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**Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) and Associated Action Plan**

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UN Environment/MAP  
Athens, 2017

## **MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MSED)**

### FINAL DRAFT

(as formulated in the framework of the *Horizon 2020* Mediterranean Environment Programme)

#### **Vision**

Our region, the Mediterranean, has been the cradle of important civilizations that influence even today the entire world. It is an exceptional eco-region not only because of its geographical and historical characteristics, its unique natural and cultural heritage, but also due to the feeling shared by its inhabitants of belonging to ‘the Mediterranean world’. At the crossroads of three continents the Mediterranean brings together countries and peoples of different levels of economic and social development, different religions, languages and cultures, that share, however, a common heritage, created throughout centuries old ‘exchanges’ of all kinds. These characteristics render the Mediterranean a perfect illustration of the global situation (Blue Plan, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. Having encountered much ecological disruption, including expanding desertification and increasing water scarcity and facing the already evident emerging changes in climate during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Mediterranean is nowadays in front of great challenges: A major recent sociopolitical restructuring in its southern and eastern shores, a deep economic crisis in the north, in addition to the existing problem of poverty. Will it be able to collectively find a pattern of development that could bring people together, in an equitable and respectful way for a better common future? The countries of the region agreed that the region needs to redirect its development to meet the economic and social needs which are considerable in the South and East, without increasing the process of environmental degradation (MSSD, 2005).<sup>2</sup>

Our vision for the future is of a region at the interface of North and South, East and West, that embraces common values of equality among countries and generations, mutual respect between people, solidarity, and peace. It is a region to be characterized by sustainable development, including economic vitality - based on green economy and more green jobs- 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.<sup>3</sup> To make our vision real, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) recognises that education in the Mediterranean needs strengthening by introducing sustainable development, through a holistic approach, into educational curricula, from primary school right up to universities and graduate schools (MSSD, 2005)<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, education, in addition to being a recognised human right,<sup>4</sup> 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 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 mindsets and in so doing enable them to make our world better, safer, healthier, with more possibilities for employment and more prosperous, thereby improving the quality of life and equity among countries and generations. 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.

<sup>1</sup> Plan Bleu (2005): Benoit G. & A. Comeau (ed.), “A Sustainable Future for the Mediterranean”, The Blue Plan’s Environment & Development Outlook, Earthscan, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> “Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, A Framework for Environmental Sustainability and Shared Prosperity” adopted the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), UNEP/MAP, 20-22 June 2005, Athens, Greece.

<sup>3</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, “Our Common Future”, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Statement on Education for Sustainable Development by the UNECE Ministers of the Environment at the Fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> UNESCO General Conference, Report of the ED Commission, main line of action 3(7) 2011

## **Introduction**

1. While the Mediterranean region does not constitute a UN region, the Mediterranean countries already from the early 70s work together in the framework of Environmental Education. After Rio they have adopted the Mediterranean Agenda 21 (Tunisia, 1994) where Education, together with Raising Awareness and Training was acknowledged as the prerequisites of sustainable development in the Mediterranean. They established the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSDD) and therein a Thematic Group on “Information, Awareness Environmental Education and Participation”. The MCSDD developed the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) adopted by the Mediterranean countries in 2005 which explicitly stated that “*Education and training particularly Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are recognized as a prerequisite for improved Governance*”... “*Introduce sustainable development into educational curricula, from primary school right up to universities and graduate schools and contribute to the implementation at Mediterranean level of the Thessaloniki UNESCO Conference Declaration (1997), the United Nations resolution on the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (Vilnius 2005).*”<sup>2</sup> The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) reconfirmed the importance of Education acknowledging the synergies within education and sustainable development as one of the pillars on which the future of the Euro-Mediterranean region lies (Joint Declaration Paris Summit, 2008)<sup>5</sup>.

The explicit mandate to develop the Strategy derives from the statement made by the Conference for the Official Launching of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Mediterranean region in Athens (26-27 November 2005)<sup>6</sup>. The Strategy benefited from experience gained both within the Mediterranean “eco-region” and globally. It is a contribution to the achievement of Education For All Goals and of Quality Education, and in line with the Framework of the Implementation scheme for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Furthermore, the Strategy was inspired by and utilised the UNECE Strategy for ESD<sup>7</sup> and, although it contains references specific to the Mediterranean region, it is fully compatible with it, so that its philosophy and implementation does not present any inconsistencies to the Mediterranean countries which have already adopted the former.

The Ministers in the Rio+20 (June 2012) Resolution “The future we want”<sup>8</sup> in article 232 emphasize the importance of greater international cooperation to improve access to education, and encourage international educational exchanges and partnerships, to help achieve global education goals. In article 233 they resolve to promote ESD beyond the United Nations Decade of ESD while, in articles 234 and 235 underscore the importance of supporting Higher Educational Institutions to carry out research and innovation for SD, including in the field of Education and strongly encourage them to consider adopting good practices in sustainable management in their premises. The Mediterranean Side Event at Rio+20 confirmed the need for a Mediterranean Strategy on ESD to be completed within the finalization of the UN DESD.

The Tbilisi+35 Conference (6-7 September, 2012) Communiqué<sup>9</sup> acknowledges the achievements of EE and ESD at regional level (Article 6) and the international cooperation for sharing good practices between states and regions (Article 20) and recommends strengthening and upgrading of international mechanisms, organizations and institutions for transferring knowledge, technologies and innovations, for creating viable ESD capacities worldwide (Article 33).

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<sup>5</sup> Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean adopted by Euro-Mediterranean Heads of States and Government in Paris, 13 July 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The Conference was organized by the Hellenic Ministry of National Education & Religious Affairs also with the support of the Italian Ministry for Environment & Territory, UNEP/MAP and MIO-ECSDE and under the auspices of Greek Parliament, UNESCO and UNECE.

<sup>7</sup> UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development adopted at the High-Level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17-18 March 2005).

<sup>8</sup> The Future We Want: Outcome document adopted at Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio, 20-22 June 2012.

<sup>9</sup> The Tbilisi Communiqué – Educate Today for a Sustainable Future Outcome document adopted at TBILISI+35 Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development Tbilisi, 6-7 September 2012

The Strategy is flexible in order to accommodate related developments regarding the post 2015 Development Agenda and the ESD post 2015 at international level:

- the UNESCO General Conference 2011 requested to develop options for transforming the Decade of ESD into an institutionalized process beyond 2014;
- the decision to develop a future implementation framework for implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD beyond 2015 by the UNECE ESD Steering Committee at its 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting;
- the Arab Ministerial resolution adopted by CAMRE at its 25th Session in Iraq Number 392 dated 25/12/2012 which underscored the rising attention of drafting an Arab strategy for Education for SD calling on specialized organizations like ALESCO, ISESCO, UNESCO and civil society to participate in drafting this strategy;
- the commitment of Environment Ministers of Islamic countries in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2012 and the report of the ISESCO presented at the 7th World Environmental Education Congress held in Marrakesh on 9-14 June 2013.

2. The Strategy has been developed through a participatory process involving governments, educational institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders of the Mediterranean region as well as international organizations.

3. This Strategy should facilitate the introduction and promotion of education for sustainable development (ESD) in the Mediterranean region and thereby contribute to the realization of our common vision.

4. The Mediterranean region encompasses countries with a rich cultural diversity and with different socio-economic and political conditions. The prospects of sustainable development depend to a great extent on changing lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production, respecting at the same time the needs of countries where poverty alleviation is still a major concern.

5. The region has both preconditions and needs for implementing the Strategy. Most countries in the region have established education systems employing professional educators, ensured equitable access to basic education and equal rights to quality education for all, achieved high levels of literacy, cooperated in various joint projects and exchanged experiences, in promoting Education in general, and in particular ESD, developed a scientific potential and provided for the participation of civil society. However, there are still challenges to be met in order to implement ESD effectively. Education systems should be improved to address the interdisciplinary nature of ESD, the involvement and partnerships of civil society including *inter alia* with NGOs, business sector and media, should be strengthened and adequate institutional and material provisions should be mobilized.

## I. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

6. The aim of this Strategy is to encourage countries of the Mediterranean to develop and incorporate ESD into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, and in non-formal and informal education. This will equip people with knowledge of and skills in sustainable development, making them more competent and confident and increasing their opportunities for acting for a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature<sup>10</sup> and with concern for social values, gender equity and cultural diversity.

7. The objectives of this Strategy, which will contribute to the achievement of the aim, are to:

- (a) Ensure that policy, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks support ESD;
- (b) Promote SD through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) Equip educators with the competence to include SD in their teaching;
- (d) Ensure that adequate tools and materials for ESD are accessible;
- (e) Promote research on and development of ESD;

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<sup>10</sup> The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development, and that they are entitled to a healthy and productive life, in harmony with nature (See also Plan of Implementation, World Summit on Sustainable Development, UN, 2002).

- (f) Strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels, including exchange of experience and technologies within the Mediterranean region.

## II. SCOPE

8. The Strategy will be endorsed by interested Mediterranean countries. States outside the region are also encouraged to follow it.

9. The Strategy is addressed to governments, motivating and advising them on how to develop policies and practices that incorporate sustainable development into education and learning with the involvement of educators and other stakeholders. Since education for sustainable development must take account of local, subnational, national and regional circumstances, it may place varying degrees of emphasis on the different aspects of sustainable development, depending on the country and the field of education. This Strategy will serve as a flexible framework for the countries of the region, given that its implementation is driven by countries' priorities and initiatives addressing their specific needs and circumstances.

10. The Strategy encourages interdepartmental<sup>11</sup>, multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships, thereby stimulating investment of material and human resources in ESD.

11. The Strategy encompasses the basic provisions of Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments<sup>12</sup>.

12. The Strategy supports the implementation of the communication, education, public-participation and awareness-raising provisions of multilateral environmental and other relevant agreements. It should also support the implementation of principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Aarhus Convention<sup>13</sup>, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals<sup>14</sup> and Quality Education<sup>15</sup> by promoting transparent, inclusive and accountable decision-making as well as people's empowerment.

## III. PRINCIPLES

13. There is a need to consider the evolving meaning of SD. The development of a sustainable society should, therefore, be seen as a continuous learning process, exploring issues and dilemmas, where appropriate answers and solutions may change as our experience increases. Learning targets for ESD should include knowledge, skills, understanding, attitude, values and ability to act accordingly.

14. ESD is still developing as a broad and comprehensive concept, encompassing interrelated environmental, economic and social issues. It broadens the concept of environmental education (EE) which has increasingly addressed a wide range of development subjects. ESD also encompasses various elements of development and other targeted forms of education. Therefore, environmental education should be elaborated and complemented with other fields of education in an integrative approach towards education for sustainable development.

15. Key themes of SD include among other things poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace, ethics, responsibility in local and global contexts, social cohesion, democracy and governance, justice, security, human rights, health, gender equity, cultural diversity, rural and urban development, economy, production and consumption patterns, corporate responsibility, environmental protection, natural resource management

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<sup>11</sup> Between State bodies.

<sup>12</sup> The Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Aarhus (Denmark), 1998.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Millennium Declaration, The General Assembly, 8<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Ministers of Education Joint Communiqué, 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of UNESCO, 2003

and biological and landscape diversity<sup>16</sup> and access to and sharing of benefits from genetic resources<sup>17</sup>. Addressing such diverse themes in ESD requires a holistic approach<sup>4</sup>.

16. While implementing ESD, the following areas should be addressed: improving basic education, reorienting education towards sustainable development, increasing public awareness and promoting training<sup>18</sup>.

17. ESD should foster respect for and understanding of different cultures and embrace contributions from them. The role of indigenous peoples should be recognized and they should be a partner in the process of developing educational programmes. Traditional knowledge should be valued and conserved as an integral part of ESD.

18. Learners at all levels should be encouraged to use systemic, critical and creative thinking and reflection in both local and global contexts; these are prerequisites for action for sustainable development<sup>4</sup>.

19. ESD is a lifelong process from early childhood to higher and adult education and goes beyond formal education. As values, lifestyles and attitudes are established from an early age, the role of education is of particular importance for children. Since learning takes place as we take on different roles in our lives, ESD has to be considered as a “life-long” process. It should permeate learning programmes at all levels, including vocational education, training for educators, and continuous professional development for educators and decision makers.

20. Higher education should contribute significantly to ESD in the development of appropriate knowledge and competences.

21. ESD should take into account diverse local, national and regional circumstances as well as the global context, seeking a balance between global and local interests.

22. ESD could also contribute to developing rural and urban areas by increasing access to education and improving its quality. This would be beneficial to people, and in particular women, living in rural areas.

23. Addressing the ethical dimension, including issues of equity, solidarity and interdependence in the present generation and between generations, as well as relationships between humans and nature and between rich and poor, is central to sustainable development and, therefore, vital for ESD. Responsibility is inherent in ethics and becomes a practical matter for ESD.

24. Formal ESD should be permeated by experience of life and work beyond the classroom. Educators<sup>19</sup> involved in ESD play an important role in facilitating this process and in encouraging dialogue among pupils and students and the authorities and civil society<sup>15</sup>. In this way, ESD presents an opportunity for education to overcome its isolation vis-à-vis society.

25. ESD involves initiatives for developing a culture of mutual respect in communication and decision-making, shifting the focus away from solely transmitting information towards facilitating participatory learning<sup>20</sup>. ESD should therefore be recognized for its contribution to interactive and integrated policy- and

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<sup>16</sup> Framework for a draft implementation scheme for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Strategic goal D “Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services” Target 16, Para 13. of the Annex of the New Strategic plan for biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi biodiversity targets “Living in harmony with nature”

<sup>18</sup> Agenda 21.

<sup>19</sup> Educators are teachers, lecturers, trainers and all other professionals with educational tasks, as well as voluntary education leaders.

<sup>20</sup> Thessaloniki Declaration; Thessaloniki, Greece, 1997. Some countries use the term “social learning” for participatory learning.

decision-making. The role of ESD in developing and enhancing participatory democracy<sup>21</sup> should also be considered, in particular as a contribution to resolving conflicts in society and achieving justice, including through Local Agenda 21.

26. ESD requires multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnership. The main actors include governments and local authorities, the education and scientific sectors, the health sector, the private sector, industry, transport and agriculture, trade and labour unions, the mass media, non-governmental organizations, various communities, indigenous peoples and international organizations.

27. ESD should strongly promote the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and relevant international agreements related to SD.

#### **IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

28. ESD demands a reorientation away from focusing entirely on providing knowledge towards dealing with problems and identifying possible solutions. Therefore, education should retain its traditional focus on individual subjects and at the same time open the door to multi- and inter-disciplinary examination of real-life situations. This could have an impact on the structure of learning programmes and on the teaching methods, demanding that educators change from being solely transmitters and learners change from being solely recipients. Instead both should form a team.

29. Formal education institutions play an important role in developing capacities from an early age, providing knowledge and influencing attitudes and behaviour. It is important to ensure that all pupils and students acquire appropriate knowledge of SD and are aware of the impact of decisions that do not support sustainable development. An educational institution, as a whole, including pupils and students, teachers, managers and other staff as well as parents, should follow principles of SD.

30. It is important to support non-formal and informal ESD activities, since they are an essential complement to formal education, not least for adult learning. Non-formal ESD has a special role as it is often more learner-oriented, participatory and promotes lifelong learning. Informal learning in the workplace adds value for both employers and employees. Therefore, the cooperation among the different actors involved in all forms of ESD should be recognized and encouraged.

31. Appropriate initial training and re-training of educators and opportunities for them to share experiences are extremely important for the success of ESD. With heightened awareness and knowledge on sustainable development and, in particular, SD aspects in the areas where they work, educators can be more effective and lead by example. Training should also be closely linked to the relevant research findings on SD.

32. Teaching and learning in ESD are greatly enhanced by the content, quality and availability of instruction materials. Such materials, however, are not available in all countries. This is a problem for entire sector of formal education as well as non-formal and informal learning. Therefore considerable efforts should be devoted to developing and reproducing and making them accessible to all. Coherence between the instruction materials of formal and non-formal education should be encouraged and the challenge is to ensure that they are relevant to SD and locally affordable.

33. To be effective ESD should:

- (a) Be addressed in two ways: (i) through the integration of ESD themes across all relevant subjects, programmes and courses; and (ii) through the provision of specific subject programmes and courses;

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<sup>21</sup> Agenda 21.

- (b) Focus on enabling meaningful learning experiences that foster sustainable behaviour, including in educational institutions, the workplace, families and communities;
- (c) Increase cooperation and partnerships among members of the educational community and other stakeholders. Further involvement of the private sector and industry in educational processes will help to address rapid technological development and changing working conditions. Learning activities in close relation with society will add to learners' practical experience;
- (d) Provide an insight into global, regional, national and local environmental problems explaining them by means of a life-cycle approach and focusing not only on the environmental impact, but also on the economic and social implications, addressing both the natural environment and that modified by humans;
- (e) Use a wide range of participatory, process- and solution-oriented educational methods tailored to the learner. Apart from the traditional ones, these should include among other things, brainstorming, debate and argumentation, conceptual and perceptual mapping, philosophical inquiry, value clarification, simulations, scenarios, modeling, role playing, games, information and communication technology (ICT), surveys, case studies, learner-driven projects & Project-based Learning (PBL), excursions and outdoor learning, good practice analyses, workplace experience and problem solving;
- (f) Be supported by relevant instruction materials, such as, methodological, pedagogic and didactic publications, textbooks, visual aids, brochures, cases studies and good practices, electronic, audio and video resources.

34. Governments should be supportive of non-formal and informal learning because informed citizens and knowledgeable consumers are essential in enacting sustainability measures through their choices and actions, including local Agenda 21.

35. Non-formal and informal learning, including public awareness programmes, should aim to provide a better understanding of the links between social, economic and environmental issues in local and global contexts, including a time perspective. Communities, families, the media and NGOs are important actors in raising public awareness on SD.

36. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important providers of informal and non-formal learning, able to implement processes of civil empowerment as well as integrating and transforming scientific knowledge and facts into easily understandable information. Their role as mediators between governments and the general public should be recognized, promoted and supported. Partnerships among NGOs, governments and the private sector would add significant value to ESD.

37. Mass media is a powerful force in guiding consumer choice and lifestyles, especially for children and young people. The challenge is to mobilize their know-how and distribution channels to pass reliable information and key messages on SD-related issues.

38. All sectors of the workforce can contribute to national, regional and global sustainability. The development of specialized training programmes to provide professionals and decision makers with the knowledge and skills to contribute to SD has been identified as a critical component of ESD.<sup>22</sup>

39. Thus, vocational and continuing education have a very important role to play and should therefore be offered to decision makers and all professionals, especially those with a role in planning and management. It should be aimed at building knowledge and awareness of SD. Continuing education has two main activity areas: (a) upgrading knowledge and skills; and (b) providing new competencies needed in different professions and in different situations. Continuing education is one of the areas that would benefit from cooperation among the education sector, stakeholders and the community at large.

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<sup>22</sup> See also Framework for a draft implementation scheme for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.



40. Training programmes should address the key themes of SD, but at the same time take into consideration the needs of different professions and the relevance of these themes to their areas of work. Special attention should be given to subjects linked to the primary responsibility of a profession and its economic, social and environmental impacts.

41. For ESD to become part of an agenda for change towards a more sustainable society, education itself must be subject to change. Research that might contribute to ESD should be encouraged. There is a need for increased cooperation and partnerships between stakeholders in research and development activities, ranging from identifying issues to working with new knowledge and making it known and used. The results of research and development efforts should be shared with actors locally, regionally and globally, and be incorporated into different parts of the education system, experience and practice.

## **V. FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

### **1. National/State implementation**

42. Each country is responsible for implementing this Strategy. To include SD perspectives throughout education, strong political support will be necessary at all levels of governance. To that end, it is recommended that countries should translate this Strategy into their official language(s), and distribute it to the relevant authorities and designate a focal point.

43. Effective implementation of the Strategy requires its provisions to be integrated into the planning, investment and management strategies of the State and local government for all levels of education and for all educational institutions and organizations. At the same time, the implementation should be in accordance with and benefit from other relevant State, bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Existing related legal, economic and communication instruments should be adapted to the State's circumstances. Thus, countries would implement the provisions, as appropriate, in relation to their legislation, policies and operational frameworks.

44. Countries should identify their existing obligations regarding communication, education and public participation and awareness raising in international environmental and other relevant agreements in order to address these in a coherent manner through ESD.

45. The education sector consists of a broad field of actors with different regulatory management systems in different countries. It is also geared to people of different ages and in different positions in life. The challenge will be to address and implement necessary reform of policy-making and the operational framework of the education sector on a basis of trust, inclusivity and subsidiarity, and to encourage self-evaluation. It is important that those responsible for formal, non-formal and informal education cooperate with other relevant State authorities in implementing this Strategy.

46. The cooperation, shared responsibility and leadership of all relevant State bodies should be recognized as an important mechanism for good governance and be strengthened. Education and Environment Ministries, in particular, should cooperate and take the lead in initiating and encouraging the further integration of SD concerns into formal education policies, programmes and curricula at all levels and assess the implementation of the Strategy. However, close and effective cooperation with other public authorities as well as with stakeholders is also required, in particular with authorities responsible for economy.

47. There is a need for a coordination mechanism for implementing the Strategy at the State level, as well as for sharing information and stimulating partnerships among different actors<sup>23</sup>. One option is to set up a "national ESD platform" possibly under the umbrella of the councils on sustainable development or other relevant bodies, bringing together professionals from different sectors.

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<sup>23</sup> Some countries have introduced the "knowledge management" approach.

48. National<sup>24</sup> (State) implementation plans should serve as a core element of implementation. Countries should decide on a body that will be responsible for drafting their national implementation plan.

49. The national implementation plan should be developed with a participatory approach. Thus, all relevant stakeholders should be involved. It should take into consideration the actual situation in a country. Recognizing that countries may wish to set their own priorities and schedules for implementation in accordance with their needs, policies and programmes, the provisions of this chapter could serve as a guide for this work. National implementation plans should address objectives, activities, measures, tentative timetable, means of implementation and evaluation instruments.

## **2. Areas for actions**

### ***Ensure that policy, regulatory and operational frameworks support the promotion of ESD***

50. Policy, legislation, operational frameworks and curricula should include and support ESD. Key actions to achieve this could be to: adopt frameworks for ESD for all levels of education; stimulate the development of interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder cooperation, including the establishment of consultative mechanisms, as appropriate; to integrate SD principles into the study programmes and special courses at all levels of higher education, especially in initial / pre-service teacher education; improve the provision and management of education facilities towards SD and strengthen the connection between natural, technical, economic, political and social sciences in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and specialized studies. Interdisciplinary and specialized studies should be properly balanced.

### ***Promote SD through formal, non-formal and informal learning***

51. Raising public awareness of SD in and through institutions of formal education as well as communities, families, the media and NGOs should be encouraged.

52. Professional knowledge and skills of sustainable development should be improved continuously and, consequently, be part of the lifelong learning of individuals including those in sectors such as public administration, media, the private sector, industry, transport, tourism and agriculture. The development of new knowledge and the need to introduce new skills in order to give more specific substance to the concept of SD will remain a constant need, as many areas of expertise are constantly developing.

53. Key actions to achieve this could be to: offer SD-related learning opportunities in continuing education for professionals, including those in planning, management and the mass media; encourage and support community-based SD-awareness-raising activities; develop cooperation with NGOs and support their educational activities; promote cooperation among formal educational institutions and non-formal organizations as well as informal activities; encourage the media to inform and debate issues for SD to reach the general public.

### ***Develop the competence within the education sector to engage in ESD***

54. Educators, leaders and decision makers at all levels of education need to increase their knowledge about education for sustainable development in order to provide appropriate guidance and support. Therefore, competence-building efforts are necessary at all levels of both formal and non-formal education.

55. Key actions to achieve this could be to: stimulate competence development for staff in the education system, including actions for the leaders to increase their awareness of SD issues; develop criteria for validating professional competence in ESD and incorporating them in staff evaluation and; introduce and develop management systems for SD in formal educational institutions and non-formal education settings;

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<sup>24</sup> For countries with a federal governmental structure, all references to national plans apply to State and sub-State plans, when appropriate.

include SD-related issues in training and re-training programmes for educators for all levels of education; and encourage educators, including those involved in non-formal and informal education, to share experiences. The competences in ESD for educators as developed by the relevant UNECE Expert Group (2011)<sup>25</sup> should be considered.

***Ensure that adequate tools and materials for ESD are accessible***

56. Materials for ESD at all levels need to be developed, both for general courses and specialist education and for self-study and be adapted to the local conditions and needs. These pedagogical materials should become accessible to and affordable for all.

57. Key actions to achieve this could be to: stimulate the development and production of materials for educators, learners and researchers for all levels of education and training, especially in local languages; encourage the development and use of electronic, audio, video and multi-media resources and visual aids for both learning purposes and sharing information; facilitate access by electronic means and the Internet to resources and information relevant to ESD; ensure updating and coherence between materials for formal, non-formal and informal learning, develop relevant dissemination strategies.

***Promote research on and development of ESD***

58. There is a need for research and development activities in different areas of ESD, such as effective learning methods, evaluation tools, formation of attitudes and values, school/institutional development and implementation of ICT. Interdisciplinary research and development on ESD should offer a continuing basis in developing ESD.

59. The results of research and development efforts should be shared with actors locally, regionally and globally, and incorporated into different parts of the education system.

60. Key actions to achieve this could be to initiate and promote research on and development of: the content of ESD and teaching and learning methods; the economic effects of and incentives for ESD; ways of including aspects of SD and their local context in different subjects, giving priority to research that brings together the different dimensions of SD; indicators and evaluation instruments for ESD; and sharing the results of research and examples of good practices.

**3. International cooperation**

61. Cooperation on education for sustainable development, apart from contributing to the strengthening and improvement of ESD in countries, could help to ensure mutual understanding, strengthen trust and develop respect for cultural values, thereby building friendly relations between peoples and nations and contributing to peace and wellbeing.

62. There is a need at the regional level to review and facilitate the implementation of the Strategy and support cooperation on ESD. The regional process should take into account other developments that take place in connection with the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development and the beyond 2014 phase and be seen as a contribution to the global initiatives on ESD.

63. The region has already experience in international cooperation on education, especially in higher education. A number of national and subregional networks, education, working groups, networks and associations of universities, programmes and partnerships have started work on the development of multidisciplinary forms of education to devise solutions to the problems linked to SD. The challenge is how best to use their experience and potential to promote ESD. Another challenge is research into ESD-related issues, which still does not have a prominent role in the region. There is also a need for international cooperation on ESD in pre-school and school education.

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<sup>25</sup> “Learning for the future: competences in education for sustainable development” developed by the UNECE Expert Group on Competences in Education for Sustainable Development (2011)

64. Regional and subregional forums that bring together members of the education community, such as civil servants, educators and researchers, and other relevant actors to share their experience and good practices on SD- and ESD-related issues should receive high priority.
65. The complex nature of ESD requires that, in addition to the education community, other relevant international actors should be invited to work in partnership to implement the Strategy. This is especially relevant for international cooperation aimed at improving SD-related knowledge and skills for different professionals and decision makers.
66. Experiences and needs vary in different parts of the Mediterranean region. Subregional cooperation needs to be strengthened. This would make it possible to work closely on those issues that are of high importance for a given subregion, thereby helping countries to attain the best practical results.
67. Further assessment of the needs in different subregions is required. Some of their problems are lack of adequate instruction materials, the inefficient use of the capacity of higher education and research institutions, the shortage of skilled educators and insufficient awareness raising as well as a lack of interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder cooperation on ESD. Another challenge that should be addressed is the poor quality of education for children living in rural areas and the lack of financial and human resources to develop ESD in those areas. Thus, providing capacity building, financial assistance and support to education, research and public awareness programmes on SD in countries with policies and economies in transition should be recognized as an important issue and be considered by governments, relevant organizations and donors accordingly<sup>10</sup>.
68. Key actions could be to: strengthen existing regional and subregional alliances and networks working on ESD and encourage twinning programmes, bilateral cooperation and partnerships; use, as appropriate, existing international legally binding instruments such as the Aarhus Convention and other relevant agreements to raise awareness of SD; facilitate the sharing of good practices and experiences, innovations and information of national experiences and projects in development cooperation on ESD-related issues, e.g. by using ICT tools the Internet and the social media; include ESD in relevant bilateral and multilateral programmes; encourage the participation of NGOs and other major groups in international cooperation on ESD; encourage and coordinate international events for SD-awareness raising; and encourage the share of experience.
69. To ensure efficient regional governance and communication, the appointment of ESD focal points in all Mediterranean countries is required. Furthermore, the establishment and modalities of a Mediterranean Commission for ESD (MCESD) consisting of representatives of the Environment and Education (or other relevant) Ministries and competent international/regional organisations as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) will be explored, to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy. The UfM, in cooperation with other competent organisations (i.e. UNESCO, MCSD, UNEP/MAP, UNECE) provides the platform for regional cooperation on ESD.
70. At the UfM Conferences, relevant Ministers may wish to discuss progress in the Strategy's implementation based on national and other relevant reports. Environmental performance reviews may also include an assessment of the reviewed country's efforts on ESD.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

71. Governments should play a proactive role in promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD in their countries. They should assess and regularly follow up its implementation at all levels of governance.
72. Local educational authorities and institutions of formal education are encouraged to take on responsibility for implementing the relevant provisions of the Strategy and monitoring it.

73. Relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, the education and scientific sectors, the environment and health sectors, the private sector, industry, transport, tourism and agriculture, trade and labour unions, the media, non-governmental organizations, various communities, indigenous peoples and regional and international organizations active in the region should be invited to define their priorities and take responsibility for implementing and following up the Strategy.

## **5. Financial matters**

74. Ensuring adequate financial means to implement the Strategy at national and subnational level is an important precondition for its success in assessing the costs of implementing measures that are necessary to achieve the objective of the Strategy and the impact of such an investment, it is essential to understand the value of education in introducing SD policies and practices in society. Education should be seen also as a management tool and investment that will pay off in the long term.

75. The cost of implementing this Strategy should, in general, be borne by each country in coordination with other investments for Education. Governments should therefore ensure that appropriate resources are available. Many of the proposed actions can be incorporated into ongoing development work in the education sector and supported by public and private funds. Some actions could be more easily carried out as subregional or region-wide projects co-supported by relevant regional organisations and donors.

76. Governments should consider using budgets and economic incentives to finance ESD for all forms of education, including introducing scholarships on ESD and capacity building in educational institutions. ESD research should also be supported through appropriate mechanisms. Partnerships may be formed and should be encouraged to seek support, including contributions in kind, from international funding agencies and the private sector.

77. Efforts should be made to include ESD components in relevant bilateral and multilateral development/aid programmes considering investment in ESD as a development activity.

## **6. Evaluation timetable and modalities**

78. In order to assess the implementation of the Strategy, a time frame should be set and indicators adopted taking into account the relevant work carried out under the UNECE. Enabling people to act in favour of SD is a matter of quality of education and result of their studies. Introducing SD aspects into all forms and levels of education is a long process and the outcome can, therefore, be measured only over a long period of time. In this line the 7<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Youth Forum strongly requested to transform the UN Decade on ESD into an institutionalized process beyond 2014, under the auspices of UNESCO<sup>26</sup>. Rio+20 recommended the promotion of ESD beyond the UN Decade of ESD<sup>8</sup>. In the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO<sup>27</sup> the countries endorsed the Draft Global Action Programme of ESD as follow-up of DESD after 2014. The Mediterranean Strategy on ESD facilitates the implementation of the Global Action Programme of ESD beyond 2014.

79. Implementation of the Strategy should be seen as a continuous process. However, relevant indicators are proposed deriving from the relevant work of UNECE<sup>28</sup>, to be used as reference in order to facilitate assessment of its progress. Two phases for implementation are proposed:

Phase I (2014-2016): National Strategies and Action Plans to be in place. This would include a review of current policies, legal and operational frameworks, financial mechanisms, and educational activities, and would also include identification of any obstacles or gaps. Remedial action should be considered to

<sup>26</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Youth Forum, Final Report, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Draft Global Action Programme of ESD as follow-up of DESD after 2014, 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, 36C/Resolution 16, 190 EX/Decision 9 and 192 EX/Decision 6, Paris, November 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development included in the Guidance for Reporting prepared by the UNECE Expert Group on Indicators for ESD and adopted at the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD (19-20/2/2009)

overcome weaknesses and a relevant national implementation plan drafted. Evaluation methods and indicators for the implementation of ESD, in particular qualitative ones, should be developed. Countries that are reporting to the UNECE are not requested to report again. At their Conference, Ministers can demonstrate their commitment to the Strategy, celebrate successes, share issues and concerns, and report on progress of their national/State strategies. Additionally countries should review progress made in the implementation of their respective national/State strategies and revise them, if necessary

Phase II (2017 - 2020 and beyond): countries should have made considerable progress in implementing ESD.

80. The Secretariat of the UfM (UfMS), supported scientifically/technically by MEdIES<sup>29</sup> will facilitate its promotion, implementation, monitoring and reporting on progress. A 5-year Action Plan will be developed for the promotion of regional and subregional activities on ESD, including capacity building activities at national level, taking into account the Global Action Programme of ESD as a follow-up of DESD after 2014. The implementation of the Strategy at regional level will be financed by voluntary contribution of States, intergovernmental organisations, and any other source, public or private, with genuine interest in ESD (formal, non-formal and informal).

81. The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development is endorsed at the UfM Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change. The Strategy will be formally presented at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to be held in Japan in November 2014 on the occasion of the end of the UN Decade of ESD as a concrete contribution of the Mediterranean eco-region to the UNDESD, to the post-2014 Global Action Programme and the sustainable development of the region.

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<sup>29</sup> The Mediterranean Initiative for Environment and Sustainability ([www.medies.net](http://www.medies.net))

**Action Plan  
of the Mediterranean Strategy on  
Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD)**

## **I. JUSTIFICATION**

The World as a whole, and the Mediterranean Region in particular, face important challenges related to a complex combination of natural phenomena and, mostly, anthropogenic pressures resulting in accelerating climate variability and change, depletion or deterioration of vital natural resources, such as water, degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, pollution of the atmosphere, the terrestrial and aquatic environment, contamination of the food chain, impacts on health and a series of important socioeconomic consequences and phenomena related to the still prevailing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, the rapidly increasing population, migration, inequalities - including poverty and gender-related ones, as well as the various tensions including armed conflicts, terrorism and occupation exerted at least on some parts of the wider region followed by misery, displacement and mass flows of refugees. Some of the above are also related to economies characterised, in general, by low productivity and low efficiency of natural resources utilisation, while at the root of many of the tensions, one could find lack of trust and understanding frequently based on ignorance or erratic education.

Many of the above challenges could be addressed through public policies, “widening of the horizons” of societies and adaptation of individual choices and behaviours, many of which could be influenced significantly and positively through appropriate education, especially if the latter is of quality and oriented to sustainable development.

It has been repeatedly recognised that appropriate education is the prerequisite for addressing all issues related to Sustainable Development (SD) as it creates the necessary enabling environment and enhances competences as well as individual and collective social commitment for the needed transformation for creating more sustainable societies.

Despite the efforts of international organisations and countries, including governments, educational institutions, economic sectors and civil society organisations, at large, there is an urgent need throughout the Mediterranean, to promote education which could empower learners in addressing the accumulated and new challenges in a creative and optimistic way. Furthermore, a better link of education with policies, strategies and efforts promoting SD is needed for the achievement of the Global Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, in particular, SDG4 and commitments under major Conventions.

In promoting appropriate educational approaches, we are not starting from scratch. The countries of the region have already valuable experience in international cooperation on education, especially in higher education. They have followed the developments under the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (2005-2014). A number of national and subregional education networks and associations of universities, teachers education and programmes have been set up, some of which include issues linked to SD. It is noteworthy that in the national, subregional and regional level there is a wealth of experience on Environmental Education (EE) much of which have gradually integrated sustainability dimensions and evolved to ESD. The challenge is how to optimise all these initiatives and their potential in order to promote ESD and SD at regional/Mediterranean level.

To address this challenge, which extends from the classroom to the information provided by the media and the related multidisciplinary research, international/regional cooperation on ESD has been identified as a top priority by all countries and has led to the adoption of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD), a visionary and progressive policy document which, however, is still unevenly introduced and implemented in the various countries of the region.

The present Action Plan aims at facilitating the countries to set the MSED in motion through concrete programmes and synergies.

## **II. PREAMBLE**

The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSED) was endorsed by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministers of the Environment in Athens, on 13 May 2014. The Strategy was developed under the formal framework of the UfM, through a long participatory process involving international and national experts from universities, government departments, Non Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations, in general, from the North and the South of the region in several consultations, scientifically-technically coordinated by the University of Athens/UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean and supported by the Mediterranean Educational Initiative on Environment and Sustainability (MEIES) of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), many of which were organised under the EU funded Horizon 2020 Capacity Building/Mediterranean Environment Programme.

The MSED has been accepted as an integral part of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), while a specific relevant indicator has been included among those which will demonstrate the progress of the MSSD's next phase of implementation (2016-2025).

The **mandate** to develop an Action Plan for the MSED to guide its implementation and to promote regional and sub-regional activities on ESD comes from the MSED's statement that "A 5-year Action Plan will be developed for the promotion of regional and subregional activities on ESD, including capacity building activities at national level, taking into account the Global Action Programme of ESD as a follow-up of DESD after 2014". It will support the relevant to Public Awareness and Education part of the MSSD. The Action Plan has therefore been prepared accordingly, facilitated by the UoA UNESCO Chair on Management and Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean, in collaboration with MEIES of MIO-ECSDE. Apart from inputs by the countries, and stakeholders, it has also considered the outcomes of a region-wide youth survey.

## **III. GOAL & OBJECTIVES**

### **The Goal**

The Goal of the Action Plan is the facilitation of the implementation of the MSED and, as appropriate, the provisions on ESD of all other relevant Conventions and International Bodies by all the countries of the region through appropriate activities of governments and other competent stakeholders.

### **Objectives**

The specific objectives of the Action Plan are to:

1. Facilitate through regional cooperation and activities the Ministries of Education of the region in planning and implementing their national ESD priorities as it relates to appropriate resources, thematic areas, educators' competences, etc.
2. Raise throughout the region the awareness and recognition of the fundamental role of Education, and ESD in particular as quality education, emphasizing also the developmental transformative and participatory character of ESD.
3. Ensure further support by governments and other bodies, mobilizing appropriate resources as it regards ESD mainstreaming, as called for by the MSED.



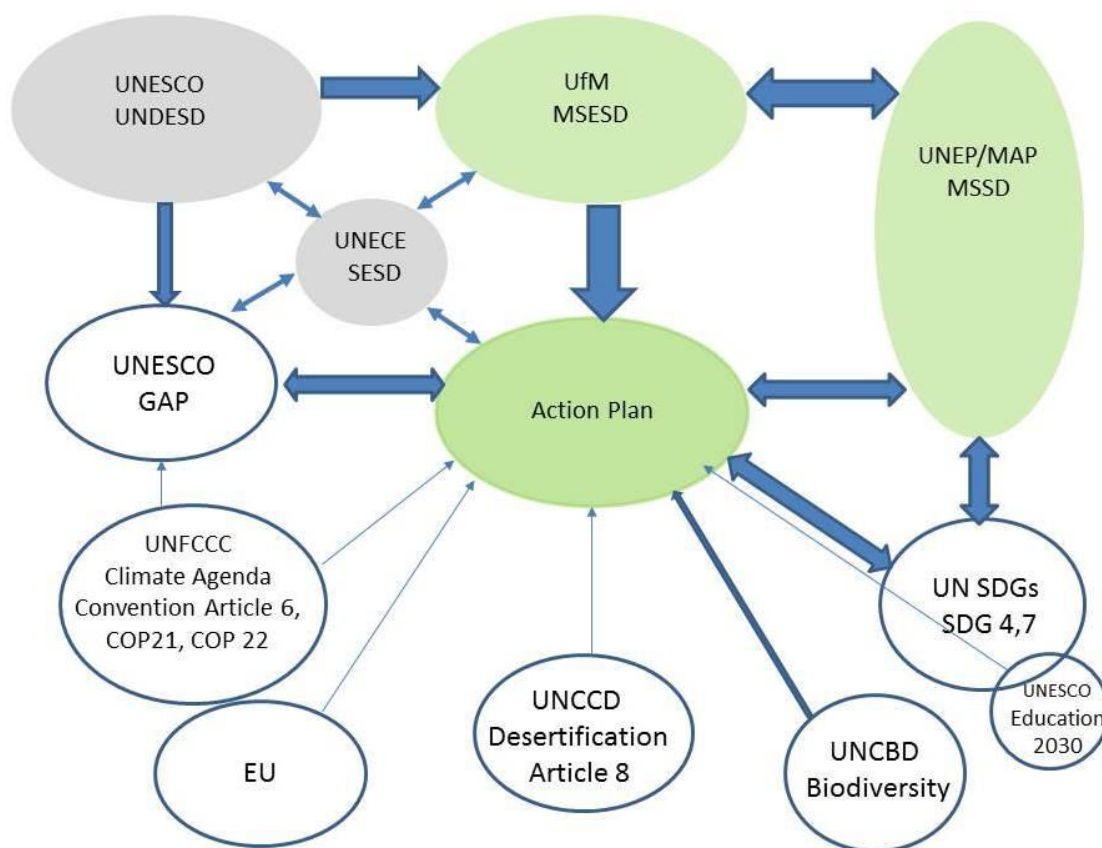
4. Support the educational community of the region in content development for ESD along the lines described in the MSES and for increasing human and material resources regarding the production of publically available educational materials, teacher training material, etc.
5. Assist Ministries of Environment, Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, etc. of the region in mainstreaming their awareness and education campaigns and initiatives related to the SDGs, viewing the access to the aforementioned resources not only as basic need but also from the perspective of the human rights.
6. Provide identified priority areas to donors and supporters in regard to ESD key themes for the Mediterranean region.
7. Help the countries to fulfill their international commitments related to ESD towards UNESCO and other International Organisations.
8. Promote regional research projects building on existing regional and subregional experiences.
9. Enhance international cooperation among Educational Institutions and other stakeholders and CSOs in promoting effectively the SDGs and sustainable development approaches in the Mediterranean, through regional activities.
10. Contribute in addressing, through regional educational activities, the economic and humanitarian crises and peace issues in the region.
11. Facilitate the better synergy between educational initiatives and the private sector particularly as it concerns the optimisation of interactions within the corporate social responsibility programmes of enterprises and the “opening” to the society initiatives of educational institutions.

#### **IV. BACKGROUND**

The Action Plan is a “new generation” instrument, which could serve in an integrated way all major international commitments of the countries of the region related to ESD in a way easy to be followed by national administrations, reducing unnecessary overlaps and repetitions.

It is stressed that the Action Plan is directly related, on the one hand, to the two major relevant regional Mediterranean processes, namely: the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, under the UfM, and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) (2016-2025) of the Barcelona Convention, coordinated by UNEP/MAP, and on the other, on the promotion and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while it takes due consideration and integrates the other relevant provisions deriving from international conventions and important international developments that have occurred since May 2014.

The figure below demonstrates the dynamic relations and initiatives (presented in the following paragraphs) that were considered for the drafting of the Action Plan and which are “serviced” by it.



1. The **Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSED)**. The Action Plan stems from and is fully aligned with it. The MSED in its 81 Articles provides the regional Vision, defines the Aims and Objectives, the Scope and the Principles, explains the Implication for Education and proposes the Framework for Implementation identifying areas for action and national and international/regional level, while it also clarifies the modalities. The Framework for Implementation is the one providing the structural elements for the Action Plan.

### AIM

The aim of the Strategy is to encourage countries of the Mediterranean to develop and incorporate ESD into their formal education systems, in all relevant subjects, and in non-formal and informal education.

Objectives:

- (a) Ensure that policy, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks support ESD;
- (b) Promote SD through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) Equip educators with the competence to include SD in their teaching;
- (d) Ensure that adequate tools and materials for ESD are accessible;
- (e) Promote research on and development of ESD;
- (f) Strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels, including exchange of experience and technologies within the Mediterranean region

2. The **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD 2016-2025)** is based on the integration between socio-economic development and protection of natural resources. This principle is encapsulated in the subtitle of the Strategy: “investing in environmental sustainability to

achieve social and economic development”. MSSD 2016-2025 is complementary with the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production for the Mediterranean and its Roadmap for implementation, which focuses on four priority areas: e.g. food, agriculture and fisheries; goods manufacturing; tourism; and, housing and construction. Those areas represent drivers of pollution generation and environmental pressures on the marine and coastal ecosystems but at the same time high contributors to the Mediterranean economies and to social well-being. The MSSD 2016-2025 was adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention (including the EU) gathered in the 19th Conference of Parties (Athens, 9-12 February 2016) and is articulated around 6 objectives with 29 strategic directions and 147 actions. Within this Strategy, the MSED was accepted as an integral part while it was also included in the “Athens Declaration” as instrumental to achieve the SDGs (“The Ministers mindful of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, resolve to enhance public awareness and the role of education promoting sustainability and the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean”).

In defining a regional process for the monitoring of the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 in relation with the adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the Mediterranean region, a first core set of indicators (30-40), the so-called "Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard" are under development that will be accessible and easy to communicate to decision makers. In this core set, the reference to the MSED and an indicator for the Action Plan are included (see indicators).

3. The **UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD** that followed the UN Decade on ESD (post 2015 period), and in particular its Five Priority Action Areas, namely:

- i) Advancing ESD policy by mainstreaming ESD into both education and sustainable development policies.
- ii) Transforming learning and training environments by integrating sustainability principles into education and training settings.
- iii) Building capacities of educators and trainers to more effectively deliver ESD.
- iv) Empowering and mobilizing youth by multiplying ESD actions among and led by youth.
- v) Accelerating sustainable solutions at local and community level, scaling up ESD projects and multi-stakeholder ESD networks.

4. The **Education 2030 Framework for Action** and the Incheon Declaration which set out a new vision of Education towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.

5. The **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** adopted by all the UN Member States, in most of which Education is mentioned as necessary for achieving their targets while SDG4 on Education emphasises the need to ensure that all girls and boys have quality primary and secondary education and all men and women have access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education as foundation of improving people’s lives and sustainable development. Target 4.7 in particular provides that, “by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

6. The **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** (1992), in its Article 6, specifies that “the parties shall promote at the National and as appropriate sub-regional and regional levels. the development and implementation of educational and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects; ... Training of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Personnel; ...Development and exchange of educational and public awareness material on climate change and its effects; and the development and implementation of education and training programmes, including the strengthening

of national institutions and the exchange or secondment of personnel to train experts in this field, in particular for developing countries”.

Furthermore, the **UN Conference on Climate Change COP 21** (Paris, December 2015) hosted representatives of 195 governments who agreed in holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and in pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in order to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. In the Paris negotiations the critical role of education in climate change was given special attention: ESD and climate change education were included in the Paris Agreement, approved by the countries, while an entire thematic day of the Conference was dedicated to Education recognizing its top priority in the Climate Change Agenda.

In addition, at the High Level meeting organized during the COP22 in Marrakesh on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, the UNESCO/UNFCCC Guidelines were launched and the role of education in preparing societies for global change and a greener future was a clear message.

7. The **UN Convention to Combat Desertification** (UNCCD, 1994) in its article 8 provides that “the overall strategy of national action programmes (to combat desertification), shall aim at strengthening the capacity of local authorities and ensuring the active involvement of local populations, communities and groups, with emphasis on education and training, mobilization of non-governmental organizations with proven expertise and strengthening of decentralized governmental structures. They shall, as appropriate, include training with regard to, and strengthening, public awareness and environmental education campaigns and disseminating knowledge of techniques relating to the sustainable management of natural resources”. Also under article 11 it defines that priority areas for subregional action programmes shall, as appropriate, focus on capacity building, education and public awareness activities that are better carried out or supported at the subregional level.

8. The **UN Convention on Biological Diversity** (UNCBD), in its Article 13 provides that “the Contracting Parties shall:

- a) promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes, and
- b) cooperate, as appropriate, with other States and international organisations in developing educational and public awareness programmes with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”.

9. The Framework for the future implementation of the **UNECE Strategy for ESD** which provides for a series of countries of the north and east coasts of the Mediterranean (adopted at the 8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016) which calls for:

- 1) Encouraging whole-institution approaches by establishing ESD school plans or embedding ESD in existing school plans.
- 2) Promoting the extension of ESD in Teacher Education and in the Training of all educators.
- 3) Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in support of sustainable development and green economy.
- 4) Strengthening integration of ESD in both international and national education and sustainable development policies and other relevant policies.
- 5) Linking ESD in formal, informal and non-formal education.
- 6) Acknowledging the important role of networks, including those of civil society, academia and science, non-governmental organizations, business and enterprises, in implementing ESD.

A series of indicators have been introduced by UNECE some of which have been included (see V.D).

10. The relevant League of the Arab States efforts/initiatives namely: **the Plan for the Development of Education in Arab Countries** adopted in the Damascus Summit (2008) aiming at developing the quality of education, curricula, improving teachers’ capacities, teaching methods, at all levels of education, vocational education and life-long learning; **The Arab Decade on adult learning and Literacy 2015-2024** (Sharm El Sheikh Summit 2015); the **Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO) Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2022**.

11. The **Paris Declaration** on “Promoting Citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through Education” adopted at the informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers (17 March 2015).

In this respect, the present Action Plan meaningfully combines and reflects the provisions and commitments included in the aforementioned Conventions, Strategies and Declarations and, therefore, its implementation fulfils simultaneously all the ESD related priorities and commitments of the countries to the UN and other international organizations and fora.

Furthermore, the Action Plan was informed by a Survey on Mediterranean Youth Responses towards sustainable development and the current crisis that was run by the University of Athens /UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean and MIO-ECSDE throughout 2015.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMMES**

The Action Plan directly derives from and reflects the “Framework of Implementation” of the MSES (articles 42-70) and as a consequence, it elaborates and interprets the Framework’s components in a more detailed and concrete way suggesting an indicative roadmap, in order to assist towards:

- A. Enhancing the enabling conditions for the proper implementation of the MSES.
- B. Proposing a set of identified common regional programmes/projects of institutional/non-thematic nature.
- C. Highlighting priority thematic issues for region-wide programmes.
- D. Proposing indicators of progress and monitoring.

### **A. Enhancing the enabling conditions for the proper implementation of the MSES**

The Priority Areas of institutional and operational interventions as identified by the MSES (the numbers in brackets correspond to the relevant articles of the Strategy) are presented below, together with key Recommended Activities for the Action Plan and an indicative roadmap (the dates in the parentheses are only indicative).

Priority Area 1 [Article 42]: To include SD perspectives throughout formal, non-formal and informal education strong political support will be necessary at all levels and sectors of governance.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2017):*

- i. Translate the MSES into the national language.
- ii. Distribute it to the relevant authorities and bodies including civil society organisations.
- iii. Designate a focal point for regular contact and coordination.

Priority Area 2 [Articles 48 & 49]: National implementation plans should serve as a core element of implementation.

*Recommended Activities:*

- i. Set up a National ESD platform/Committee /Body involving all stakeholders from the relevant Ministries (Education, Environment, etc.), Academia, Educators' representatives, CSOs, etc. (till the end of 2017) to:
- ii. Draft/review/revise/amend, if needed, the National Plan on ESD. (till the end of 2018)
- iii. Launch the implementation of the National Plan (till the end of 2018).
- iv. Collect the necessary data, share information and stimulate partnerships on ESD among different actors. (starting from the end of 2018)

Priority Area 3 [Article 50]: Curricula and extra curricula activities should include and support ESD.

*Recommended Activities:*

- i. Adopt appropriate “frameworks” (including legal, institutional, learning outcome, competences) for ESD at all levels of education, in all disciplines and subjects. (till the end of 2019)
- ii. Integrate SD principles into the study programmes and introduce whenever necessary special courses at all levels of Higher Education. (till the end of 2020)
- iii. Promote “Whole Institution Approach” (WIA)\*, improve the provision and management of education facilities towards SD. (till the end of 2020)
- iv. Promote assessments of the impact of ESD programmes on learners' behaviours, employing appropriate methodologies

Priority Area 4 [Articles 52-53]: Professional development on SD and lifelong learning on SD to be promoted and enhanced.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2019):*

- i. Offer SD-related learning opportunities in education for professionals of all disciplines in relation to the efforts for achieving the SDGs and enhance their employability.
- ii. Support community-based SD awareness raising activities, involving local regional (sub national) authorities, media, CSOs/NGOs, as well as formal educational institutions.

Priority Area 5 [Articles 54-55]: Professionals within the education sector to build capacities on ESD.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2019):*

- i. Provide pre-service ESD competence development opportunities for young educators and for staff involved in the education sector.
- ii. Include ESD related issues in in-service training and re-training programmes for educators at all levels of education and for other stakeholders in the educational field (Directors, Inspectors, Counselors, etc.).
- iii. Familiarize educators with the pedagogical approaches of ESD in the formal and non-formal context and all the interested parties of the school process with the theory and praxis of the “Whole Institution Approach”. In this context educators should be provided with the

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\* *The whole-institution approach involves more than integrating sustainability in the curricula. It is a cohesive, collective and collaborative approach, implying that the whole educational institution including: curriculum and teaching/learning, campus management and “institution” culture (administration-leadership-teachers-students) recognizes diversity and promotes shared commitment to quality teaching and improving student achievements, as well as that the educational institution interacts with the local society. (UNESCO 2014).*

interdependence and freedom to undertake initiatives and adopt interactive methodologies in their educational practices.

- iv. Develop criteria for validating and recognition of professional competence in ESD. The Educators Competences in ESD developed by the UNECE Expert Group (2011) should be considered.

Priority Area 6 [Articles 56-57]: Accessible materials for ESD at all levels need to be developed.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2019):*

- i. Ensure that adequate ESD materials and other resources for educators, youth workers, learners, young people and researchers for all levels of education and training are available and open for public use.
- ii. Make use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for both learning and youth work purposes and for sharing information.
- iii. Develop strategies for appropriate dissemination of ESD materials.

Priority Area 7 [Articles 58-60]: Interdisciplinary research on ESD should offer a continuing basis in further developing ESD.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2019):*

- i. Promote research on the content of ESD, teaching and learning methods; youth work methods; the economic impacts/benefits of and incentives for ESD; indicators and evaluation instruments for ESD, involving in this activity non-education stakeholders i.e. enterprises, local authorities, youth and civil society associations, etc.
- ii. Share the results of research with relevant actors locally, regionally and globally, incorporate the results into different parts of the education system and share examples of good practices.

Priority Area 8 [Articles 61-62]: Support cooperation on ESD at the regional level to review and facilitate the implementation of the Strategy.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2019):*

Follow closely and synergise with international and regional processes (e.g. UNESCO/GAP, UfM, MSSD, SDGs), that could enhance the implementation of the MSES and, in particular, through:

- i. the co-operation of the countries at regional level.
- ii. the active involvement of the Mediterranean region in contributing to the ESD agenda at global level.

Priority Area 9 [Article 64]: Regional and subregional forums that bring together members of the education community, such as civil servants, educators and researchers, and other relevant actors including youth and civil society actors to share their experience and good practices on SD- and ESD-related issues should receive high priority.

*Recommended Activities (till the end of 2021):*

- i. Reinforce international cooperation in the framework of the implementation of the MSES and the National Plans.
- ii. Utilise systematically ESD in supporting common activities of countries for the achievements of the SDGs at regional and subregional level.
- iii. Elaborate and implement an appropriate high level information/training programme on SD challenges and opportunities in the Mediterranean targeting decision makers, parliamentarians, national and local authorities, administrators, leadership in the private sector, the media, etc.

#### Priority Area 10 [Article 65]: (till the end of 2021)

The complex nature of ESD requires that, in addition to the education community, other relevant international actors be involved for enhancing SD related knowledge and skills of professionals and decision makers.

#### *Recommended Activities (till the end of 2021):*

Actively involve international/regional organisations, Chambers of crucial sectors, e.g. Tourism, Agriculture, Water, and organisations representing Parliamentarians, Municipal Councils, youth organisations, etc., to work in partnership with the countries and other stakeholders contributing to, benefiting from and promoting the implementation of the MSES.

Priority Area 11 [Article 66]: Experiences and needs vary in different parts of the Mediterranean region. Subregional cooperation needs to be strengthened.

#### *Recommended Activities:*

Subregional programmes such as those related to: 5+5 for the Western Mediterranean subregion on Water, the Ionian-Adriatic initiative, etc., need to develop or synergise with educational components. Also the already labelled under the UfM “Blue-Green Med Project” with partnership of several regional CSOs under the UfM needs to be supported and implemented (till the end of 2019). Exchange and share the good practices in ESD produced by the aforementioned processes.

Priority Area 12 [Articles 67-68]: Continuous assessment of the ESD needs in different subregions is required. Some of their problems are lack of adequate teaching and awareness materials, the inefficient use of the capacity of higher education and research institutions, the shortage of skilled educators and insufficient awareness raising as well as a lack of interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder cooperation on ESD.

#### *Recommended Activities:*

- i. Reinforce the production of ESD materials in cooperation with UNESCO, and other regional competent bodies and organisations. (till the end of 2019)
- ii. Strengthen existing regional and subregional alliances and networks working on ESD and encourage twinning programmes, bilateral cooperation and partnerships; peer-to-peer capacity building. (till the end of 2019)
- iii. Use, as appropriate, other relevant agreements to raise awareness of SD; facilitate the sharing of good practices and experiences on innovation and information of national experiences and projects in development cooperation on ESD-related issues, e.g. by using ICT tools the Internet and social media; include ESD in relevant bilateral and multilateral programmes; encourage the participation of NGOs and other major groups in international cooperation on ESD; encourage and coordinate international events for SD-awareness raising; and encourage the sharing of experience. (till the end of 2020)

## **B. Proposed Regional Programmes**

The Action Plan includes the following set of identified common regional ‘institutional’ (non-thematic) programmes, some either existing and some new/proposed, that could help the countries not only to raise awareness on environment and SD, on key for the region topics, but also as tools to create the necessary ‘enabling’ environment in order to achieve various SDGs. The proposed programmes should be open to all countries and stakeholders of the region and could be developed and implemented by making systematic use of the existing opportunities and programmes provided by



UNESCO, the EU, UNEP, etc. and of the existing networking schemes among Schools, Universities, Educational Centres, CSOs/NGOs, etc.

1. Programme for the promotion of the Whole Institution Approach in at least 50% of the schools of each country based on three-year ESD school plans involving all classes and available means (e.g. including application of Non Conventional Water Resources, increasing the energy efficiency of schools through various means, waste management, school gardens, alternative transportation, health nutrition, promotion of dialogue, consensus and respect of different opinions, promoting action and change at school and in the community, active relationship with the school neighborhood and local society, participatory school governance, students' participation in decision formulation, parents' involvement in projects, projects/activities on SDGs making links of local relevance, projects with farmers, professionals, SCP initiatives, etc.).
2. School Twinning Programme for primary and secondary education levels between different countries of the region.
3. Programme to mobilise youth activities including activities of youth associations and programmes supported by national and local authorities.
4. Programme for supporting joint projects among Schools, Local Authorities, Private Sector and NGOs (CSOs) of the Mediterranean region (North – South, South-South) on ESD.
5. Programme for enhancing the linkage between outdoor education, ESD and specially designated areas (e.g. Biosphere Reserves, Protected Areas) with an emphasis on training activities and regional/sub-regional summer schools/universities, etc.
6. “Peer-to-peer” Capacity Building Programme for school teachers and/or staff of Ministries of Education, etc. within e.g. an extended SWIM-Horizon2020 Support Mechanism.
7. Programme on ESD inclusion in Higher Education, particularly at the post-graduate level.
8. Programmes supporting Exchanges on ESD among Educational Institutions of the Mediterranean region (like the Erasmus+ for the EU).
9. Programme on common e-learning courses on SD/ESD among Mediterranean Universities.
10. Programme aiming at the promotion and adoption of ESD Charters by Higher Education Institutions based on the Whole Institution Approach (e.g. curricula reform including or reinforcing basic courses on SD in the Mediterranean).
11. Post-graduate programmes among Mediterranean Universities for joint Master Degrees on ESD/SD issues.
12. Programme on Research on ESD involving Higher Education and Research Institutes and Centres from the entire Euro-Mediterranean region.
13. Programme for the enhancement of cooperation on ESD by strengthening and expanding the regional Networks working on ESD.
14. Supporting Programmes for Regional cooperation on the adult education sector and life-long learning.
15. Creation of an Association of Mediterranean Training Centres with competences on ESD.

16. Programme covering different aspects of ESD in view of the extreme importance of the refugee and migration crisis evolving in the Mediterranean addressing (a) refugees and migrants with emphasis on children, (b) the host communities, (c) vocational trainings.

17. Capacity Building Programme for Media/Journalists dealing with awareness raising on ESD issues.

### **C. Priority thematic issues for ESD in the Mediterranean region**

The priority thematic issues regarding ESD which regional programmes and activities shall target, either independently or as cross-cutting issues, are listed below together with some relevant key international and regional potential partners.

1. Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation building on the guidelines issued by UNESCO and UNFCCC | UN Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness Secretariat of UNFCCC; GWP-Med; UfM
2. Alternative Energy Sources; Energy footprint | UN-Energy; UfM
3. Biodiversity; Sustainable management of Protected Areas; Ecosystem services | UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme; International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD); UfM; WWF; BirdLife International
4. Land erosion and desertification | UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); UfM
5. Cultural Diversity, Heritage and the values it carries, with due attention to the importance of native languages and indigenous traditions| UNESCO; The Euro-Mediterranean Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures; MIO-ECSDE
6. Empowerment of Women and Youth | The Euro-Mediterranean Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures (ALF); UN Population Fund; UN Women; UfM
7. Integrated Water Resources Management; Non Conventional Water Resources (NCWRs) | Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med); UfM
8. Marine Resources; Blue/Green Economy; Fisheries; Marine litter; Integrated Coastal Zone Management | UNEP-MAP; UfM; The follow-up to the Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership)
9. Migration and Refugees Crisis - direct and indirect impacts including rights of displaced populations | The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR); ALF
10. Peace / Conflict resolution and promotion of spirit of tolerance, co-existence, away from religious and cultural fundamentalism | UNESCO; the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR); ALF
11. Public Participation in planning and decision making on Sustainable Development issues | Aarhus Convention; MIO-ECSDE; RAED
12. Sustainable cities; Urban environment | Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI); MedCities; GWP-Med ; UfM; ALF
13. Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns | UNEP 10 Year Framework Programme/Global Action on SCR; UNEP-MAP SCP/RAC; UfM

14. Waste Management; Life Cycle of Products; Recycling | UNEP-MAP SCP/RAC; UfM; SWEEP Net

15. Sustainable Tourism | Sustainable Tourism Programme of the UNEP 10 Year Framework Programme on SCR; UfM

16. Private Sector and Public Private Synergies for SD (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility-CSR) | OECD; GWP; UfM

#### **D. Proposed Indicators of progress, monitoring and reporting**

Consistent with Article 70 of the MSES, Ministers, at relevant regional Conferences (UfM, MCSD, UNESCO, etc.) on Education, Environment, Sustainable Development, etc., may wish to include sessions, discuss and report progress on the implementation of the MSES.

The following initial set of indicators to monitor the MSES's progress and to serve also reporting purposes are proposed. They will be further enriched and elaborated in line with developments at Mediterranean and Global level.

INDICATOR 1. Number of countries that have launched national strategies on ESD. Deriving from the "Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard" (under development) that will be used for monitoring the progress of implementation of the MSSD (2016-2015)

INDICATOR 2. Extent to which (i) Global Citizenship Education and (ii) Education for Sustainable Development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed in

- (a) national education policies
- (b) curricula
- (c) teacher education
- (d) student assessment

This can be derived from the global indicators (under development) for SDG 4.7. Guidelines for the assessment of the components of the indicator could eventually be deduced from the UNECE Indicators on ESD already used by some of the Mediterranean countries ([http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/01\\_Typo3site/LearningFromEachOther.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/01_Typo3site/LearningFromEachOther.pdf))

INDICATOR 3. Percentage of students by age group (or level of education) showing adequate understanding of issues relating to global citizenship and sustainability. This can be derived from the thematic indicators (under development) for SDG 4.7

INDICATOR 4. Extent to which regional/international cooperation on ESD is strengthened within the Mediterranean region, and more specifically:

- (a) The public authorities that cooperate in or support international networks on ESD (Yes/No and list of networks)
- (b) The educational institutions/organisations (formal and non-formal) in the countries that participate in international networks related to ESD (Yes/No and list of networks)
- (c) Existence of State, bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation mechanisms/agreements that include an explicit ESD component (Yes/No and list of mechanisms/agreements)
- (d) Steps taken by the Government to promote ESD in international forums outside the region (Y/N and list of initiatives)

Deriving from the UNECE Indicators on ESD

## **VI. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES and FINANCING**

1. Consistent with Articles 71 to 77 of the MSES, it is reaffirmed that the implementation of the Action Plan is primarily the responsibility of the Governments and the Authorities designated for the implementation of Educational Policies of each country. Because of the multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of ESD, other Ministries, Agencies, organisations and stakeholders should be encouraged to support ESD initiatives and collaborate in the design, support and implementation of ESD programmes beyond the schooling system, recognising ESD interventions as important components of management and professional development of various sectors including health, industry, tourism, agriculture, financing, trade, construction and media. To facilitate coordinated approaches, countries are encouraged to appoint an Officer/Focal Point responsible for ESD in every Ministry of Education.
2. For the MSES and its Action Plan to substantially contribute to the sustainable future of the Mediterranean, ensuring adequate funding for ESD is an important precondition. Although, as stated in Article 75 of the MSES, the cost of its implementation should, in principle, be borne by each country in coordination with other investments for Education, ESD should be supported also from additional budgets and funds dedicated to the achievement of the SDGs, beyond SDG 4 and contributions by donors. Similarly countries facing serious refugee flows should be assisted in dealing with ESD for refugees and host communities.
3. The proposed regional activities and programmes (V.B and V.C) require adequate funding. International Organisations and Agencies, the EU, Foundations and private donors should include the Priority Areas and themes in their budget programming and their calls for proposals. At the same time, systematic efforts should be made to include ESD components in relevant bilateral and multilateral development/aid programmes, including with the EU, considering investment in ESD as a genuine development activity. The establishment of a specialised ESD Fund may be considered.
4. A Mediterranean Committee for ESD is to be established for following up and promoting the implementation of the MSES and its Action Plan. The Committee will collaborate closely with the Global Action Programme (GAP) for ESD of UNESCO, the European Union, the League of the Arab States, the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCS) (facilitated by UNEP/MAP) for pursuing its tasks. Ministries of Education and other Ministries responsible for Environment and Sustainable Development of all countries of the region or their appointed representatives will be eligible to participate. Relevant international/regional (Mediterranean) organisations/stakeholders will also participate in its works. The Committee could set up focus groups to work on specific issues such as one on ESD indicators. The MEDIES Secretariat and the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean by the University of Athens will be requested to continue their facilitating secretariat and scientifically advisory role under the guidance of the Committee.