North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

3ʳᵈ European Congress on Global Education

Education for a Global Citizenship: Unity in Diversity
26-28 November 2015, Zagreb

Workshop 3
Education and sustainability

-Briefing note-

The 3ʳᵈ European Congress on Global Education (GE) will bring together stakeholders from formal and non-formal education sectors, civil society platforms, governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and intergovernmental organisations from Europe and beyond, using the principle of "quadrilogue"[1] and of a holistic approach to global education.

Almost three years after the last European Congress on GE, the upcoming Congress seeks to take stock of the main achievements as well as the key issues to be tackled following the regional and national seminars organized by the NSC over the past three years. It also seeks to feed into the debate on the thread of consistency in terms of GE and explore new avenues of cooperation in the light of the post-2015 development agenda. The Congress shall approve recommendations that respond to the new challenges faced by educators when dealing with GE.

Global education and youth skills

Tapping into the potential of today's youth requires fostering key skills of a segment of our society that makes up 25% of the total working age population and 40 per cent of the unemployed. (ILO, FAO, 2015). There has been a continuous and growing interest on the part of the international community on youth skills meeting the needs of our societies and economies.

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[1] the "quadrilogue" is a unique North-South Centre concept coined to explain a partnership which brings together representatives of governments, national parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society to ensure good governance of the Centre representative of all the relevant stakeholders.

This year, on 15th July the world has celebrated the first **World Youth Skills Day** (WYSD), inaugurated by the United Nations, at the UN Campus in Bonn. According to the UN, the WYSD seeks to '*raise awareness of the importance of investing in youth skills as a means of promoting employment and sustainable development'.*[2] Even though the main motivation for establishing this day was the high rate of youth unemployment worldwide, the WYSD sprouts at a propitious moment when there is a need to look at youth skills gap from a different angle.

Thus, the 3rd European Congress on GE seeks to go beyond the aforementioned motivation and look for other societal issues such as increasing inequalities, cultural ignorance, rising violence and extremism in Europe and beyond.

At EU level, youth are seen as the 'driving forces of the European Union'[3]. Equipping youth with the necessary skills represents a priority as a means to reach the main EU strategies and initiatives ('*including the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Digital Single Market initiative, the European Agenda on Security and the Investment Plan for Europe'*)[4]. Most importantly, beyond the market-driven skills, education has a role in '*fostering inclusion and equality, cultivating mutual respect and embedding fundamental values in an open and democratic society'* and '*promoting equity and non-discrimination and in imparting fundamental values, intercultural competences and active citizenship'.*[5] The Council of Europe has also a solid concern related to enhancing social competences and it is currently developing a framework of competences for democratic culture including: self-efficacy[6], autonomous learning skills[7] and knowledge and critical understanding of the self,[8] recognising the need for framing soft skills that are necessary for a sustainable society.

The objectives of the Congress are to:

1. **Contribute to a Global Education/Global Citizenship Education (GE/GCED) competence and methodological framework**, in particular key competences for intercultural and interreligious understanding, to be used in both formal and non-formal education sectors and which contribute to critical and active citizenship, aware of, and able to deal with global challenges and opportunities;

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[2] http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=World%20Youth%20Skills%20Day%20at%20UNEVOC

[3] http://www.cesci-net.eu/2015_youth

[4] Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) New priorities for European cooperation in education and training, COM(2015) 408 final, Brussels, 26.8.2015, p. 3

[5] Ibid 3, p.3

[6] Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions which are required to achieve particular goals, and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, navigate obstacles successfully, influence what happens, and make a difference in the world.

[7] Autonomous learning skills are those skills which individuals require to organise and pursue their own learning, in accordance with their own needs, without being prompted by others. They include abilities in identifying, locating and accessing possible sources of the information, and the ability to judge the reliability of the various sources.

[8] Knowledge and critical understanding of the self has many different aspects, including knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural affiliations, knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world, and knowledge and understanding of one's own thoughts, beliefs, emotions, feelings and motivations.

2. **Identify the priorities and mechanisms for further strengthening of GE/GCED**, given the existing needs and the achievements at the country level, within national strategy development, curricular reform, capacity-building, quality support, campaigning and outreach;
3. **Identify the integral contribution of GE/GCED to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs);
4. **Outline proposals to establish an oversight mechanism to support evaluation and implementation of GE/GCED in Europe** and propose an Action Plan for the next three years in terms of policy development, pedagogical support and training mechanisms, through a multi-stakeholder approach including policy-makers and practitioners.

Life skills and skills for work

There is a global tendency to give predominance to skills for work over life skills due to a worldwide high unemployment rate as well as the corporate-driven approach towards education. However there is a need to develop life skills from an early age so as to prepare the future global citizens to tackle future global problems and look for sustainable and people-centred solutions through an informed manner with proper tools. Ignoring the development of these life skills at an early age will entail at a later stage tensions within our societies as well as widespread ignorance. Life skills have the potential to fill in ignorance gaps. They are first and foremost life and societal skills. They complement skills for work and represent essential tools that foster sustainable and people-centred societies. The international and European communities have been focusing on entrepreneurship and financial education as necessary skills for work to face youth unemployment and other societal issues. Thereupon, this Congress seeks to develop a common understanding of the necessary life skills for a better society as a complementary approach to the skills for work. As mentioned before it seeks to 'contribute to a competence and methodological framework' of skills for work and life skills to be utilised both in the formal and non-formal education. This debate will revolve around three identified workshop[9] topics:

-   Intercultural and interfaith dialogue
-   Active citizenship
-   Education and sustainability

Workshop 3: Education and sustainability

1. Workshop objectives

This workshop will explore how global education/ development education/ education for global citizenship can contribute to the sustainable development goals and how policy-makers, global educators and learners can position themselves strategically and act as agents of change for a sustainable future. Its main objectives are:

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[9] Entrepreneurship and financial education and Media, information and digital literacy are subsidiary topics up for discussion, integrated into the aforementioned workshop topics.

a. Developing a common view of the relation between education and sustainability;

b. Understanding the set of skills that education for sustainable development must foster (namely in terms of entrepreneurship and financial education), as well as the methodological framework and the evaluation mechanisms linked to those skills;

c. Identifying the added value of GE to the sustainable development goals in promoting a sustainable way of life through best practice and experience sharing;

d. Contribute to the Congress recommendations.

2. Global framework

2.1. Defining sustainability

According to UNESCO, sustainability is the main concept of the future[10], insofar as it is key in guiding our actions across three different dimensions: the environmental, societal and economic dimensions. The centrality of the notion of "sustainable development" is all the more evident if one looks at the different global obstacles to sustainability:

(1) Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption cause ecological stress; *(2)* Greater wealth also increases vulnerability and inequalities; *(3)* Growing interconnectedness coexists with rising intolerance and violence; *(4)* Human rights have progressed, but still face numerous challenges[11].

There is an essential link between the notions of "global citizenship" and "sustainability": indeed, a true Global Citizen puts effort into having a more sustainable lifestyle, as he/she understands the global consequences of local actions[12]. The *Global Education Manual* makes a number of suggestions to improve the mastery of competences related to sustainability[13].

Various notions from the global South could help us enrich our understanding of sustainability. "*The future of education and development in today's world requires fostering a dialogue among different worldviews with the aim of integrating knowledge systems originating in diverse realities, and to establish our common heritage*"[14].

2.2 Education for sustainable development

Sustainability is about personal responsibility, hence the link with global citizenship. This is why the role of education is crucial in fostering sustainability.

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[10] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p.17.

[11] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?* Paris: UNESCO, p.20-25.

[12] Tudorache, A. (2015). *Global Education Manual*. [online] Bucharest. Available at: http://library.deeep.org/record/1103?ln=en [Accessed 22 Sep. 2015].

[13] *Ibid*. For more information on:
- Tips for leading a more sustainable life, see p. 20-24.
- Tips for the organisation of sustainable GE / GCED workshops, see p. 39-41.
- Activities on "Responsible Consumption", see p. 64-72.
- Activities on "Sustainable Life Style", see p. 73-83.

[14] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.31.

This is why UNESCO notes that GE / GCED should promote a model in which "*economic growth [is] guided by environmental stewardship and by concern for peace, inclusion and social justice*"[15], thereby eliminating the nexus between economic growth, environmental degradation and social injustice. The link between education and sustainability requires a flexible approach to learning, which should be "*lifelong and life-wide*"[16].

Particularly regarding the challenge of climate change, education can play a pivotal role. According to UNESCO, "*Education plays a paramount role in raising awareness and promoting behavioural change for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. [...] Energy infrastructure by itself will not result in the appropriate changes*"[17]. Therefore, climate change must be included in school curricula. The *Global Education Manual* provides advice on how to deal with this particular topic, from an educator's perspective: there is a risk that an introduction on climate change either gets too technical or too emotional, while both temptations must be avoided. There is also a need to avoid confrontation with participants who deny climate change: an educator should expose facts, and let every participant form their own opinion[18].

As was observed previously, education has a close link with sustainability, since one can foster the other. As such, education has a special role in the Sustainable Development Agenda: not only is it a goal in itself, but it is also a crucial enabler for the accomplishment of the SDGs: "*Education is at the heart of the sustainable development agenda and essential for the success of all sustainable development goals. The new education agenda encapsulated in Goal 4 is holistic, ambitious, aspirational, [universal and transformational]*"[19]. Our attention is drawn to Target 4.7 in particular: "*By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*"[20].

On the role of education in sustainable development, the following was noted at the World Education Forum: "*Evidence continues to accumulate of education's unmatched power to improve lives, particularly for girls and women. Education has a key role in eradicating poverty: it helps people obtain decent work and raises their incomes, and generates productivity gains that fuel economic development. Education is one of the most potent ways of improving individuals' health – and of making sure the benefits are passed on to future generations. It saves the lives of millions of mothers and children, helps prevent and contain disease, and is an essential element of efforts to reduce malnutrition. Education also promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities*"[21].

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[15] *Ibid.*, p.10.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*, p.27-28.

[18] Tudorache, A. (2015). *Global Education Manual*. [online] Bucharest. Available at: http://library.deeep.org/record/1103?ln=en [Accessed 22 Sep. 2015], p.84-86.

[19] World Education Forum 2015, (2015). *Framework for Action Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all [Draft]*. p.2.

[20] *Ibid.*. p.11.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.2.

For education to play its role in sustainable development, education systems need to be more resilient in the face of conflict (i.e. solutions for the learning process to continue in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations must be found), and at the same time promote peace and reconciliation[22].

We must also stress the role of technology in the accomplishment of the SDGs: the Technology Facilitation Mechanism[23] (launched in September 2015) is crucial for the implementation of the Goals, namely by ensuring the transfers of environmentally clean technology necessary to a sustainable future in developing countries. As technology is worthless without the competences to operate it, the TFM illustrates the link between knowledge, sustainability and technology. In addition, another illustration of matching knowledge-sharing, sustainability and the digital world is the Global Youth Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals, which will play a key role in '*connecting young people with opportunities to take action for contributing to global development, locally and internationally, and also link together education, implementation and evaluation of the SDGs by youth and for youth.*'[24] The Global Youth Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals is co-convened by the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the Major Group on Children and Youth.

Lastly, the Paris Declaration of EU Education Ministers[25] is an important milestone, insofar as a multi-stakeholder approach is essential for sustainability to become a value embedded in education systems. This naturally entails including local authorities, but the role of Ministries and Parliamentarians is also central for the development, adaptation and monitoring of any innovative policy. These institutions are irreplaceable providers of democratic accountability. However, the lack of continuity in power, and a certain lack of responsiveness by decision-makers may hinder the development of innovative education policies in this field.

Attention should be raised on the risk of focusing on societal outcomes rather than on educational processes in order to foster a sustainable future. Here the role of teachers and educators is essential. They have the potential to bridge education and sustainability and create a sustainably literate society. Hence, their role in society needs to be underlined and more value should be given to their work. A recent report published by the Education International Research Institute[26] shows that teacher status has been affected by the austerity measures that followed the global economic crisis. Naturally, this "downgrade" in teachers' status has direct effects on the quality of education. Job insecurity, worst working conditions and lower salaries and allowances diminish the attractiveness of the teaching profession, thereby leading to less qualified people being hired as teachers. The paper offers policy recommendations to ensure high quality education namely including the following:

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[22] *Ibid.*, p.2-3.

[23] IISD, (2015). *The Technology Facilitation Mechanism: Conceived in Rio, Born in Addis - Sustainable Development Policy & Practice*. [online] Available at: http://sd.iisd.org/policy-updates/the-technology-facilitation-mechanism-tfm-conceived-in-rio-born-in-addis/ [Accessed 23 Sep. 2015].

[24] Global Youth Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals announced at UNGA high-level side event [online] Available at: http://youthgateway.org/

[25] Informal Meeting of EU Education Ministers, (2015). *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*.

[26] Symeonidis, V. (2015). *The Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession - A study of education unions' perspectives*. Brussels: Education International Research Institute, p.71-72.

- At least 6% of GDP should be invested in education
- Quality professional development programmes should create career opportunities
- Stability and security of employment are essential
- Ensuring teachers are offered the same conditions as professionals with the same qualifications is essential in increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession.
- A positive image of teachers should be promoted by governments

2.3 Sustainability and entrepreneurship education

As it has been seen above, education is a key lever of sustainable development. But one cannot forget that sustainability has many dimensions: when taking into account social sustainability and the sustainability of education systems (facing pressure to solve the problem of youth unemployment), entrepreneurship education emerges as a pertinent topic. Although entrepreneurship is supposed to have a positive impact on a sustainable society, concerns have been raised over the kind of influences both entrepreneurship and education can have on one another. Thus, through education, the concept of sustainability has the mission of conciliating economic citizenship with the broader global citizenship actions.

According to the OECD, entrepreneurship education consists of three main dimensions: "*first, to raise awareness that business creation and self-employment are viable career options, and to develop the right attitudes towards this possibility through role models and information services; second, to teach the legal, managerial, financial and technical knowledge and skills necessary to set up and run a successful business; third, to provide concrete practical support, often in the form of mentoring and other services in the business creation and establishment phase*"[27].

Removing barriers to entrepreneurship entails integrating "*high-quality entrepreneurship education more prominently at all levels of education, and in partnership with successful entrepreneurs. To ensure quality, these programmes need to be assessed carefully*"[28].

Although it is also pointed out in the OECD Skills Outlook that youth self-employment remains rare, entrepreneurship education has had some success: "*Surveys show that participants in entrepreneurship education are at least 20% more likely than other groups to engage in entrepreneurship in the early part of their careers [...]*"[29].

In a context where almost 5 million young people in the EU-28 are unemployed, the European Parliament adopted a *Resolution promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training*[30].

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[27] OECD, (2015). *OECD Skills Outlook 2015: Youth, Skills and Employability*. [online] Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234178-en [Accessed 20 Sep. 2015], p.143.

[28] *Ibid.*, p.150.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.147.

[30] European Parliament, (2015). *European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training*.

It recognises that "*the gap between education and training and the job market is one of the causes of youth unemployment and of the large number of unfilled vacancies in the EU and should be addressed also by empowering young people with the key competences, including a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, that are needed if they are to participate confidently in today's knowledge-based economy and society*"[31].

Among the skills needed for entrepreneurship, the European Parliament mentions a few: "*proactiveness, creativity, innovation and risk-taking [...] creative thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and resourcefulness*"[32]. Among the transversal skills important for entrepreneurship, there are: "*critical thinking, problem-solving, initiative, collaboration, cooperation, self-direction, planning, leadership and team-building*"[33].

After this brief introduction to entrepreneurship education, it is necessary to present the issue of its links with GE / GCED. This issue is itself related to the view one takes on the relationship between the notions of "competitiveness" and "solidarity" in the field of GE / GCED. Indeed, one can either assume that the two notions are antagonistic, or on the contrary see them both as "*critical elements of global citizenship*"[34].

If one accepts the latter premise, one can envisage a fruitful interaction between entrepreneurship education and GE / GCED. "*One speaker at the UNESCO Global Citizenship Education Forum suggested that the principles embodied in the model of the European Union (EU) illustrate this view of GCE. Salvatore Nigro, Director of Education for Employment, explained: 'competition that stimulates, cooperation that strengthens, and solidarity that unites. If you take these three values and bring them together at the individual level you have global citizenship education'*"[35]. This is consistent with the view that GCED is about reconciling tensions, namely between global solidarity and global competition.

If GE / GCED and entrepreneurship education are compatible, how can they influence, modify each other? First of all, sustainability concerns could be included in entrepreneurship education curricula, since "*economic growth must be guided by environmental stewardship and by concern for peace, inclusion and social justice*"[36]. Secondly, the introduction of GE / GCED principles in entrepreneurship education can contribute to reaffirm the primacy of fundamental values over economic concerns. "*The economic functions of education are undoubtedly important, but we must go beyond the strictly utilitarian vision and the human capital approach that characterizes much of international development discourse. Education is not only about the acquisition of skills, it is also about values of respect for life and human dignity required for social harmony in a diverse world*"[37].

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[31] *Ibid.*, p.5.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.9.

[33] *Ibid.*, p.12.

[34] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p.19.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.10.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.37.

Thirdly, we must note that entrepreneurship education can be an answer to the growing frustration among the young due to scarce employment and low levels of upward social mobility. Hence the need for education to focus on "career-adaptive competencies"[38]. However, if the transition time between studies and employment might be seen as "economically unproductive", it is also an opportunity to learn through social engagement or volunteering.

The Council of Europe's *Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights* also notes that by creating better conditions for youth entrepreneurship, it is possible to reduce the exclusion of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The European Parliament is of the view that, in many ways, entrepreneurship can and should be a driver for sustainability and social inclusion: "*entrepreneurship, and in particular social entrepreneurship, are important drivers of social cohesion and sustainability that can boost the economy whilst simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems*"[39]. Embedding GE into traditional entrepreneurship education can only strengthen this nexus: "*entrepreneurship education should incorporate a social dimension including teaching about fair trade, social enterprises and alternative business models such as cooperatives, with a view to achieving a social, inclusive and sustainable economy*"[40].

Education for sustainability and entrepreneurship education, promoting critical thinking, are productive fields for the questioning of actual models and for the arise of new economic models, through the development of new, alternative, ways of doing "business", based on a more human and value centred approaches, like what is called social and solidarity economy, for instance. On the other hand, experiencing alternative models is, itself, a schools of citizenship education.

In fact, entrepreneurship education and GE / GCED share some inherent features: the fact that acquiring skills is more important than theoretical knowledge is true for both forms of education. Moreover, like GE, entrepreneurship education needs participative, transversal, innovative and learner-centred pedagogies. Both GE and entrepreneurship education should be learned all throughout life, through formal and non-formal education[41].

Lastly, the European Parliament Resolution also provides interesting clues for building bridges between media, information and digital literacy and entrepreneurship and financial education: "*[...] the successful deployment of entrepreneurship competence is more and more dependent on accompanying media and digital competence, and that this interrelationship should receive a greater focus in education and training*"[42].

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[38] *Ibid.*, p.58-61.

[39] European Parliament, (2015). *European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training*, p.6.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*, p.10-11.

[42] *Ibid.*, p.11.

3. Outcomes of the surveys carried out by the NSC

According to the outcomes of the survey carried out by the NSC in order to take stoke of the achievements in terms of GE since the last GE Congress in 2012, there is a need to better coordinate GE initiatives with the new sustainable development goals and look for bridges between the two. In addition, some of the main expectations from the Global Education Survey respondents were to: rethink the concept of GE/DE regarding its relation to GCE, envision future steps for post-2015 as well as open up to the Global South.

Following the surveyed respondents, the link between education and sustainable development represents one of the prioritised topics in the light of the post-2015 development agenda *(see GE survey)*.

The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe has also launched a survey on skills youth need to develop in order to face today's societal challenges. This survey has a skills-awareness approach and it also seeks to identify the relevant skills youth need today from their own perspective. According to this survey, around half of the young respondents identified education for sustainable development as a key competence to acquire in their respective countries whilst more than a quarter marked financial/entrepreneurship education as a necessary skills to develop *(see Youth Global Skills survey)*. Sustainability lays the foundation for the debate on the reconciliation of the two set of skills: life skills and skills for work in order to steer the world on a more sustainable path.

4. Paving the way for the 3rd Congress Recommendations

The Congress facilitates a peer-learning process leading towards a growing commitment to GE/GCED and to a set of strategic recommendations that foster GE/GCED policy and practice at local and national levels and within the European and international institutions for the coming period. The following key areas have been identified for the future-oriented discussions that will guide the strategic recommendation development:

o **National strategy development and implementation**
o **Curricular reform and education at the national and local levels**
o **Capacity-building**
o **Quality support and monitoring**
o **Campaigning and outreach**

Workshop conclusions may feed/complement the draft congress recommendations which will be circulated prior to the event.