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# Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research

Publication launch

17 September 2026

13:00-14:30 CET



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## Background

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) seeks to transform the way education systems respond to the complex environmental, social and economic challenges facing the global community. By engaging the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning ESD becomes a powerful tool for change. It can be integrated across teaching and learning at all levels, within institutions and in wider communities, and across formal, non-formal and informal education settings.

The transformative nature of ESD calls for a shift in approaches to teaching and learning. Moving beyond the traditional focus on knowledge acquisition, it emphasizes the development of transversal sustainability competencies. This shift also requires rethinking assessment practices and their ultimate goals. At the same time, learning environments are evolving, with sustainability learning and action increasingly taking both inside and outside the classroom, permeating all areas and aspects of institutional life and engaging the whole community.

UNESCO's [Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research project](#) was designed to build capacity, develop practical guidance tools and generate evidence to support

practitioners in adapting to these new realities of education. The project produced three guidance tools each addressing a core dimension of ESD:

- **Driving sustainability in education through a whole-institution approach**
- **Enhancing pedagogies and competencies for sustainability**
- **Assessing learning in Education for Sustainable Development**



The project developed the guidance tools from 2024-2026, working through the global ESD for 2030 Network, bringing together UNESCO Chairs, higher education institutions and ASPnet schools from ten participating countries: **Brazil, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Romania** and **Slovenia**. Forty-one institutions from these countries tested these tools by expanding existing activities or creating new activities relevant to their local contexts. In the action research process, educators and school leaders became the researchers – and their experiences, feedback, and documentation generated valuable case studies and evidence that informed the refinement of the tools. Through action research, the project strengthened the knowledge and capacity of institutions and practitioners to embed sustainability in education policy and practice, with local and global Communities of Practice (CoP) sparking inspiration in local communities and contributing to school-level ESD initiatives.

The project was generously supported by the Government of Japan.

## Objectives

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Building on this collaborative process, this webinar will:

- Officially launch the three Transforming futures guidance tools
- Present the overall findings and outcomes of the [Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research project](#), including key lessons emerging from the action research process
- Highlight how the tools can be used by institutions, educators and policymakers
- Facilitate discussion on opportunities for scaling the project to additional schools, institutions and countries to ensure long-term sustainability
- Explore next steps for engagement within the ESD for 2030 Network, including collaboration, adaptation and further application of the tools

## Date

The event will take place on 17 September 2026, at 13:00-14:30 CET.

## Target audience

The target audience of this webinar includes education stakeholders interested in strengthening the implementation of ESD in their learning environments. This includes educators, school leaders, ASPnet coordinators, teacher trainers, community-based educators, youth leaders, academics, policymakers, national and regional education authorities and other practitioners engaged in advancing ESD in policy and practice.

The webinar will bring together participants of the *Transforming Futures* project, including authors of the guidance tools, national researchers, participating educators and school leaders who piloted the tools, as well as other members of the ESD for 2030 Network (ESD-Net), the Greening Education Partnership (GEP) and UNESCO Associate Schools project (ASPnet).

Registration is open to all stakeholders who consider this webinar relevant.

The event will be conducted in English, with French and Spanish interpretation.

## How to join the webinar?

The webinar will be held online via Zoom. To participate, please register at: <https://unesco-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/k8UbuXGPSTGnGZaHDz9fBQ>

We encourage participants to log on 5 minutes before the start of the webinar.

## Programme

| Outline  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| (5 min)  | <b>Welcome and opening remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christopher Castle, Director, Division for Peace and Sustainable Development, UNESCO</li><li>• Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| (5min)   | <b>Introduction to the Transforming Futures project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Julia Heiss, Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| (60 min) | <b>Launch and presentation of the Transforming futures Guidance Tools: Panel discussions</b><br><br><b>1. Roundtable: How to use the guidance tools (30 min)</b><br>How to use the tools and key takeaways from the action research <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Katrin Kohl</b>, Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability, York University, and <b>Isabel Toman</b>, Senior Programme Officer for Sustainable Development, International Association of Universities</li><li>• <b>Robert J. Didham</b>, UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Lifestyles, Centre Director, and Associate Professor, University of Inland Norway</li><li>• <b>Daniel Fischer</b>, UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, and <b>Jordan King</b>, Director and Professor of Practice, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, United States of America</li></ul> |

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|                 | <p><b>2. Roundtable: Transforming futures project participants (30 min)</b></p> <p>Project participants will share how they implemented the tools, best practices, and impact stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>José Vicente de Freitas</b>, Principal Professor and Researcher at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), Brazil</li> <li>• <b>Yao Saturnin Davy Akaffou</b>, Lecturer and Researcher, Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Côte d'Ivoire</li> <li>• <b>Nadine Thunecke</b>, Education Specialist and Head of ESD Task Force at Working Group for Nature and Environmental Education Brandenburg (ANU Brandenburg), Germany</li> <li>• <b>Subarna Sivapalan</b>, Associate Professor of Education and Associate Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia</li> <li>• <b>Hiroki Fujii</b>, Professor of science education, Okayama University/Director of Okayama University ESD Promotion Centre at the UNESCO Chair in Research and Education for Sustainable Development, Japan</li> </ul> |
| <b>(15 min)</b> | <p><b>Reflections and discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can stakeholders use the tools?</li> <li>• How could this project be scaled to additional schools and countries?</li> <li>• How can we continue collaborating through the ESD-Net and international exchanges?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>(5 min)</b>  | <p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Heiss, Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Contact

### UNESCO

#### ESD-Net 2030 Secretariat

Section of Education for Sustainable Development

Division for Peace and Sustainable Development

Education Sector

[esd-net@unesco.org](mailto:esd-net@unesco.org)



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