into a community of learning for Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategic directions and goals

55. The whole institution approach involves orienting a given institution’s strategy and ultimately its overall culture towards sustainable development. This implies the institution reviewing its own actions in the light of sustainable development principles regarding the four overlapping spheres characterizing this approach: learning programme; governance compatible with sustainability principles; infrastructure; and relationships with community and overall society.

56. To facilitate the dissemination and implementation of the whole institution approach, all ECE member States, as well as the competent regional and other international organizations, donors and programmes active in the region, are encouraged to develop and support appropriate policies, measures and resources that facilitate efforts by institutions and organizations in formal, non-formal and informal sectors and at all levels to reorganize and transform themselves as “whole institutions” through the:

(a) Provision of competent and coherent frameworks that foster participatory approaches enhancing commitment, ownership and responsibility for promoting a whole institution approach in diverse contexts;

(b) Use of the lessons learned and expertise gained on the whole institution approach throughout the ECE region for the creation of a self-assessment mechanism that can support institutions and their members in their efforts to advance sustainability in the framework of the whole institution approach;

(c) Provision of the opportunities, the needed tools and resources that facilitate the participation of stakeholders (particularly youth) and institutions in a whole institution transformation;

(d) Mobilization and creation of opportunities for youth to participate actively in the design of whole institution approach plans to promote ESD in their respective institutions and adopt a leading role in reinforcing the focus on the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 4.7 thereof;

(e) Strengthening of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD synergies with organizations, mechanisms and networks (e.g., UNESCO, the European Union and WHO) that also develop policies for a whole institution approach.

Strand C: Digital education, information and communications technology and education for sustainable development

57. The aim of this strand is to ensure that the opportunities offered by information and communication technology are developed to support the learning processes needed to enhance learning, in general, and on ESD in particular and, at the same time, raise awareness about both the positive and more critical, or potentially negative, impacts technology and information and communications technology can have on learning for sustainable futures.

58. Technologies and information and communications technologies develop rapidly in times of accelerating change. This can give rise to both positive and negative impacts, particularly when little attention is paid to how “modernity” can be compatible with sustainability. The challenge is to use such technologies in a proper way to accelerate the necessary transformations towards more sustainable futures, in formal technical and vocational education and training and non-formal settings, and in learning schemes to respond adequately to (green) job requirements and employability of youth.¹⁵ Although the recent increase in the use of information and communications technologies and other delivery mechanisms due to the COVID-19 crisis was, to a large extent, successful, many key questions still remain regarding: the limitations of digitalization; the appropriate learning and expression tool mix (e.g., avoidance of the dominance of images as opposed to abstract thinking, etc.); various issues related to the access of disadvantaged groups to information and communications technology use and, consequently, e-learning programmes; and the ways in which information and communications technologies will facilitate education and sustainable changes.

Vision

59. The intention would be for all ECE member States to obtain a systematic, balanced and updated use of information and communications technology and all digital tools and resources as a means of promoting ESD and new educational practices, facilitating lifelong access to sustainable development learning by offering everyone the possibility of capitalizing on accumulated knowledge and know-how derived from good practices. ESD applied to digital technology must thus make it possible to bring together the digital transition and the need to provide, in an adapted and evolving form, responses to the emergencies facing human societies.

Policy framework

60. Digital technology represents a powerful means of transformation to support ECE policy in all dimensions of ESD in order to meet current and future needs, be it in terms of general education, vocational training or information. In parallel, in order to cope with the rapid changes and challenges brought by the introduction of information and communications technologies in all areas and at all levels of education, training and information structures, as well as appropriate institutional and operational frameworks

¹⁵ See also General Assembly resolution 74/4 on the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (A/RES/74/4).

should be in place to allow the educational process and the stakeholders involved to be mobilized, guided, supported and engaged in the profound educational and organizational transformations required.

Strategic directions and goals

61. For the effective introduction and employment of information and communications technology in the ECE member States, due attention should be given to addressing a series of challenges faced by many education systems, such as the: lack of teachers; lack of skills in the implementation of digital tools; lack of infrastructure or access to digital tools; and insufficient training of personnel of all types. This strengthening of the share of digital technology in education should not obscure the need to limit the worrying increase in its carbon footprint, in particular by: limiting impacts and consumption by promoting the eco-design of equipment and processes educational; making ESD through digital technology inclusive and sustainable by ensuring the resilience of processes; and being part of an evolutionary process favouring the emergence of new systems and values.

62. In parallel, the advantages of digital technology should be fully understood, particularly when it comes to teaching sustainable development and rethinking the processes implemented to develop ESD capable of responding to the current and future challenges of human societies. Such advantages benefit:

- (a) Learners, who can thus have a personalized learning environment;
- (b) Teachers, who can have the opportunity to develop new pedagogies;
- (c) Researchers, who can contribute to new educational tools and policies;
- (d) Managers of education systems and other actors, through the statistical use of data to assess practices and impacts of model changes.

63. The following points are of strategic importance for all ECE member States:

(a) The development of procedures to combat “illectronism” (electronic illiteracy) and thus enable everyone to use digital tools and access digital resources;

(b) The development of media education, to give everyone the ability to understand and appreciate, with a critical sense, the various digital messages and content dealing directly or indirectly with sustainable development, and to comment and formulate personal views thereon. The latter point is particularly important since the issue of misinformation, “alternative fact”, “framing” and misuse of digital information by criminals is a major, fast-growing sociopolitical and cultural challenge.

64. Therefore, legal provisions and measures for a safe, just and objective use of information and communications technologies should be part of further digitalization development, coupled with systematic awareness-raising and development of skills for self-protection by users in the framework of ESD.

Strand D: Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development

65. The aim of this strand is to connect ESD with economic and social developments and address the business, financial and policy arenas that influence sources of welfare and well-being. The issue at hand is how to assure that innovations and entrepreneurship will contribute to a sustainable, fair future, especially for future generations.

66. ESD is expected to contribute to enhancing entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for people – especially youth – through the development of their creativity and willingness to transform ideas into concrete actions. ESD should provide them with competences and learning conditions to develop their personalities and contribute to personal and community change and transformation towards sustainable development. Starting with rethinking the current socioeconomic conditions and their relationship to ecosystems, there is a need for young people to be ultimately enabled and given proper space to develop their potential.

Vision

67. The intention would be to encourage all ECE member States to use ESD in stimulating entrepreneurial and innovation mindsets in learners in order to accelerate transformations towards sustainable development and increase the employability of youth in existing or emerging new jobs.

68. Whereas significant technological advances across many fields have improved welfare globally, many communities within the ECE region and across the world have difficulties to cope with this change, whether that involves the economy (e.g., new economic models), society (alternative jobs) or the environment (climate change). Educating and re-educating people to address these challenges is becoming of the utmost importance and urgency.

69. Since sustainable development is not achievable through isolated innovation actions, a systems approach within the context of ESD is apparently necessary, according to which:

(a) Individuals should acquire “green” skills and be able to continuously learn, including on “green” and information and communications technologies, understand that there are social/economic/environmental challenges and drivers crucial in applying innovative solutions, disrupting the current state of practice and bringing about lasting solutions;

(b) There is a need to think like an entrepreneur – a competence that allows individuals to “learn, unlearn and relearn”, enabling them to solve problems and adapt in a radically changing environment be they self-employed business people or employees. However, entrepreneurial skills extend beyond learning how to run a business and, in the context of ESD entrepreneurship, should also promote ethical and responsible business.

Policy framework

70. Employment, entrepreneurship and innovation, if placed in the policy framework of “green and circular economy”, can lead the way towards a radical shift of consumption and production choices towards much-needed sustainable models. In such a framework, well-articulated entrepreneurship and innovation could become significant job creating motors but also the output of an enlarged ESD approach, assisting learners to answer the question of what kind of society and economy people want to live and work in.¹⁶ *The Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: the Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*¹⁷ states that: “Building the capacities and skills of the next generation of researchers and change makers is one of the biggest leverage points towards sustainability at humanity’s disposal.” According to *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis – Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*,¹⁸ the Paris Agreement and other relevant United Nations initiatives, the need for fast transformation on a global scale requires radical changes that can be brought about through innovation, entrepreneurial activity and new employment routes. Employment or the lack thereof, has an important socioeconomic, political and environmental impact. A sustainable transformation will see some jobs disappear and new ones come into play,¹⁹ as the economy transitions into more digital and less carbon intensive ventures and services, creating gaps and opportunities in terms of skills and competencies.

71. As highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, policies for systematic innovation need to be in place at the local authority and community levels, including on local education, which should stimulate the development of an entrepreneurial and innovative mindset. Systems innovation is necessary to boost efforts in the transition while ensuring that people are adequately trained to be employable in a future, agile,

¹⁶ See also General Assembly resolution 66/288 on the future we want (A/RES/66/288).

¹⁷ United Nations (New York, 2019), p. 134.

¹⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (n.p., 2021).

¹⁹ Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, “The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerization?”, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, vol. 114 (January 2017), pp. 254–280.

competitive job market (including green skills and the promotion of green economy), since unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern.

Strategic directions and goals

72. In order to improve young people's employability, their entrepreneurship, skills and knowledge on innovation need to be enhanced. 73. It is therefore important to strategically address certain challenges that frequently arise in the region, such as:

(a) Inadequate entrepreneurial ecosystems: this issue can be tackled by, among other things, supporting legislation, platforms for interaction and funding mechanisms that enable entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial activity;

(b) Students' insufficient preparation for the (future) labour market: to overcome this challenge, the content and methodologies of curricula and learning conditions and standards must be revised, in line with strands A, B and C as described above. This encompasses the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own decisions, develop a sense of initiative, soft skills and critical thinking, as well as acquire a basic economic and legal education, the ability to solve problems and the ability to actively search for, select and take advantage of opportunities for personal development. This, in turn, also requires major reskilling and up-skilling, in the form of "training the trainers" especially in the case of the younger generation of educators;

(c) Gender inequality: this is a horizontal challenge that trickles down through all aspects of ESD. Increasing gender equality will boost employability for all, including through entrepreneurship;

(d) Insufficient intergenerational approaches: inclusive education is required as a part of which policies for urgent employment for the young should not overlook the experienced older generations, persons with disabilities and persons who have been marginalized. Adequate provisions should be in place to allow the rapid technological advances to help as many as possible to improve their social situation, while decreasing still growing social and economic differences, which, to a large degree, are connected to unequal accessibility regarding education and employment opportunities.

VIII. 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

73. As explained in the previous parts of the present document, considerable systematic and comprehensive effort should be made in substantially strengthening ESD introduction and enhancement in all its forms and at all levels and its proper implementation as a capital tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This could urgently address very serious threats and challenges of the present and emerging and future ones, if people do not want to find themselves and their children forced to adapt to harsher realities, where the natural and many social "safety nets" that protect them collapse.

74. What is included in the UNECE Strategy of 2005 is still valid; while through the present document it is primarily recommended that the ECE member States revisit their national education and sustainable development policies, strategies, programmes, projects, activities and resources to make sure that they are fully fit for accelerating the transformation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, having ESD as a fundamental driver and enabler. In order to facilitate prioritization by the member States, four strands were collectively chosen that, according to their combined visions, cover a very broader spectrum of the needed transformations. Based on existing or still developing political frameworks, a set of strategic orientations have been identified and suggested.

75. Therefore, the second main recommendation is for ECE member States to consider these strategic orientations and adjust, if needed, and as appropriate, their related strategies accordingly.

76. Furthermore, given that a series of interventions are necessary, either as prerequisites or enabling conditions or as “encouragement” opportunities by “picking the low-hanging fruit”, a third set of recommended interventions, directly linked to the four strands, is included in the present document, intended to prepare the initial part of a living work plan addressing activities that are proposed to be carried out, via participatory processes that create ownership and embed good practices by member States and stakeholders at both the national and the regional ECE level through the Steering Committee and its working groups, provided that resources become available through country contributors and/or grant authorities and donors. Apart from specific activities mentioned in the following paragraphs, all four strands should contribute to the Voluntary National Reviews of ECE member States on the implementation of target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, as well as in the ECE ESD monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

77. On quality education and ESD, it is recommended to:

(a) Identify the key people and organizations – such as national quality agencies – that have national and international responsibilities for quality education, and facilitate their interaction with the ESD communities;

(b) Collect good practice examples from countries and invite heads of national quality agencies to a meeting in Geneva to share their experiences and involve them in efforts on potential collective work on “quality and ESD” from the very beginning;

(c) Develop quality criteria frameworks for embedding ESD into each educational level – early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and technical and vocational education and training, colleges and universities. This could consist of discipline-based learner attributes accompanied by guidelines for integrating ESD into learning experiences; for a two-year period, efforts could focus on one of the above-mentioned educational levels;

(d) Develop “benchmarking tools” to assess practice;

(e) Consider an ad hoc expert group or other international alliance scheme that makes a connection with Sustainable Development Goal 4 communities, UNESCO, UNEP, the European Union, the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and others to work together.

78. On the “whole institution approach”, it is recommended to:

(a) Create and promote a “whole institution framework” based on areas of generic interest and shared experiences including: (i) leadership in the learning place; (ii) quality assurance – any place of learning needs to have a vision of how to use ESD 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) ESD for staff development; (v) opportunities for further training for everyone; (vi) developing sustainable infrastructures such as waste management practices, energy conservation and purchasing policies; (vii) innovation – being open to change and collaboration with other entities through networking opportunities at all levels; and (viii) communication networks within and outside of the institution;

(b) Develop an evaluation scheme or a set of quality criteria for institutions seeking to adopt a whole institution approach to help them identify: what they have achieved; what they still need to work on; what obstacles they face and how to overcome them; how the adoption of the approach is improving performance and the quality of life in the institution;

(c) Create a guide that mobilizes and supports youth in the design, development and implementation, in close collaboration with all interested parties, of a whole institution approach plan to promote ESD, within the institutions where they study or work.

79. On information and communications technologies and digital methods, in general, it is recommended to:

(a) Identify and address educational barriers related to access to digital technology and systematize the use of digital tools to enhance the current potential of information and communications technologies in formal, non-formal and informal learning;

(b) Generalize opportunities for e-learning and blended learning that combine face-to-face training and e-learning;

(c) Strengthen the production of and access to open educational resources and open educational practices, which are key factors in facilitating ESD; integrate an open science framework allowing the use, reuse, creation and sharing of open educational resources and good practices at all levels of education and training;

(d) Apply learning analytics and other artificial intelligence techniques to ESD in order to measure, collect, analyse and process data associated with the progress of interventions, learners and their environment;

(e) Develop and “add value” to social networks as key instruments, bearing in mind the fact that social networks are of little value without an educational goal and framework;

(f) Collect good practices and develop specific pilot programmes for media education and “illectronism” for those without the keys to the use of electronic resources.

80. On entrepreneurship, employment and ESD innovation, it is recommended to:

(a) Identify new qualifications and skills in the field of sustainable development, green and circular economy and green technologies in order to integrate them into professional profiles and facilitate the effective integration of learners, in initial and continuing training. Cooperation could be developed with the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training - Technical and Vocational Education and Training, which provides a platform for exchange on technological, social and environmental changes (e.g., the Bridging Innovation and Learning in Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme);

(b) Promote, through the competent/relevant State institutions, proven and functional educational approaches, projects and organizations that support the required skills for the development of entrepreneurship, employability and innovation. This support could involve various dimensions and resources to increase the means (financial, operational, technical, etc.) and improve conditions for educators and learners to acquire the necessary skills for successfully responding to new employment challenges and opportunities;

(c) Create guidelines and an assessment tool to benchmark the levels of education institutions’ readiness to encompass entrepreneurial skills and support employability related to innovation;

(d) Establish and/or use existing funding mechanisms to support networking of ESD settings with other stakeholders and local communities with the aim of developing and strengthening an ecosystem of champions agile in employability, entrepreneurship and innovation, which could then widely diffuse its know-how in the region and beyond;

(e) Create or enhance ESD synergies with ECE region, national and local initiatives and bodies (including Sustainable Development Goal accelerator hubs) in tackling environmental, social and economic challenges, particularly at the local level, by enhancing the role of education and training institutions working with local governments and businesses to develop and implement appropriate policies and actions.

IX. Time frame and monitoring

81. The implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development is a continuous, long-term process. For the next implementation period, the first phase (2021–

2025) will align with the first five-year phase of the new global framework on ESD entitled “Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs” or “ESD for 2030”, which follows up on the Global Action Programme and ends in 2025, when the mid-term evaluation of “ESD for 2030” will take place. The Steering Committee should consider aligning the second phase of the new process with the next phases of the global framework “ESD for 2030”.

82. The High-level Meeting notes that, based on the information received through four cycles of national reporting, the four implementation phases completed since the Strategy’s adoption in Vilnius in 2005 have brought concrete results:

(a) Phase I (until 2007): countries took stock of what was included within the remit of the Strategy and also identified priorities for action required to implement it;

(b) Phase II (until 2010): the implementation of the Strategy was advanced. Countries reviewed progress made in the implementation of their national strategies in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts, and in putting the Strategy into action;

(c) Phase III (until 2015): countries made considerable progress, with a focus on practical steps and actions to implement ESD;

(d) Phase IV (until 2019): political commitment to ensure successful implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

83. In ESD, developing capacity for monitoring, as well as long-term evaluation of quantitative and qualitative aspects, is critical. Therefore, at the end of the next implementation phase, mandatory national progress reporting should be carried out following established practice. The Steering Committee on ESD will align future monitoring and evaluation work as much as possible with the global framework “ESD for 2030” reporting scheme, while also allowing for the comparability of the reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises.

X. Financial arrangements

84. Effective implementation of the Strategy for ESD 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.
