

#ESDfor2030



BERLIN

DECLARATION

on

EDUCATION

FOR

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT

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## UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



## The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to “*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*” The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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Section of Education for Sustainable Development  
Education Sector  
UNESCO

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## INTRODUCTION

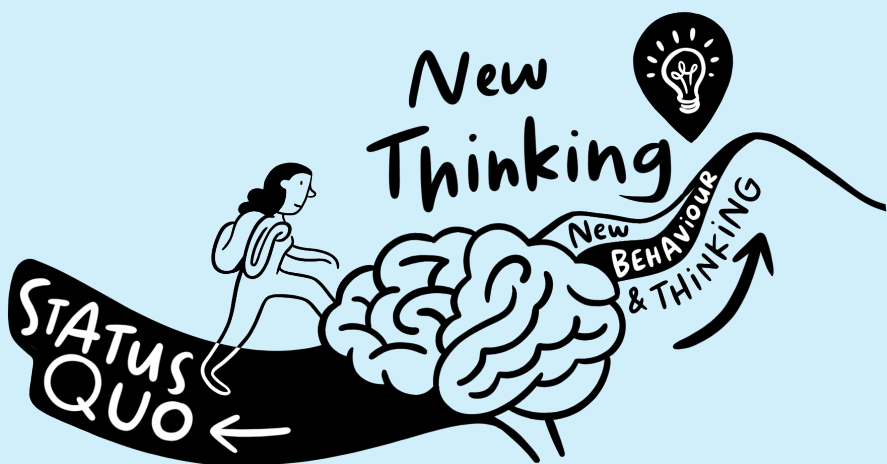
### WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

FIND OUT  
MORE  
HERE

From 17 May to 19 May 2021 around 2800 people – from governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, youth, the business sector, and many more - representing 160 countries came together virtually at the **UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2021**. During the conference, they expressed their commitment to use the transformative power of education in order to address the global challenges we face. The Berlin Declaration was the main result of the conference.

The Berlin Declaration is an important document that emphasizes the significance of ESD for each and every one of us. It identifies concrete challenges the global community is facing and calls for changes that are urgently needed to fully integrate and strengthen ESD in all educational contexts. It took several months to compile text of the Declaration, as it was written and consulted by representatives from all over the world.

This brochure presents the full text of the declaration together with explanatory boxes to put it into context and to encourage readers' further exploration of the key messages. The original text of the declaration can also be found here ( <https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030>).




## PREAMBLE

1. We, participants from governments, international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, youth, the academic community, the business sector and all spheres of teaching and learning, convened online from 17 to 19 May 2021 for the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, organized by [UNESCO](#) in cooperation with the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany](#), and with the [German Commission for UNESCO](#) as advisory partner, adopt this declaration.
2. We are convinced that urgent action is needed to address the dramatic interrelated challenges the world is facing, in particular the climate crisis, mass loss of biodiversity, pollution, pandemic diseases, extreme poverty and inequalities, violent conflicts, and other environmental, social, and economic crises that endanger life on our planet. We believe that the urgency of these challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, requires a fundamental transformation that sets us on the path of sustainable development based on more just, inclusive, caring, and peaceful relationships with each other and with nature.
3. We are confident that education is a powerful enabler of positive change of mindsets and worldviews and that it can support the integration of all dimensions of sustainable development, of economy, society and the environment, ensuring that development trajectories are not exclusively orientated towards economic growth to the detriment of the planet, but towards the well-being of all within planetary boundaries.

### THE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**There are three key dimensions to sustainable development – society, environment, and economy- which are interrelated. Building a sustainable future requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of an improved quality of life.**

4. We are confident that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), anchored in SDG 4.7 and as an enabler for all 17 [SDGs](#), is the foundation for the required transformation, providing everyone with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to become change agents for sustainable development. ESD enables learners to develop their cognitive and non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking and competences for collaboration, problem solving, coping with complexity and risk, building resilience, thinking systemically and creatively, and empowering them to take responsible action as citizens, fulfilling their right to quality education as defined in SDG 4 -Education 2030. We believe that ESD must be based on and promote respect for nature, as well as human rights, democracy, the rule of law, non-discrimination, equity and gender equality. In addition, it should promote intercultural understanding, cultural diversity, a culture of peace and non-violence, inclusion and the notion of responsible and active global citizenship.
5. We welcome the new 'ESD for 2030' framework and its [Roadmap](#)  for implementation as our guiding documents for the next 10 years to mobilize action on ESD in the areas of policy, transforming learning environments, capacity development of educators, youth empowerment, and local level action.

## ESD FOR 2030

In 2020 UNESCO launched a new strategy, Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030), which will be in place for the next ten years. It aims to build a more just, sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Priority action area 1  
Advancing policy

WE NEED TO  
CHANGE WHAT WE  
LEARN



Priority action area 2  
Transforming learning  
environments

SCHOOLS  
NEED TO BE A PLACE  
WHERE LEARNERS LEARN WHAT  
THEY LIVE AND LIVE WHAT  
THEY LEARN



Priority action area 3  
Building capacities of  
educators

TEACHERS  
NEED TO BE PREPARED  
WITH KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS  
AND VALUES TO SUPPORT  
LEARNERS' TRANSITION.



Priority action area 4  
Empowering and  
mobilizing youth

YOUNG PEOPLE  
MUST BE RECOGNIZED  
AS CHANGE MAKERS.



Priority action area 5  
Accelerating local  
level actions

MEANINGFUL  
TRANSFORMATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
TAKES PLACE IN THE  
COMMUNITY.

## OUR COMMITMENT

**We, within our respective mandates and in our areas of responsibility, taking into account our needs, capacities, available resources and national priorities, commit to the following:**

- a.** Ensure that ESD is a foundational element of our education systems at all levels, with environmental and climate action as a core curriculum component, while maintaining a holistic perspective on ESD that recognizes the interrelatedness of all dimensions of sustainable development;
- b.** Integrate ESD into all levels of education and training from early childhood to tertiary and adult education, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and into non-formal education and informal learning, so that all individuals are provided with lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities for sustainable development;
- c.** Implement ESD with joint emphasis on the cognitive skills, social and emotional learning, and action competences for the individual and societal dimensions of transformation, promoting individual behavioural change for sustainable development, equality and respect for human rights as well as fundamental structural and cultural changes at the systemic level of economies and societies, and also promoting the required political action to bring about these changes;

### DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

#### HEAD

Understand sustainability challenges and their complex interlinkages, and explore alternative solutions



#### HEART

Build core values and attitudes for sustainability, cultivate empathy and compassion for other people and the planet, and motivate to lead the change



#### HAND

Take practical action for sustainable transformations in the personal, societal and political spheres

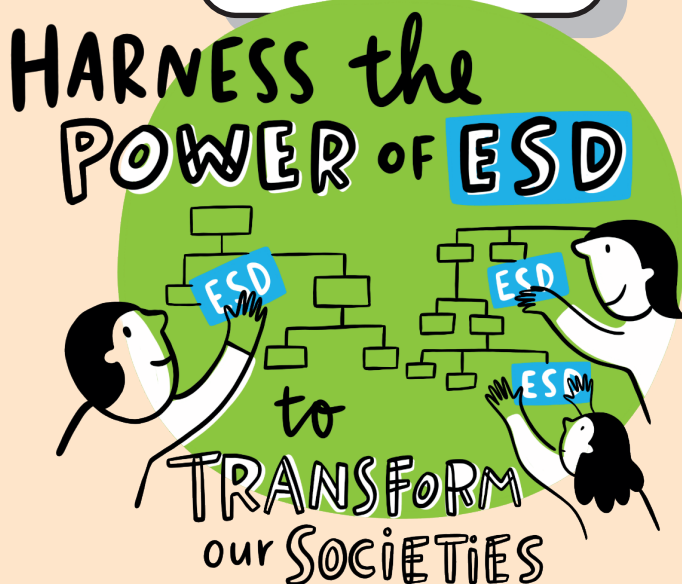


- d. Harness the power of ESD for the redesign of our societies, encouraging, inter alia, access to scientific knowledge and data sharing to facilitate research, evidence-based policies, democratic decision-making and the recognition of indigenous knowledge, to promote sustainable and transformative economies centered on respect for the well-being of people as well as for the planet, and to enhance resilience and preparedness for future global crises;
- e. Promote a whole-institution approach, recognizing that learners and the school community become meaningfully engaged in sustainable development through democratic participation when their institutions become living laboratories for participation and active citizenship, equity and gender equality, health, connections with nature and respect for the environment, energy efficiency and sustainable consumption, and where learning is experiential, action-oriented, localized and culturally specific, allowing learners to learn what they live and live what they learn;

### WHOLE INSTITUTION APPROACH

**We need learning environments where learners learn what they live and live what they learn.**

**To achieve this change, educational institutions need to adopt sustainable development principles, not only in their learning and pedagogical practices, but also at the managerial and decision-making level.**





- f. Recognize climate change as a priority area of ESD of particular importance to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as they require special attention in terms of ESD implementation due to their increasing vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards;

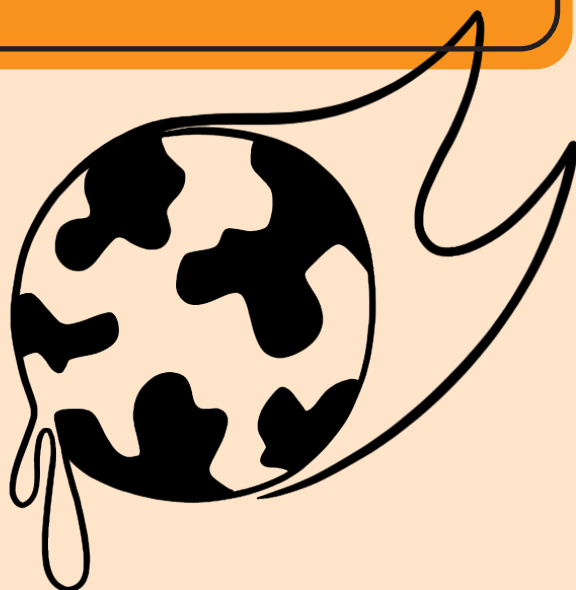
### **SMALL ISLANDS - WHY ARE THEY PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE CHANGE?**

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are on the 'front lines' of climate change, as they face rising sea levels, dying coral reefs and ocean ecosystems, and increasing natural disasters. Environmental challenges undermine social and economic sustainability with women often suffering a disproportionate impact and communities being threatened with displacement and forced migration.

ESD prepares people of all ages and genders with the knowledge, skills and values to respond to such challenges, building on indigenous knowledge and practices. Lifelong learning, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can help ensure professionals and communities are well prepared to meet these challenges.

[More information](#)

**Climate  
CRISIS**





- g. Also recognize the crucial role of teachers to promote ESD and invest in the capacity development of teachers and other education personnel at all levels and to ensure a whole-of-sector approach to the necessary transformation of education;



## ARE YOU AN EDUCATOR?

Complementary to the UNESCO guidance document - [Education for Sustainable Development Goals - Learning Objectives](#), Resources of educators has been designed for educators, education planners and practitioners to offer hundreds of pedagogical ideas: [Find out more](#)

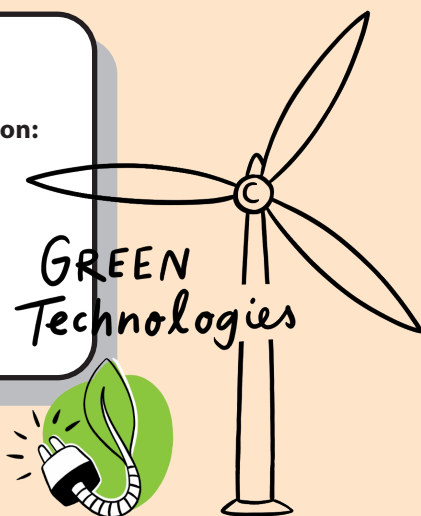
- h. Harness the potential of new, digital and 'green' technologies to ensure that the access, development and use of technologies is responsible, safe, equitable, inclusive and based on critical thinking and sustainability principles with a proper assessment of risks and benefits, as well as promotes open educational resources, open science and affordable eLearning facilities for ESD;

## GREEN TECHNOLOGIES

Further information on greening technologies and education:

[Skills development and climate change action plans: enhancing TVET's contribution](#)

[Greening technical and vocational education and training: a practical guide for institutions](#)



- i. Empower young people as change agents for sustainable development, by creating opportunities for learning and civic engagement, and providing them with the competencies and tools to participate in ESD as co-creators of individual and societal transformation;

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR ROLE

Young people are not only the future but the present, they are actively participating in shaping their futures, creating new solutions to sustainability challenges and holding world leaders accountable. Enabling and mobilizing young people to contribute to a more sustainable world is a central part of ESD implementation. Find out more [here](#)

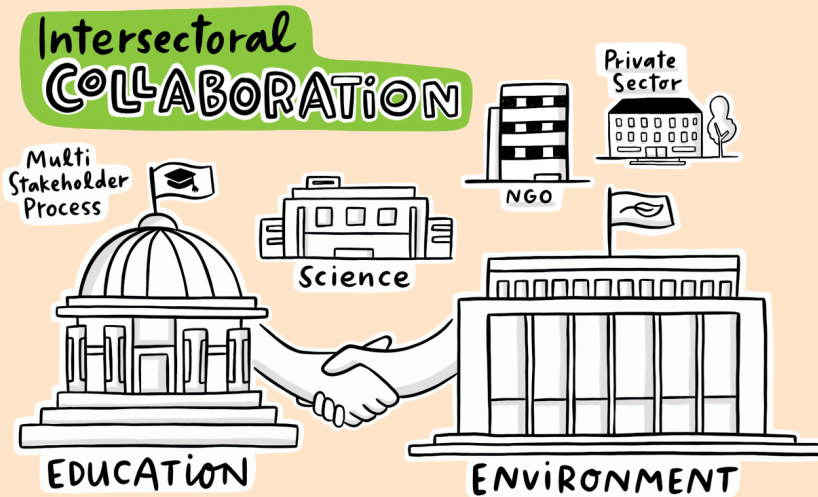
- j. Prioritize marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, refugees and persons affected by conflict, crises and natural disasters, through an inclusive approach by promoting innovative ESD policies which are contextualized and embedding ESD in emergency education;
- k. Emphasize gender equality and non-discrimination in access to knowledge and skills, and ensure gender mainstreaming in ESD which enables a more profound and holistic understanding of sustainability challenges and potential solutions;
- l. Mobilize ESD to combat poverty, particularly extreme poverty, and provide learners with relevant competencies to meet individual and societal demands, including through TVET and skills development for sustainable livelihoods to ensure human dignity and the right to live decently;

## ESD AND GENDER EQUALITY

ESD for 2030 actively promotes gender equality. For more information on UNESCO's work on the matter click here: [UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan: 2014-2021](#)





- m. Enhance multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaboration on ESD at all levels of governance, with Ministries of Education collaborating with all other Ministries that have an impact on sustainable development, to ensure a whole-of-government approach, with strengthened cooperation between Ministries of Education and Environment at the core, as well as with all other relevant stakeholder groups, such as non-governmental organizations, the academic community, the business sector, youth, and others;



- n. Support the further alignment, at global, regional and national levels, of the education, environment, climate, sustainable economy and other relevant development agendas, and enhance networking between different stakeholder groups in order to ensure that efforts are mutually supportive and complementary and support structural mainstreaming of ESD;
- o. Allocate sufficient resources and protect the domestic and international financing of ESD at the time of Covid-19 and beyond, and emphasize the role international development cooperation plays in promoting quality education and youth empowerment in developing countries in ways that strengthen the power of education in making all societies more just and sustainable;
- p. Monitor ESD progress, in the context of the overall monitoring of the SDGs and Target 4.7 in particular, in order to ensure that implementation is continuously improved and helps ensure that no-one is left behind, put in place assessment systems on ESD and enhance research on how to evaluate ESD progress.

## WAY FORWARD

6. We invite UNESCO, as the lead United Nations agency for ESD, to support the implementation of this declaration in cooperation with Member States, mobilizing its networks, including [UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs](#), [UNESCO Associated Schools](#) and [UNESCO designated sites](#), among others, and ensuring regular reviews of implementation progress. 
7. We commit to taking this declaration and its provisions forward through [relevant global, regional, national and local processes](#), looking ahead to important [milestones](#) such as the [2021 United Nations Biodiversity Conference \(COP 15\)](#), the [2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP 26\)](#) and beyond. 
8. Transformative learning for people and the planet is a necessity for our survival and that of future generations. The time to learn and act for our planet is now.

### GET SOCIAL

Join UNESCO to call for education to change our societies.

You can also get social with the wider ESD community

by connecting to [UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development LinkedIn Group](#) or using the [#ESDfor2030](#) and [#LearnForOurPlanet](#) in social media.





# BERLIN DECLARATION

2021 UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE

on **EDUCATION**  
for **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

POLLUTION

Climate  
CRISIS

CHALLENGES

COVID

BIODIVERSITY LOSS

New  
Thinking

STATUS  
QUO

New  
BEHAVIOUR  
& THINKING

EDUCATION is

of POSITIVE  
**CHANGE** of  
Mindsets &  
Worldviews

a POWERFUL  
ENABLER

GLOBAL  
CONSULTATION

TEACHER  
ROLE

→ TEACHERS  
play a crucial  
ROLE

**ESD**

FOUNDATIONAL  
ELEMENT

Whole INSTITUTION  
APPROACH

SCHOOL

#ESDfor2030

#LEARNforOURPLANET

OUR  
COMMITMENTS

Intersectoral  
COLLABORATION

Multi  
Stakeholder  
Process

Private  
Sector

NGO

Science

GREEN  
Technologies

EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENT

HARNESS the  
POWER of ESD  
to

TRANSFORM  
our SOCIETIES

TIME  
to ACT  
IS NOW

LEARN

AND  
ACT



on.unesco.org/esd

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# #ESDfor2030

## Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development

In light of the dramatic challenges the world is facing today there is urgent need to transform learning and redesign our societies for the survival of our planet. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is key in achieving this change. In May 2021 Ministers of Education from around the world, youth, teachers, scientists and civil society, came together virtually at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development. They adopted the Berlin Declaration for Sustainable Development, expressing their commitment to harness the power of ESD to build a more just, equal, equitable and sustainable world.

The purpose of this online publication is to contextualize the promises made in the Berlin Declaration and explain complex terms and concepts contained in the document, thus rendering its content easily accessible to the wider public. The main body of the text presents the Declaration itself, while the explanatory boxes provide practical background information about sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7 as well as interesting links to find more information about ESD, climate change, green technologies and other related issues.

### STAY IN TOUCH

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<https://on.unesco.org/esd>



#esdfor2030 #LearnForOurPlanet



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