

Education for sustainable Development

Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Serbia

Transnational Report



Taking stock study to examine sustainability education in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Serbia

Transnational report

Project



AELIA - APPLYING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND WHOLE-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY



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1. Introduction

Applying a multi-stakeholder and whole-institutional approach to education for sustainability (AELIA) is an EU-funded project that adopts a multi-stakeholder and whole-institutional approach to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project aims to support education and training institutions and their staff in enhancing their skills and competencies in the field of ESD. The primary goal of AELIA is to mainstream the concept of ESD and its practical applications within educational institutions in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia. This is achieved through the implementation of a Whole Institution Approach (WIA) and a Multi-stakeholder Strategy, ensuring the involvement of various stakeholders and fostering collaboration among them to drive sustainable development efforts in education.

The Transnational Report is a comparative analysis of the case studies and individual country reports provided by the project consortium. Its objective is to provide a comprehensive overview of the findings from the five national reports, highlighting key similarities, differences, and trends. By examining these case studies collectively, the report aims to identify common themes, best practices, and areas for improvement in the context of the subject matter. The objectives of the national research endeavours were to offer a comprehensive assessment of the status of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia. Furthermore, the aim was to identify and differentiate the diverse policies, practices, measures, and legislations that these countries have adopted to incorporate principles of Sustainable Development across various educational levels and national curricula. Additionally, the research sought to monitor the advancements made in formulating ESD-related policies and frameworks since 2005, along with the forthcoming commitments for the year 2030.

According to UNESCO, Education for Sustainable Development is seen as a coping mechanism against pressing planetary issues such as climate change and global warming, which threaten human survival and thus need to be addressed holistically before they reach catastrophic levels (UNESCO, 2023). In this context, ESD is considered the most effective method to tackle this issue by confronting it through the integration of SD principles into educational institutions.

The national reports therefore aimed to identify gaps that need to be addressed in order to establish sustainable educational institutions that adopt a comprehensive approach and align with the global framework for ESD implementation and support achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the national studies analysed the nature and quality of the gaps found and targeted remedies within the Framework of AELIA Project. For so, they delved into key concepts and mapped the ESD national landscape, first by researching literature and second, by interviewing actors of educational institutions.

The findings helped to answer the following research questions:



What is the current state of ESD implementation in the involved countries, and what is the existing vision?



Who are the key actors involved in ESD implementation in the Partner countries? What challenges do they face, and how can these challenges be addressed?



What best practices can be identified in the involved countries?

The desk research conducted for the national reports primarily involved analysing official national and regional reports submitted by government authorities. These reports included the UNECE Strategy on ESD implementation report, which covered the period from 2005 to 2019. The study also examined national strategies and considered position papers, recommendations published by stakeholders and scholars in the field of ESD to gather comprehensive insights.

To enhance the robustness of the findings, the national researchers conducted surveys and interviews with the key actors from institutions of both formal and non-formal education that are heads of institutions, educators, trainers, students and institution's staff members in their respective countries. This field research allowed for a deeper understanding of the implementation of ESD and provided valuable first-hand perspectives from the individuals involved. By combining desk research with on-the-ground investigations, the national reports obtained a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the ESD landscape in each country.



The methodology employed follows the principles of Action Research, as outlined by Shani and Pasmore, who emphasise that:

Action research may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organizational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations, in developing self-help competencies in organizational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry.

(Shani and Pasmore, 1985, p. 439 as cited in Coghlan. 31 Oct 2011, p. 48)

The combined results of the assessment provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). They can be used as a foundation for reflection and improvement. The identified gaps will be addressed to ensure the optimal application of ESD not only in Austria but also in other contexts. The findings will inform future efforts and actions to enhance the implementation of ESD, with the goal of promoting sustainability education in a meaningful and effective manner.

2. Desk research

2.1 Education for sustainable development: a general comparative overview

When comparing the situation in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Serbia regarding the integration of sustainable development principles into their education systems, one can observe some similarities and differences.

All five countries have shown significant dedication to integrating sustainable development principles into their education systems. They have formulated national strategies and established institutions and initiatives specifically aimed at promoting and implementing education for sustainable development (ESD). These countries understand the significance of equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to tackle environmental and social challenges. Their commitments reflect a shared recognition of the importance of ESD in preparing future generations to contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive society. However, because of the differences that exist among those countries, a comparison is not always constructive, as it would not consider contextual realities beyond ESD criteria.

In 2002, Austria introduced the “National Strategy for Sustainable Development,” which emphasised the importance of education for sustainability and the values and skills necessary for its implementation. Building upon this foundation, Austria launched the “Austrian Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development” in 2008. This strategy aimed to foster a comprehensive and sustainable approach to education, with the goal of enabling present and future generations to live in peace, solidarity, freedom, prosperity, and a sustainable environment. The country established key institutions such as the Forum Umweltbildung (Forum Environmental Education) in the former Dekadenbüro to coordinate and implement ESD activities. The Forum Umweltbildung is still serving as the central hub for coordinating and implementing activities related to ESD. Austria also offers professional development programs, a national competence centre, ESD modules, and a certification program for University teachers, resource centres, and partnerships to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate sustainability into their classrooms. Empowering youth for ESD

has a long tradition in the countries. Overall, Austria is one of the pioneer countries for Global Learning in Europe.

Cyprus, like the other AELIA countries, has shown a strong commitment to integrating education for sustainable development (ESD) into its educational system. The country began incorporating environmental education and ESD between 1996 and 2004, and significant progress was made during the United Nations Decade of ESD. Cyprus developed a national Strategy on ESD and established the Unit for Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD) to monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan for Environmental Education focused on ESD (NAPEESD) in 2007. NAPEESD covers various areas such as organisational framework, curriculum, research, teacher training, and non-formal learning. Cyprus has also introduced the National Curriculum for ESD, emphasising sustainable school practices and connections with the local community.

Greece aligns its approach to ESD with international frameworks such as the UNESCO Global Action Plan on ESD. The country established an Inter-ministerial Working Group on ESD to coordinate efforts across ministries and integrate sustainability education into the national curriculum. Greece promotes cross-curricular approaches and offers professional development opportunities for teachers. The collaboration of the working group with various stakeholders, including ministries, universities, research institutes, and NGOs, has led to the development of guidelines, curricula, and assessment tools that incorporate sustainability themes and promote critical thinking and responsible behaviour among students.

Romania made significant strides in integrating ESD into its education system. The Romanian Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other ministries, devised a comprehensive National Strategy for ESD that spans the timeframe of 2019-2030. The strategy aims to disseminate sustainable development values, knowledge, and skills throughout all levels of education in Romania. A curriculum update in 2020 focused on Environmental Education, incorporating ESD-related topics, with an emphasis on

interactive and project-based learning activities. In January 2023, the Government of Romania approved the National Strategy on Education for the Environment and Climate Change 2023-2030. This marks a significant milestone for Romanian education, as it is the first national strategy dedicated to education for the environment and climate change. The strategy aims to increase education and awareness among children and young people regarding sustainable development and environmental responsibility.

In Serbia, the general framework has been established, as well some aspects of ESD have already been set in motion (through field-specific courses in secondary vocational schools and elective courses in Grammar Schools dedicated to ESD but rather one-dimensional in nature (Vukić, T. & Jovanović M. 2020), or through an integrative approach to ESD by introducing the topic throughout different courses in primary and vocational secondary schools in Serbia; preschool activities based on a project approach fostered by the new national preschool curriculum, etc.). The existing National Strategy for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2008 for a period of ten years. There is no revised national strategy for the coming period though. However, Education for Sustainable Development was included in the Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia until 2030, which was adopted in June 2021. This document is based on the UNECE Strategy for ESD and provides for the evaluation and revision of educational standards, study programmes and existing curricula in order to introduce and/or develop topics that have been somewhat neglected in the past, including Education for Sustainable Development. Serbia, as an official candidate for EU membership, has adopted relevant policies

and strategies related to the green transition and sustainable development. Efforts are underway to align Serbia's education system with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The inclusion of education for sustainable development in the Strategy for the Development of Education and Upbringing in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 adopted in June 2021 demonstrates the country's commitment to integrating sustainability into its education system. The country has ESD focal points in several Ministries.

Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Serbia have demonstrated a strong commitment to integrating sustainable development principles into their respective education systems. Each

country has developed strategies, established institutions, and implemented initiatives to promote sustainability education. Although Serbia is still in the early stages of this process, it shares the vision of fostering a culture of sustainable development.

The overarching framework for all five countries is the UNESCO Global Action Plan (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which is closely aligned with the priorities and policies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for ESD. Moreover, Cyprus and Greece also adhere to the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development.

During the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, these countries developed specific national strategies for ESD. However, these strategies have not yet been updated towards the UNESCO Roadmap for ESD 2030. Instead, they are gradually intertwined with broader national strategies and plans related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, the ESD frameworks can be less accessible to educational institution leaders, even though the ministries of education are involved in all five countries.

Up to this moment, none of these countries, except Cyprus, has a current ESD strategy document specifically designed for practical use in formal and non-formal education settings. While the countries have framework documents that demonstrate the existence of a national policy, these policy documents may not provide sufficient practical guidance for educational institutions. While they have made notable efforts to incorporate sustainability education into their systems, there is still room for improvement in terms of developing practical and accessible guidelines for educational institutions to implement ESD effectively.

Another challenge is framing the ESD toward Global Citizen Education (GCED)



and other approaches that have already been popular in the partner countries, as these approaches contain elements that are similar, but potentially inconsistent with certain national curriculum objectives (IBE-UNESCO 2016). In Austria, where many stakeholders have been working for almost half a century on Development Education with more social and cultural aspects, there is a need for clear framing of the approaches used in ESD, e.g. Global Citizen Education, Global learning or Environmental Education or ESD itself.

According to Michelsen & Wells (2017):

Today education for sustainable development is seen as an innovative concept that gives a new meaning to teaching and learning in many different educational settings. Education for sustainable development is no longer an “add-on” in the curriculum alongside environmental, consumer or climate education; instead, it is an approach offering an opportunity to fundamentally rethink education. Increasingly this means taking a holistic systems approach, one which assumes that education for sustainable development and the idea of sustainability are not only important for teaching and learning processes but also for the development of educational institutions, whether they are day-care centres, schools, universities or vocational institutions.

In Greece and Serbia ESD is mostly seen through the lens of Environmental Education (EE). That tendency seems to meet the expectations of the adopted Recommendations on Learning for Environmental Sustainability of the Council of the European Union - General Secretariat of the Council (2022). Those recommendations state that it is necessary to recognise the need for interconnected learning across the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development, while placing a specific focus on the environmental pillar.

Educational institutions should also take an interest in the concept of “sustainability competencies.”

These competencies encompass the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by learners of all ages to live, work, and act in a sustainable manner. The European Sustainability Competence Framework, known as GreenComp, provides a comprehensive framework for these competencies. It includes essential elements such as critical thinking, systems thinking, and fostering a connection to nature.

GreenComp is designed to align with the ambitions set forth in the European Green Deal, which emphasises the need for sustainable practices and solutions. It recognizes the significance of “green skills” that are essential across all sectors and levels of the labour market to facilitate the green transition and the creation of new green jobs.

In fact, educational institutions are confronted with several concepts that are not always clear to them and may lead to confusion. As for the United Nations:

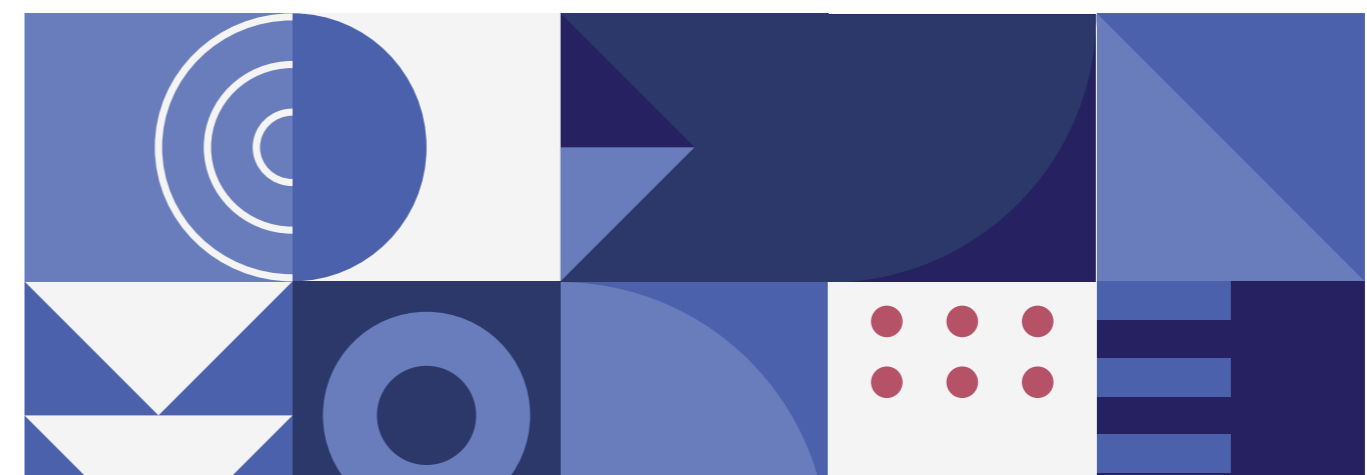
“Connected within the Target 4.7, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are recognized as mutually reinforcing approaches: both prioritise the relevance and content of education in order to ensure that education helps build a peaceful and sustainable world and both emphasise the need to foster the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that allow individuals to take informed decisions and assume active roles locally, nationally and globally

(United Nations, n.d. para. 4).

Attention should be paid to the perspective of educational institutions that are called upon to implement ESD. As stated by Kartikeya V. Sarabhai (2013):

“Strengthening a sense of global citizenship is an essential part of ESD, but one needs to be careful as we load the system and especially teachers with emerging concepts without reference to ones that are just about being understood”

(Editorial of Journal of Education for Sustainable development 2013 para. 7).



2.2 Education for Sustainable Development UNESCO 2030 Roadmap in the transnational context

Progress from 2005 to 2019 and future plans (2020 - 2030)

While the UNECE reports on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (2005 through 2019) indicated positive progress above all in formal education, the countries involved in the AELIA project still face hurdles in effectively integrating ESD into its educational practices. The deficiencies in explicit inclusion within curricula and educational standards, the limited integration in formal and non-formal education sectors and the absence of formal ESD references in dedicated legislative guidance remain areas of concern. The UNESCO “Education for sustainable development: a roadmap” (2020) provided a renewed impetus, fostering discussions and inspiring decision-makers and actors to reassess their approaches to ESD implementation, with educational institutions grappling with the introduction of new terminology and references in their pursuit of enhanced ESD practices.

2.2.1 Priority area 1: Advancing policy

According to the UNECE reports, all countries involved in the AELIA Project have made efforts to institutionalise Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by 2018 and establish working groups to implement it. Greece, although in the early stages of the first reporting period, has ongoing processes and programs. Although ESD has not yet been formally integrated into the educational curriculum through legislative acts, commitments have been made through circulars and specific laws, such as Law 3848/2010 in Greece. Austria had established the “Dekadenbüro” and introduced a specific ESD strategy, in addition to having a broader sustainability strategy called the Austrian Strategy for Sustainable Development (ÖSTRAT), which includes education and research as key objectives. Cyprus, Romania and Serbia, without specific formal strategies, had incorporated sustainability into the curriculum, established teacher-training programs, and built partnerships to promote ESD. Since 2018, these five countries have maintained their efforts to advance ESD policies.



Austria

In Austria, ESD policies and implementations have been integrated into various sectors through stakeholder networks and platforms such as FUB, Strategieguppe Globales Lernen, Austrian UNESCO Commission, Zentrum Polis, Klimabundnis, UniNEtZ, Bildung 2030, WWF, and others. The Federal Government and local public administrations provide co-financing for these platforms, enabling reporting and evaluation of the diverse policies. The Austrian education system has undergone a curriculum reform that prioritises the development of subject-specific and interdisciplinary competencies. The revised curricula aim to promote interdisciplinary thinking, criticality, communication, cooperation, and creativity (21st Century Skills).

In the higher education sector, UniNEtZ, an inter-university collaboration, plays a significant role in integrating sustainability across various university domains, including research, teaching, student initiatives, management, and public administration. UniNEtZ aims to provide strategic guidance and support to the government by developing an Options Paper that identifies proactive actions aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

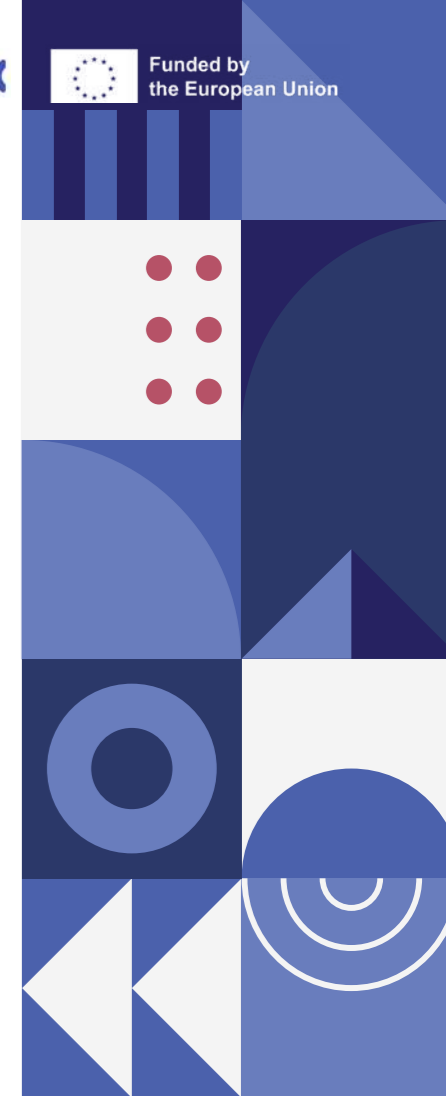
Cyprus

Cyprus has undergone a series of efforts to integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into its educational system. While the transition from Environmental Education (EE) to ESD was not linear, initiatives during the UN Decade of ESD (DESD) and Cyprus’s accession to the European Union played significant roles in promoting and integrating ESD at multiple levels.

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) was appointed as the national focal point responsible for coordinating and overseeing the deployment of the National Action Plan for Education for Environment and Sustainable Development. In 2018, the Unit for Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (UEESD) was established within CPI to address the needs and challenges of coordinating ESD implementation.

The UEESD implements central actions, including establishing an organizational and institutional framework, revising the national curriculum, creating educational resources, conducting research and evaluation, providing in-service training for educators, utilizing technology, promoting cooperation, participating in EE programs, establishing Environmental Education Centers, and securing funding for ESD-related initiatives.

Following the completion of the Strategic Planning for Environmental Education focusing on Sustainable Development (2008-2020), the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth decided to revise the National Strategic Plan for ESD (2021-2030). This revision took into account international and regional policies, new data and needs, and national priorities for the environment and sustainable development. The revised plan aimed to strengthen and promote effective changes and reforms toward a green and sustainable future.



The objectives of the revised plan include strengthening the support structure for ESD, establishing monitoring controls and quality assurance, revising ESD curricula, implementing a Whole-Institutional Approach, enhancing professional development, strengthening non-formal education and community engagement, and actively engaging in regional processes and decision-making mechanisms.

The long-term results sought to embed ESD in school life, policy integration, capacity building, and the empowerment of young people, aligning with ESG and SDGs. Overall, Cyprus is working toward the widespread integration of ESD across its educational system and society as a whole.

Greece

As reported in the Greek Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2018, the introduction of Law 4547/18, which established the “Centres for Education and Sustainability” (CES), was a significant development (UNECE, 2019). These centres aim to promote local sustainable development, raise awareness about sustainability, provide training for teachers and stakeholders, encourage research, and mobilise the local community for collaborations. The CES has also appointed “Coordinators for Sustainability” to support the activities under the Centres’ umbrella, including offering guidance on ESD to educators and trainers. At the same time, ESD was included in the Mediterranean Strategy on SD, where Greece actively participated in its drafting (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 2007). Greece was striving to reform the education sector by incorporating the principles of sustainability into all levels of education and the educational curricula. Although the Thematic Week program, which aimed to raise awareness of specific subjects related to sustainability, was eliminated in 2020, efforts are being made to integrate ESD into the curriculum through the ongoing development of a National Strategy for the promotion of ESD. Collaboration with international organisations such as UNICEF and UNESCO, as well as Greek NGOs, has been empha-

sised. These organisations have been involved in launching programs like “The World’s Largest Lesson,” which aimed to incorporate sustainability into the academic curriculum of primary and secondary schools. It was a collaboration among several NGOs (UNESCO - Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2023). The whole-institution approach was not implemented, but there were projects in progress for new environmental-friendly school buildings and a project for “sustainable schools” (Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2019).

Romania

Since 2019, Romania has revised the National Strategy for Sustainable Development to align with the SDGs, further integrated sustainability into the curriculum, and enhanced teacher professional development. Efforts have also focused on increasing awareness and engaging stakeholders in ESD initiatives. Online platforms and resources will be utilised to enhance student engagement and collaboration. Collaboration with businesses and civil society organisations will be actively pursued to advance ESD in the country. Looking ahead to 2020-2030, Romania aims to strengthen ESD policy implementation, leverage digital technologies, promote collaboration across sectors, and monitor progress towards ESD goals.

Serbia

Throughout its EU (pre) accession process, Serbia is making substantial efforts to align its legislation with that of the European Union, encompassing strategies, policies, and agendas related to sustainable development. However, a specific National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development is still missing. Notably since 2019, limited progress has been observed in this regard, partly due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected various aspects of life, including the educational sector, shifting the focus towards virtual platforms and altering teaching approaches. However, there is a promising trend with increasing research done towards this direction (Pejić et al., 2019).

While Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia have taken steps to integrate ESD into their national policies and practices, there is a lack of specific data collection and reporting on SDG 4.7, which pertains to ESD. Monitoring bodies often encounter a “data gap” in this area. The absence of specific formal ESD policies and standalone strategies could be linked to the gap in specific ESD data.

2.2.2 Priority area 2: Transforming learning environments

Austria

From 2005 to 2018, Austria demonstrated progress in transforming the learning environment for Sustainable Development (ESD) into its education system. The establishment of the Schulgemeinschaftsausschuss (SGA), a committee representing various stakeholders in the school community, aimed to foster collaboration and participatory decision-making processes within educational institutions. Austria adopted a “whole-institutional approach” to ESD, striving for widespread integration in both schools and universities. However, deficiencies were identified, such as a lack of national quality control for ESD in classroom teaching and a need for comprehensive analysis of the relationship between ESD, curricula, and cross-curricular principles.

The country has been actively integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) principles into various areas of education. Ongoing efforts include incorporating technology, creating flexible spaces, and rethinking teaching methods to support innovative and student-centred education. Austria is committed to digitalisation, as seen in initiatives like the 8-Point Plan for Digital Learning and the provision of digital devices to students. The “ÖKOLOGisierung von Schulen” program plays a significant role in promoting sustainability education, addressing a wide range of topics related to resource conservation, emissions reduction, healthy eating, and more. Future plans include continuing efforts to enhance learning environments, increase collaboration with civil society actors, and contribute to the framework of ESD for 2030.

Cyprus

The Cyprus Curriculum of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD) emphasises the transformation of learning environments through the whole-institutional approach/whole-school approach (WIA/WSA) and the formation of a community of learning for ESD. This involves changes at the pedagogical, organisational, and social levels.

At the pedagogical level, there is a focus on strengthening pedagogical and teaching approaches to integrate ESD effectively. The organisational level involves utilising the school as a pedagogical and educational tool, incorporating sustainability principles into the school's functioning. At the social level, cooperation networks are developed with organisations and institutions to foster collaboration in ESD.

In Cyprus, the Sustainable Environmental Educational Policy (SEEP) is an official whole-institution policy adopted by pre-primary and primary schools, and its preparation is mandatory since 2012.

Future plans for curricula and educational resources on ESD in Cyprus include the revision of pre-primary and primary education curricula, the development of curricula for secondary general and vocational education, the integration of school ESD policy in secondary education, the development of self-evaluation frameworks for secondary schools, and the establishment of an ISO Accreditation Scheme for WSA and ESD sustainable schools.

Additionally, there are plans to develop educational materials, both online and offline, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An online educational platform for WSA and ESD is also in development to provide resources and support for educators in implementing ESD in schools.

Greece

In Greece, just like in the other four countries, progress is made in creating digital spaces to supplement the educational process and promote ESD principles. The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) was established in 2011 to evaluate and recommend the use of teaching supplements and materials aligned with ESD goals. Websites like "digitalschool.minedu.gov.gr" and "photodentro.edu.gr" were created to provide easy access to approved materials. The "Photodentro" platform, part of the Ministry of Education's "Digital School" program, serves as a repository for educational content covering sustainability-related subjects. It is accessible to the public, students, instructors, and parents.

Greece has also made progress in transforming learning environments since 2018/19. Efforts have been made to upgrade school processes, enhance vocational education and training, and promote inclusivity. The government has focused on supplying schools with digital infrastructure and implementing projects funded by the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Fund. The development of the National Digital Academy Platform aims to improve digital competencies among citizens. Future priorities in Greece include creating specific units in universities dedicated to sustainable development, advancing inclusive education, and enhancing physical and digital accessibility.

Romania

Romania focused on transforming learning environments to support ESD from 2005 to 2018. Efforts included infrastructure development, implementing sustainable school management practices, and promoting experiential learning approaches. However, specific details on the progress and outcomes in Romania during this period were not provided. Romania has continued its commitment to transforming learning environments for ESD since 2018/19. Progress includes investments in sustainable school infrastructure, the introduction of green school certification programs, and the emphasis on outdoor education and nature-based learning experiences. Future plans in Romania involve expanding the Eco-School network, creating innovative learning spaces, and strengthening community engagement for sustainability education.

Serbia

In Serbia, significant improvements have been observed in learning environments since 2005. Schools were equipped with digital devices, and curricula underwent changes to shift from traditional role learning to project-based and problem-based approaches. Efforts were made to create a multi-stakeholder approach and collaboration in education. While progress in this area was noted, it was acknowledged that more could be done. The COVID-19 pandemic, while presenting challenges, also encouraged educational institutions to embrace and adapt to virtual environments, leading to creative and bold approaches in teaching and learning. Specific details about progress in transforming learning environments since 2018/19 were not provided. However, there is an advocacy for digital approaches in education, although concrete action plans in the field of education for sustainable development are not clearly presented.

Overall, Austria, Cyprus and Greece displayed advancements in integrating ESD principles into their education systems, while specific details about Romania's progress were not provided. Serbia demonstrated improvements in learning environments and the adoption of new teaching approaches, with recognition that further progress is possible.



2.2.3 Priority area 3: Building capacities of educators



Austria

In Austria, progress was made in building the capacities of educators from 2005 to 2018. The focus was on digitalization in teaching, research, and studies. Initiatives like eEducation Austria and the iMooX platform played significant roles in supporting educators in using digital technologies effectively and promoting IT competence among students. The implementation of services like the Apprenticeship-Systems (Dual VET-systems) also demonstrated the country's ability to respond flexibly to new requirements in the economy and ecology.

Since 2018/19, the implementation of the SDGs and ESD has been emphasised in governmental strategy documents, including at the university level. Efforts have been made to empower educators through courses like "Global Citizenship Education," which explores various SDGs and promotes quality education for sustainable development. The "EDUCATION 2030" web platform provides resources and materials related to the 2030 Agenda that have been made available. However, a key issue is the lack of compulsory training for educators in ESD within their curricula. Efforts are being made to bridge the gap in ESD among university teachers through the "Certificate for University Teachers Education for Sustainable Development" program.

In 2004, policy and curricular reforms in Cyprus led to changes in teachers' education and professional development to align with the new Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) curriculum. Various educational programs and training courses, both compulsory and optional, were developed and promoted to meet the demand for skilled and competent teachers.



Cyprus

Two series of professional development programs were implemented specifically for primary school teachers. The first series focused on providing a deep understanding of the ESD curriculum's philosophy, principles, pedagogical framework, implementation methodology, and quality standards. The second series focused on practical and school-based implementation, including the development of ESD school plans, classroom teaching, and self-assessment.

Optional ESD courses of varying content, scope, and duration were also offered to teachers and principals, including school-based seminars and on-site courses in Environmental Education (EE) centres, environmental fields, and museums.

However, research highlighted gaps in the education and support provided to principals and novice teachers. Principals lacked adequate content and form of training, calling for compulsory, practical, and experiential training in school settings or EE centers. Novice teachers also expressed a lack of self-efficacy in ESD planning and implementation.

Since the establishment of the Unit for Education for Environment and Sustainable Development in 2018, efforts have been made to develop and produce ESD materials to support practitioners. An interdisciplinary team has authored educational materials for teachers and students at all education levels, and two websites have been created for communication and knowledge dissemination on SDGs and ESD.

During the COVID school closures, digital educational tools and lesson plans on Sustainable Development Issues were developed and presented through Educational Television, a program created by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) and the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC).

The revision of the Strategic Planning for Environmental Education focusing on Sustainable Development for the 2020-2030 period emphasises the need for comprehensive ESD capacity development in pre-service and in-service teacher training and assessment. Strategic objectives include the development of mentoring courses, targeted training for school principals, further educational materials on SDGs, an online professional development platform for WSA and ESD, and linking schools with the labour market through green skills and green transitions



Greece

In Greece, capacity building for educators in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) primarily occurred through in-service training. Public administration professionals had opportunities to participate in training, capacity-building activities, and seminars on ESD and sustainable development challenges. Environmental education was incorporated into the main teacher-training process, and networks of educators had the chance to coordinate projects offered by UNESCO. The approval of the National Strategy for Biodiversity 2014-2029 emphasised the integration of biodiversity conservation and ESD in formal and non-formal education.

Since 2018/19, Greece has made progress in upgrading old school curricula to incorporate ESD methodology and the cultivation of soft and digital skills. The new curricula emphasise the use of digital tools for creativity, cooperation, and communication. An assessment tool has been launched to provide feedback and support for teachers. Unlike in the past, ESD is now part of the initial training of teachers and educators. Future plans include further improving teacher training programs and activities related to ESD to enhance the capacities of educators and promote education for sustainable development.

Romania has prioritised building the capacities of educators for ESD from 2005 to 2019. Teacher training programs were implemented to enhance knowledge and pedagogical approaches. Partnerships with universities and NGOs provided support and resources for training. Since 2019, Romania has further developed teacher training programs, increased professional development opportunities, and promoted collaboration and networking among educators, universities, NGOs, and stakeholders in the field of ESD.



Romania

Romania plans to continue building the capacities of educators for ESD from 2020 to 2030. This includes providing ongoing professional development opportunities, strengthening teacher education programs, and promoting collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools. Teacher networks and communities of practice will be established to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices. The aim is to develop a skilled and motivated teaching workforce that can effectively deliver ESD and inspire students to become agents of change for sustainable development.

Serbia

In Serbia, progress in building the capacities of educators for ESD was not explicitly mentioned in the literature from 2005 to 2018. However, courses related to aspects of sustainable development were included in the Catalogue of teacher training programs. Although there was no official platform or network of educators involved in ESD, there were informal possibilities for cooperation and networking. Since 2018/19, progress in building the capacities of educators for ESD in Serbia has been limited. While there have been some efforts, such as the availability of various Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs, the absence of training courses specifically designed for in-service teachers and educators is discouraging. Teachers and educators have expressed a need for more expertise and resources in sustainable development topics. The COVID-19 pandemic has also hindered progress in this area, with limited steps taken since its outbreak.

Austria, Greece, and Cyprus have demonstrated progress in building ESD capacities of educators throughout the education sector with initiatives, resources, and a focus on digitalization. Romania has prioritised teacher training for ESD and fostered collaboration among stakeholders. However, Serbia still faces challenges in providing comprehensive training and resources for educators in the field of sustainable development, and its progress in this area was not clearly outlined.

It is important to note that the efforts to implement ESD have not adequately addressed the role of educational institution leaders in addressing their specific needs regarding leadership and ESD competences. This observation has been echoed by others who question how to effectively address this issue, as highlighted by Müller et al.:

Education for sustainable development (ESD) aims at preparing children for this future. However, how do principals meet the challenge of handling multiple crises that require immediate actions on a day-to-day basis on the one hand and promoting long-term projects such as the implementation of ESD on the other hand—the latter being a responsibility that is not as pressing, but is no less important?

(Müller et al. 2022, p. 2)

2.2.4 Priority area 4: Empowering and mobilising youth

During this period 2005 to 2018, Austria committed to empowering and mobilising youth. Initiatives such as youngCaritas and “My Design, My Responsibility – Sustainable Fashion” played a significant role in raising awareness about social issues, promoting sustainable development, and fostering social justice. These projects aimed to engage children and young people, providing them with knowledge and opportunities to actively participate in addressing social and environmental challenges. Since 2018/19, aligning with the UNESCO roadmap on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The support of ongoing projects like My Revolution, Youlead, My Resistance-My Democracy, Yupad, Our Food-Our Future, and Generation Earth, Rebels of Change exemplify this commitment. The Austrian Youth Strategy, led by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research, aims to strengthen youth policy through the development of specific Youth Goals aligned with strategic areas of action. The implementation of the Youth Check, which evaluates legislative proposals’ impact on young people, has been mandated by law. Austria also recognises the importance of aligning its Youth Strategy with the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Goals.

The development of the Sustainable Environmental Educational Policy (SEEP) at each school engages students in designing, organising, and implementing targeted actions based on their needs and interests, as well as the characteristics and challenges of their communities. This empowers students to contribute to their communities and raise awareness among their peers and local communities.

Targeted youth mobilisation programs are implemented to sensitise civil society. For instance, the “Action Against Climate Change: The Climate Calls ‘S.O.S’” program encourages students from primary and secondary education to creatively express their concerns about climate change through visual arts. This program raises awareness about the systemic nature and chain effects of climate change and promotes a call to action. Similarly, the “Travelling SDGs Suitcase” program aims to inform, raise awareness, and mobilise citizens to make positive changes for a sustainable future. It involves the development of 17 books, each focusing on one Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), with interconnected learning scenarios promoting principles such as local-to-global thinking, school-community cooperation, intergenerational communication, and action for change.

Greece

In Greece, the progress in empowering and mobilising youth from 2005 to 2018 was relatively limited. Apart from the establishment of an Education Division by the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change in 2015 (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2015), which was preparing educational material on environmental and sustainable development issues, no major activities were implemented to mobilise youth during this period. Since 2018/19, Greece has been empowering and mobilising youth through initiatives like Skills Labs (Legislation Information Bank, 2021). These Labs are integrated into the compulsory education curriculum and focus on cultivating skills such as critical

Cyprus

The empowerment and mobilisation of youth in Cyprus are being achieved through various approaches and initiatives:

The national curriculum incorporates a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, allowing young people to develop critical thinking and a broader understanding of environmental and sustainability issues through social, political, and cultural perspectives.



thinking, communication, cooperation, creativity, and digital literacy. They aim to make students active participants in the educational process and contribute to the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the curriculum. Additionally, supported by the OECD, Greece is working on developing a national strategy for financial literacy, encouraging young people to increase their skills in using financial services and making independent financial decisions (VNR, 2022).

Romania

Romania made notable progress in empowering and mobilising youth for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) from 2005 to 2018. The country focused on supporting youth organisations, involving young people in decision-making processes, and providing leadership-training opportunities. These initiatives aimed to enhance youth engagement in sustainable development efforts and promote active participation in shaping their communities. Even after 2019, Romania has continued its engagement to empower and mobilise youth for Education for ESD. The country aims to strengthen youth engagement in sustainability initiatives, increase their representation in decision-making processes, and integrate ESD into formal and non-formal education settings. Future plans include expanding youth engagement opportunities, supporting youth-led projects, and promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills among youth.

Serbia

Unfortunately, specific data on the progress in empowering and mobilising youth in Serbia from 2005 to 2018 is not available. This indicates that there may have been limited or insufficient initiatives targeting youth empowerment and mobilisation during that period. In Serbia since then, student participation in all aspects of school life is encouraged, including the development of student bodies and associations to ensure their voices are heard. Because ESD in Serbia has mainly focused on environmental topics, there are positive developments in raising awareness among young people about environmental health. However, there is currently no indication of planned curriculum changes to incorporate other sustainable development goals into the existing course contents.

Austria

Austria stands out as a country that actively worked to empower and mobilise youth, with various initiatives addressing social, environmental, and sustainable development issues. While Greece had started with limited activities in mobilising youth, the country is speeding up. Romania also made notable progress in this area; specific data for Serbia is not available, making it difficult to assess the progress in that country.

2.2.5 Priority area 5: Accelerating local level actions

Austria

From 2005 to 2018, Austria made progress in accelerating local level actions for sustainable development through the establishment of the Alliance of Sustainable Universities. In 2015, the Alliance formed a working group called AG ESD dedicated to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). AG ESD brought together representatives from prestigious universities and focused on integrating sustainability principles and practices into the academic curriculum and broader educational framework. The performance agreements for 2022-2024 further highlighted the commitment to promoting education for sustainable development at the local level. After 2018/19, Austria has continued to make progress in accelerating local level actions for sustainable development through various initiatives. The platform "Dialogue for Change," established by the Umweltbundesamt (Austrian Environment Agency), provides a space for knowledge exchange and support for individuals and their activities. SDG Watch Austria, a network of civil society and non-profit organisations, collaborates with the private and academic sectors to advance sustainable development. UniNETZ focuses on inter- and intra-university networking to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across all university domains. The annual "Sustainability Action Days" provide a platform for diverse activities promoting sustainable development. The fourth Agenda 2030 Conference brings together stakeholders to discuss strategies for implementing the SDGs. ADA-Dialogveranstaltungen serve as platforms for exchanging ideas and fostering collaboration in international development.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, Education for Sustainability aims to foster action in the community, leading to the design and implementation of environmental education programs in schools. Since 2003, various community action programs have been carried out across the country, involving in-service teacher training, designing EE projects, and promoting collaboration between schools and community groups.

The establishment of the National Network of Environmental Education Centers (EEC) exemplifies the cooperation between ministries and local communities. These centers, in collaboration with governmental and private partners, NGOs, local authorities, and the local population, organise and provide specific environmental and sustainable education programs tailored to the particularities of each community.

Local communities play a vital role in renovating centre buildings and infrastructure, and they are at the core of implementing environmental education programs. Participants in these programs interact with the local population, engage in discussions, collect data on sustainable development issues, and work with locals to experience their traditions, culture, and way of life.

Schools in Cyprus are encouraged to work with local populations and stakeholders, focusing on community-specific issues and needs to improve the quality of life. A guide titled "Key Stones for School and Community Collaboration on Sustainable Development" supports schools in cooperative efforts with local communities, utilising non-formal and informal education methods.

Looking ahead to 2030, the Unit of EESD plans to develop more actions with schools and communities related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as educational programs on topics such as Green Transition, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation. Furthermore, the strategic planning for Environmental Education Centers envisions expanding educational programs to parents, children, youth, and other local populations, along with summer schools and awareness-raising initiatives to sensitise the local communities.

Greece

During the period from 2005 to 2018, Centres for Environmental Education and Sustainability (CEES) played a significant role in local level actions in Greece. These centres, subordinate to the Ministry of Education, provided seminars and actions at the local level, reaching thousands of students and educators. The CEES acted as multipliers of local level actions by organising conferences and workshops on ESD, promoting cooperation and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Beyond 2018/19, Greece has taken steps to accelerate local level actions by restructuring existing initiatives and supporting local projects. The Centres of Education for Sustainable Development (CES) have gained an important role in supporting schools and local communities. The AEIFORUM certification, known as “The Sustainable School Label - SSL,” incentivises schools to turn to ESD and indicates progress at the school and local levels. Ministries have actively supported local initiatives, such as the LIFE projects, which raise awareness and educate target groups, including local communities and youth. Environmental Education Centres at the Management Bodies of Natura 2000 sites further promote ESD objectives at the local level.

Romania

From 2005 to 2018, Romania focused on accelerating local level actions for sustainable development through various initiatives. This included strengthening local ESD networks to enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders. Scaling up sustainable community projects in areas such as renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture was also prioritised. Romania engaged stakeholders at the local level, including local authorities, civil society organisations, businesses, and community members, in decision-making processes and collaborative initiatives to ensure the active participation and ownership of local stakeholders in driving sustainable development actions. In Romania, the focus on accelerating lo-

cal level actions for ESD continues into the 2020-2030 period. The country plans to strengthen local ESD networks, expand sustainable community projects, and enhance stakeholder engagement at the local level. The goal is to empower local communities to take meaningful action towards sustainable development and contribute to a sustainable future

Serbia

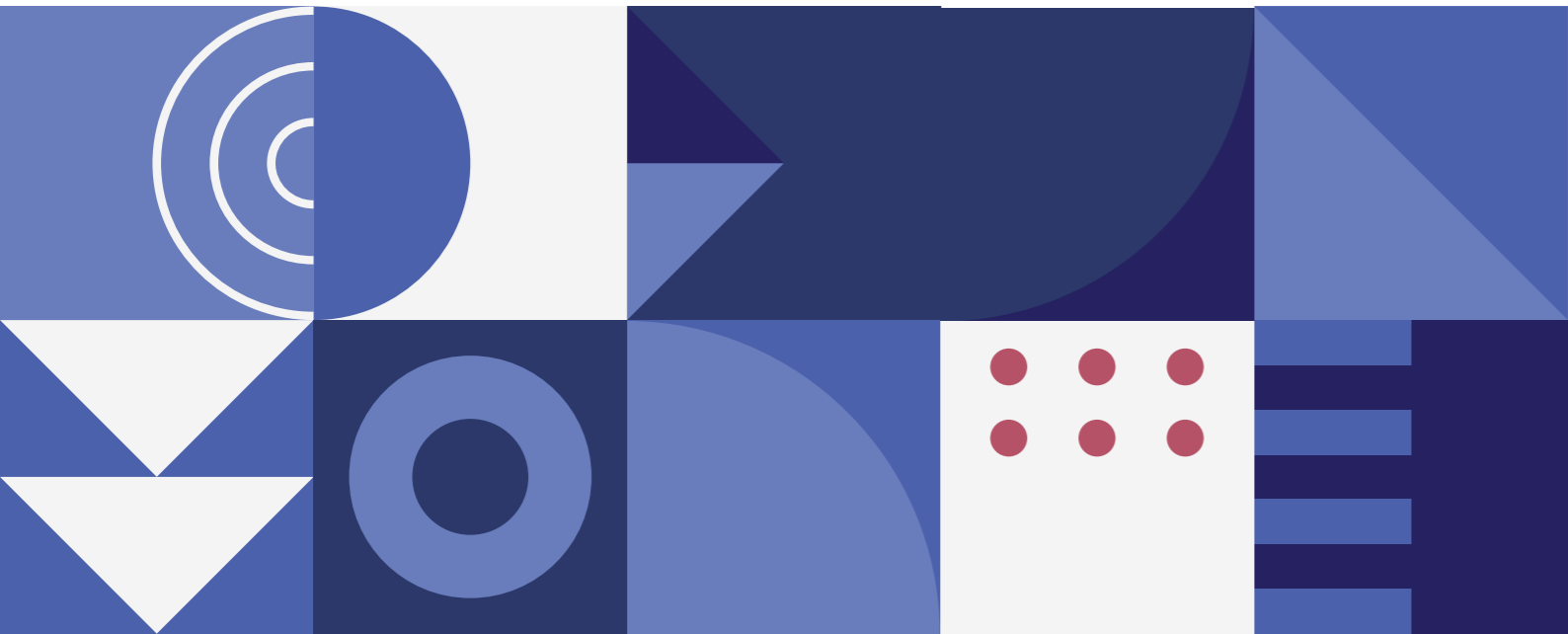
The available information suggests that progress in accelerating local level actions for sustainable development in Serbia from 2005 to 2018 was limited. The UNECE reports indicate a lack of thorough elaboration on this specific priority area. While there were positive responses regarding ESD networking, cooperation, and sustainable development campaigns, these responses were not sufficiently supported with detailed information. It is unclear to what extent Serbia actively advanced local level actions during this period. While there have been some individual institutional actions in Serbia, a systemic approach to accelerating local level actions for sustainable development is still lacking. Progress since 2018/19 has been limited, and there is a need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to address this priority effectively in the future.

In summary, Austria, Cyprus and Greece have made notable progress in accelerating local level actions for sustainable development, with well-established platforms, collaborations, and stakeholder engagement. Romania has laid out plans to further strengthen local networks and engage stakeholders, demonstrating a commitment to empowering local communities. However, Serbia lags behind in terms of a systemic approach and comprehensive initiatives in this area. All five countries recognise that enhancing collaboration, networking, and stakeholder engagement are essential for all countries to accelerate local level actions for sustainable development in the future.

2.3 ESD Key actors in the countries


According to national reports, the implementation of ESD involves actors at different levels in a similar manner across all five countries. Global actors tackle global challenges and develop international policies, while national actors customise these policies to their country’s specific context. Regional and local actors then execute and adjust these policies to cater to the unique needs of local communities. This multi-level approach aims to address sustainability at various scales, leading to more impactful and contextually relevant solutions. However, for this approach to be effective, it is crucial that all actors share a common understanding of ESD and its framework.





2.3.1 International and supranational actors

Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia all demonstrate active engagement and cooperation at the international level for the implementation of ESD. Here is a summary of the reported key common actors and some country's specific ones:

 <p>Organisations such as UNESCO, UNECE, and OECD play a crucial role in promoting ESD in Austria by providing strategic frameworks, policies, and financial support.</p>	 <p>UNECE coordinates the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and the ESD for 2030 roadmap in Romania and other countries in the region.</p>	 <p>UNESCO leads the global ESD agenda and provides resources, training, and recognition for ESD initiatives and projects in Romania and other countries.</p>
 <p>The European Union (EU) supports and promotes ESD through funding, resources, and collaboration. It encourages the integration of sustainability into education systems, knowledge sharing, and active citizenship.</p>	 <p>Austria actively participates in international networks such as the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), the Global Education Network Europe (GENE), and the European Network of Teacher Education Policies (ENTEP).</p>	 <p>At the political level, Austria collaborates with other countries, such as Zambia, to address Sustainable Development Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) through initiatives like the INDABA event series, which engages young people in implementing the SDGs.</p>
 <p>International NGOs, such as the Global Schools Program and the ESD Global Europe network, contribute to ESD in Romania by supporting the localization of the SDGs in school curricula and providing training for empowerment and self-defence.</p>	 <p>Serbian teachers have opportunities for job shadowing in European educational institutions experienced in ESD, while students benefit from mobility projects to visit European peers and gain experiential knowledge.</p>	 <p>Cyprus and Greece are members of the Union for the Mediterranean. In addition, Cyprus reported a collaboration with the Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri (British bases in Akrotiri) as well as with Embassies of various EU and non-EU countries in Cyprus</p>

In summary, all five countries benefit from international engagement and support for ESD, with the EU playing a significant role across the board. These collaborations provide strategic frameworks, funding, knowledge exchange, and capacity building to promote sustainability in education systems and raise awareness of sustainable development goals.

2.3.2 National actors

In terms of national actors involved in ESD, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia all have a range of governmental bodies, ministries, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working towards promoting sustainability in education. Here are some of them in each country:

Austria:

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research (BMBWF)
- Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, and Tourism (BMLRT)
- Austrian Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (BMNT)
- Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology (BMK)
- Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt, UBA)
- Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz, BANU)
- Forum Umweltbildung
- Austrian Development Agency (ADA)

Cyprus:

Governmental institutions:

- Governmental institutions:
- Agriculture Research Institute
- Commissioner of the Environment Office
- Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
- Cyprus Tourism Organisation
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Environment
- Department of Fisheries and Marine Research
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Geology
- Department of Labour Inspection
- Department of Secondary Education
- Department of Vocational Education
- Department of Water
- Departments of Primary Education,
- Directorate General of European Programs Coordination and Development
- Energy Service
- Game Fund
- Geological Department
- Lifelong Learning Agency
- Research Promotion Foundation

- State General Laboratory
- The Game and Fauna Service
- Water Development Department

NGOs:

- Association of Environmental and Ecological Organizations
- Pancyprian Union of Consumers and Quality of Life
- AKTI
- Association for Wildlife
- CARDET
- CYMEPA
- Cyprus Energy Agency
- Future World Centre
- NGO Support Centre
- Organisation "OIKOGNOSIA
- Organization of Friends of Earth
- TERRA CYPRIA (the Cyprus Conservation Foundation)

Academia:

- University of Cyprus
- Cyprus University of Technology
- Open University of Cyprus
- Frederick University
- Nicosia University
- European University

Greece:

- Directorate of International Relations in Education
- Directorate of Vocational Guidance and Educational Activities
- General Secretariat for Gender Equality
- General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning
- General Secretariat for Youth
- Greek Ombudsman
- Institute of Educational Policy
- Ministry for Culture and Tourism
- Ministry for Environment and Climate Change
- Ministry of National Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs
- Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education Institutions in Greece play an additional significant role in promoting ESD through their decisions and activities that include research, educational programs, and partnerships on ESD.

Romania:

- Ministries (Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests)
- Parliamentary committees (Committee on Education, Science, Youth and Sport, Committee on Environment and Ecological Balance)
- Think tanks, research agencies, NGOs, Youth Organizations, Civil Society Organizations
- Higher Education Institutions

In Romania, the ministries, parliamentary committees, think tanks, NGOs, and higher education institutions contribute to the development and implementation of policies and strategies for ESD. They work towards integrating ESD in formal education and environmental issues through research, legislative oversight, and various projects and activities.

Serbia:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
- Association for Young Researchers
- School for Survival (an NGO)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Higher education institutions
- ESD working group appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

Overall, while all five countries have national actors involved in ESD, the specific organisations and their roles vary. In all countries, there is a range of actors, including various ministries and agencies. In those countries, there are also collaborations among governmental bodies, educational institutions, and NGOs contributing to ESD efforts.



2.3.3 Regional actors

Austria

In Austria, there is a strong commitment to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the regional and local levels. The country's "Learning Strategy" focuses on sharing and communication to encourage broader participation in ESD development and implementation. Numerous actors, including NGOs, are actively involved in advancing ESD initiatives within Austria. These NGOs not only contribute to national efforts but also engage in international and European projects. By collaborating with foreign NGOs, they aim to increase the impact of their sustainability initiatives and reach a wider audience. This collaborative approach facilitates the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and experiences across countries, promoting a more global perspective on ESD. The involvement of actors at the regional and local levels in Austria strengthens the effectiveness and influence of sustainability initiatives, creating a broader network of stakeholders committed to promoting ESD.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, the above-mentioned Cypriot groups of organisations and bodies are operating on both national and regional level since Cyprus is a small country

Greece

In Greece, NGOs play a crucial role in organising and implementing activities and projects about ESD in cooperation with schools and other educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2015). There is a plethora of NGOs that strive to promote ESD at the regional level. Some of them also take on international and European projects by cooperating and creating synergies with other foreign NGOs in order to have a broader impact and a wider audience

Romania

Regional actors promoting ESD include regional governmental bodies like Regional Development Agencies, CSOs/NGOs such as the Eco-Civica Foundation, regional networks like the Danube Region Strategy, and businesses and social enterprises. They contribute to ESD through policies, projects, partnerships, and initiatives at the regional level, fostering sustainable development and raising awareness.

Serbia

When it comes to the regional stakeholders, one cannot safely name such stakeholders on the basis of presented reports. However, if one bears in mind the previously mentioned cooperation between educational institutions within different EU programmes, it is safe to say that different project partners, be they institutions or individuals from the formal or non-formal educational setting, constitute key stakeholders in the process of introducing and further improving the ESD in the Serbian educational context.

2.3.4 Local actors

At the local level in Austria, a wide array of actors are actively engaged in promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). These actors encompass various entities, including local government bodies, educational institutions, and neighbourhood associations. There are actors whose engagement ranges from local to transnational level.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, municipalities of all major cities, local boards and communities cooperate and facilitate actions focusing on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This cooperation is very crucial especially in remote areas/regions in which the Environmental Education Centres are located (e.g. the villages Koilani, Panayia, Pedoula).

Greece

In Greece, municipalities and NGOs play a crucial role in promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the local level. They work in collaboration with schools and other educational institutions to organise and implement ESD activities and projects. Numerous NGOs are consulted for ESD issues and contribute to the development of ESD policies. Some notable

NGOs in Greece include Action Aid, AIESEC Hellas, ARKTOUROS, Centre of Life, Ecological Recycling Society, HELMEPA, WWF Greece, and many more. These NGOs engage in various initiatives and participate in international and European projects, forming partnerships with foreign NGOs to broaden their impact and reach a wider audience.

Romania

Municipalities such as Bucharest City Hall and Cluj-Napoca City Hall support various Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives and projects at the local level. The Romanian Network of Eco-Schools (RONES) encourages schools to integrate sustainable development principles into their practices and provides guidance and resources. The YouthSpeak Forum, organised by AIESEC, engages young people in addressing global challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Romanian Network for Lifelong Learning (RELEARN) supports schools in adopting the SDGs through resources and partnerships. Sustainable Schools Romania (SSR) is a platform that promotes sustainability in education and recognizes schools' achievements. Global Education Network Romania (GEN Romania) focuses on global citizenship education and sustainable practices in schools. These local networks empower schools and students, fostering responsibility and awareness for sustainable development in Romania..

Serbia

At the local level, when it comes to ESD, one can safely say that municipalities, local NGOs and CSOs and even small and medium enterprises collaborating with educational institutions within various dual education initiatives constitute key stakeholders in upholding and promoting ESD. Usually, CSOs at the local level are primary drivers of different civic initiatives and they are always willing to include educational institutions in their local actions.

2.4 ESD Best/promising practices in the field of ESD AELIA Countries

2.4.1 Austria – Bildung2030

<p>General information</p>	<p>The collaborative project “Bildung2030” is being carried out by BAOBAB, Forum Umweltbildung, KommEnt, Südwind, and Welthaus Graz, five leading organisations in the field of global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.</p> <p>April 2020 ongoing</p> <p>https://bildung2030.at/english-info/</p>
<p>Main Priority action areas covered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing policy. • Transforming learning environments including Multi-stakeholder processes. • Building capacities of educators and trainers. • Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level
<p>Short description of the practice</p>	<p>The digital portal “Bildung2030” (Education2030) targets everyone involved in and supporting the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals as well as those who are putting these goals into practice through educational initiatives.</p> <p>The portal compiles data on the 2030 Agenda themes and offers a variety of recommendations for how to address global issues for all ages and in various teaching and learning contexts. In addition to providing a summary of the current continuing education and training opportunities for teachers, coaches, and instructors, it compiles resources and materials for schools and other learning environments from all across Austria. When selecting these resources, specially specified quality criteria are used. When selecting these resources, specially specified quality criteria are used.</p> <p>The platform also offers a number of educational concepts, such as Global Learning/Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), in order to support critical and sustainable education.</p> <p>The Austrian Development Agency and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology are funding its implementation.</p>

<p>Relevance for AELIA</p>	<p>This practice serves as an excellent demonstration of collaboration among stakeholders in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Austria. It provides valuable support to educational institutions by offering practical tools and a solid theoretical foundation for understanding and implementing ESD.</p> <p>The materials available on the platform are easily accessible to everyone and can be downloaded free of charge. These resources serve as valuable knowledge sources for leaders of educational institutions, both in the formal and non-formal sectors. They provide guidance and insights that can aid in the advancement of ESD practices within these institutions.</p> <p>The experience of the promoters of the platform is valuable input within AELIA stakeholders’ consultation.</p>
<p>Visibility of the practice</p>	<p>World University Service (WUS)</p> <p>BMK</p> <p>Austrian Development Agency (ADA)</p> <p>SDG Watch Austria</p> <p>Forum Umweltbildung</p> <p>Land Niederösterreich</p> <p>Europahaus Burgenland</p>

2.4.2 Cyprus - PEDIA

<p>General information</p>	<p>Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (Unit of Education for the Environment and SD) and Cyprus Energy Agency</p> <p>2020-2025</p> <p>http://www.moec.gov.cy/</p> <p>https://www.cea.org.cy/</p> <p>https://mepaa.moec.gov.cy/index.php/el/</p>
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2.4.3 Greece – We all Care, We all Participate

<p>Main Priority action areas covered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing policy. • Transforming learning environments. • Building capacities of educators and trainers. • Empowering and mobilising youth. • Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level.
<p>Short description of the practice</p>	<p>In September 2020, the Cyprus Energy Agency in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth launched the European funded program PEDIA, which allowed public schools in Cyprus to apply for the improvement of their energy performance and indoor conditions. Out of 144 eligible schools that were ranked on specific environmental, energy, educational and socioeconomic criteria, 25 were finally chosen. PEDIA project is the first project that approaches the overall needs of the public school buildings in Cyprus in order to transform them into nearly-zero-energy level. Currently the interventions began in the first 5 schools. The project aims in the creation of a complete methodology tool that includes energy and social criteria designed exclusively for the Cypriot public school building stock where the interventions need to be implemented are tailored for each school. The transformation of schools into green and sustainable will be achieved through several interventions that include thermal insulation for roofs and walls, window replacement, installation of shading, ventilation, LED lighting, installation of photovoltaic systems, adoption of efficient solutions for cooling and the creation of green roofs. These transformations will highlight public schools as model examples in Cyprus and the rest of Europe and will also utilise them as an important pedagogical tool, helping their transition to whole institution approach.</p>
<p>Relevance for AELIA</p>	<p>The project is a good example of a collective decision making and government model between several actors of the public and private sector, NGOs and social actors.</p> <p>Indirectly it will contribute to the advancement of the competencies of the staff, the teachers and students of the transformed schools</p> <p>It is a great example of green practices, since it takes into consideration the climate change crisis we are facing, and with the planned transformations of the schools, there will be a contribution to energy saving and the schools will reach nearly-zero-energy level.</p>
<p>Visibility of the practice</p>	<p>https://www.cea.org.cy/en/pedia/</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7xvNyyg0h4</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/PEDIAeuproject/</p>

<p>General information</p>	<p>Sustainable Greek School Program: Hellenic Foundation for Environment & Culture Hellenic Foundation for Environment & Culture (within the framework of the Environmental Education Council)</p> <p>https://www.ellet.gr/</p> <p>The programme is implemented with the support of the A.G. Leventis Foundation.</p> <p>Ongoing https://aeiforosxoleio.wixsite.com/website</p>
<p>Main Priority action areas covered</p>	<p>The Sustainable Greek School program tries to activate mechanisms for the transformation of the school into a sustainable one. The Project focuses on 8 main Pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Democracy and Participation 2. Promotion of Learning 3. Promotion of Arts and Civilization 4. Sustainable building and Courtyard 5. Energy saving / travel policy 6. Saving resources 7. Promoting Health 8. From the local to the planetary scale
<p>Short description of the practice</p>	<p>One of the Council for Environmental Education's most significant programs is the Sustainable Greek School Program. It is a program that encourages the sustainability ethos in the school. A school is deemed sustainable if, through its structure, existence, and operation, it can serve as an example of best practices for both society and its students, giving them the knowledge and skills they need to become contributing members of society who can address environmental and social issues and shape the future in a way that is both sustainable on both those fronts.</p> <p>The Sustainable Greek School initiative aims to trigger processes that will change the school into one that is sustainable. In order to encourage the teachers to gradually become involved in their school's transformation processes and to follow the path of the changes brought about by the sustainability of the school, the holistic approach of the school as an organisation is chosen. To motivate teachers to participate in their school transformation processes and to track their progress toward sustainability, the introduction of sustainability in the classroom is structured around eight pillars as already mentioned (Elliniki Etaireia: Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage, 2022).</p>

	<p>The main characteristics of this Network are that:</p> <p>It focuses on the holistic transformation of the school into a learning and collaborative organisation.</p> <p>It is a link between various partners who are inspired by the common vision or serve some aspect of it. The program's partners are teachers from schools participating in the project, education managers, university professors, experts, members of other projects, educational services, etc. Each partner contributes with their specific expertise and competences</p> <p>With the respective actions (seminars, conferences, publications) the network aims to create content that can support schools in their transformation efforts and local networks inspired by its principles (Sustainable Greek School, 2023).</p> <p>The Schools that have participated in the Sustainable Greek School Program have been awarded twice in 2017 and 2019 by members of the Quality Control Council.</p>
<p>Relevance for AELIA</p>	<p>The creation of this Network for communication, cooperation and idea sharing between teachers, school leaders and schools in general is a very effective method for moving forward when it comes to Education for Sustainable Development and for raising students' awareness and interests for environmental issues. This initiative is one of the most innovative in Greece, as it utilises a whole institutional approach for the sustainable transformation of Greek schools.</p> <p>It is also important to note that the program does not only focus on preparing teachers and school leaders on the subject of Sustainability, but it also aims at equipping students with the right tools to become active agents for sustainability in our future society. Taking into consideration that the school is a small-scale society, students are able to understand the meaning of preserving the overall environment and community that they live in.</p>
<p>Visibility of the practice:</p>	<p>Guide for the Sustainable Greek School: https://dd64123b-73cd-4385-a7d2-90ac4d923ee3.filesusr.com/ugd/3850a1_a8e5904a88034f8e923a2b724bfc2053.pdf</p> <p>Facebook Profile: https://www.facebook.com/greek.sustainableschool</p>

2.4.4 Romania – Green Schools project

<p>General information</p>	<p>The Green School project is an initiative that aims to promote sustainable practices in schools. The project is part of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 roadmap, which outlines actions in five priority areas on policy, learning environments, building capacities of educators, youth and local level action.</p>
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<p>Main Priority action areas covered</p>	<p>Policy: Advocating for supportive policies at the national and local levels that prioritise sustainability in education. This includes policy frameworks, guidelines, and regulations that promote sustainable practices and the integration of environmental education in schools.</p> <p>Learning Environments: Creating sustainable learning environments within schools by implementing eco-friendly practices. This involves initiatives such as reducing energy and water consumption, implementing waste management systems, and promoting sustainable design and infrastructure.</p> <p>Building Capacities of Educators: Prioritising the development of educators' knowledge and skills in delivering sustainability education. This involves providing training programs, workshops, and resources to equip educators with the necessary tools and pedagogical approaches for teaching sustainability concepts effectively.</p> <p>Youth Engagement: Focusing on engaging and empowering youth in sustainability initiatives within schools. This includes the establishment of eco-clubs, organising student-led projects and campaigns, and fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and activism among students.</p> <p>Local Level Action: Collaborating with local communities, organisations, and stakeholders to implement sustainability projects and initiatives. This involves partnerships for implementing renewable energy systems, organising community-based environmental events, and promoting sustainable practices beyond the school setting.</p>
<p>Short description of the practice</p>	<p>The project is a national initiative that supports schools in implementing environmental education activities and developing green attitudes and behaviours among students and teachers. It provides training, resources, guidance, and recognition for schools that participate in various environmental actions, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. The project aims to raise awareness, educate students and teachers about environmental issues and sustainable development, promote active citizenship and participation in environmental protection, and foster cooperation and networking among schools and stakeholders. It also encourages innovation and creativity in environmental education.</p>
<p>Relevance for AELIA</p>	<p>The Green School project is relevant to AELIA because it aims to empower people and help them build both their personal and professional competencies. By promoting sustainable practices in schools, the project contributes to building resilient and inclusive societies. The project also encourages a learning-for-life mindset by transforming learning and training environments</p>
<p>Visibility of the practice</p>	<p>http://www.rogbc.org/en/projects/green-schools</p>

2.4.5 Serbia – Sustainable Development in the Pre-school Curriculum

<p>General information</p>	<p>Educating prospective pre-school teachers as well as pre-school children within the scope of ESD is of utmost importance for a timely and efficient intervention in the domain of sustainable development. It is much easier to form good habits, than to rectify the bad ones. When initiated on time, ESD at a pre-school level can produce visible results within the first generation of children taking on ESD in kindergartens</p>
<p>Main Priority action areas covered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming learning and training environments • Building Capacities of Educators and Trainers • Empowering and Mobilising Youth • Accelerating Sustainable Solutions at the Local Level
<p>Short description of the practice</p>	<p>The practice is dedicated to a timely and efficient introduction of ESD at a pre-school level by respecting all ethical and moral standards. It is highly transferable and it is possible to replicate those activities and methods, and even further improve them or adjust them to specific contexts. Likewise, the suggested practice is highly replicable and it can be applied over a long period because methods advocated within the chosen practice are in harmony with the desired interaction between young human beings and the world around them. Finally, the selected example of potentially good practice would indubitably involve the engagement of different municipalities, local actors, NGOs, and if needed even the line Ministry. Such endeavour would greatly benefit communities.</p>
<p>Relevance for AELIA</p>	<p>This particular practice has been selected because it represents a significant and valuable initiative introduced by five teaching staff members in the Teacher Training College in Novi Sad: Svetlana Radović, Otilia Velišek-Braško, Lada Marinković, Ivana Ignjatov Popović and Jovanka Ulić. Pre-school age is the right time to start with ESD and the afore-mentioned authors have suggested potential solutions on how to introduce ESD at a pre-school level by resorting to an integrative approach. This aspect is directly related to AELIA topics and efforts. Furthermore, the approach that the authors chose is comprehensive and goes beyond the usual understanding of sustainable development as something solely related to environmental protections. This practice considers all 17 SD goals in relation to ESD.</p>
<p>Visibility of the practice</p>	<p>https://www.academia.edu/39021497/Odr%C5%BEivi_razvoj_u_pred%C5%A1kolskom_programu_integralni_pristup</p>

2.5 ESD Conclusions from desk research

The information found in literature describes the status and challenges of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the efforts made to implement it in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Serbia, and Romania.

Austria recognizes the pivotal role of education in shaping the future and achieving global sustainable development. Efforts have been made to integrate sustainability into the education system at all levels of society. However, to enhance the effectiveness of ESD, a structured and customised framework is necessary to guide institutions and channel their engagement in ESD. This framework should support educational leaders in fostering innovation and improving labelling and definitions within ESD. The government aims to involve civil society, the scientific community, and businesses to ensure comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Cyprus: For the past two decades, important milestones have been reached and leaps of progress has been made in the Cyprus context regarding the integration of ESD in the broader educational landscape and beyond. It is an ongoing process requiring constant adjustments and calibrations ensuring its continuity, further optimization and enhancement. The room for improvement on various levels of implementation and the gap between intended policies and grassroots level learning and teaching practices is one to be addressed by the Cyprus government in the next decade ahead. The ongoing process requires continuous adjustments and improvements.

Greece acknowledges the importance of environmental perception and sustainable ethos through ESD. Although numerous practices and frameworks have been developed, a clear institutional framework for environmental and sustainable education is still lacking, especially in the sector of empowerment of youth despite the fact that Greek youth is very much concerned about environmental issues nowadays (Youth Employment Magazine, 2021). The implementation of sustainability activities in schools and educational institutions often depends on the willingness and availability of individual teachers and educators, resulting in inconsistent implementation across the country. Furthermore, ESD is not compulsory in Greece, and there is a need to differentiate it from traditional environmental education. Mobilising and empowering youth in ESD also requires attention.

Romania: ESD integration in Romanian schools requires a holistic and systemic approach involving multiple stakeholders, levels, and sectors of education and society. Factors influencing ESD integration include political support, institutional capacity, public awareness, curriculum flexibility, teacher training, student engagement, community involvement, resource availability, and data quality. ESD integration brings various benefits such as enhancing the quality and relevance of education, developing key competencies for sustainable development, fostering active citizenship, and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, challenges and barriers such as lack of political stability, administrative efficiency, and governance structures, rigid curricula, insufficient training and resources, and low awareness among stakeholders need to be addressed.

Serbia has been harmonising its domestic legislation with the EU acquis and has adopted policies related to SD and ESD during its process of accession to the EU. However, a comprehensive National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development is still missing. ESD practices in Serbian schools vary, with a predominant focus on environmental issues rather than considering all dimensions of sustainable development. Teachers initially perceived ESD as a burden due to a lack of readiness and training. Quality training programs for teachers are necessary to ensure a standardised and systemic approach to ESD implementation across educational institutions in Serbia.

In summary, while progress has been made in integrating ESD in these countries, there are still challenges to overcome. These include the need for structured frameworks, standardised implementation, teacher training, engagement of various stakeholders, and addressing specific challenges unique to each country. By addressing these challenges and taking decisive action, these countries can further advance their commitments to ESD and contribute to international and regional goals for sustainable development. Educational Institutions need a systemic framework that links Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with educational outcomes to facilitate the achievement of sustainability. This approach should enable all stakeholders, including educators, students, civil society organisation entrepreneurs and education policymakers, to identify educational challenges and gaps, design curricula, create adequate environment and employ appropriate pedagogical tools to drive significant societal transformations through a sustainability lens (Dumitrescu, C. I., Moiceanu, G., Dobrescu, R. M., & Popescu, M. A. M. 2022).

3. Qualitative research

3.1 Introduction

Context of the qualitative research

The UNESCO's ESD for 2030 roadmap and the 17 UN's Sustainable Development Goals call for immediate actions and measures since – as the former UN Secretary General stated – there is “No plan B as there is no planet B”. Switching to sustainability is the only way to stop this dramatic course of our planet from disaster. ESD has a crucial role and is expected to be the path that will make learners capable of acknowledging, identifying, researching and acting against sustainability issues they address. This will be feasible if institutions are able to apply a Whole Institution Approach to their core vision and daily life.

Aim of the qualitative research

In this context, the qualitative research aimed at identifying the gaps between the ESD practices in Educational Institutions, in formal and non-formal education, and the ESD roadmap of the UNESCO at national level.

Methodology

Research participants that are head of educational institutions, Teachers or Trainers students or courses' participants and others employees in the institutions, were selected through purposive sampling both for formal and non-formal education, having in mind that participants' sample had to be as representative as it could for the limited framework of AELIA. In order to triangulate the data of the research, participants filled in questionnaires and participated in semi-structured interviews. Specifically, 60 questionnaires have been filled in and 50 interviews conducted through this research. The research's scope was national)

Profiles of the research's population

	Survey only	Survey and Interview	Interview only
Heads of institution (formal and non-formal education)	60	20	0
Teachers / Trainers (formal and non-formal education)	0	10	0
Learners (formal and non-formal education)	0	0	10
Other employees (formal and non-formal education)	0	0	10

- Head of institutions were in their position already in 2018 (for the 20 Interviewees).
- No restrictions for the heads of institutions that took only the survey.
- Teachers and trainers should have been in that institution already in 2018.
- Learners should be in that institution at least in their second year. They should come from the same institution as a teacher, a trainer and a director involved.
- This means that in five formal and five non-formal educational institutions, interviews were conducted with the Head, a Teacher, a Student and another Employee).

What did researchers want to find out?

From Heads of Institution and Trainers

- Understanding of ESD /ESD for 2030
- Type of activities conducted to implemented ESD
- Skills and attitudes about ESD
- Perception of ESD by Leaders of Educational institutions /ESD national Coordinator
- Challenges faced by Educational Institutions
- Needs we could address in the framework of AELIA

From the students

- What student's experiences can be shared regarding students' engagement that can inform policy development in this area?
- How can the school's core activities be redesigned so that students become key actors
- Is there a culture of ESD in the schools? Can students see the alignment between the what; where; who, how and why of the ESD?

From the other employees

- How does the inclusion toward policy advancing function in the institution? How informed are the employees?
- How did the school environment transform or did not transform the employees?
- What are their capacity building needs as school members that work towards achieving the SGDs through ESD?
- From their job position point of view, to what extent they contribute/ would like to contribute to the youth empowerment process in the school.
- In which form would they like to be involved in school activities towards sustainability?
- Promoting a multi-stakeholder process. From their point of view with which fields of activities, would the school need to build partnerships in order to implement ESD in the best possible manner?

The indicators of the ESD implementation used in the questionnaires and interview guidelines derived from the measuring tool UNECE uses in the framework of country report (UNECE 2019b). For the purpose of this research, those indicators have been selected and adapted to educational institutions. In the reports, the following labelling is used to preserve the privacy of the population.

Labelling the quotations (Legend)

AT=Country (Austria) H=Head, F=Formal education, Q=Questionnaire I=Interview
1= Number 1, 2, 3....

	Austria	Cyprus	Greece	Romania	Serbia
Head Formal-Education	ATHFQ1 ATHFI1 ATHFQ2	CYHFQ1 CYHFI1 CYHFQ2	GRHFQ1 GRHFI1 GRHFQ2	ROHFQ1 ROHFI1 ROHFQ2	SEHFQ1 SEHFI1 SEHFQ2
Head Non-formal education	ATHNQ1 ATHNI1	CYHNQ1 CYHNI1	GRHNQ1 GRHNI1	ROHNQ1 ROHNI1	SEHNQ1 SEHNI1
Teacher formal-education	ATFTQ1 ATNFI1	CYFTQ1 CYFTI1	GRFTQ1 GRFTI1	ROFTQ1 GRFTI1	SEFTQ1 SEFTI1
Trainer non-formal education	ATNTQ1 ATNTI1	CYNTQ1 CYNTI1	GRNTQ1 GRNTI1	RONTQ1 RONTI1	SENTQ1 SENTI1
Student formal Education	ATFSI1	CYFSI1	GRFSI1	ROFSI1	SEFSI1
Student non formal education	ATNSI1	CYNSI1	GRNSI1	RONSI1	SENSI1
Other employee formal education	ATFEI1	CYFEI1	GRFEI1	ROFEI1	SEFEI1
Other employee non formal education	ATNEI1	CYNEI1	GRNEI1	RONEI1	SENEI1

3.2 Educational Institutions Perspective

General survey's results

The majority of those interviewed displayed awareness of both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the content of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). However, not all participants consistently used the label "ESD" to describe their activities. Additionally, fewer participants were familiar with the concepts of the whole-school approach and multi-stakeholder process. Over 90% expressed a desire to acquire more knowledge about ESD topics and its implementation. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of survey participants had not previously participated in other relevant studies on ESD within their respective countries. This commonality is observed across all five countries. Other shared challenges are observed in cases where ESD is not following national official programmes, participants evoked a lack of time and financial resources. As stated by ATHFQ6 with reference to the common survey for formal and non-formal educational institution:

"Non formal education is project-funded and very dynamic, therefore many questions cannot be fully answered" ATHFQ6

The national reports provide further insights into the differences regarding ESD between formal and non-formal education institutions, as well as among different educational levels. Therefore, in addition to the comparative examination presented in this transnational report, detailed analysis of each national context is available in the respective National Reports.

3.2.1 ESD Priority action area: Advancing policy

Austria

In Austria, the report highlights an interesting contrast between two interviewed heads of schools. One head of school admitted to having no prior knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), despite being part of sustainability school networks. On the other hand, another school, led by an experienced head, developed and implemented its own SDG curricula. Their curriculum, called "Sustainable Business," aligns all subject topics with the SDGs and is taught for one hour per week in the third grade. In a subsequent phase, the school developed a four-year curriculum for grades 5 to 8, which was accredited by the Ministry of Education as a school-autonomous curriculum. Its implementation is set to begin in the 2023/2024 school year. This example highlights the variations among educational institutions in terms of their progress in implementing ESD.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, primary schools demonstrate greater effectiveness in designing, implementing, and monitoring sustainability actions through their Sustainable Educational Environmental Policy (SEEP). However, secondary schools face challenges due to the distinct nature of their subject-based curricula and the larger number of students and teachers.

Regarding formal education, there are notable differences in the implementation of ESD between formal and non-formal education, as well as across different levels of formal education. The SEEP plays a crucial role in assisting schools in applying ESD holistically, addressing sustainability issues, and improving the quality of life within school communities through cross-thematic and multidisciplinary approaches. However, as Teacher 1 from the formal education sector pointed out, some teachers may be hesitant or “afraid to dare,” which hinders effective implementation of sustainability policies. The presence of experienced educators in ESD significantly impacts their ability to empower and guide their colleagues in implementing the SEEP effectively. In secondary education (ages 12-18), the constraints of subject-based curricula and limited time for interdisciplinary projects result in the absence of a designated SEEP. However, the willingness of educators to form student groups becomes crucial in addressing sustainability actions. Students express their desire for greater involvement in institutional bodies responsible for designing and implementing sustainability policies at school. On the other hand, non-formal education institutions, being trained in ESD, demonstrate greater effectiveness in applying ESD and related institutional policies, which are closely aligned with the promotion of ESD and SDGs.

Greece

In Greece, challenges include limited time for teacher training, lack of incentives, and inadequate theoretical background in climate change topics. The survey reveals that only 35% of educational institutions have ESD policies, while the rest either lack awareness or seek more information. Half of the respondents are open to changing policies in response to sustainability challenges, and 60% support project-based learning for sustainability. Only 10% of institutions mention ESD in their mission statements, and 25% have ESD-related committees or working groups. Cooperation, teacher training, and resource allocation are identified as

crucial needs. The constant turnover of teaching staff hampers continuity, and some teachers exhibit resistance to private initiatives. Municipalities are increasingly supportive, but overall, greater efforts are required from all stakeholders to advance ESD.

Romania

In Romania, the findings of field research indicate that principals, teachers, employees, and students possess significant knowledge of the 17 objectives of ESD. These institutions claim awareness of ESD and have incorporated measures in their institutional development plans to implement the national strategy for ESD. However, the progress in these efforts is relatively slow, and the number of actions and activities undertaken through projects and partnerships at various levels remains limited. Increased involvement and training are seen as beneficial for further development.

Serbia

In Serbia, four out of six school directors who filled out the AELIA questionnaire on ESD are familiar with the goals of sustainable development and ESD, as well as the five priority action areas. However, they are not acquainted with any national framework or strategy for ESD. Their responses to other items within the questionnaire are mostly negative or indecisive.

Throughout the survey and interviews, it becomes evident that school heads who display strong commitment to sustainable education show greater involvement and advancement in this area. Tailored expectations and clearer guidance would assist institutions in aligning and scaling their actions more effectively, as some still face confusion:

“What does it actually mean for a small business like ours? I see a lot of difficulties in implementing all these sustainable and green policies. In terms of content we already work a lot with sustainability and green change.” ATHNQ6

ATHNQ6



3.2.2 ESD Priority action area 2: Transforming learning and training environments

Austria

In Austria, educational institutions have expressed their satisfaction with the availability of modern IT devices and software. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the process of integrating these technologies. Trainers in non-formal education have reported encountering certain issues during this period, particularly regarding participants’ home infrastructures:

“Some students faced difficulties in fully participating in online sessions due to limited internet connectivity. To address this, we organised tutorials to provide support”.

ATNTI2.

According to a student, there have been noticeable improvements in everyday practices within the school over the past four years. “

“One specific focus has been waste management and recycling. Lessons and excursions have provided us with knowledge on this topic, which we put into practice in our daily school life. At the beginning of each school year, a teacher visits each classroom to remind students of the essential rules and emphasise everyone’s impact.”

ATFSI1

An employee in the same school corroborated this trend, stating that:

“several years ago, teachers and students began advocating for reusable alternatives such as coffee cups, dishes, and wooden cutlery, thereby altering our habits to reduce the use of plastic packaging”.

ATFEI1

Both formal and non-formal education actors mentioned consulting and utilising Global Citizenship Education handbooks and guidelines provided by educational NGOs like Südwind. However, the primary challenges lie in transforming facilities and school buildings to align them with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This necessitates substantial financial investment and progress in this area has been slow, as commented:

“This is on the shoulder of the government: if they want a change, they should provide us with renewals like solar panels or better heating system.”

ATNTQ1

Cyprus

Research conducted in Cyprus reveals several findings regarding formal and non-formal education. In formal education, head teachers recognise the importance of management time and a clear institutional vision towards sustainability. They believe that training practices and school handbooks should provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing sustainability. Teachers face challenges in implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) due to time constraints and secondary education Heads suggest the allocation of specific hours for projects as well as continuous mentoring support. While schools promote the use of information technology (IT), collaboration, and inclusive practices, there is still room for improvement in areas such as embracing complexity, adopting multidisciplinary approaches, and enhancing cooperation with stakeholders.

Directors in non-formal education express confidence in their ESD training capabilities but express a desire for more time and opportunities for job shadowing. Environmental education centres are recognized for their exceptional learning environments and active participation in European projects. However, there is a need for pedagogical training to further enhance their expertise. Non-formal education trainers highlight the advantages of current ESD approaches, the flexibility in delivering programs, and the exchange of knowledge among colleagues.

Teachers in formal education emphasise the need for more preparation time, the development of an ESD handbook, and increased training frequency. Non-formal education trainers also emphasise the benefits of environmental education centres, which utilise effective ESD approaches and actively participate in sustainability projects. They engage in peer training on sustainability themes and techniques.

Students in formal education express a desire for institutional partnerships and networks focused on ESD, innovative teaching methodologies, and revised subject content. They view themselves as agents of change and emphasise the importance of a democratic and sustainable school environment. Non-formal education students value outdoor education, experiential learning, up-to-date pedagogical materials, and innovative teaching techniques. They describe a sustainable school as a democratic place where learning thrives, students feel safe, empowered, and motivated.

Employees in formal education strive to connect classroom learning to real-life situations and actively engage in sustainability actions within their local community. Non-formal education employees believe that their sustainability policies can be applied at home and actively participate in sharing knowledge and experiences with their colleagues.

Greece

In Greece, the majority of organisations provide a safe and inclusive learning environment, with a strong emphasis on promoting information technology and digitalisation. However, there is a need for further support in implementing global citizenship education and the whole-school approach to sustainability. Most organisations adopt a multi-stakeholder approach and employ interdisciplinary and participatory methods to address environmental challenges. In terms of inclusion and ESD integration, organisations show positive practices. However, there is room for improvement in terms of being perceived as a sustainable example. Public educational institutions noted that infrastructure is in a very poor condition in the Greek context (GRHF11, GRHF12, GRFT11).

Greek schools lack libraries and flexible rooms that teachers could use for various events (GRHF12). Projectors in classrooms are acquired through donations, sponsorships, and parents' associations, with little investment from municipalities (GRFT11). There are insufficient resources and investments from the authorities for sustainable educational buildings. Digital infrastructure and literacy has seen some improvements but it still is ineffective and needs further improvements. There is a lack of essential digital items. Other challenges relate to providing appropriate software and training for interactive whiteboards. Regarding the latter, many shortcomings are also observed in the training of educators in the use of digital tools (GRHF12).



Romania

In Romania, according to Institutions' lead there is variation in the implementation of ESD practices. Some institutions promote IT, digitalisation, and multi-stakeholder collaborations, while others do not. Around 50% of institutions apply a whole institution approach to sustainability and implement multidisciplinary and participatory approaches. There is room for improvement in embracing complexity and implementing approaches for acting on environmental challenges.

Teachers and trainers generally promote IT, provide an identity-safe learning environment, and embrace complexity. However, there is a lack of examples of living sustainably and intertwining Sustainable Development pillars in governance or culture.

Students emphasise the importance of global citizenship education and ESD implementation in schools. They suggest more student involvement in generating learning content and creating a healthy school environment. Awareness of global citizenship education and ESD varies among students:

"Students should contribute more in the generation of learning contents, because young people have new ideas, they are creative and open in terms of interactive methodologies. Only in this way can they be empowered and helped, through involvement in activities."

Principals, teachers, and employees are well aware that they bear a significant responsibility for driving change and making a positive impact. Their level of involvement and their ability to identify opportunities are crucial in achieving sustainable and high-quality education. However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges posed by the social context of the country, particularly the limitations in human and financial resources that may hinder the comprehensive implementation of desired initiatives.

Serbia

Findings in Serbia displayed that, in the area of transforming learning and training environments, directors of primary and secondary schools generally adhere to sustainability principles, but may lack confidence in responding to certain terms. However, they recognize and apply practices related to digitalization and environmental actions. In higher education, although institutions may not be seen as examples of sustainability, interviewees generally provided affirmative responses to items in this area.

Directors of NGOs, associations, and non-formal education centres mostly responded positively to items in the transformation of learning and training environments. However, there were negative responses regarding global citizenship methodology and the whole-institutional approach to ESD. Two NGO interviewees expressed concerns about the safety and sustainability of their buildings but highlighted their participation in European projects focused on climate change and capacity-building. One interviewee emphasised the need for practical social inclusion efforts, while another highlighted the community-focused approach to addressing sustainable development issues at the local level.

Overall, the findings in all five countries highlight the need for further support and improvement in various aspects of sustainability education, including infrastructure, training, interdisciplinary approaches, student involvement, and collaboration with stakeholders. Efforts are being made, but additional resources and a clear institutional vision are required to achieve comprehensive and effective sustainability education in these contexts.

3.2.3 ESD Priority action area 3: Building capacities of educators and trainers



Austria

In Austria, it has been established that sustainability holds a significant position in performance agreements. A head of institution stated:

"Sustainability is a focal point in the performance agreements. Topics such as sustainability and digitalisation are cross-cutting issues by definition. Their treatment and anchoring in all course measures must be evaluated and also financed accordingly". ATNFHQ

Teachers and trainers in the country have access to a comprehensive range of in-service training opportunities. However, a head of an educational institution highlighted the value of "in-formal" learning among teachers, noting that while additional training options are available, teachers may not be aware of them due to their focus on specific subjects rather than interdisciplinary matters. The head emphasised the importance of personal contacts in facilitating the dissemination of information in the daily school environment:

"Even though there are further training options, teachers often don't know them because they are mainly looking for their specific subject and not so much for interdisciplinary issues. He adds that the daily school-life is full of information and that information mainly works best via personal contacts". ATHF1

"All in all the interest in trainings could be increased – among the teachers as well as among the other employees. "People need to know why the ESD training is relevant for their work or subjects." ATFT12

Teachers of formal educational institutions expect new teachers to have acquired knowledge about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during their training courses. However, doubts remain regarding the level of SDG awareness among employees. One head mentioned that:

"An increasing number of young teachers are already familiar with the SDGs and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through their university education. While most teachers in their school are aware of the SDGs, other employees may only recognize them superficially without having received specific sustainability training". ATHF12

In the interview with a student from a formal educational institution, there was expressed confidence in the competence of teachers when it comes to ESD. The student believed that:

"Many teachers possess extensive knowledge about sustainability issues, mainly driven by their personal interest, enabling them to teach these topics effectively. However, it was acknowledged that some teachers might have limited knowledge in this area. Those teachers who seek to improve their understanding actively pursue further training opportunities on their own initiative." ATFS1

It appears that there is a general assumption among the educational population that every teacher and trainer either is trained in ESD or has access to ESD training whenever necessary. This expectation reflects the belief that educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills to incorporate sustainability education into their teaching practices.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, Heads of institutions emphasise the need for teachers to feel secure and competent in ESD. One emphasised:

"In order for teachers to "dare", they need to feel secure and competent about ESD. They must learn how to teach, having in mind ESD, probably through co-teaching with experienced mentor trainers and feel that someone can hold their back with anything they need to". CYHF11

At some point, educators are settled in just doing simple things and they do not foster to take a further step. They need to be mobilised and motivated i.e. through special prizes or collecting credits for evaluation purposes. For a Head of institution, lack of formal time for projects and in-service training is a challenge. That head advised:

"It is crucial that school principal must establish a vision for sustainability at school." CYHF12

Head teachers, in great majority, acknowledge that their institutions do not include systematic and comprehensive ESD capacity development in in-service training of teachers nor do they participate in cross-school training on sustainability. On the contrary, they think that their schools motivate or award educators who successfully integrate ESD into their teaching. Finally, all of them state that they would like to get additional training on ESD.

Regarding non-formal education, Director 1 does not think that there are any difficulties for the personnel to apply ESD.

"There is constant support among them and their supervisor, but having also the ability to exchange expertise with foreign centres would have been also a great added value". (CYNF11)

Their postgraduate course helped a lot in applying ESD in non-formal education. A director mentioned that there are no difficulties or gaps regarding their programs since they are formed and targeted to be delivered by them. The personnel are experienced and participate in European projects. Pre-service training was at a specific subject and thus, they were not trained at that point to be educators or trainers. This happened later, during their daily experience.

The teacher of formal education referred to the fact that there is a lot of school content to be covered, which inhibits the effective ESD application across school. School principal exploits school staff with special interests, capabilities, i.e. a teacher wrote a book about refugees, and the whole school used it to elaborate on related ESD issues. Teachers then felt confident that they had a solid thing to rely on. In addition, he/she indicated, teachers do not easily get involved in sustainability actions. This may be because:

"There are no motivations/rewards, besides ethical ones, for school staff who engage themselves and their students in sustainability actions except in cases of winning a prize in student contests. ESD changed me. It made me see and realise things differently and appreciate sustainability." CYFT11

Non-formal education trainer said that:

"Environmental Centres have a supplementary role towards formal education". CYNT11

In their case, because of the centre's location which is really far from cities and thus from relevant services, it is difficult to develop cooperation networks with other organisations that would further enrich ESD provided at their centre. There is a great demand from schools to participate in a centre's program so there is limited time for personnel's training since they have to deliver environmental programs on a daily basis.

Formal education student states that:

"Teachers should primarily have empathy, be able to understand their students and include everyone in the everyday learning procedure." CYFS11

This is something they must be trained to do. In addition, they need to be trained more about SDGs to be able to teach their students accordingly. Non-formal education student would favour

"Even more positive attitudes towards sustainability by trainers, the use of current, interesting and updated teaching techniques, and the use of IT so as to facilitate their programs". CYN11

Therefore, trainers must also be trained in order to keep sustainability and ESD on track.

Formal education employee states that all personnel of the institution must be aware of ESD and then how to embed it in their tasks whether it is teaching, IT support, cleaning services, etc. Students there have to participate in projects with real life issues and that is helpful to obtain ESD capacities. Non-formal education employees consider that continuous ESD training is necessary to improve their abilities. Moreover, IT and digital literacy is something he/she would like to engage in.

Head teachers, directors, teachers, students and other personnel all think that ESD awareness is crucial and that educators must learn how to teach with ESD in mind. There is a catholic demand for quality training towards ESD that would provide empathy skills and effective teaching techniques to educators.

Greece

In Greece, the third priority action area is one that can be further supported. ESD is being somehow promoted between the educators within the responding organisations (40%), all the while, a more systematic approach to capacity building would be welcome (70% did not have a systematic approach, were unaware of it, or would like to know more about it). In this context, only 35% of the respondents indicated that there is in-house/internal training regarding ESD for educators. The same percentage of the respondents also specified that they participate in training regarding ESD with other schools.

Additionally, only 20% indicated that they have tailored their curriculum to each SDG goal, while at the same time, participation in EU projects for ESD (55%) was favoured in the education organisations.

One of the highest activities towards the capacity building of educators refers to their digital literacy. More than 70% of the responding participants noted that their institution promotes digital literacy among educators.

Lastly, in terms of incentivizing educators to promote or include ESD-related topics in education and recognising their contributions to this direction, the majority (70%) did not identify such practices, were unaware or would like to know more about those.

In the open questions, the participants noted that in-school training and cooperation with stakeholders for the development of sustainable development are needed. While another respondent indicated the following:

continuous training of teachers; updating of educational programmes in accordance with new scientific data; development and modernisation of educational material (printed and digital); use of modern technology; synergies with other educational institutions and the local community.

Regarding educator and trainer capacity building, the main factors to be considered refer to the fact that training for ESD is on a voluntary basis for teachers (and free of charge), There is a lack of incentives and reward system for those who undertake training, and in some cases the content needs to be improved – some asynchronous programmes have nothing to do with the reality (GRHF12). Additionally, there is a lack of linkage between real-world problems and the modern context of society, while one of the interviewees claimed that ESD-related issues are not addressed at all (GRFT11). Another issue referred to the fact that there is a limited exchange of experience and good practices among teachers. In this context, it was also pointed out that cooperation among schools and institutions as well as exchange of methods and good practices do not take place in the Greek educational system. In this context, communication between neighbouring schools needs to be strengthened. As one of

the interviewees claimed, the main challenges lie in the cultural aspects of cooperation and sharing of good practices and not in the legal and institutional framework, which already exists GRFT11.

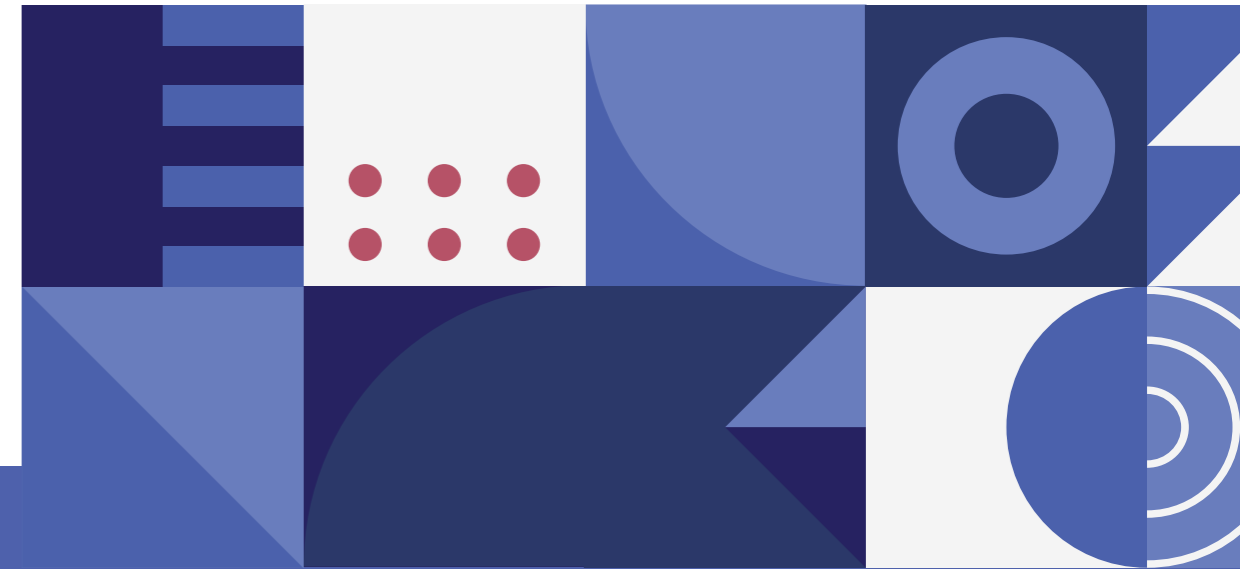
Efforts are being made to target teachers, but the training is optional, on a voluntary basis and takes place outside school hours which discourages participation as the majority of educators in Greece are women and mothers and have no free time. This leads to the same group of educators consistently being involved in the training programs GRHF12.

In general, there have been some improvements for the educator’s capacity building, especially by IEP whose responsibilities include that aspect; nonetheless, there are several structural challenges that hinder this process.

According to the Romanian national report, all institutions are promoting the practice of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) among their teachers. Half of the institutions include systematic and comprehensive capacity development for ESD in the training provided to teachers, while the other half do not. Similarly, half of the institutions incorporate learning content specific to each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), while the remaining half do not. None of the institutions organises internal training sessions on sustainability for all teachers. Additionally, one-third of the institutions participate in cross-school training on sustainability, while the remaining two-thirds do not.



In the context of formal education, all institutions promote IT literacy among their teachers and support their participation in EU-Projects related to sustainability. Furthermore, 83% of institutions motivate or celebrate educators who successfully integrate ESD into their teaching, while 17% do not. In terms of assessment, 66% of institutions consider ESD initiatives as indicators of institutional education quality, while 34% do not.



In non-formal education, 33% of institutions promote the practice of ESD among their teachers, while 67% do not. None of the institutions provides systematic and comprehensive capacity development for ESD in the in-service training of teachers, nor do they include learning content specific to each SDG. Additionally, no institutions organise internal training sessions on sustainability for all teachers, and none participates in cross-school training on sustainability.

From the perspectives of teachers, trainers, students, and employees, there are varying opinions on ESD implementation and capacity building. In formal education, a teacher believes that her institution promotes ESD among teachers and provides comprehensive capacity development. However, she thinks that her institution lacks specific learning content for each SDG, internal training on sustainability, participation in cross-school training, and recognition of ESD initiatives in assessing education quality.

In non-formal education, a trainer believes that his institution promotes IT literacy and participates in cross-school training on sustainability. However, he feels that the institution does not promote ESD among teachers, lacks comprehensive capacity development, support for participation in EU-Projects, specific learning content for each SDG, internal training on sustainability, and recognition of educators integrating ESD.

In formal education, a student believes that teachers in his school need practical strategies to be effective ESD teachers, emphasising the importance of practical activities alongside providing information. In non-formal education, a student volunteer believes that teachers in his institution should have the ability to empathise with students and support their inclinations, recognizing that teachers already possess organisational and coordination skills.

A school employee in formal education believes that integrating interdisciplinary skills and knowledge is essential to contribute to ESD implementation and SDG achievement through aligning school and extracurricular activities. Similarly, an employee in a non-formal education institution believes that participating in training courses is necessary to effectively contribute to ESD implementation and SDG achievement.

Serbia

Regarding Priority Action Area 3 in Serbia, primary and secondary school directors agree in the questionnaire that their institutions do not provide sustainability training and do not participate in such training with other schools. However, as individuals are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills, schools and teachers engage in international ESD projects. Some aspects of ESD are implemented in school education, regardless of schools' awareness. Interview responses vary based on the degree of involvement in ESD, ranging from affirmative to complete unawareness.

Responses in the field of non-formal education are mostly in agreement, with some slight differences on specific items. All respondents state that the practice of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not promoted among trainers in their institutions, and there is no comprehensive and systematic capacity building for trainers and educators in the field of ESD. Additionally, if educators or trainers seek to enhance their capacities and skills in ESD, their institutions do not provide motivation or recognition for their efforts. However, in terms of environmental and digital capacities and skills, which are recognized as dominant topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all respondents affirm that there are capacity-building opportunities in these areas.

In the case of the interviewed NGO directors, their responses align mostly positively with the items in this Priority Action Area. Both directors mention that their institutions do not participate in inter-institutional sustainability training. However, some members of their associations/NGOs are experts on SD and provide training courses both within and outside their organisations, which are attended by employees of the NGOs/associations. This was also confirmed by an employee in a face-to-face interview. A beneficiary of the courses mentioned that the courses should be more tailored to current topics and the overall context. Overall, all participants in the non-formal education research indicate that there are many opportunities for improving their knowledge and capacities on SD topics

3.2.4 ESD Priority action area 4:
Empowering and mobilising youth

Austria

The field research conducted in Austria has provided valuable insights into the state of youth empowerment in educational institutions. The study uncovered several noteworthy examples of youth empowerment implementation, as described by actors within these institutions.

One school participant shared, "In our school, many activities are student-driven." The students' proactive engagement and advocacy were so impactful that the climate minister visited their school for a discussion, prompted by a critical open letter they had formulated to the climate ministry (ATHF11). Another participant highlighted the various avenues available for students to suggest and share their ideas within the school community. For instance, they organized a school survey that revealed the need for a community room, which is now being planned for implementation (ATFTI1).

These instances of youth empowerment in education lay the foundation for a whole-institution approach, where students become active multipliers in the process. A non-pedagogical school employee expressed their experience, stating, "Students sometimes come to me and tell me their ideas, such as asking for vegan lentil burgers or vegan cookies. In response, I started cooking and baking them, and the students love it. It feels like a personal exchange, and I feel a bit like a social worker" (ATFEI1).

Furthermore, empowering and mobilizing young people not only benefits the school community but also facilitates the multi-stakeholder process. Students play an active role in driving activities and voicing their opinions on various issues. For instance, students formulated a critical open letter to the climate ministry, resulting in a visit by the Austri-

an climate minister for a school-wide discussion. The regional media coverage of this event further extended the reach of these actions, informing people outside the school community and creating broader awareness (ATFSI1).

Another area where youth empowerment is evident is in waste management initiatives within schools. During the conception phase of curricula, students were asked for their opinions in an informal manner and acted as peers in shaping waste management practices within their school environment. Their focus often centers on issues directly related to their surroundings, such as the school cafeteria, school garden, and the arrangement of furniture in corridors (ATHFI2).

While youth empowerment is well-established within formal educational institutions, the potential for empowerment in non-formal education varies depending on the nature and objectives of the institutions involved. Youth centers, for example, provide a welcoming environment that encourages and supports youth-led activities and campaigns. However, in institutions with shorter course durations, like language course institutions, it may be more challenging to fully integrate youth empowerment practices (ATNSI2).

Nonetheless, non-formal education offers greater flexibility in terms of curricula and methodologies, allowing for the empowerment and mobilization of course participants towards causes that extend beyond the confines of the educational institution itself. Participants have the opportunity to engage in discussions about real-life situations worldwide, such as injustice, working conditions, and the environment. They are encouraged to suggest topics and share their insights with other participants, fostering a sense of active participation and empowerment (ATNSI2).



The examples from Austria serve as commendable models of dedication to youth empowerment, showcasing active student involvement in decision-making processes and their ability to create positive changes within their school environments and beyond. It is important, however, to acknowledge the need to tailor approaches in non-formal settings to align with the specific nature and objectives of each institution, taking into consideration that participants often attend these institutions for specific purposes or goals.

Cyprus

In Cyprus, both in formal and non-formal education settings, there is a recognition of the importance of empowering and mobilising young people towards sustainability. Head teachers in formal education institutions express the desire to see students more engaged and motivated, suggesting ideas such as competitions, specific roles for students, and fundraising campaigns to promote sustainability in schools. They believe that:

“If students know that their action is going to be presented to an important audience and that the local community will stand by them in matters of funding and facilitating their work, then most probably they will commit to actions”. CYHF11

According to the questionnaire data, head teachers generally agree that their institutions have implemented a youth engagement policy related to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and recognize young people as key contributors to promoting sustainable development. They also involve students in local community activities. However, there is a mixed response when it comes to fully including young people in the design, delivery, and monitoring of policies and programs on education and sustainable development, as well as securing seats for student representatives in decision-making bodies.

In non-formal education, directors emphasise the importance of empowering and mobilising youth; supporting local actions and helping young people develop key competencies of active citizenship. They believe that:

“Students must feel they have equal say to adults. Young people must learn how to engage in fostering sustainable solutions but a central policy should be established so as to motivate a great number of young people to act collectively”. CYHNI1

Examples of programs and initiatives aimed at empowering young people and raising awareness about climate change are mentioned:

“We have adopted programs for empowering and mobilising young people 8 – 18 years old about climate change. We provided training at schools that intend to make students aware of climate change and urge them to demand for environmental justice”. CYHNI2

However, a director also points out that primary education places more emphasis on ESD compared to lower and upper secondary education. There is a call for students to have a greater role and involvement in decision-making processes in schools.

Students, both in formal and non-formal education, express their desire to be more involved and have a say in matters that affect them. They highlight the importance of being equal partners in decision-making processes and propose actions for promoting specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Employees in formal and non-formal education mention their contributions to the youth empowerment process. They participate in working groups, influence project design, and act as sustainability role models to empower colleagues and learners.

Romania

According to the Romanian national report, in formal education, 83% of institutions have implemented a youth engagement policy related to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), while 17% have not. Regarding the recognition of young people as key contributors and actors in sustainable development efforts, 50% of institutions recognize them, while the other 50% do not. Similarly, 83% of institutions fully include young people in the design, delivery, and monitoring of policies and programs on education and sustainable development, whereas 17% do not. In terms of providing seats for student representatives in decision-making bodies at all levels, only 17% of institutions secure such seats, while 83% do not. However, it is encouraging that 83% of institutions involve students in local community activities, with only 17% not involving them.

In non-formal education, 66% of institutions have implemented a youth engagement policy related to ESD, while 34% have not. Similarly, 83% of institutions recognize young people as key contributors and actors in sustainable development efforts, while 17% do not. In terms of fully including young people in the design, delivery, and monitoring of policies and programs on education and sustainable development, 66% of institutions do so, while 34% do not. Only 17% of institutions secure seats for student representatives in decision-making bodies at all levels, while 83% do not. However, it is worth noting that 100% of institutions involve students in local community activities.

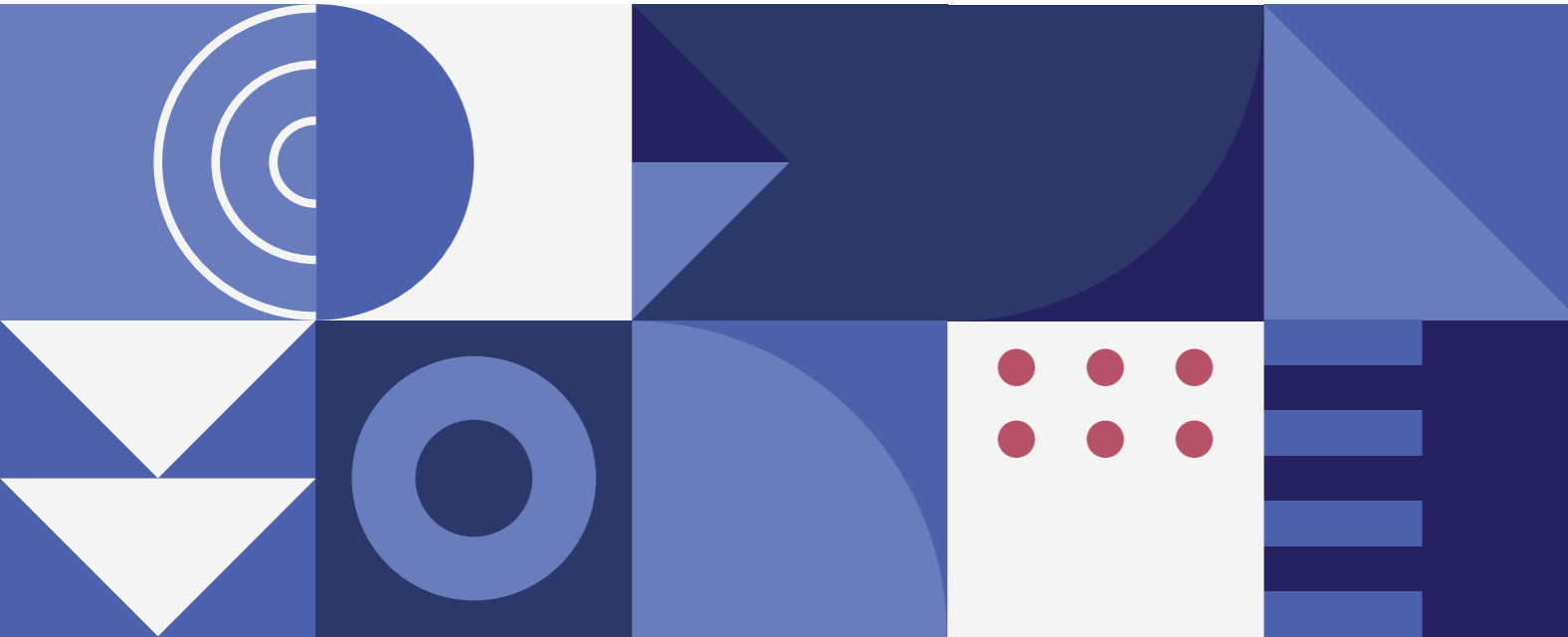
The teacher in formal education believes that the school has implemented a youth engagement policy related to ESD and recognizes young people as key contributors and actors in sustainable development. The school also involves students in local community activities. However, the teacher does not believe that the school fully includes young people in the design, delivery, and monitoring of policies and programs on education and sustainable development, nor does the school secure seats for student representatives in decision-making bodies at all levels.

Overall, there is a consensus among educators and learners that more efforts should be made to empower and mobilise youth towards sustainability. Suggestions include establishing a central policy, involving students in decision-making processes, and providing incentives for their engagement in sustainability actions. There is a recognition that primary education places more emphasis on sustainability compared to higher levels of education, highlighting the need for continued support and motivation throughout the educational journey.

Greece

In terms of empowering youth in Greece, several of the organisations’ respondents were from the environment of primary education, thus most of the students were younger than 15. For that reason, insights coming from this field might not be very relevant. Nonetheless, in terms of the last question “Do students from your institution participate in local community activities?” The vast majority of the respondents (90%) did include students in local community activities. Whereas in terms of decision-making, a smaller percentage of the institutions included students in the process (25%).

All the interviewees mentioned working with students who are younger than 15. The students they had were included in school visits and in the implementation of environmental-related actions. Recycling and composting were some of the initiatives, while one of the interviewees from the private organisations mentioned that they are involving both children and youth in their experiential learning activities (e.g. “pocket-parks” or “adopting parks” which are initiatives that protect green spaces around schools and neighbourhoods). One of the interviewees stressed that we should try to teach attitudes to children - clarify the concepts of values by involving pupils in the actions by being the facilitators (GRFT11). Implementing the actions that the pupils themselves are more interested in is also very important.



The trainer in non-formal education believes that the institution has implemented a youth engagement policy related to ESD and recognizes young people as key contributors and actors in sustainable development. The institution also involves students in local community activities. However, the trainer does not believe that the institution secures seats for student representatives in decision-making bodies at all levels.

The student in formal education states that students in his school have the opportunity to engage as key actors in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by participating in various debates within projects. The school recognizes students' initiatives and engagement through "participation diplomas" and publicising the results.

The student in non-formal education (volunteer) states that students in the institution have the opportunity to engage as key actors in achieving the SDGs through participation in various extracurricular activities. The award for students' initiatives and engagement in the institution is the joy of a job well done.

The employee in formal education envisions being involved in empowering young people and rewarding them for their merits to contribute to the youth empowerment process in the school.

The employee in non-formal education envisions being involved in empowering young people to contribute to the youth empowerment process in the institution.

While there are some institutions that have implemented a youth engagement policy and recognize young people as key actors in sustainable development, representation of students in decision-making bodies is limited. However, the involvement of students in local community activities is widespread, which is a positive aspect.

Serbia

Three Serbian directors from urban formal education schools provided positive responses to all items in this priority area. On the other hand, the remaining three directors, including two from suburban schools and one from an urban school, either gave negative responses or were unsure about how to respond, except for recognizing young people as key actors in promoting sustainable development.

The responses from the interviewees also varied based on their personal engagement in the field of sustainable development and ESD. Some interviewees were unsure about the accuracy of the statements, while others provided mixed positive and negative responses based on their individual practices rather than institutional arrangements.

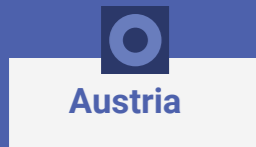
In non-formal education, it is expected that NGOs, associations, and centres providing non-formal education, including sustainable development, would have implemented a policy to engage the youth. However, all six respondents in this sector gave a negative response to this particular item. Additionally, even though these organisations involve young people in the creation, implementation, and monitoring of ESD programs and policies, the respondents did not provide a unified positive answer in this area.

In contrast, the interviewed employees who run NGOs provided positive and encouraging responses to all items within this priority. They expressed their active involvement in inspiring and encouraging young people to take action and become active citizens. However, the course beneficiary mentioned that young people should have more influence in the development of strategic plans and local action plans.

Overall, the responses indicate a lack of uniform implementation of youth engagement policies and varied levels of involvement of young people in formal and non-formal educational settings. While some institutions and individuals are actively promoting youth empowerment and involvement, there is still room for improvement in ensuring widespread recognition and meaningful participation of young people in sustainable development efforts.



3.2.5 ESD Priority action area 5: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level



In Austria, the institutions interviewed are actively engaged in various networks. However, resource management often sets limits on their participation, as stated in the survey comment:

“Many projects are a question of resources – who can take time to implement ideas, who has the expertise, and is there any money for the activity?” ATHF11

Indeed, the institutions in Austria not only focus on inspiring their neighbourhood but also recognize the importance of learning from their surroundings. The mentioned example of a head of school appreciating the work done in a neighbouring technical school, where students set up a vertical garden, highlights the recognition of good practices and innovation in sustainability. A teacher said:

“It’s great to have this exchange about renewable energy. Besides that, we as schools need budget to make our school buildings more sustainable, like facade greening for example.” ATFT11

Efforts are made to promote sustainability within the school premises as well. One school offers fair trade products through a vending machine called “FAIRomat,” installed in cooperation with the local “Weltladen.” However, a student mentioned that they believe the school is already on a sustainable path, and there may not be much potential for further improvement from the students’ side.

Many activities and projects are organised by specific classes with one teacher, such as clothes swaps and drives. While other students are asked to participate, it can sometimes be difficult for them to join if it is not their own class due to organisational reasons. Infrastructure is identified as a specific challenge, and students suggest that the head of school could easily change the products in vending machines to sustainable alternatives.

Overall, the institutions in Austria are actively involved in sustainable development networks and strive to implement sustainable practices within their schools and in their neighbourhood. However, resource constraints and logistical challenges may limit the extent of their initiatives.

The heads of both formal education institutions express a positive attitude towards opening their schools to the community and working with them. They emphasise their involvement in sustainable development campaigns and ensuring the visibility of their SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood and the public. However, they responded negatively to being a member of any ESD network or coordinating programs with other institutions to address all SDGs and local sustainability challenges coherently.

Non-formal education Director 1 mentions the cooperation of their environmental centre with the local



community:

“If it was not for the centre, the local community would have been “lifeless” and unexploited because of the long distance someone has to travel to reach the place”. (CYHNI1)

The centre serves as a vital hub for the community, providing opportunities for engagement that would otherwise be unavailable due to the distance people have to travel. The centre also collaborates with the Forest Department, involving learners in identifying issues and proposing solutions. This engagement benefits the learners by empowering them as active citizens. Director 2 also highlights how nearby communities seek their expertise in environmental and sustainability issues, positively affecting the centre’s personnel by providing them with necessary tools.

The formal education teacher expresses optimism about cooperation with local authorities to address sustainability issues. Students contribute many ideas for positive changes in their school and local community. However, the teacher notes that implementation of these ideas may face obstacles such as bureaucracy and lack of economic funding. They believe that the school should have more autonomy to overcome these challenges.

The non-formal education trainer provides an example of facilitating sustainable solutions at the local level through collaboration with vocational education teachers, students, local community members, and specialised workers. Together, they successfully addressed the issue of a ruined dry stall, holding a training seminar and collectively fixing it, benefiting everyone involved.

Formal and non-formal education students are in the same line regarding sustainable solutions at the local level. As CYSF11 noted:

“Students can be part of solutions and so they must be given the chance to investigate sustainability issues, propose and take part in designing actions so as to tackle them at local level”. CYSF11

Both formal and non-formal education students share the belief that they can be part of sustainable solutions at the local level. They advocate for the chance to investigate sustainability issues, propose actions, and actively participate in designing and implementing them. This demonstrates a strong bond between schools and their local communities, as they frequently cooperate with local authorities on sustainability actions.

The formal education employee acknowledges personal growth and increased awareness of sustainability through engagement in institutional sustainability actions. They also observe that students are motivated to participate and gradually become more sensitised to sustainability issues. The non-formal education employee agrees with these statements and confirmed personal improvement in sustainability matters.

While educational institutions are actively cooperating with the local community and engaging in sustainability efforts, questionnaire responses suggest that becoming members of ESD networks could further enhance their engagement and accelerate local-level solutions.

Greece

In Greece, from the responses that were provided, 40% of the institutions participated in campaigns to raise awareness concerning sustainable development. Sixty (60%) percent did not do so, were unaware or would like to know more. The same percentage of organisations indicated that they ensure the dissemination of their activities that are connected to ESD in the community. In the same context, only 25% - 30% of the organisation representatives that responded to the survey specified that they belong to an SDG-related network or coordinate programmes with other institutions to jointly address all SDGs and related local sustainability challenges in a coherent manner. The answers at this priority area showcase that there is a significant lack in terms of creating and maintaining partnerships, networks and coordinating mechanisms to commonly address matters related to ESD.

In the open questions, one of the respondents indicated that “there is a great need for the help of the local community”. Regarding the local context, it is worth noting that there are ongoing initiatives that demonstrate positive progress. In comparison to other levels, the local area shows a relatively more favourable situation. Several initiatives at the public elementary school level and the private non-formal education level involve local actors within their activities in terms of ESD. At this level, the main obstacle that was mentioned referred to difficulties arising due to bureaucracy and punctuality (GRHF12, GRH-NI1). It takes a lot of time from all sides in order to implement actions that will involve the local community.

In this, it was also mentioned that there is greater flexibility at lower educational levels, as the curriculum is more open to creative and experiential activities (GRHF12). During secondary education, the programme becomes less flexible and more structured, with little room for ESD-related content. Overall, some schools have demonstrated exceptional performance and achievements with kindergartens serving as excellent examples of effective collabo-

ration between schools and special education units.

According to the Romanian national report, the findings in formal education indicate that 50% of institutions are involved in sustainable development campaigns, while the other 50% do not implement them. About 83% of institutions ensure the visibility of their SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood and the public, while 17% do not. None of the institutions is member of any ESD networks. In terms of program coordination, 50% of institutions coordinate their programs with other institutions to address all SDGs and local sustainability challenges coherently, while the remaining 50% do not.

In non-formal education, 33% of institutions are involved in sustainable development campaigns, while 67% do not implement them. Only 33% of institutions ensure the visibility of their SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood and the public, while 67% do not. Similar to formal education, none of the institutions in non-formal education is member of any ESD networks. In terms of program coordination, 50% of institutions coordinate their programs with other institutions to address all SDGs and local sustainability challenges coherently, while the other 50% do not.

The teacher in formal education believes that her school is involved in sustainable development campaigns, ensures the visibility of its SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood and the public, and coordinates its programs with other institutions to address all SDGs and related local sustainability challenges coherently. However, she does not think that her school is a member of any ESD networks. The trainer in non-formal education believes that his institution is involved in sustainable development campaigns and ensures the visibility of its SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood

Romania

and the public. However, he is unsure if his institution is a member of any ESD networks or coordinates its programs with other institutions for coherent SDG implementation.

The student in formal education believes that a school can interact with its neighbourhood to solve local problems by participating in environmental issues, involving as many students as possible in eco-projects, and organising volunteering actions that involve community members. He mentions that his school is already involved in local projects aimed at protecting the environment, and he would actively participate in activities centred on environmental protection, animals, and natural resources.

The student in non-formal education (volunteer) believes that an institution can interact with its neighbourhood to solve local problems by participating in projects related to sustainable education objectives. He mentions that his institution is already involved in various projects aimed at quality education, and he would participate in activities that contribute to the personal development of students.

From the perspective of personnel in formal education, the employee believes that the school environment has transformed her, making her more attentive to details and more responsible and involved in school and extracurricular activities. Similarly, the employee in non-formal education feels that the institution’s environment has transformed her, making her more involved and responsible. They observe that students and staff have also undergone transformations, such as increased involvement and volunteering activities.

It is noted that there is a need to accelerate finding solutions for involving institutions in sustainable development actions at the local level. While there is a desire to involve and implement projects on this topic, the directors promoting formal education feel that there are currently insufficient resources to develop strong partnerships and programs with institutions in the field. They suggest the need for national-level programs in both formal and non-formal education institutions to address this issue effectively.

Serbia

In the population of the formal education sector in Serbia, there is a general trend of negative responses among primary and secondary school directors regarding accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level. The majority of respondents provided negative responses to all items within this section. However, two out of four respondents mentioned that their institutions ensure the visibility of SDGs-related activities for the neighbourhood and the public, as well as coordinate programs with other institutions.

Among the interviewees in the formal education sector, most respondents maintained a negative stance towards the items in Priority Action Area 5. However, two teachers who are professionally involved in promoting ESD provided somewhat different responses. They stated that their higher education institution is part of SD campaigns, ensures the visibility of SDGs-related activities, and coordinates programs with other institutions.

In the non-formal education sector, four out of six respondents mentioned that their institutions actively participate in campaigns for sustainable development. However, for other items within Priority Action Area 5, the majority of respondents provided negative responses. Only one institution coordinates its programmes with other similar institutions to address ESD challenges and other SD issues in a coherent manner. None of the institutions ensures the visibility of their ESD actions in public or is members of wider ESD networks.

Among the interviewees in the non-formal education sector, both NGO directors stated that their organisations participate in SD campaigns however, none of them is a member of an ESD network. The course beneficiary expressed the need for increased consultation with people in the local municipality to address local problems, including those related to sustainable development. They also highlighted the requirement for additional budget allocation to effectively tackle urgent issues in various local municipalities.

3.2.6 Multi-stakeholder process

Austria

In the Austrian context, the Institution's leads ATHFI1 and ATHFI2 emphasised the importance of partnerships and cooperation. Teacher ATFTI1 acknowledges the abundance of educational materials available online to support teachers interested in sustainability.

ATFTI2 highlights the benefits of cooperating with NGOs such as Südwind, Forum Umweltbildung. They think that those stakeholders are crucial for pedagogical resources. Stakeholders like Weltladen (World shop) offer opportunities to practise Fairness in Business Collaborating with these organisations and allowing them access in the classrooms, helps improve Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) lessons.

Especially trainers in non-formal education appreciate interacting with external stakeholders because they would extend their horizon through such cooperation.

Students both of formal and non-formal educational institution expressed their interest in having multi-stakeholder process going on in the school for a special reason:

"Having multiple actors in school open doors to real live and networks for our future" ATFSI2

Overall, all actors highlighted the importance of partnerships, cooperation, and personal interest in sustainability for effective implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Cyprus

In Cyprus, both formal and non-formal education institutions recognise the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation and express a willingness to collaborate. However, they face various challenges. Head teachers in formal education primarily cooperate with local authorities for school support, indicating a strong reliance on the local government. Despite a desire to engage in multi-stakeholder processes for sustainability, some schools find it challenging to establish such collaborations, hindering the implementation of their intentions. Additionally, there is limited cooperation with stakeholders beyond local authorities, with only a minority of schools collaborating with Civil Society Organizations, indicating a potential gap in engagement with NGOs and non-governmental stakeholders. Moreover, there is no indication of involvement in global networks for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) or cooperation with businesses among participating schools, suggesting a lack of active engagement in these areas. On the other hand, non-formal education institutions involve relevant stakeholders, especially local authori-

ties, when necessary, demonstrating a practical approach to collaboration. However, cooperation with other stakeholders in non-formal education is typically project-based rather than integrated into regular programs, indicating the need for more consistent partnerships.

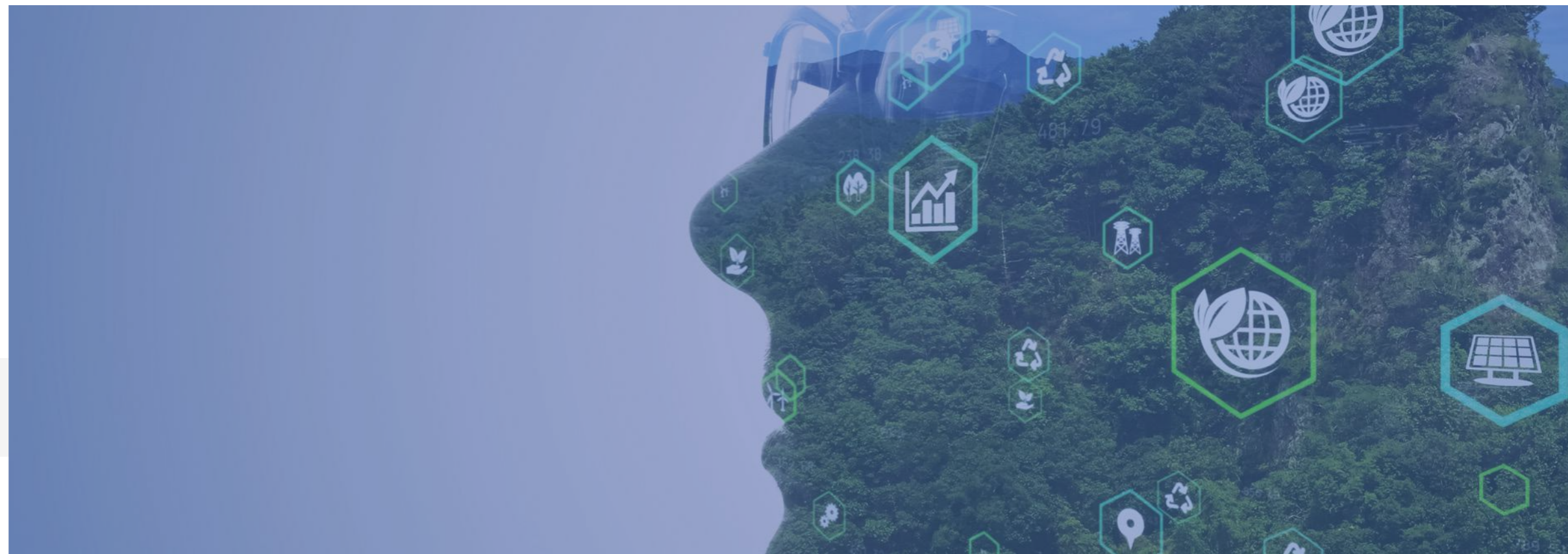
Non-formal education institutions value cooperation with stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness of their sustainability actions, recognising the importance of involving diverse perspectives and resources. In contrast, teachers in formal education express a lack of cooperation with out-of-school organisations, acknowledging the need for increased collaboration beyond local authorities to enhance sustainability efforts. Trainers in non-formal education face challenges in finding suitable stakeholders to cooperate with, possibly due to geographical and demographic factors. Nevertheless, students in both formal and non-formal education highlight the importance of cooperation with NGOs, emphasising its role in promoting volunteerism and fostering active citizenship. Non-formal education students further emphasise the mutual benefits of involving various stakeholders to find sustainable solutions, reflecting their understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative efforts. In the context of formal education, employees mention fruitful partnerships between university sectors and stakeholders, indicating suc-

cessful collaborations within the higher education system. Additionally, non-formal education employees propose establishing partnerships with organisations sharing similar interests, demonstrating a proactive approach to seeking relevant stakeholders. Overall, the institutions in Cyprus express a willingness to engage in multi-stakeholder processes and recognise the benefits they bring. While local authorities are commonly involved partners, there is also interest in collaborating with NGOs and other stakeholders to enhance sustainability efforts, promote active citizenship, and find sustainable solutions to emerging challenges.

Greece

Regarding multi-stakeholder processes in Greece, 60% of the organisations that responded to the survey indicated that they include in their policies institutions from other sectors and activities. Nonetheless, a smaller number of institutions took into account the position other stakeholders held in terms of sustainability challenges the educational organisation has faced.

In terms of global cooperation and networks, none of the responding organisations was part of the ESD 2030 global network; whereas a signif-



icant part of the respondents reported that, they have international partnerships (55%).

Concerning cooperation with business actors, 35% specified to do so, while 65% indicated that they mainly do not. Cooperation with NGOs and civil society however was reported at a higher degree (55%), while collaboration with community organisations was at a slightly lower percentage (45%).

Multi-stakeholder processes and approaches to ESD can be improved at various levels such as the global, but most importantly at the business and community levels.

The interviewees mostly mentioned that there is an effort to connect the schools with the community but that takes a lot of time due to bureaucratic obstacles. Private bodies are also very interested in cooperating with schools, but the municipality is more important to approach. One of the teachers that was involved in the interviews stated that they want the private sector to be involved in schools but there are many objections by others due to ideological and advertising reasons – she stressed that any help that the schools receive is vital (GRHF12). Similarly, for the private organisations it was easier to foster multi-stakeholder processes as other stakeholders that have the funds do not know how to implement sustainability-related projects, so a partnership emerges among NGOs and other stakeholders (e.g. business) (GRHNI1, GRNT11). One of the school directors stressed the fact that civil society plays a crucial role in acting as an intermediary to foster collaboration and synergies in support of multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Romania

In Romania, both formal and non-formal education institutions demonstrate a strong inclination towards including institutions from other fields of activities in their action policies. This shows a recognition of the importance of collaboration and multi-disciplinary approaches to sustainability. However, there is room for improvement in terms of cooperation with various stakeholders. While some institutions engage with business actors, Civil Society Organizations, and community organisations, there is still a significant percentage that does not participate in such collaborations. The absence of formal education institutions as members of the ESD for 2030 Global Network indicates a potential gap in international engagement and networking.

The majority of both formal and non-formal education institutions prioritise the adherence to ESD principles, indicating a shared belief in the significance of sustainable development education. Teachers and trainers in both sectors express their commitment to these principles and acknowledge the need for continuous professional development. Students also value partnerships with external organisations, recognizing the benefits of active participation and practical application of sustainability concepts.



Serbia

In Serbian formal education, the majority of primary and secondary school directors provided positive responses to most statements, except for membership in the 2030 Global Network. They expressed engagement with external actors, business enterprises, and civil society, as well as involvement in international partnerships. However, their responses to other items were either negative or indecisive.

In non-formal education, all respondents provided mostly positive answers to the items, except for membership in the ESD for 2030 Global Network. Additionally, external factors and interested parties were found to have no voting rights regarding the sustainability challenges faced by their institutions.

During interviews, it was generally observed that NGOs, associations, and civil society organisations collaborate with each other and various business enterprises. They are members of different partnership networks, although not the 2030 Global Network. The interviewees emphasised the importance of cooperation and partnership with stakeholders to raise awareness of all sustainable development goals and address societal issues effectively.

However, there is a need for greater facilitation and support for partnerships, particularly with economic actors. Decision-makers in education should focus on creating an environment that encourages collaboration between educational institutions and stakeholders from various fields of activities, fostering a more comprehensive and impactful approach to sustainability education.

Overall, there is a positive attitude towards the integration of sustainability principles in Romanian education, but efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation, enhance international partnerships, and provide continuous professional development opportunities for educators and trainers.

3.2.7 A Whole institution approach

Austria

In Austria, many schools have internal committees responsible for the management of everyday life within the school. These committees play a crucial role in the school's operations. Additionally, parents' associations are key actors in schools, providing financial support for various activities, particularly those related to informal education. Considering their involvement and contributions, it would be beneficial to engage them in the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives. There is a growing trend of introducing ESD topics in working groups within schools, indicating an increasing recognition of the importance of sustainability education among educators and administrators.

"The school quality committee meets regularly to discuss strategic topics. ESD was not on the agenda until now." ATHFI1

When topics are thoroughly discussed at school, the head of the institution feels encouraged to bring suggestions forward to higher educational decision-makers. This indicates that open and meaningful discussions within the school community can inspire and empower educational leaders to advocate for change and improvements in the broader education system. By voicing their ideas and concerns, the head of the institution can contribute to shaping educational policies and practices at a higher level, promoting positive developments in areas such as curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the integration of important topics like sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). A director gave an example:

"Heating and cooling of school buildings throughout Austria is a significant issue. This particular school has been interested in improving its infrastructure for years and is keen on installing a renewable energy system like photovoltaics. However, achieving this goal requires changes at a higher level, such as the involvement of the "Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft" to support schools in making their buildings more sustainable. It would be remarkable if all schools in Austria could become energy self-sufficient." ATHFI2

ATFSI1 declared that in their quite big school the students are mainly in touch with their classmates and other students from their department.

All school actors in Austria are attracted to the Whole Institution Approach for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This holistic approach aims to integrate sustainability principles and prac-



tices throughout the entire school community. However, many interviewees express concerns about the challenges of involving the entire school for each ESD action.

Implementing the Whole Institution Approach requires engaging various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators, to work collectively towards sustainable development goals. While there is enthusiasm for this approach, interviewees fear that achieving full participation and involvement from all members of the school community may be difficult.

Cyprus

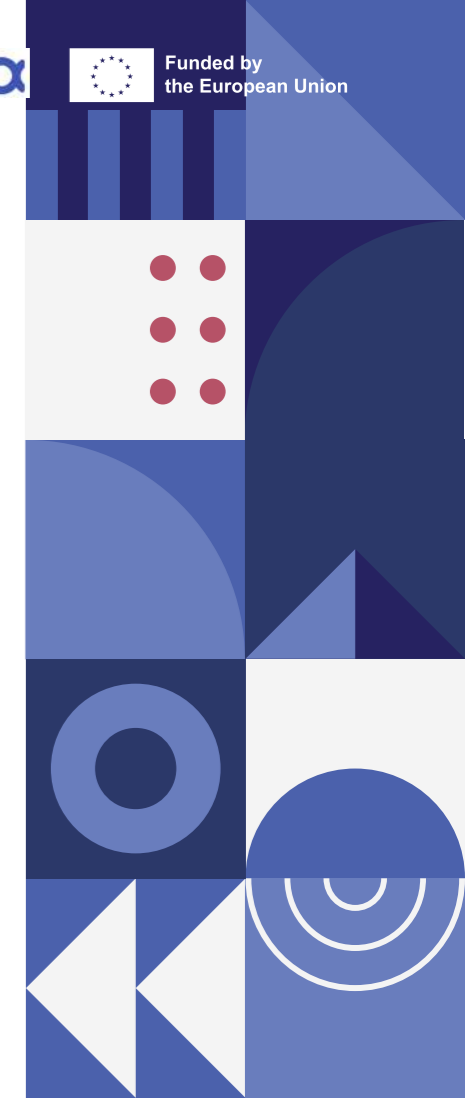
In Cyprus, there is a mixed perspective among school actors regarding the implementation of the whole institution approach to sustainability. Head Teacher 1 is optimistic and sees the potential for a sustainable way of life at school, aiming to improve the quality of life for students and local youth. However, Head Teacher 2 is less optimistic due to safety concerns in the old school building, prioritising resolving these issues before focusing on sustainability.

Non-formal education institutions see themselves as facilitators, assisting schools in adopting the whole institution approach. They provide support in identifying stakeholders, developing sustainability visions, designing Sustainable Energy and Environmental Plans (SEEP), implementing actions, and offering training when requested.

Formal education teachers acknowledge the need for a whole school approach but believe schools should have more autonomy in its implementation. Non-formal education trainers align with the objectives of Director 1, aiming to raise awareness of holistic sustainability issues, mobilise the school and local community for support, and address sustainability challenges.

Both formal and non-formal education students emphasise the importance of active student involvement in decision-making processes, fostering their development of active citizenship and relevant capacities. Formal education employees participate in working groups and engage in sustainability actions, suggesting the organisation of engaging sustainability workshops for staff. Non-formal education employees seek a more active role in educational programs and establishing networks with the local community, emphasising the importance of ongoing sustainability training and motivation for staff participation.

Non-formal education directors and trainers recognise the significance of the whole institution approach and can support schools in its effective implementation. Formal education institutions express willingness to receive training and understand the potential of this approach for promoting sustainability. Students desire participation in decision-making processes, while institutional personnel highlight the importance of workshops, training, and motivation to engage staff effectively in sustainability actions.



Greece

In connection to the whole-school approach in Greece, a majority of the respondents emphasised democratic decision-making processes and the presence of a forward-looking vision plan within their institutions. However, the integration of sustainability into all activities, such as building and facility management, governance, partnerships, and community relations, was reported by only a quarter of the respondents. Additionally, one respondent highlighted the ongoing need for better cooperation and involvement of students within the school.

Concerning the insights that came up from the interviews, cooperation and communication between teachers are essential for implementing a certain approach in Greece. In this context, there is also a need to incorporate sustainable development issues into the pedagogical curriculum by implementing learner-centred methodologies that actively involve children in acquiring knowledge, skills, and values related to sustainable development. In connection with this, involving all stakeholders (parents, pupils, and teachers) in the decision-making process was considered very important by one of the interviewees. Promoting a culture of cooperation among teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in the educational community is vital for the successful realisation of ESD, and there is a need to work towards improvements in this direction.

Romania

In Romanian formal education, the statistics show that 33% of schools have a board on sustainability, while 67% do not. However, all institutions ensure democratic bottom-up decision-making processes, develop future-oriented vision plans, embed sustainability in all activities, and support shared leadership. These institutions involve teachers, learners, and personnel in designing, planning, and taking action across the school.

In Romanian non-formal education, 17% of institutions have a board on sustainability, while 83% do not. Similarly, 83% of institutions ensure democratic bottom-up decision-making processes, 66% develop future-oriented vision plans, and 66% embed sustainability in all activities. However, there is a discrepancy in the percentages regarding ensuring democratic processes and supporting shared leadership, where 34% of institutions do not meet these criteria.

The teacher in formal education believes that their school ensures democratic decision-making processes, develops a future-oriented vision plan, embeds sustainability in all activities, and supports shared leadership. However, they mention that their school does not have a board on sustainability.

The trainer in non-formal education shares similar views to the formal education teacher, stating that their institution ensures democratic decision-making processes, develops a future-oriented vision plan, embeds sustainability in all activities, and supports shared leadership. They also mention the absence of a board on sustainability in their institution.

Both the formal education student and the non-formal education volunteer believe that student involvement in institution management is beneficial. They feel that their voices are considered through examples of good practices where students are invited to share their experiences. They express satisfaction with the management of their respective institutions regarding sustainability but express a desire for more international projects to learn from others' experiences in sustainable education. They are unsure if their institutions can serve as models for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The employee in formal education mentions being consulted on various school management matters, such as budget substantiation and analysis. They suggest stimulating people's participation in ESD implementation through project activities at the school level.

The employee in non-formal education, on the other hand, states not being consulted on any school management matters. They have ideas for sustainability education and promoting the new targets of ESD. Their suggestion is to involve all personnel in institution activities, especially volunteering activities, to promote ESD implementation.

In terms of institutional perspectives on challenges and strategies, there is a clear desire among all institutions to support activities and ensure democratic decision-making processes. However, it is noted that there is a need to establish commissions at the school unit level for sustainable education.

Serbia

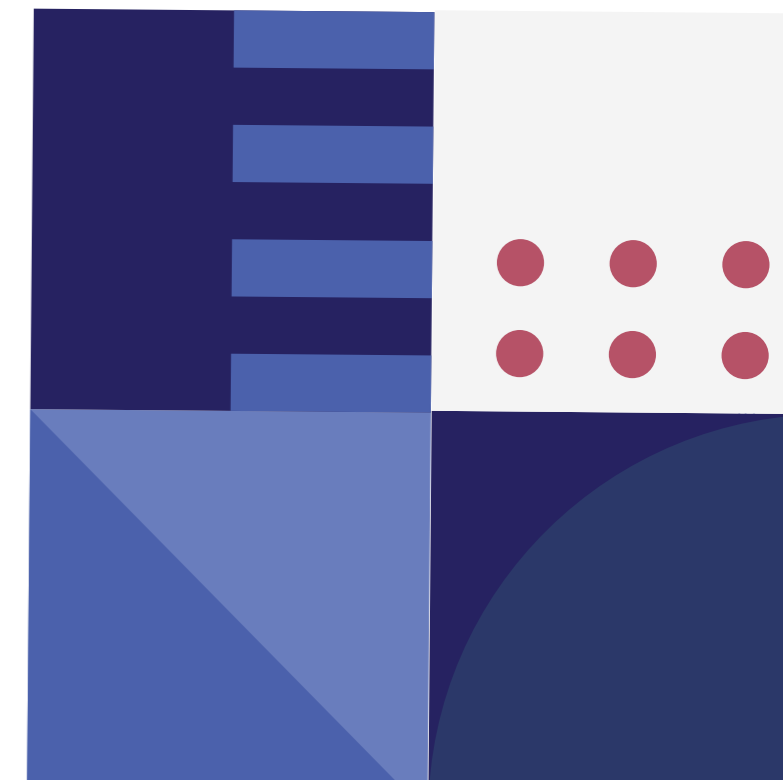
In Serbia, the implementation of a whole-school approach to sustainability in primary and secondary schools is reflected in the responses of six directors who filled out the questionnaire. Five out of six directors provided positive answers to all the items, except for the existence of a Board for Sustainability, which none of the schools had. Only one director provided negative responses to all the offered items.

Similarly, higher education institutions in Serbia, as indicated by the interviewees, also do not have Boards for Sustainability. However, all institutions ensure democratic bottom-up decision-making processes and have a future-oriented vision plan at the core of their identity.

For NGOs, associations, and centres, five out of six respondents provided identical affirmative answers to all questionnaire items, except for the establishment of a Board for Sustainability, which none of the organisations had. One respondent provided a negative response regarding the integration of sustainability principles in all institutional activities.

Despite the absence of Boards for Sustainability, the interviewees stated that their institutions have a comprehensive approach to sustainable development issues. However, there is a need for additional education and continuous professional development for educators, trainers, and other stakeholders to further enhance their understanding and implementation of sustainability principles. It is understandable that implementing ESD actions that involve the entire school can present logistical and organisational challenges. It requires effective coordination, communication, and ongoing commitment from all stakeholders. Overcoming resistance to change and ensuring widespread understanding and buy-in for sustainability initiatives may also pose difficulties.

Nonetheless, despite the apprehensions, the desire to pursue the Whole Institution Approach reflects a shared recognition of the importance of involving the entire school community in fostering sustainable practices. It may require strategic planning, clear communication of objectives, and targeted efforts to engage and motivate all stakeholders. By addressing these concerns and implementing supportive strategies, schools can gradually work towards realising the vision of whole-school involvement in ESD actions.



4. Final analysis and suggestions - Conclusion

The survey results and interviews conducted reveal several areas for improvement in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia, in both formal and informal educational systems.

One key aspect is the need for more training for school actors to effectively implement ESD. To enhance ESD, educational staff awareness should be fostered regarding the UNESCO's 2030 Roadmap, and active citizenship.

Students are requesting participation in decision-making processes at school, and experienced teachers can serve as mentors for their colleagues. Additionally, students form sustainability committees to address relevant issues within their schools

or local communities and advocate for a democratic and respectful school environment.

Students also emphasise the importance of having up-to-date educators and trainers proficient in ESD and current teaching methods. They seek empathy and inclusive education for everyone, necessitating teacher training in these areas.

It is crucial to support institutions in effectively designing, implementing, and monitoring policies related to food waste, water management, plastic usage, and paper management that can benefit institutions in their sustainability efforts.

Partnerships with stakeholders, including universities, can facilitate schools' endeavours toward sustainability.

To ensure ongoing progress, teacher/trainer and student committees should be established to evaluate institutions' facilities and suggest sustainable updates in all educational institutions.

In the public formal sector, educators and school directors demonstrate a general understanding of the SDGs and ESD concepts. However, specific priority areas of ESD are not yet familiar to them. A more tailored approach based on each priority area would support their efforts. It is worth noting that ESD is often not mentioned in educational organisations' mission statements, indicating a lack of prioritisation. Addressing this minor change can be a positive step toward incorporating ESD into educational considerations.

Structural challenges such as time constraints and continuity can only be resolved at a central level. Knowledge about past efforts and incentivisation /reward systems for educators incorporating ESD into their approaches should be elaborated and tailored to each institution. Support for a more tailored curriculum in ESD and SDGs should be provided from all levels, especially from central authorities.

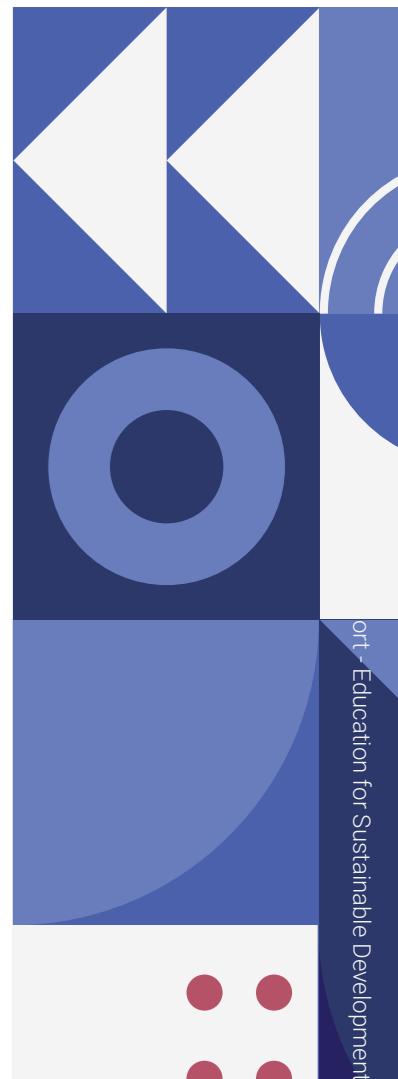
Concentrating on local-level initiatives, enhancing cooperation between neighbouring schools, and creating relevant networks are vital for fostering a communication and cooperation culture. Local events that facilitate communication and foster trust among various organisations can also be supportive measures.

Improving digital literacy skills among educators and students, particularly those in non-formal education, is recognized as a crucial aspect by all the interviewed actors.

Providing in-service and institution-wide training programs are significant and appear as viable measures. However, it is important to address the challenge of limited resources that may hinder the implementation of such initiatives.

The inclusion of students and employees in decision-making processes pertaining to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is considered significant and valuable. It calls for the creation of clear and open frameworks for internal communication and decision-making mechanisms within educational institutions.

Differentiated measuring criteria for ESD in formal and non-formal educational institutions are needed due to their distinct structures, methodologies, and administrative practices. Tailored ESD strategies and guidelines for each school, based on their specific needs, should be developed. Implementing whole institution ESD training that includes stakeholders is essential. It is critical to view the obligation of addressing sustainability in the context of the climate crisis critically. Merely ticking off ineffective sustainability statements should be avoided. The aim should be to educate children as responsible global citizens, preparing them for their future with knowledge and commitment to fellow human beings and the environment. Implementing the SDGs for a better world requires collaborative efforts, and sustainability should be pursued willingly and from within the school community.



ESD should be a mandatory aspect of education in all institutions. However, the question of financing such initiatives remains. Addressing issues such as unfair supply chains, overconsumption, overproduction, and waste of resources is vital globally. The education system's central tasks should include solution-oriented creative action, sensitization for appreciation and meaningfulness, and promoting networking and cooperation.

It is therefore important to recognise this variation in terminology and ensure clear communication and understanding among stakeholders. Clarifying and aligning the language used in the field of ESD can help facilitate effective collaboration and knowledge sharing, promoting a unified approach towards achieving sustainability goals.

Education for Sustainable Development is a key issue for accomplishing SDGs in enabling learners to live what they learn and learn what they live. Current study indicates that there is a lot of work done regarding ESD and that there are many challenges institutions face in their effort to be sustainable and embrace WIA. Nevertheless, institutions are willing to be trained in all aspects of sustainability and areas indicated by UNESCO's 2030 roadmap. Non-formal education has a major role and ability to provide necessary training that schools ask for.

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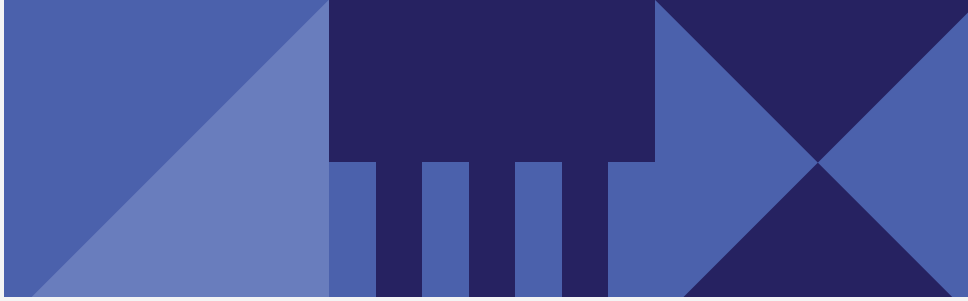
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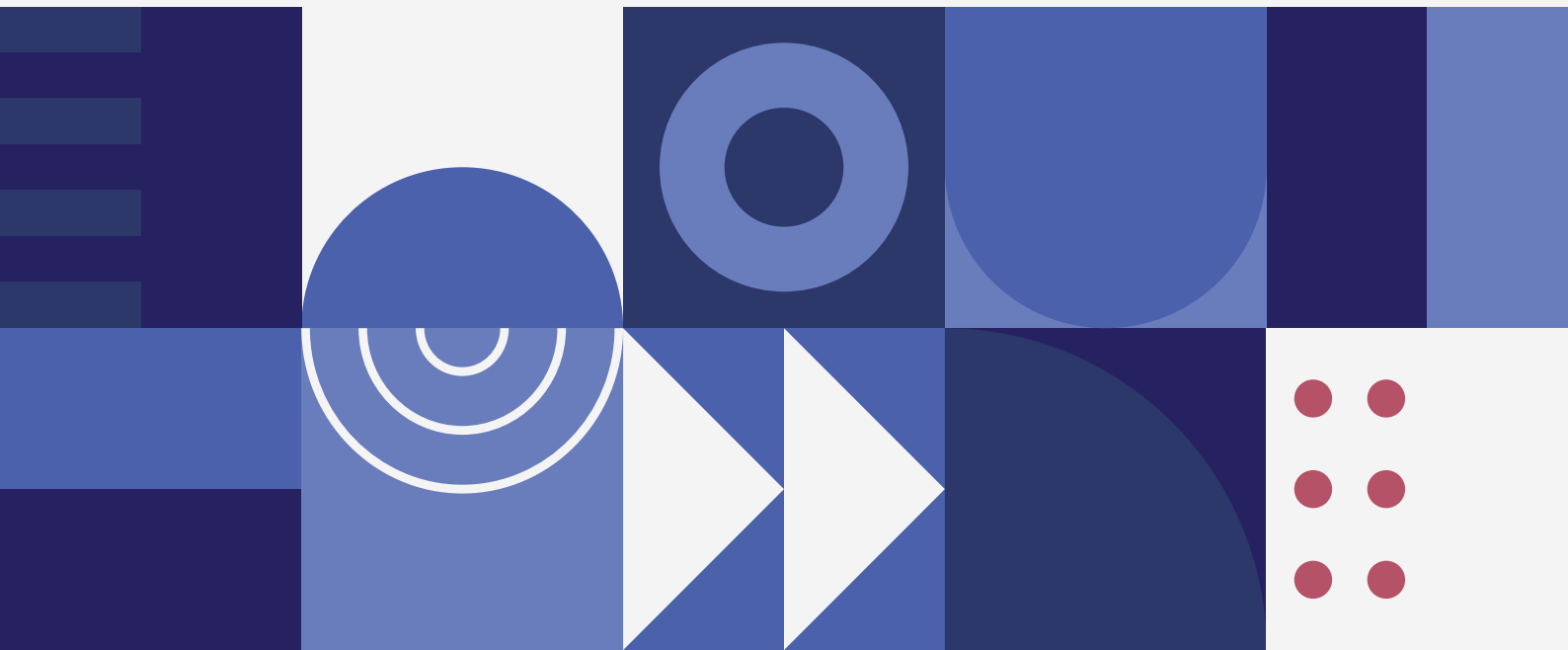


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Education for sustainable Development

Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Serbia

Transnational Report



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