



Simply
improving the
WORLD

Education
for Sustainable
Development

ESD



Dear reader,

How can we preserve our livelihood for future generations? How can we fight hunger worldwide? How can we learn to do business in a way that protects our planet's resources?

On our path towards a sustainable future, we need answers to these and many more questions. The challenges we face as individuals and as societies are significant. In order to overcome them, we need Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

We need the relevant knowledge and skills that enable us – in our everyday lives, at work and in politics – to think and take action for the future in a viable and optimistic manner. ESD creates the opportunities to do so. ESD strengthens our prospects of successfully implementing the necessary innovations for more sustainability – irrespective of age, gender and background.

Now, I invite you to take a look at how education can shape the future.

Bettina Stark-Watzinger

Member of the German Bundestag

Federal Minister of Education and Research

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WHAT IS ESD?

**ESD stands for
Education for Sustainable
Development**

Sustainable development means that we have to change the way we coexist so that everyone – today and in future – is able to meet their basic needs, live in dignity and fulfil their potential while conserving the planet's resources.





ESD aims to enable everyone to gain the skills needed for thinking and acting in a sustainable and responsible way. It is a holistic education approach for learners of all ages. Designing a sustainable learning environment as well as fundamental pedagogical principles that are specifically linked to ESD play an important role.

This includes interactive, exploratory and self-guided learning as well as hands-on methods. The content addresses ecological, economic, social, cultural and political topics together; for example from the areas of environmental protection and nature conservation, climate and gender equality: What is the impact of my own energy consumption? What should mobility look like in the future?

Please note:

For information on the history and development of ESD, please refer to “International Aspects”.

“Education for Sustainable Development enables every individual to understand the impact of their own actions on the world and to make responsible choices.”

(National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development, p. 7)



THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development (NAP ESD) is the strategy of the ESD process in Germany.

It aims to firmly anchor ESD in the very structure of the German education landscape. The NAP ESD contains 130 objectives and 349 specific recommendations for actions in six areas of education. It was developed in a participatory process by representatives from civil society, science, industry, research and politics under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Citizens were also invited to submit their ideas online. The Plan was adopted in 2017 by the National Platform (NP) on ESD.

The NP is the supreme steering body for the implementation of the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD 2030 in Germany. Organizations and institutions can submit commitments to the NAP ESD via the platform. So far, more than 300 of these commitments, which constitute specific contributions to the implementation of NAP ESD, have been registered. This includes the commitment by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to support the development of ESD indicators so that these may be integrated into, for example, the [German Sustainable Development Strategy](#) and the reporting on education and may be used by the Länder and local authorities.

An interim evaluation of the NAP ESD implementation was published in 2020. The evaluation highlights the positive developments in many areas but also shows that there is still potential for rolling out ESD more widely.



The six areas of the National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development

- Early childhood care and education
- School
- Technical and vocational education and training
- Higher Education
- Non-formal and informal learning
- Local authorities

Commitments can continuously be submitted by your organization and/or institution via the ESD portal:

bne-portal.de/esd



The Institut "Futur" by Freie Universität Berlin provides scientific support for the implementation of the NAP ESD.

Current results of the ESD monitoring can be found at **bne-portal.de**.



Ralph Caspers



is a multiple award-winning TV presenter and author.

As a presenter for a variety of educational TV shows by the WDR broadcasting service and in his books, he makes knowledge accessible in simple language.

Ralph Caspers is also one of the German ambassadors for the UN Decade on Biodiversity and an ambassador for the under 18s children and youth election project “Kinder- und Jugendwahl U18”.

Mr Caspers, which of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you consider particularly urgent?

First of all, SDG 4 “Quality Education”. I hope that we do not fail to invest enough money in education. I think empowering people to take charge of their own lives is the basis for that and therefore most important. Without a good education, people can tell you whatever they like – and that would be disastrous. And, of course, I find child poverty terrible, and I wish for a more socially just world.

See p.30 for more information on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Goals (SDGs).



EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

ESD can be applied and communicated from early on, including in nurseries, child-care settings and other early childhood care and education facilities.

This enables children to take responsible ownership of their decisions and actions from a young age, which forms the basis for lifelong learning. Through playful, participatory and age-appropriate activities, the children engage in questions about sustainable development. They are supported in this by education specialist, who learn with and about ESD in initial and continuing training, to then put it into practice. ESD as a holistic approach also concerns parents, other staff and childcare providers. The childcare provider can play a key role in implementing ESD and sustainable development in all areas of the learning and social environment, ranging from the design of the premises to the thematic focus of what the children will be working on.



The Expert Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education of the National Platform on ESD has published a reference framework for early childhood care and education. It is available to download from bne-portal.de/esd.

SCHOOL

Schools are learning and living spaces that have a major influence on every individual.



For this reason, it is important to embed ESD in all areas of both general education schools and vocational schools. This is achieved by integrating ESD into the curricula and educational plans as well as into lesson topics and teaching materials. It is important that ESD is actively applied in the school as a whole. This is made possible by learners and teachers participating in design and development processes in schools, through school clubs and social commitment as well as through cooperation with local non-school partners.

The aim is to promote sustainable development and to make it visible in all learning and living spaces of the school.



Introducing ESD as a mandatory part of teacher and (educational) specialist training can provide an important basis for this. It is teachers in particular who, in their role of providing support for learners, contribute substantially to applying and making ESD visible in schools.



Domitila Barros

grew up in a favela (shanty town) in Brazil. This is where, in a voluntary capacity, her parents founded a street children project.



Ms Barros was already teaching other children and teenagers how to read and write when she was a teenager. In 2000, she was granted the “millenium dreamer” award by the United Nations. In 2022 she was crowned Miss Germany. Now, she is a green influencer and a green consultant and has founded a sustainable jewellery brand called “She is from the jungle”.

Ms Barros, what is your advice to others who want to campaign for sustainability?

Tip 1: Don't be too hard on yourself and start where you can. For example, it's no use feeling guilty for taking the car if there is poor public transport provision in your village. Instead of blaming yourself, focus instead on always properly separating your rubbish. It doesn't pay to want to implement all your plans only to then give in to frustration – and perhaps end up doing nothing.

Tip 2: We humans are part of the environment. For me, being open to diversity is part of sustainability!

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Initial and continuing vocational education and training play a central role in securing the skilled professionals and innovations needed for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The focus is on practical training. This hands-on approach is one of the strengths of technical and vocational education and training. It offers valuable starting points, in particular for Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Development (TVET for SD): at the workplace and in the vocational

school, the apprentices learn to independently plan, carry out and monitor sustainable activities.





The trainees also experience that their work makes a difference. The approach centres around learners, vocational schools and full-time adult education colleges, intercompany training centres, their teachers as well as the places of work and the trainers employed there.

In terms of continuing education and training, the companies and work-places that also carry out training in cooperation with relevant experts play an important role.

HIGHER EDUCATION

As places of research and teaching, higher education institutions make important contributions to sustainable development.



They are places of innovation – places where the knowledge and skills needed for societal transformation are developed and passed on. Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development require knowledge to be shared among the different disciplines. This allows for important discoveries to be made and shared with different players, for example from industry, politics, social and environmental organizations. In higher education, professors, teaching staff and also students and student organizations are involved in the process of implementing and developing ESD.

The higher education institution, as an institution itself and as a place of learning, is also a point of reference for the local and regional community on the path towards sustainable development.

The cooperation of all those actively involved can give rise to a science and education culture for sustainable development.





Jacob Beautemps



Together with the production company i&u TV, Jacob Beautemps operates the YouTube channel “Breaking Lab” and the Instagram channel “breakinglab” ...

... where he looks at current topics with a scientific eye and makes them easy to understand by using simple language. He also initiated the annual “YouTopia” fundraising campaign, which is dedicated to the topics of environmental protection and sustainability.

Mr Beautemps, your channels often deal with sustainability topics. What added value do you wish your followers to gain from this?

I always try to adopt a constructive approach when dealing with the topic of sustainability. And I try to give people hope because it is very important that we not lose hope. It would be disastrous if people thought "it's a lost cause – no point in me doing anything." For me, it is important to show specific solutions – for example, new developments that benefit the climate. Many components for solutions already exist. That's what I want to focus on, so that these sustainable organizations receive more support.



NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Non-formal and informal learning comprises learning outside of school as well as adult education.

In this area, ESD is implemented and made accessible to the public by a range of different contributors, such as associations, museums and adult education centres. Here, the particular focus is on lifelong learning. Cooperating with formal educational establishments can provide an important impetus for ESD and create synergies. This promotes interdisciplinary exchange and connects knowledge from different areas of society. Voluntary work in associations and other civil society organizations also plays an important role in this context.




Thus, non-formal and informal learning formats fulfil important functions. These include networking, the acquisition of knowledge and empowering people to act, all of which are fundamental for including everyone in the societal transformation.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES


Local authorities play a key role in the transformation of society and the implementation of ESD in line with the Whole Institution Approach.

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It is in the towns, rural areas and districts that the needs of the citizens and the challenges in shaping sustainable development are first noticed. Changes in local structures, as seen in the transformation of the transport system and the development of education landscapes, can lead to



decisive changes. Involving citizens in sustainable design and development processes in the local area allows for sustainable development to be experienced and learned together.

Initiating and managing these local processes as part of ESD is a extensive and long-term task. Institutions such as the ESD competence centre for education, sustainability and local authorities (BNE-Kompetenzzentrum “Bildung – Nachhaltigkeit – Kommune” BiNaKom) or the BMBF’s programme on “local education authorities” (Bildungskommunen) provide support in this regard.

YOUTH AND ESD

“The involvement of young people is essential when it comes to shaping the future and transformation. They must be involved in ESD in an age-appropriate manner, with effective participation and a proper say. Only then will new ways of doing things emerge, where everyone participates.”

(National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development, p. 70)

youpaN



The youpaN is the youth panel on Education for Sustainable Development. It is made up of 30 young people between the ages of 16 and 27 who are actively involved in implementing the National Action Plan on ESD. They are members in different committees, for example the National Platform on ESD. In addition, they organize their own events and engage in exchange with political decision-makers.



**The youpaN panel is supported
by a team from Stiftung
Bildung (education foundation).**



The logo for youcoN features the word "youcoN" in a sans-serif font. "youco" is in blue and "N" is in green. To the right of the text is a stylized blue graphic of two hands reaching towards each other, forming a mountain-like shape.

The members of **youpaN** organize the annual **youcoN** conference, which lasts several days and follows the motto “Wir l(i)eben Zukunft!” (We live/love the future!). The event brings together more than 100 young people who discuss ESD together with experts in a variety of interactive formats. The event is open to all young people

More information is available at youpan.de.

Expert conference

The youpaN also organizes an expert conference that takes place every year.

It provides young people from more than 40 different organizations with the opportunity to come together and discuss a variety of topics related to ESD. The participants can share knowledge, experience and best practice examples, thus connecting various players and networking.

Enterprises run by school students

*Within the context of the **youstartN** programme, young people learn to connect sustainable and business actions in real-life settings.*

By providing financial boosts and contributing to a successful start, the BMBF-funded project supports enterprises run by school students and apprentices relating to at least one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in implementing creative ideas. More information is available at stiftungbildung.de/youstartn. In addition to this, the German Children and Youth Foundation, with funding from the BMBF, provides workshops for school students on the topics of sustainability and start-ups.



These idea labs for sustainability support the participants with their start-up ideas and provide basic knowledge about ESD and the SDGs.

More information on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be found on page 27.



Rebecca Freitag

Rebecca Freitag, a popular green activist, founded “Global Impact Alliance” and advises companies on sustainability topics.



She was a UN Youth Delegate on Sustainable Development and ambassador of the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (FRFG). In 2013, in her role of board member of BUNDjugend Berlin, the youth arm of BUND Berlin (Friends of the Earth Berlin), she founded the mobility working group “FahrradBande” (bicycle gang). In 2019, she led the “All in for Climate Action” campaign. Presently, she is involved in founding the “Future Maps” start-up.

Ms Freitag, what motivates you in your work for climate action and sustainability?

I want to give a voice to all those who otherwise would go unheard or whose voices are hardly heard at all. These are young people, for example. More than 51 percent of all people worldwide are under the age of 30 – in the national and international parliaments, i. e. the representation of the people, they account for a mere two percent, however! I also want to give nature a voice by ensuring that the decisions we take – be they political or economic – are also in nature’s interest.

INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

The national ESD process is the implementation of the current UNESCO programme “Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) #BNE2030”.

ESD 2030 highlights the key role education plays in achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme was launched in 2020 for the period until 2030. It follows on from the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) and the World Action Program for Education for Sustainable Development (2015–2019). The accompanying roadmap supports specific implementation measures in the different countries in view of the global challenges. The aim is for ESD to empower “learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society empowering people of all genders, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity”.

Berlin Declaration

The Berlin Declaration is the final document of the UNESCO World Conference, which took place in Berlin in 2021 under the leadership of the BMBF. The decisions it contains provide support for implementing ESD 2030 in education policy and in practice. The UNESCO Roadmap and the Berlin Declaration can be downloaded from the ESD portal (bne-portal.de/esd).



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs provide support for sustainable development in politics, industry and civil society.

UNESCO

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is the specialized agency of the United Nations for education, science, culture and communication.



Holger Nikelis

In 2012, Holger Nikelis founded "sport grenzenlos" (sports without barriers), a non-profit limited company (GmbH) ...

... which promotes the inclusion of people with and without disabilities. In 2019, he co-initiated the "Sports For Future e. V." association, which promotes climate stewardship.

Mr Nikelis, what does inclusion mean to you?

It simply means enabling everybody to participate equally in all areas of society becomes a normal thing to do – and this includes every individual no matter what you look like, what language you speak or whether you have a disability and so on. We have come to realize that this is best addressed with children and young people in order to inform and make them aware of this issue at a formative stage in their development. For this reason, we specifically focus on education and work in close cooperation with schools, for example. Working with young people is at the very core of "sport grenzenlos": We carry out different projects and measures promoting inclusion in sports and thus in society as a whole.

ESD PRIZE AND ESD AWARDS

Nominations for the ESD Awards can be submitted to the German Commission for UNESCO at unesco.de/en throughout the year.



National Awards – Education for Sustainable Development

Several times a year, the “National Awards – Education for Sustainable Development” (Nationale Auszeichnung – Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) honour organizations, associations, local authorities and individuals that actively promote a more sustainable society. The awards confirm the high quality of the educational programmes as well as the award winners’ outstanding commitment to ESD 2030 of the award winners and the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals. For a period of two years, the award winners receive extensive support and may use the prize’s logo in their promotional campaigns.

National Prize – Education for Sustainable Development

Since 2022, the BMBF and the German Commission for UNESCO have been awarding the annual “National Prize – Education for Sustainable Development” (Nationaler Preis – Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) within the framework of the “Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs” (ESD for 2030) programme. The prize is awarded to three players in each of the following categories: places of ESD, ESD multipliers and ESD educational landscapes; as well as to one newcomer. For their special contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, they each receive 10,000 euros in prize money and become part of a network of outstanding education initiatives.

LEARNING WITH ESD



A database, including a large selection of learning materials for different levels of the education system (in German), is available at (bne-portal.de) under **Infothek > Lernmaterial**.

The collection of information material provided by the Federal Ministry for the Environment entitled **“Weltklimakonferenz: Wie steht es um das Übereinkommen von Paris?”** (UN Climate Change Conference: What is the current state of the Paris Agreement?) offers the opportunity to engage with international climate policy.

The Greenpeace app **“Tracking Biodiversity”** takes learners on an augmented reality research tour to discover the biodiversity around the globe.



The experimental game **“Wasser.Marsch!”** (Bring on the water!) by the FoodFirst Information and Action Network addresses the topic of access to water, taking into account various different perspectives.

bne-portal.de/esd



The Little Scientists Foundation provides a collection of materials on the topic of

“sustainable consumption in preschools, childcare centres and primary schools”

including websites and apps for children.

stiftung-kinder-forschen.de/en/about-us

The **“Klima & Gerechtigkeit”**

(climate & justice) toolbox by the German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation MISEREOR enables learners to explore their own options for promoting global justice.



The **“Global Lernen
Brisant – Ukraine und Frieden”**

education material about Ukraine and peace by Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) provides a cross-curricular opportunity for dealing with the topic of security.

bne-portal.de/esd



Kristina Wetzel



Kristina Wetzel has been head of the “AgendaBüro” at the Office of Environmental Protection, Trade Supervision and Energy since 2016.

The office takes care of ESD, the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, environment and sustainability projects in childcare centres, schools and sports clubs, and sustainability management within administration.

Frau Wetzel, do you have a vision for the future?

I also long to live in a more sustainable world in the future, of course. But instead of dreaming up big plans, I prefer to look at my own immediate surroundings. For the town administration, for example, I would like to see us humans being more mindful in our interactions, and that we work together on widening our horizons. By this, I mean that we look not just at Heidelberg and ensure that everything looks nice and green, but that we also ask ourselves how our actions impact the situation of other people in the world. The important thing for me is that we focus more on our global responsibility.

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