



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 March 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

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

Tenth meeting

Geneva, 8 and 9 June 2015

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Draft future implementation framework for the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

Draft future implementation framework

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its eighth meeting in March 2013, the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development voiced its strong commitment to continue implementing the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development on the regional level beyond the third phase of implementation, which ran until 2015. It tasked its Bureau with developing a draft framework for implementation of the Strategy beyond 2015, taking into account the results of the 2014 national implementation reporting (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2013/2, paras. 37–44).

Annex I to the present document contains the draft implementation framework, drafted by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat on the basis of the basic elements agreed by the Steering Committee at its ninth meeting in 2014. Another source of inspiration was the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, launched at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Japan in November 2014. The results of the 2014 reporting, however, were not available in time to be taken into consideration in the present draft.

Annex II contains proposed terms of reference for the Steering Committee for the five-year period 2016–2021.

The Steering Committee is expected to consider these documents at its tenth session and decide on the next steps.

GE.15-05878 (E)



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Background

1. At its eighth meeting (Geneva, 21–22 March 2013), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development voiced its strong commitment to continue implementing the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (Strategy for ESD) on the regional level beyond the third phase of implementation, which ran until 2015 (see ECE/CEP/AC.13/2013/2, paras. 37–44). To assess the progress made under the Strategy, and to consider the continuation of the Strategy’s implementation, the Steering Committee proposed to hold a high-level meeting of education and environment ministries at the next “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference to be held in Batumi, Georgia, from 8 to 10 June 2016.

2. At its ninth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 April 2014), the Committee reconfirmed its strong commitment to continuing implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD beyond 2015. It furthermore decided that two more Steering Committee meetings in 2015 and 2016 would take place in the current format until the next EfE Ministerial Conference, and reconfirmed its decision to prepare a high-level meeting thereafter, including the preparation of a draft implementation framework for the future implementation of the Strategy and a draft ministerial declaration (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2014/2, paras. 35–36).

3. It is important to note that the future implementation framework is not a new UNECE Strategy for ESD. The Strategy for ESD is expected to remain in place, including the main objectives, definitions and the vision provided therein. The new implementation framework will rather follow up on the Vilnius implementation framework — adopted by ECE environment and education ministries in 2005 in Vilnius and reconfirmed at the EfE Ministerial Conference in Belgrade in 2010 — which spanned three implementation phases (2005–2015). The Vilnius framework defined the practical arrangements for the implementation of the Strategy.

4. At its ninth meeting, the Steering Committee considered and decided upon basic elements of the new implementation framework based on proposals made by the Bureau. The present draft implementation framework (annex I) reflects these elements and is also inspired by and aligned with the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Annex II contains proposed terms of reference for the Steering Committee for the five-year period 2016–2021.

Annex I

Draft future implementation framework

I. Progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

[Will be drafted as soon as the analysis of the national implementation reports is available.]

II. Joint Vision of the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries

[1.] Among the different initiatives developed in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, established at the High-level Meeting in Vilnius (2005), is an outstanding example of regional implementation of ESD and has served as a blueprint for other regions. *[A very concrete example is the endorsement of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development by the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change (Athens, May 2014).]*

[2.] ESD is currently included in the proposals for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (as part of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 proposed by the Open Working Group on SDGs under the United Nations General Assembly). However, the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD in the period beyond 2015 will contribute to the implementation not only of the SDGs directly related to education, but to the implementation of all the SDGs. ESD is a cross-cutting process that will allow for a better understanding and enhanced competences related to all aspects of sustainable development. *[In addition, ESD could contribute significantly to the achievement of the United Nations 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (10YFP) implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme.]*

[3.] The ECE region will continue to implement the Strategy for ESD and as such make a tangible regional contribution to the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference at its thirty-seventh session (UNESCO 37 C/Resolution 12). The GAP was acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly as the follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in its resolution 69/211, which requests UNESCO to continue to provide coordination for the implementation of the GAP.

[4.] The GAP on ESD focuses on five priority action areas to enable strategic focus and stakeholder commitment: (a) policy support; (b) whole-institution approaches; (c) educators; (d) youth; and (e) local communities. The future implementation framework of the UNECE Strategy for ESD is informed by the GAP, and this is reflected in the “vertical” and “horizontal” priority action areas of the implementation framework.

[5.] The ECE Education and Environment Ministries gathered at the High-level Meeting in Batumi, Georgia, reaffirm the joint vision set out in the Strategy on ESD (see box).

Vision of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

Our vision for the future is of a region that embraces common values of solidarity, equality and mutual respect between people, countries and generations. It is a region characterized by sustainable development, including economic vitality, justice, social cohesion, environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources, so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Education, in addition to being a human right, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and an essential tool for good governance, informed decision-making and the promotion of democracy. Therefore, education for sustainable development can help translate our vision into reality. Education for sustainable development develops and strengthens the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and countries to make judgements and choices in favour of sustainable development. It can promote a shift in people's mind-sets and in so doing enable them to make our world safer, healthier and more prosperous, thereby improving the quality of life. Education for sustainable development can provide critical reflection and greater awareness and empowerment so that new visions and concepts can be explored and new methods and tools developed.

III. Governance body of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

[6.] ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting also reconfirm the mandate of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD to decide on the Strategy's implementation and review its progress. Representatives from environment and education ministries should remain at the core of the Steering Committee; however, countries are invited to include other ministries in their delegations, depending on their country situation. Also, countries are encouraged to consider including UNESCO National Commission representatives in their national delegations and other stakeholders to ensure the close alignment with the global ESD process.

[7.] To ensure efficient regional governance and communication, member States are requested to reconfirm or newly nominate focal points for ESD in education and environment ministries. They may also nominate, in addition, focal points in other departments or ministries, as appropriate, to participate in the ECE ESD process.

[8.] The Steering Committee should meet annually, preferably in person. If resources permit, funding will be provided to one person per eligible country to participate in these meetings, in accordance with the rules established by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy. However, with a view to both environmental and financial considerations, the Committee may consider holding an electronic Steering Committee meeting every other year (see annex II for the Committee's terms of reference).

[9.] The "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process should continue to be used as a platform for the regional high-level coordination of the implementation of the Strategy.

[10.] *[Time frame and implementation phases: At its ninth meeting (Geneva, 3–4 April 2014), the Steering Committee extended implementation phase III until the high-level meeting of education and environment ministries, expected to take place in 2016. The length and focus of the implementation period thereafter, including considerations related to either extending phase III or entering new phase, were postponed for further discussion at the tenth and eleventh Steering Committee meetings. Time frames of 5 and 10 years have been mentioned as possible time periods.]*

IV. Priority action areas

[11.] While member States recognize the importance of continuing to implement all the objectives of the Strategy for ESD, ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting stress in particular the importance of advancing three “vertical” priority action areas (sections A–C below), which focus on what should be done, and three “horizontal” priority action areas (sections D–F below), which focus on how it should be done.

A. Ensuring there is an education for sustainable development school plan in every school by *[depending on time frame (see para. 10)]*

[12.] ESD school plans are a crucial component of a whole-school approach and the ongoing process of implementing the Strategy. Promoting whole-institution approaches is one of the five priority action areas of the GAP. Whole-institution approaches are an important vehicle for achieving holistic and structural implementation of ESD in formal education (primary and secondary), vocational and higher education and in facilitating a link between formal and non-formal education. Therefore, the establishment of ESD school plans or embedding ESD in existing school plans (i.e., ESD school planning) is strongly encouraged. The adoption of whole-school approaches in pre-school education is also considered beneficial.

B. Promoting the extension of education for sustainable development in teacher education and in training of all educators

[13.] Teachers, and more broadly, educators, are key drivers of change in the process of integrating ESD into education. Their capacities have to be strengthened through ESD in pre-service and in-service teacher education and other forms that support the development of competences in non-formal and informal educators. Therefore, ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting strongly support the further integration and extension of ESD in teacher education. This priority action area is aligned with the GAP priority area, “Building capacities of educators and trainers”.

C. Reorienting technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy

[14.] There is a need for technical and vocational training (TVET) to transition to a green, entrepreneurial and sustainable economy. In that respect, several concrete steps to prioritize could include: educating students about the importance of moving to a green economy and becoming ecologically literate; understanding the needs of industry to transition to a green economy, with an emphasis on sustainable production and consumption; and ensuring that policymakers’ support for educators is sufficient to enable them to provide the requisite training for new skills. One of the first steps in these efforts is integrating ESD into national TVET policy, and this can be an important contribution to the GAP priority action area on “advancing policy”. Against this background, ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting recognize the importance of the reorientation of TVET in support of

sustainable development. In particular they support the more active involvement of professional unions and vocational training centres in the reorientation of TVET in support of sustainable development in general, and particularly in critical economy sectors such as water, energy and food production.

D. Strengthening policy integration

[15.] Member States should foster the integration of ESD in both international and national education and sustainable development policies and other relevant processes. On the regional level, in particular, the link with the ECE environmental conventions should be strengthened. Synergies should also be developed with other relevant programmes and organizations active in the same region. This priority area is aligned with the policy priority action area of the GAP.

E. Informal and non-formal education

[16.] Formal education needs to synergize with non-formal and informal education to effectively promote ESD in educational and environmental frameworks. Non-formal and informal education promote ESD by supporting ESD learning within formal education and by raising public awareness and learning about the ESD outside formal education. It is essential that formal, non-formal and in-formal education systems work together in a complementary fashion.

F. Highlighting the important role of networks

[17.] The role of networks, including those of civil society, academia and science, non-governmental organizations, companies and enterprises, in implementing ESD should be encouraged. Empowering and increasing the capacity of civil society and in particular of youth as critical agents of change, through networking and co-learning, is essential for achieving more sustainable societies. Strengthening multi-stakeholder networks at the local level is one example of an action under this priority area, which corresponds to the priority action area on local communities of the GAP.

[18.] In addition, the benefits of the possible collaboration of ECE with particular networks might be explored further, with a view to supporting the achievement of progress in the six priority areas.

V. Time frame and monitoring

[19.] The ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting recognize that the implementation of the Strategy for ESD is a continuous, long-term process. The first phase of this process will align with the first five-year phase of the GAP, which ends in 2019. The Steering Committee should consider aligning the second phase of the process with the next phases of GAP.

[20.] The ECE Education and Environment Ministries at High-level Meeting note that member States have had success in the three implementation phases since the Strategy's adoption in Vilnius in 2005:

(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.

[21.] *[Once the outcome of the national implementation reporting is available, possible shortcomings of achieving the objective of implementation phases I-III could be addressed.]*

[22.] Developing capacity for monitoring as well as long-term evaluation of ESD is critical. Hence, at the end of the upcoming implementation phase a mandatory national progress reporting should be carried out. The Steering Committee on ESD will align future monitoring and evaluation work as much as possible with the GAP reporting scheme, while also allowing for comparability of the reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises.

VI. Financial arrangements

[23.] 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, and a fair sharing of the burden should be the guiding principle of any financial arrangements established for this purpose.

Annex II

Proposed terms of reference of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development for 2016–2021

I. Mandate

1. The ECE Education and Environment Ministries at the High-level Meeting in Batumi, Georgia, mandate the ECE Steering Committee on ESD to continue to decide on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD and to review its progress.
2. ECE will provide secretariat support to the Steering Committee in accordance with ECE rules and practices, subject to sufficient funding being provided by the member States.

II. Composition

3. The members of the Steering Committee will be designated by Governments of the ECE member States. The Committee will include at least representatives of the environment and education sectors and will be open-ended. Countries are invited, moreover, to include representatives of other ministries as well as of UNESCO National Commissions. Committee members will be responsible for representing the consolidated national position in the work of the Steering Committee. The reconfirmation or nominations of national focal points should be submitted to the secretariat by [e.g., November 2016, if the High-level Meeting takes place in June 2016 as expected]. Representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations will be invited as observers, as decided by the Steering Committee. UNESCO will be a permanent observer.

III. Purpose

4. The Steering Committee will constitute the principal decision-making body for the activities on the Strategy for ESD in the ECE region and be responsible for giving guidance and strategic directions to the implementation of the Strategy. It will also review the progress of its implementation. In particular, it will continue to:
 - (a) Promote and coordinate the implementation of the Strategy in line with the GAP and in consultation with UNESCO, the lead agency for ESD in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/211, and with other relevant international activities and processes, such as the SDGs process, seeking synergies and avoiding overlaps;
 - (b) Advance the three vertical priority action areas:
 - (i) Ensuring there is an ESD school plan in every school by [insert date];
 - (ii) Promoting the extension of ESD in teacher education and in training of all educators;
 - (iii) Reorienting TVET in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy;
 - (a) Also advance the three horizontal priority action areas:
 - (i) Strengthening policy integration;

- (ii) Informal and non-formal education;
- (iii) Highlighting the important role of networks;
- (c) Monitor progress in implementation, preparing assessments of progress made, proposing priorities for actions, identifying challenges and proposing corrective measures, where appropriate;
- (d) Liaise and cooperate closely with relevant intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations that are active in education, the environment and sustainable development;
- (e) Establish ad hoc working groups, task forces and other bodies as needed to implement the activities;
- (f) Provide guidance on the need for possible new instruments promoting ESD;
- (g) Serve as a forum for the consideration of issues related to ESD at the regional and international levels;
- (h) Liaise, as required, with other regional commissions, including those of the United Nations, for matters related to its competence;
- (i) Keep the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and other relevant bodies informed about its activities;

IV. Officers

5. For the upcoming implementation phase a chair and a vice-chair will be elected from among the representatives of the ECE member States present at the meeting. Officers should represent different sectors (e.g. environment and education). They shall serve as the officers of the Steering Committee until [*their successors have been elected/the next High-level Meeting*].

V. Meetings

6. The meetings of the Steering Committee will be convened by ECE. They will ordinarily be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva, unless there is a feasible proposal by a member State to host the meeting. If resources permit, funding will be provided to one person per eligible country to participate in these meetings, in accordance with the rules established by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy. However, with a view to both environmental and financial considerations, the Committee may consider holding an electronic Steering Committee meeting every other year. The Steering Committee will take decisions by consensus and vote on decisions, if required.
