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**LIMITE**

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CLIMA 139  
SOC 187  
SUSTDEV 68  
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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability  
- *Revised Presidency text*

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Delegations will find attached the compromise text of the draft Recommendation, as prepared by the Presidency in light of the contributions received from delegations, with a view to the informal videoconference of the members of the Education Committee on 26 April.

**Bold** and [...] are used to indicate changes to the Commission proposal (5325/22). Delegations are kindly invited to send their written comments to the Presidency ([aline.humbert@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:aline.humbert@diplomatie.gouv.fr) ; [stephanie.juban@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:stephanie.juban@diplomatie.gouv.fr) ; [marie.goiset@education.gouv.fr](mailto:marie.goiset@education.gouv.fr)), as well as the Council Secretariat ([eycs@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:eycs@consilium.europa.eu)) by 26 April cob.

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability

(Text with EEA relevance)

**THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,**

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165(4) and 166(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

1. The European Green Deal<sup>1</sup>, [...] the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>2</sup> **and the new framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030** highlight the key role of schools, higher education and other **education and** training institutions to engage with learners, parents, educators<sup>3</sup> and the wider community on the changes needed for a successful **and fair** green transition.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2019) 640 final.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2020) 380 final.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this Recommendation, educators includes teachers (acknowledged as having the status of a teacher or equivalent according to national legislation and practice) and trainers (anyone who fulfils one or more activities linked to the theoretical or practical training function, either in an institution for education or training or at the workplace). This encompasses teachers in general education and higher education, teachers and trainers in initial and continuing VET, as well as early childhood education and care professionals and adult educators.

2. The Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, notably Target 4.7, call for all learners to acquire by 2030 the 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.
3. The Communication on the European Education Area<sup>4</sup>, **the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>5</sup> [...] the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)<sup>6</sup>** and the Communication on a new ERA for Research and Innovation<sup>7</sup> call for education and training policies and investments to be geared towards inclusive green and digital transitions for future resilience and prosperity.
4. The key competences, as defined in the European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning<sup>8</sup>, aim to support people across Europe in gaining the **knowledge**, skills and competences needed for personal fulfilment, health, employability and social inclusion in a time of rapid and profound change.
5. The European Skills Agenda<sup>9</sup> announced support for the development of a core, green skills set for the labour market with a view to creating a generation of environment-conscious professionals and green economic operators, integrating environmental and climate considerations into [...] **general education**, higher education, vocational education and training as well as research. Europe needs highly competent professionals to support the green transition and to be a world leader in sustainable technologies.

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<sup>4</sup> COM(2020) 625 final.

<sup>5</sup> [...] OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2020) 628 final.

<sup>8</sup> **Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning**, OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1 [...].

<sup>9</sup> COM(2020) 274 final.

6. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (**VET**) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness [...] and resilience<sup>10</sup> **and the Osnabrück Declaration** recognise[...] the VET sector as key for the digital and green transitions.
7. The European Climate Pact invites individuals, communities and organisations to participate in climate action and building a greener Europe by offering opportunities to learn about climate change, develop and implement solutions, and connect with others to multiply the impact of those solutions.
8. The Digital Education Action Plan<sup>11</sup> provides a vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible European digital education **and training** and underscores the importance of digital technologies as powerful enablers for the green transition whilst, at the same time, facilitating a move towards sustainable behaviour in both the development and use of digital products.
9. The New European Bauhaus brings a cultural and creative dimension to the European Green Deal, aiming to demonstrate how sustainable innovation offers tangible, positive changes in our daily life, including in school buildings and other learning environments.

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<sup>10</sup> [...] **OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1.**

<sup>11</sup> COM(2020) 624 final.

10. UNESCO, through its Education for Sustainable Development programme, has been working to make education **and training** a more central and visible part of the international response to the climate crisis and to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, notably Target 4.7 on education for sustainable development. Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, Parties commit to promoting and cooperating on climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information.
11. **Learning for sustainability supports learners of all ages to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live more sustainably, change patterns of consumption and production, embrace healthier lifestyles and contribute – both individually and collectively – to a more sustainable economy and society. It promotes understanding of the interconnected global challenges we face, including the climate crisis, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, all of which have environmental, social and economic dimensions.**
12. OECD data<sup>12</sup> from 2018 demonstrate a high awareness among 15-year olds of climate change and the environmental crisis and the need to address it. However, the same data show[...] that far fewer students feel a sense of agency to make a real difference. Learning about the environment and global crisis can lead to [...] **learners** feeling overwhelmed and disempowered, which [...] **can be** exacerbated by inaccurate information and disinformation.
13. **It is of great importance that** education and training systems and institutions [...] respond to the growing youth voice on the climate and biodiversity crises and involve young people in designing solutions related to learning for environmental sustainability.

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<sup>12</sup> OECD (2020), Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World? PISA 2018, Volume VI.

14. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our close links with nature and put renewed focus on education and training systems. Lessons have been learned about new possibilities for education and training, including **blended learning approaches** in different settings (including online), engagement and autonomy of learners and the links between formal learning and the wider community. The pandemic also increased a long-standing concern for the physical, mental and emotional well-being of children and young people.
15. Individual early childhood **education** and care centres, schools, higher education institutions, research organisations, VET providers and local communities are becoming increasingly active in relation to the climate and biodiversity crises. However, sustainability is not yet a systemic feature of education and training across the EU.
16. **In many countries, learning for sustainability and equally viable concepts, such as education for sustainable development and global competence have been taken up in policies, strategies and curricula. However, educators need further [...]** support, expertise, and training opportunities to incorporate environmental sustainability in their teaching practices. They often feel insufficiently equipped to deal with eco-anxiety and eco-pessimism and help learners engage with climate and environmental issues in a positive way.
17. Whole-institution approaches to sustainability incorporating all areas of activity are not yet [...] **sufficiently present**. Such approaches can include teaching and learning; **governance**; research and innovation; **infrastructure**, facilities and operations, and should engage [...] **learners**, staff, parents, and local and wider communities.

18. The potential and opportunity to complement and strengthen other education **and training** agendas needs to be further explored. Teaching and learning for environmental sustainability can fully support policies and programmes for **health**, well-being and inclusion, global **citizenship**, solidarity, student-centred learning, research and innovation and digital transformation, **including Artificial Intelligence**.
19. The education and training dimension [...] **should be included** systematically [...] in other policies related to the green transition and sustainability **in a lifelong perspective**. Integrating education **and training** into these policies can support their implementation, connect different sectors of society and the economy and embed sustainability effectively in education **and training**.
20. This Recommendation fully respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. **It recognises that the level of autonomy enjoyed by education and training institutions varies widely across Member States. In some Member States, education and training institutions, teacher education institutions, as well as teachers and trainers, enjoy a high degree of autonomy. The Recommendation will be implemented according to national circumstances.**

## HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES

1. [...] Step up **and strengthen** efforts to support education and training systems to take action for the green transition so that learners of all ages and from all backgrounds can access high-quality, **equitable** and inclusive education and training on **sustainability**, climate change, **environmental protection and biodiversity** [...].
2. Establish learning for environmental sustainability as [...] **one of the** priority areas in education and training policies and programmes in order to support and enable the sector to contribute to the green transition. **Implement and further develop** [...] comprehensive and collaborative approaches to learning **and teaching** for environmental sustainability involving all bodies, organisations and players in the education and training system.
3. Provide a range of learning opportunities in different settings from early childhood to adult learning, so that all individuals can prepare for and actively contribute to the green transition and take action for an environmentally sustainable, circular and climate-neutral economy and [...] just, **inclusive and peaceful** societies.
4. Consider the following measures at the level of the system:
  - a) [...] **Align, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders**, strategies and plans in education and training with environmental sustainability, including those related to curricula and assessment, **initial teacher training** pedagogies and educator professional development. Support implementation of national and other strategies and policies, including on related concepts such as education for sustainable development, through action plans and mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring.



- b) Invest, **where appropriate**, in green and sustainable equipment, resources and infrastructure (buildings, grounds and technology) for learning, socialising and recreation to ensure healthy, **inclusive, creative** and resilient learning environments.
- c) Raise awareness of the benefits and opportunities of learning for environmental sustainability, and support **formal and non-formal** education and training institutions, **including early childhood education and care**, to make climate change, **environmental protection**, biodiversity and sustainability issues relevant to the daily lives of their learners **and foster a culture of sustainability**.
- d) **Develop the knowledge, skills and competences of all learners of all ages to live more sustainably, to change consumption and production patterns, adopt healthier lifestyles and to contribute individually and collectively to the transformation of our societies.**
- e) **Support and enhance learning for environmental sustainability by providing infrastructure, digital tools and resources and support educator digital competences.**

- f) Involve [...] all learners in meaningful and coordinated ways, to propose and [...] **co-create** approaches on what, how and where they learn about and for environmental sustainability. Encourage a gender-balanced participation of learners from all backgrounds, **including those with fewer opportunities. Empower all learners to participate in and engage with decision-making at the level of their institution as well as their local and wider communities.**
- g) Develop **and support, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders**, [...] curricula **programmes and** frameworks, allowing the time and space for [...] learners [...] **to** develop sustainability competences from an early age. Intergenerational learning and local examples, problems and responses can make curricula more relevant to learners demonstrating that climate change, biodiversity, **environmental protection** and sustainability are local and actionable.
- h) Support cooperation and networking on sustainability, **environmental protection** and biodiversity, involving for example local authorities, youth [...] **organisations**, centres of environmental education **and training, centres of global learning**, forests, parks, farms, museums, libraries, non-governmental organisations, research, consumer organisations and business, **thus strengthening the links between formal and non-formal education.**
- i) Support scaling up of good practices and [...] pedagogical research on learning for environmental sustainability at all levels **and forms** of education and training.

5. Support learners by considering the following measures:
- a) Provide learners, already from pre-school, with opportunities to understand, engage with and value the natural world and its biodiversity, create a sense of curiosity and wonder and learn to act for sustainability, individually and collectively.
  - b) Strengthen, including through financial support, **in accordance with national financial support schemes**, high-quality lifelong learning for environmental sustainability, including traineeships, apprenticeships, volunteering, extra-curricular activities and other forms of **formal**, non-formal and informal learning **and the links between them**. Recognise and reward civic engagement in environmental sustainability.
  - c) Facilitate learning methods and approaches that are collaborative, experiential, **practically oriented** and relevant to local contexts and traditions **and support cross-curricula activities**. This includes giving [...] **learners** hands-on opportunities to observe and care for nature, [...] **reduce**, repair, reuse and recycle, thereby helping them understand the importance of sustainable lifestyles and the circular economy.
  - d) Provide [...] **fact-based** and accessible information on the climate, **environmental** and biodiversity crisis, and its drivers, develop problem-solving and collaboration skills, foster critical thinking, [...] media literacy skills, **systems thinking** and support positive action, including volunteering, to confront and reduce the fear and disempowerment that learners might experience in the face of the planetary crises.

6. Support educators to facilitate learning for environmental sustainability by considering the following measures:
- a) Recognise that all educators, whatever their discipline or sector of education are sustainability educators who need to support their learners in preparing for the green transition. Include, consult and [...] **support** educators on curricula **and programmes** development and other educational reforms related to environmental sustainability and on the design of appropriate professional development.
  - b) [...] **Support integration of** environmental sustainability in [...] initial teacher **and trainer** education programmes; in continued professional development programmes and teacher professional standards and frameworks in order to support educators' competence development with regard to sustainability.
  - c) **Support mentoring schemes and professional development programmes at the level of the institutions. Support educators to use digital tools and technologies in their practice to enhance learning for environmental sustainability.**
  - d) **Further develop and explore** [...] opportunities and incentives for educators to take part in professional development programmes related to sustainability, for example by [...] **considering** them [...] **in** career progression and development and creating roles for educators such as sustainability coordinator.
  - e) Support educators, including by providing the necessary time and space, to adopt pedagogies that enhance [...] learning **for sustainability** and to approach sustainability education in interdisciplinary ways and develop the socio-emotional aspects of learning for environmental sustainability, so that all learners can become agents of change and learn to **reflect and act**, both individually and collectively, **locally and globally**, for a more sustainable world.

- f) Encourage and enable, **where appropriate**, transformative and interdisciplinary teaching and learning using both traditional and innovative learning approaches, including hands-on learning, the STEAM approach<sup>13</sup>, hackathons, **service learning** and gamification.
  - g) Develop and [...] **make available** resources to support educators, including regarding assessment. Support educators to use traditional and new tools and materials to teach for environmental sustainability in a range of indoor and outdoor, and digital and non-digital, settings. Provide access to centres of expertise, including centres for environmental education **and training**.
  - h) Encourage the research and innovation community to engage with formal, non-formal and informal education **and training** providers to support educators in environmental sustainability. Support [...] **participation** in exploratory projects and research related to the climate emergency, environmental crisis and sustainability.
7. **Continue to** support education and training institutions to effectively integrate, **where appropriate**, environmental sustainability across all their activities and operations by considering the following measures:
- a) Encourage and facilitate effective whole-institution approaches to sustainability which encompass teaching and learning, vision, planning and governance, active learner and staff participation, management of buildings and resources, partnerships with local and wider communities, and research and innovation. Support education leaders in managing organisational change with dedicated professional development and guidance for their roles.

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<sup>13</sup> STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) approach embraces the creative potential of connecting STEM education with the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences.

- b) Support education and training institutions to design, monitor and evaluate their sustainability strategies and/or embed sustainability in existing processes and measures (e.g. school development plans, higher education mission statements and strategies). Recognise that this is a long-term process requiring small measurable steps which are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, including through self-evaluation by the institution.
- c) Encourage and support **early childhood education and care institutions**, schools, higher education institutions (**in accordance with their institutional autonomy and academic freedom**), VET providers, **adult learning institutions** and other education providers to take part in eco-certification programmes which can bring environmental, **social**, educational and economic benefits. Provide support structures for such schemes, e.g. agencies or bodies to support whole-institution approaches, mentoring and networking, templates and guidance, financial support.
- d) Focus part of the internal and/or external review and quality assurance mechanisms of education and training organisations on sustainability. **Recognise the effective engagement of the [...] higher education institutions through [...] appropriate means, including, for example, funding [...] mechanisms.**
- e) Further embed environmental sustainability into programmes, syllabuses and modules **in VET and higher education (in accordance with institutional autonomy and academic freedom)**, across [...] **all** disciplines, [...] **including** business studies, social sciences, **pedagogical sciences, humanities, art**, architecture and engineering, land use planning and management. Make use of resources and materials developed by environmental and educational non-governmental organisations and other relevant bodies.

- f) Support higher education, [...] **VET and adult learning** institutions in the development of small and tailored learning courses on environmental sustainability, [...] **that can lead** to micro-credentials, in order to deepen, broaden and update professional competences.
- g) [...] **Promote** partnerships with **all disciplines and actors, including** business, arts, farms, cultural heritage, sport, **youth**, research institutes, the educational resources industry (including technology, publishing and other curriculum equipment) and educational research. **Support the development of** extra-curricular, summer and other programmes while providing support for internships in, for example, laboratories, businesses, research institutions, non-governmental organisations.
- h) **Support programmes that promote sustainability innovation and entrepreneurship. Strengthen higher education and VET institutions to establish sustainability hubs that will enhance innovation and entrepreneurship for environmental sustainability, circular economy and biodiversity.**
8. **Where appropriate, mobilise** national and EU funds for investment in infrastructure, training, tools and resources to increase resilience and preparedness of education and training for the green transition, in particular Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, European Solidarity Corps, European Social Fund Plus, European Regional Development Fund, the Technical Support Instrument, Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe and InvestEU.
9. Invest in monitoring, research and evaluation of the policy challenges and of the impact of these initiatives in order to build on lessons learnt and inform policy making [...]. **This can include implementation of existing** indicators and targets [...], **including at international level.**

HEREBY INVITES THE COMMISSION, **WITH DUE REGARD FOR SUBSIDIARITY AND NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**, TO:

1. Facilitate cooperation and peer learning among Member States and stakeholders on learning for environmental sustainability through:
  - a) The Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)<sup>14</sup> where education **and training** for the green transition is a key priority area.
  - b) Disseminating and encouraging the use of, opportunities to promote, support and enable education and training for environmental sustainability within EU funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, LIFE, European Social Fund **Plus**, Horizon Europe, **including** Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, and the Technical Support Instrument.
  - c) Sharing good practice from Erasmus+ staff exchanges, projects and networks, including through the Erasmus+ European Universities, the eTwinning online community, **the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies**, as well as the Centres of Vocational Excellence, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.
  - d) Identifying, recording and sharing good practice examples, including through existing online platforms<sup>15</sup> and support the networking of national and other organisations active in education and environmental sustainability in formal and non-formal education and training.

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<sup>14</sup> Council Resolution [...] **on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)**, OJ C 66, 26.2.2021, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> This could include the forthcoming European School Education Platform, Learning Corner, Science is Wonderful! Platform, the European Youth Portal, EPALE, Scientix, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Pact for Skills.



- e) Involving youth in the implementation of the Recommendation, in particular through the European Year of Youth 2022 and the EU Youth Dialogue, to ensure that opinions, views and needs of young people and youth organisations are fully taken into account.
  - f) Creating synergies with the Education for Climate Coalition and New European Bauhaus.
2. Develop [...], share **and make available, for voluntary use**, resources, materials and research on learning for environmental sustainability, in cooperation with Member States, including on [...] **the** new European sustainability competence framework.
3. Support educators to teach for environmental sustainability by:
- a) Providing resources and support materials **for voluntary use** on the [...] European School Education Platform, EPALE and the European Youth Portal.
  - b) Recognising outstanding efforts in teaching and learning for environmental sustainability through EU award schemes, including the European Innovative Teaching Award, eTwinning Prize and the European Vocational Skills Awards.
4. Monitor the development of green skills by higher education, VET graduates and early career researchers, **without creating new reporting obligations and any additional burden to the Member States**, for example by including these in the European graduate tracking initiative.

5. Monitor progress on education for environmental sustainability within the framework of **existing** reports on the European Education Area and the European Green Deal. **This includes supporting the development of common indicators and targets on sustainability as set out in the Council Resolution on the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).**
6. Strengthen cooperation with existing international organisations, notably UNESCO and other UN bodies, **including UNECE**, to foster an approach to education and training for environmental sustainability with policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders in **and between** Member States, which incorporates equity, inclusion and justice, in line with the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals **and the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Roadmap 2030.**
7. Continue to reinforce the green dimension of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, both through green mobility, **online cooperation**, green practices in projects and strong focus on environmental sustainability in cooperation between various education, training and youth stakeholders.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council*

*The President*

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