

Global Education Thematic Seminar:

“The benefits of an intercultural and holistic approach to education for sustainable development: a North-South perspective”

Valletta (Malta), 18-19 April 2024

Rationale

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, dedicated to education, and more specifically its target 4.7, focused on education for sustainable development and global citizenship, is widely recognized by various organizations as pivotal to achieving all other SDGs¹. Education stands as a cornerstone for empowerment and societal change, capable of playing a crucial role in addressing the pressing global challenges while equipping younger generations with the agency to actively participate in and ensure the sustainability of solutions.

However, despite the gradual integration of sustainability education into policies, strategies, and school curricula worldwide, many education systems continue to teach *about* sustainable development, rather than *for* sustainable development. Besides the fact that various conflicting points persist around it due to diverse socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts across regions.

Notable tensions arise, for instance, within environmental education, a component of the broader concept of education for sustainability. This tension manifests when prioritizing basic educational needs such as literacy and numeracy over sustainability education, or when preparing students for employment in sectors that may not prioritize sustainability practices, such as extractive industries. Such conflicts mirror broader debates surrounding the balance between economic development and environmental conservation.

Considering these challenges, education for sustainable development could greatly benefit from closer integration with active global citizenship and intercultural learning. By cultivating critical thinking skills, learners can grasp, for instance, that climate change impacts are disproportionately felt across the globe², with regions and populations of the Global South being particularly vulnerable. Recognizing that local context and diversity shape both the challenges to sustainable development and potential solutions is vital.

Moreover, intercultural learning can contribute to bringing new perspectives and values to education for sustainability, learning from different education frameworks³. Specifically with regards to environment education, there can be much to learn from indigenous communities in the Global South

¹ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 Education for People and Planet: Creating sustainable Futures for All”.

² See Reports of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change](#).

³ N. Sharma, [Value-Creating Global Citizenship Education for Sustainable Development](#), Palgrave MacMillan (2020)

who often possess valuable traditional knowledge and practices related to environmental sustainability, have a more holistic understanding of nature, and consider collective needs as equally or more important than those of the individual⁴. Integrating perspectives from other cultures of the world into sustainability education programs can enrich learning outcomes and promote cultural diversity.

Lastly, education for sustainable development should aim to inspire collective action and collaboration. Individual behaviour change, while important, is insufficient to address the global environmental crisis; larger systemic changes are necessary. Civil society and youth organizations can complement formal education curricula by bridging skills gaps through capacity-building programs or project work.

Objectives of the Thematic Seminar

1. Facilitate dialogue, cooperation and peer learning between Europe and other regions of the world, notably with experts from the Southern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa on education for sustainable development.
2. Encourage policymakers to prioritize and invest in global education and education for sustainable development, in partnership with CSOs.
3. Share recommendations on how to improve strategies to equip individuals of all age groups with the knowledge, competences, skills, and values to deal with complex environmental challenges and to take positive action for a more sustainable future.
4. Share examples and best practices that can inspire the members of the Global Education Network and contribute to the new online courses developed by the North-south Centre.
5. Encourage networking and collaborations among and between public institutions, local governments, and civil society from European and other regions, aimed at making education policies more effective and inclusive.

Expected Outcomes

The insights, conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar will contribute to the North-South Centre's design of a Long-Term Training Course on "Global Education and Sustainable Development" and a Tutored Online Training Course on "Global Education and Climate change".

The recommendations of the seminar, notably relevant perspectives from the global South, will also feed the reflections of the newly created Council of Europe working group⁵ on « Education for Sustainable Development and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture⁶».

The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

Key instrument of the external dimension of the Council of Europe, the North-South Centre (NSC) serves as a vector for transmitting its values, standards, and tools beyond the European continent through political dialogue, networking, and the implementation of cooperation projects. As an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, it brings together several European and African

⁴ H. Komatsu, I. Silova and J. Rapple. Education and Environmental Sustainability: Culture Matters. Published in Journal of International Cooperation (2022). <https://www.emerald.com/insight/2755-029X.htm>

⁵ More information on the Working group on Education for Sustainable Development and the RFCDC [here](#).

⁶ [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#)

countries to exchange ideas and act on shared issues. With a solid 34-year expertise in the fields of global education, intercultural dialogue, and youth sector cooperation in Europe and beyond, and a broad geographical mandate with a focus on the Southern Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa, the NSC through its institutionalised “quadrilogue” approach engages high-level representatives from governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, as well as civil society from different regions of the world to work together on issues of common interest. The forefront role played by civil society, thanks to a robust network of youth organisations, ensures a structured, inclusive and sustainable participation with a multiplier effect.

Methodology

The Thematic Seminar will be structured around three panel discussions combining topical inputs provided by experts and practitioners from the global North and the global South, as well as examples of educational activities aimed at developing competences, skills and attitudes for sustainable development. The working language of the Thematic Seminar will be English and French.

Participants

National coordinators of the NSC Global Education Network; experts on Sustainable development; education practitioners in the formal and non-formal sector; representatives of Civil Society and Youth Organisations engaged in the promotion of global education and education for sustainable development; representatives of national and international/inter-governmental institutions engaged in education and/or sustainable development; representatives of the diplomatic corps in Malta.

The Global Education Thematic Seminar 2024 is part of *iLEGEND III: Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue (2022-2026)*, a joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe: co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. The overall objective of the project is to increase the active engagement of citizens, particularly young people, of EU member States, candidate and partner countries in safeguarding sustainable development and confronting global challenges and inequalities at local and global level.



Programme

18 April – Study visit

15:15 – Visit of the exhibition of the ECOSKOLA Programme at the Parliament of Malta

16:00 – Encounter with local civil society organisations, organised by KOPIN, Malta

19 April - Global Education Seminar

Location: University of Malta, Valletta Campus, Aula Prima

09:00 – 9:30 – Welcome coffee and registration

09:30 – 10:00 - Opening Session

- **Alfred VELLA**, Rector of the University of Malta
- Representative of the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation of Malta
- **Rocio CERVERA**, North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

10:00-10:30 – Group picture followed by coffee break

10:30 – 12:30 – PANEL DISCUSSION - Educating for sustainability: how to enhance the competences and skills of educators and learners through an intercultural approach to education.

Many education systems tend to teach *about* environmental sustainability, rather than *for* sustainability. This panel will reflect on education approaches that combine intercultural learning with teaching competences, such as respect, responsibility and critical thinking, to empower young learners to become responsible world citizens. It will also share views on educational activities and collective actions that can make a difference to young people's mindsets, taking examples from formal and non-formal education, in Europe, the MENA region and Africa.

Moderator: Veronika SCHERK-ARSENIO, North-South Centre

Panellists:

- **Natalija ACESKA**, Council of Europe Expert on Education for Sustainable Development
- **Nevena CABRILO**, Ministry of Education of Montenegro
- **Ahlem JELALIA KCHAOU**, Principal inspector of basic and secondary education in Tunisia
- **Mark MIFSUD**, Director of the Centre for Environmental Education and Research, University of Malta

12:30-14:00 - Networking Lunch

14:00 – 15:15 – PANEL DISCUSSION - Culture matters: education on environmental sustainability from a global perspective

How does education relate to nature in different parts of the world and how do our attitudes towards nature impact our global future? Could the root cause of our environmental crisis be modern mainstream culture and individualism? This panel will bring together experts and practitioners from Africa, the MENA region and Europe to reflect on how global education can incorporate and shed light on the indigenous environmental values and sustainable practices which have often been disregarded in the name of globalisation, economic development, or mass consumerism.

Moderator: **Andrew AZZOPARDI**, Dean of the Faculty of Social Wellbeing, Professor of Youth and Community Studies, University of Malta

Panellists:

- **Momodou SALLAH**, Professor of Teaching and Learning and Director of the Centre for Academic Innovation, De Montfort University, United Kingdom
- **Namrata SHARMA**, State University of New York and Representative of the Academic Network of Global Education and Learning (ANGEL)
- **Karim TEDJANI**, Environmental activist, trainer, and Member UNESCO national committee "Man and Nature", Algeria

15:15-15:30 – Coffee break

15:30-16:45 - PANEL DISCUSSION – Collective action and collaboration: linking education for sustainable development with global citizenship education to stimulate the individual and collective engagement of learners of all ages.

An effective education for sustainability is deeply intertwined with the safeguarding of human rights. Its core mission is to enable individuals to make informed choices and engage in responsible actions that uphold environmental integrity, economic viability, and social justice for both current and future generations. This entails addressing environmental crimes, inequalities, and discrimination.

This panel will delve into the ways in which governments, local authorities, and civil society organizations can collaborate to educate and foster collective initiatives toward "a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as essential for the full enjoyment of human rights." It will showcase successful examples of collaborative endeavours from diverse regions worldwide, illustrating how joint efforts can lead to tangible progress in realizing this vision.

Moderator: **Tamar SHUALI TRACHTENBERG**, Associate Professor and Director of the European Institute of Education for Democratic Culture of the Catholic University of Valencia, Spain

Panellists:

- **Nadia EL MAKHZOUMI**, Representative of the Inter-Ministerial Directorate for Human Rights of Morocco
- **Alexandros KASSAPIS**, Youth and Environment Europe
- **William GRECH**, Executive Director, and Board Member of KOPIN, Malta
- **Federica CICALA**, Co-author of the North-South Centre Global Education Guidelines

16:45-17:00 - Closing