UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

Education for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

17 - 19 May 2021
Held as a Virtual Conference

1. Background

- Our planet and its inhabitants are under increasing pressure: Human-induced climate change, limited and recklessly exploited resources, rising temperatures and sea levels, poverty and unsustainable economic structures are just a few of the challenges governments and populations face around the world.

- The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic puts pressure on us to reflect on how we lead our lives, how we live together, how we generate our livelihoods, and how we live in the one planet we share. At the same time the pandemic amplifies existing weaknesses and injustices in our systems like a magnifying glass. As a crisis presents a special opportunity to change course, this pandemic presents a chance to turn around from the disastrous path of climate and other emergencies by ‘redesigning’ our societies.

- In response to these challenges, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) supports efforts to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to contribute to a more sustainable world. UN General Assembly Resolution 72/222 (2017) reaffirmed UNESCO’s role as the lead agency on ESD and recognized ESD as ‘an integral element of the SDG on quality education and a key enabler of all the other SDGs’, the 2019 Resolution 74/233 reinforced this by calling upon countries to enhance their ESD implementation.

- In order to further enhance ESD efforts, UNESCO launched the new framework ‘Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs’ (ESD for 2030)\(^1\) and its roadmap for implementation at five regional Launch Events in November and December 2020. To build on these events and follow up with concrete action and the kick-off of the new 10-year programme, UNESCO organizes a major Conference, which will be held virtually from 17-19 May 2021. The Conference is organized in cooperation with and generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany.

- The new framework ESD for 2030 (2020-2030) builds on the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015 – 2019), which followed the UN Decade on ESD (2005-2014) and focuses on streamlining ESD with Agenda 2030 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals within the next ten years.

---

\(^1\) The framework was approved by the 40th UNESCO General Conference in November 2019.
2. Overall goal

- The Conference will create momentum for the new framework *ESD for 2030*, which aims to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs and to build education systems that support learners of all ages to be responsible and active contributors to more sustainable societies and a healthy planet.

3. Objectives

- Enhance awareness on sustainable development challenges and the crucial role of ESD as a key enabler for the successful achievement of all SDGs, particularly in light of the recent global developments during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Create momentum for the new global framework *ESD for 2030* for the period of 2020-2030 and its roadmap for implementation, including:
  - Ensure policy commitment to ESD through a Berlin *Declaration* which is expected to include a call for urgent action to accelerate sustainability and climate action through education;
  - Foster stakeholder commitments to *ESD for 2030*, including country initiatives for *ESD for 2030*;
  - Expand and reinforce partnerships and networking opportunities for ESD.

4. Outcomes

- Global awareness about ESD is increased. The participants, including the representatives of Member States, acknowledge the importance of ESD and increase their efforts in their professional capacities.
- Implementation of the new global framework *ESD for 2030* is successfully accelerated by concrete action;
  - The Berlin Declaration is adopted;
  - Concrete commitments, including for country initiatives on *ESD for 2030*, are made and/or strengthened further;
  - A strong basis for the *ESD for 2030* Global Network of ESD policy-makers and stakeholders is established.

5. Format

The Conference will be held virtually on a participatory online platform. The format of the virtual Conference will include interactive plenaries for debate and dialogue and concurrent sessions for in-depth discussion, online-workshops, virtual exhibitions and digital networking opportunities. Interaction will be key to the whole programme in order to provide a learning experience for all.

6. Programme elements

Please find the draft programme continuously updated on the conference website

7. Date and place

17 – 19 May 2020, online
With some of the moderators and speakers contributing from the studio at Berlin Congress Center, Alexanderstraße 11, 10178 Berlin, Germany

8. Participants

Approximately 2500 stakeholders from all regions of the world especially policy-makers working in education and other areas related to sustainable development; ESD practitioners, NGOs, experts and members of the development community and the private sector will also participate. All UNESCO Member States will be invited to nominate a delegation to represent them at the Conference.

9. Working languages

English, French, Spanish and German with simultaneous interpretation available for all plenary sessions and some concurrent sessions. Potentially also Arabic subject to funding availability. Please note that not all languages will be provided for all concurrent sessions. See the conference programme for details.

10. Organizers and Partners

The conference is organized by UNESCO in cooperation with and generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, and with the German Commission for UNESCO as advisory partner.

11. Contact

Mr Alexander Leicht, Chief of Section, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, Education Sector, UNESCO at future.esd@unesco.org.

More detailed information is being made available on the Conference website: https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030