

Education for a sustainable long term

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1. Foreword

The problematic roused by the impact of human activities on our environment and the following consequences for the future of our societies will only find satisfactory and lasting answers in the evolution of our behaviour.

If the scientific understanding of these problematic has improved during the last decades, the questions raised have evolved, their nature has changed and they are getting more complex: it is therefore essential to improve the level of knowledge to encourage the perception and the understanding of the current challenges. That improvement requires the implementation of new approaches concerning education, training and information of citizens. Education, firstly implemented in schools, hold an irreplaceable role and has to be developed throughout life and to be adapted to the new challenged faced by our society.

In order to bring new behaviours in accordance to sustainable development through education, it is essential to introduce clearly the challenges and to diffuse their content on a large scale through correlative approaches of education, training and information. These approaches, inscribed in the long time, should progressively raise the awareness of all the actors to develop individual and shared initiatives in order to implement new societal practices. The diffusion is made through diverse modalities according to the public involved. Despite the fact that each of these three approaches, education, training or information, have their own logic, specific targets, favoured tools they are complementary and form a whole: the education for a sustainable development.

It is necessary to promote a permanent, progressive and multiform educational approach inscribed in a long-term perspective. This will allow everyone, whatever the age, to better assimilate the information relating to environmental, socio-economic and cultural problematic and to fit – within every activity - their logics and their challenges in a perspective of sustainable development.

Changes in behaviour cannot be simply legislated for and cannot be instantly absorbed. The simple raising of a sustainable awareness is not sufficient to reach the expected goal: to make sustainable development the basis of our actions. It is therefore necessary to situate us within an approach of progressive education and to inscribe our actions in the

long-term in order to reach a real and lasting appropriation.

However, the necessity to inscribe that process in the long term should not omit the fact that contrarily to the structuring projects which are necessarily inscribed in a long-term approach, education is a permanent and continuous process which is not referring to a temporal frame. Nonetheless that process is referring to a period of time if we consider the nature of the audiences addressed to: the present time referring to the adults and the education of youths, which is an investment for our future.

Despite the urgency characterising the adoption of actions to reach rapid changes in behaviour according to sustainable development, education should rest on a continuous and concerted effort from all the actors and should be implemented according to a strategy built and adopted in the form of partnerships. This implies also a permanent evaluative approach, according to specific indicators, in order to accurately identify the processes and to adapt the actions of education, training and information to the rapid evolution of our societies.

The implementation of specific or global approaches aimed at the instauration of sustainable development rests on an iterative approach which considers both the local and global dimensions, and the interactions it might generate, knowing that this process changes constantly according to the modification of individual behaviour and to the societies to which they belong. The whole constituted by the sum of environmental, sociological, economic and cultural processes might be compared to an ecological system with components – biotope and biocoenosis – acting on the evolution of the ecosystem taken as a whole. The resulting modifications have a returning impact on the constitutive elements. This evolution or permanent mutation characterises the functioning of our atmosphere and shows a noticeable difference with the ecosystem: an ecosystem has natural regulation mechanisms able to sustain its lifespan whereas, at the present, our anthroposphere, which is lacking such mechanisms, is trying to acquire them by the adoption of behaviours, which are more in line with sustainable development. The achievement - in the nearest possible future – of this attempt is a vital challenge for our societies and education in all its dimensions is, with no doubts, one way to succeed, provided that it is part of real strategy.

Education to the diverse processes, which will allow the realisation of a transition from societies with consumption based behaviours to new behaviours more respectful of the planet's resources according to sustainable development and of for the criteria of equity and equality implies a new way of thinking and acting from everyone. The resulting understanding of the challenges and the decision taking cannot be realised without a radical change of behaviour, on the individual, national and global ground. These changes in

behaviour should not only be the result of a limited number of actors but should involve all citizens carrying on responsibilities at all the levels of society. This educational approach – education, training and information for everyone and along life according to a formal, nonformal and informal approach – includes various modalities and is oriented to a varied audience. It cannot be implemented in an empirical and isolated manner but progressively and with the cooperation of the different actors.

In the accelerated process of globalisation, Europe is a major actor able to hold fundamental problematic such as the long-term prospective addressed throughout a certain amount of structuring approaches such as education, training and information as related to sustainable development.

The decrease in illiteracy, the equality of access to schooling until graduate education and the increase in the length of schooling and employability, are creating dynamics and opening important evolution of abilities toward sustainable development.

2. What education for a sustainable development?

Education for sustainable development is a new approach, which has a crucial goal: to educate to a new global and systemic approach of a particular type of development to ensure the durability of our societies, taken in the sense a rational and integrated management of the resources of our planet. This education requires a substantial effort from and toward every components of these societies in order to encourage all the anthroposphere's inhabitants to adopt new behaviours and to ensure the appropriate integration of these behaviours in the environmental, social, economic and cultural domains. Education to sustainable development involves various domains of intervention, numerous and varied actors, targets different audiences and spread out from the youngest age scale to the most advanced one. It seems difficult or almost impossible, under such conditions, to envisage a unique strategy.

2.1. Initial training

The process of education starts with the formal initial, the school and the university training, which has been affected by deep changes to take into account sustainable development. In fact, education to environment such as the one taught from 1970 to 2000 has to be replaced by a broader approach, which is also more complete and global and in consideration of the rapid evolution of phenomena (climate change, energy, biodiversity, demography, globalisation,...) in order to answer to the necessity, for all the components of our societies,

to rapidly integrate sustainable development. This corresponds to a sizeable change, which can be referred to as a mutation. This mutation has been firstly confronted to the need to establish a transition from a phase of experimentation and individual pedagogical action to a period of generalisation and systematisation of the pedagogical approaches with all the partners leading the actions of education, training and information.

The school is the major learning place in the field of sustainable development. Since the last decade, numerous initiatives allowed to develop programmes and pedagogical approaches linked to sustainable development. However, the experts' assessment is rather critical, despite the progresses realised, because of the resistances, prejudices and material difficulties, cultural or administrative impediments. In order to reach substantial progresses, teachers should receive initial and continuous training in this field and we should also improve the cooperation between the diverse actors of education – through openness and through partnerships organised between teachers, pupils' parents, local authorities, associations and under certain circumstances companies.

Education to sustainable development implies an understanding of the challenges, the plurality of actors, the responsibilities and the learning of new behaviours: the processes implemented should themselves follow the principles of sustainable development while allowing the openness and the participation to the teachings of the actors, who will be their future partners.

In the last decades, regulatory plans have been developed to facilitate the educative approaches targeting more precisely the young generations representing tomorrow's society. These approaches refer, more or less explicitly, to the national strategy of sustainable development or to the European Sustainable Development Strategy, which constitutes its frame.

All the resources corresponding to that formal teaching, with reference to general or professional training and which are able to contribute to that effort, should be identified, mobilised and coordinated. The level and the quality of that mobilisation will bring about, to a great degree, the capacity of our societies to respond to the challenges of the century.

2.2. Continuous training and information

Beyond the initial, general or professional training, such as the one taught in schools and universities to an identified and relatively homogeneous public, it is of the utmost importance to focus on the continuous training and the information of the all types of

publics, which are at the heart of plural, complex and durable processes. It is therefore necessary to handle these two approaches separately while stressing that the education in school and university should not fall within an autarkic process but should be open in order to allow - within schools, universities and its periphery - the cooperation of the diverse actors of the society.

Continuous training completes and relays the initial training and contributes to the establishment of an educative continuum to make understandable the challenges of sustainable development to all the socio-economic actors, while information targets the whole population: the whole approaches of education, training and information allow each well-informed citizen to act appropriately in every part of his everyday life.

The phase of information is certainly the most complex to implement because in order to be efficient, information should be diverse, exhaustive, and pluralistic and should be the focus of a public debate.

The hardest task is certainly the one, which is giving transparent and reliable information to the public concerning sustainable development. In fact, in our societies, whatever the cultures and level of development, messages are omnipresent and are targeting a specific public or a large audience, mixing reality and fiction. These messages are too often difficult to interpret for the misinformed public and are also often transmitting practices and values, which are contradictory to those of sustainable development.

Information should get inspiration from society and should inventory pre-existing behaviours in order to take them into account. The objective is not to take within a group of experts the content of so-called impartial information but to inventory and to confront available information coming from multiple expertnesses in order to organise them. To reach that objective, it is necessary to assure the means of that pluralistic information, which the necessary condition for reliable and transparent information.

Following the example of education, the objective of information related to sustainable development is to contribute to the changes of the society through the implementation and the consideration of new systems of references and behaviours.

Information is targeting various actors such as the specific subgroups considered as potential prescribers and therefore key actors in the making and diffusion of information, such as the media, the management of companies, the trade union and associative leaders,... These actors should themselves have a basic training and a continuous training, which would determine the information policy they will implement. The training of actors and

the information resulting from their policy should incorporate to the basic notions, the idea of the necessity of a transversal and less sectorial processing of sustainable development.

The so-called information is essentially destined to a large and diverse public. Information, to be properly received, should be sufficiently clear and attractive not to deceive the public and should take into account the complexity of the subject which should tackle the multiple interactions between environment, society, economy and culture on the local, national and international level.

The information of the diverse public might be realised at the occasion of various situations, in and within the professional sphere, to answer to a number of priority objectives, with targeted action plans (prescribers and the general public) and associated to appropriate indicators in order to:

- contribute to the openness of the awareness of citizens with the appropriate information addressed to the general public;
- change the method of information;
- change the individual and collective behaviours;
- a better consideration of the identity and cultural diversity.

3. What are the actors of education for a sustainable development?

The success of the actions of education, training and information, which should bring about sustainable development, depends on the responsible behaviour of everyone and on the individual decisions or on the decisions made by the authorities in which the individual participate or which are representing him. Therefore, this implies the generalisation of an education seen as a structuralizing element for the sustainable development culture, which is a relatively ambitious objective given the fact that it is inscribed in a real society project. All the actors are in charge of that education. They should be associated in a common approach and should adopt innovative and adaptive modalities.

3.1. A shared responsibility for all and by all

The national strategies for sustainable development, like the EU strategy, which encloses them, claim that ambition and set voluntary objectives in terms of information, education and training.

During the last ten years, the protocol of common action emanating from the governmental sphere and the progressive awareness of the different actors implementing, on diverse time and space scales, coordinated approaches for education or training to environment and then to sustainable development, have already allowed the emergence of a numerous exemplary territorial dynamics.

The formalisation of these partnership approaches should be reinforced and the new initiatives emerging in that field particularly encouraged. In fact, the ambition of an education and a training to environment for all allowing the training of the would be citizen, actors and policy makers, impose to mobilise, around shared objectives and concerted approaches, every major actors belonging to the educational and training sectors such as the State and the decentralised bodies, the local authorities, the companies and the civil society.

In that prospect, we should encourage the implementation, at all levels of the territory, of contractual plans or partnership modalities, which would facilitate the development of concerted actions for education, training and information for a sustainable development.

3.2. An approach associating all the actors

This primary responsibility of the educative sphere concerning education for sustainable development does not exclude the other actors of the society, the local authorities, the associations or the companies: the responsible actors acknowledge that the appropriate approach necessarily involve partnerships.

The success of a policy of education to environment and sustainable development answering to the genuine needs of our society taken in its local, regional, national and international dimensions, rests necessarily on the concretisation of a double approach: a voluntary policy emanating from the implicated political bodies at the diverse European, national and regional scales and the implementation of specific measures according to diverse modalities between the major actors of this educational approach, which are the State and its decentralised bodies, the local authorities, the companies and the civil society.

A voluntary policy of the implicated political bodies:

The first point of this approach is often been implemented within the framework of sustainable development strategies with a certain amount of initiatives:

- Some of these initiatives are specially addressed to the school milieu: in France for example, the ministry of national education has published in 2004 a circular, which makes education to environment for sustainable development compulsory.
- Larger initiatives relate to all the approaches of education and training such as the creation of federative structures gathered in network such as schools of education or virtual universities or data banks relating to sustainable development or the holding of national and international conferences.
- At last, the approaches conducted by the major national or regional ministries involved in education and training to sustainable development, which continue to encourage or initiate actions, each in its own field of competence, on the regional, national and international scale.

Contractual plans on a territorial basis

The territorial entities play a major and increasing role in the implementation of educational and training plans in association with the other partners: the State, the companies and the civil society. The modalities are different according to the level of decentralisation of the diverse European countries and according to the allocation of competencies, it is nevertheless essential to generalise these plans.

Local authorities have a crucial position in the elaboration and implementation of a policy supporting the actions of education and training because of the diversity of their level of intervention and a closer promiscuity in relation to citizens.

The key role of the companies, the civil society and the public institutions

The diverse components of the civil society (associations, foundations, companies, consular chambers, chambers of trade,...) and the public institutions have a key role to play. They are special partners because they are requiring training and because they are situated at the heart of the activities of our society, they are able to bring knowledge and know-how, which have to be taken into account in every approach relating to education and training.

3.3. Innovative and adaptive modalities

The specificity of the approach

In consideration of the diversity of the actors, we have to remind the collective dimension of every project of education, training and information relating to sustainable development.

Addressed to the population as a whole, such a project should be pursued in synergy and in coordination with all the involved partners. The expected result should be a generalised effort of articulation at all levels and which has to take into account various prerequisites:

- the commonly shared responsibility of every partner in consideration of their own missions;
- their cooperation, requested for everyone, at each level of the territory;
- the sharing of means and resources.

Such an approach does not appear as self-evident. In fact, it requires the conciliation of a global vision and particular challenges. Therefore, it appears necessary that each partnership should ensure beforehand that:

- every actor keep in mind the necessary dialogue to implement a genuine collective project,
- and at the same time this should be inscribed in the framework of specific missions with respect to the own specifications.

The importance of methodology

Every partnership project should start with a common reflection concerning the missions and the constraints characterising this project, in order to define precisely the domains of intervention of the various partners and the rules to follow as part of a concerted action.

In order to facilitate consultation it appears convenient to create or consolidate appropriate measures with consideration to the measures which have already been implemented, such as:

- contractual forms meant to engage actors around explicit objectives: framework agreement, protocol, project convention, etc...
- consultative institutions responsible for, according to the case, the initiation, the implementation, the support of the process or the evolution according to the different contexts: follow-up committee, steering committee, commission, council,...

Considering the diversity of the situations and the more or less engaged commitment of each other we will try to avoid the adoption of constraining structures and the reinvention of measures which have already shown their relevance and efficiency. In some instances, new

formulations will emerge and in some instances it would be preferable to consolidate existing forms of partnership.

Defining each other's role

The role of each partner is therefore to contribute, according to its missions and to its possibilities (scientific, technique, financial...), to the implementation and to the monitoring of projects relating to education for sustainable development. The approach of participative elaboration should allow the writing of the specifications mentioning the objectives and the common contents and also the responsibilities and the role of each partner at all steps of the projects.

If each partnership project has to fix its contents according to the needs and the expectations of everyone, the existing initiatives have showed the value-added effect of partnership, in the definition of shared needs (evaluation, expertise, council, consultancy, etc...) whatever the territorial scale of the project under consideration, in the training of professionals and publics with mixed and criss-crossed training plans, in the multiplication of resources privileging projects of co-production or co-diffusion or information, whatever the terms of communication or dissemination strategies.

Multiple examples of realisations based on partnership are available from the structures to make an inventory of these practices while mentioning in a more specific way the national observatory for education to environment for a sustainable development, which has a double mission: to identify and follow the diverse partnerships implementing in a perspective of education to environment for a sustainable development but also to facilitate the exchanges between the diverse actors by the implementation of central portal with the possibility to link multiple networks to existing networks in order to improve the valorisation of the approaches of education for a sustainable development at all the levels of the territories.

While referring to the diverse strategies of sustainable development, that approach stresses the necessity to encourage the reinforcement of contractual measures or partnership modalities to favour the development of concerted actions for education and training for a sustainable development answering to the needs of our society.

4. What is the role of the public?

The involvement of the public has recently stimulated a new reflective movement and has assisted to the emergence of new practices. The standard form of public participation is for

instance organised around public surveys, which have an administrative or technical form, with conclusions that are too often supporting the project.

In reality, there is a feeling that the public has only a limited reorientation capacity, even for the matters concerning directly the public. About fifteen years ago, within the modern democracies, multiple processes of participation have been invented, tested and improved.

They respond to the needs of new governance processes toward new kind of citizens. They establish a closer promiscuity between decisions and the publics, an increase in the participation to decisions making and a better confidence among the social actors and at the end more efficiency.

Education, like training and information, has its own capability to generate the progress of the understanding and the involvement toward sustainable development. Therefore, young people and adults, trained or informed are able to participate to the challenges of sustainable development on a national or local scale. Each genuine participation process rests on the equitable access to transparent and varied information.

In that context, it is essential to facilitate the participation of European citizens to the public debate. In fact, beyond the propositions, which are parts of the official literature referring to the "local direct democracy" and formulated through petitions or local referendums, the active participation of the public interested in the relevant decisions constitute by itself an approach of sustainable development. This participation is organised around phases of information, consultation and dialogue preceding the decision taking process by the competent authorities.

The implication of citizens in that process renew the governance and allow the organising authorities to treat various source of information, to compare the data, to get new solutions and to improve the quality of decisions. The participation of citizens to the public debate contributes to the reinforcement of the civic sense and the confidence of the public in the governmental authority and to the improvement of the quality of the democracy by the instituted transparency.

Therefore, new mechanism of participation and consultation should be created or improved while debating the challenges of sustainable development, on the local or national scale, with three main objectives:

- to organise and encourage the active participation of the public to the challenges of sustainable development

- to provide the youth with the means to understand and participate to the challenges of sustainable development.

- to organise and encourage the active participation of consumers and employees to public debate.

5. How to situate the approaches of ESD within Europe?

We can notice on the European ground and since one fourth of century, the multiplication of initiatives to improve the capacity to take into account sustainable development and the closely linked problematic such as education, training and information. Within that evolution which aims at an improvement of the adequacy with the limited resources of our planet et which wants to favour the intergenerational solidarity, the European Union has an educational policy which rests on close or common historical, environmental, economic, social and cultural references.

In that context, the European Union – because of its history and socio-economical and cultural level – appears as a privileged craftsman for the implementation of a real policy of sustainable development which rests on an approach of education, training and information affecting every members, whatever their age, gender or condition, that policy will be extended all over Europe and beyond.

Diverse European countries have developed many years ago policies, which are more or less concerned with ESD, mainly on the educational level, like the European Union especially with the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy (2000). When we are mentioning the education to sustainable development, ESD, it seems necessary to consider the whole approaches existing on the European scale *lato sensu* (see : *the United Nations Decade and the Vilnius Strategy*) and to stresses the specificities characterising the European Union to assess the way their respond to the internal needs of the EU while contributing to the approach as defined by the Nation States in the context of the United Nations Decade of education for a sustainable development.

In order to confront the disruptions induced by the globalization and the new challenges coming with the new economy built on knowledge, the extraordinary meeting of the European Council in Lisbon (march 2000) has implemented a global strategy to provide the European Union from 2010 with “the most competitive knowledge economy, able to bring a sustainable economic growth together with the improvement of the employment on a quantitative and qualitative basis and the enhancement of the social cohesion.

In Göteborg (June 2001) the European Union has enlarged the objectives of the Lisbon

Strategy concerning environment and sustainable development, with the adoption of the first strategy of the European Union resting on the principle that it is necessary to analyse the economic, social and environmental consequences of all the policies with coordination and to take this into account in the decision process. These three dimensions, which are the constitutive elements of sustainable development, come with four domains of primary actions: climatic change, transportations, public health and the management of natural resources.

In June 2006 a new strategy has been adopted by the enlarged European Union for the benefit of sustainable development (while specifying that the main challenge is the progressive change in our consumption behaviour and current means of production which are not durable), specifies four key objectives, suggests guiding principles for policies and remind the main challenges. That document fixes a unique and coherent strategy describing the way the European Union could honour in a more efficient manner its long-standing commitment to face the challenges of sustainable development. This document refers to the Lisbon Strategy and to education and research.

What analysis of the current situation?

The analysis of the current situation shows that the process characterising the European Union might sometimes appear in a more or less salient rupture with some other countries of the geographical Europe concerned by the Vilnius Strategy, either because they are not at the same level of development, or because they have different conceptions concerning sustainable development and/or only favour economic development.

What are therefore these political, economical, and socio-cultural characteristics shared by the countries of the European Union which have an origin rooted in a long-standing and common history, sometimes distressful, but also from a recent past – the last 50 years – which has seen deep - and mostly industrial – mutations.

These common characteristics might be summarised in a few points:

- on the cultural ground: cultural roots – identical or close – which ensure a certain identity while acknowledging and accepting the cultural diversities;
- on the political ground: democratic countries with variable constructions which are more or less centralised and which are progressively gathered and resulting therefore in the harmonisation of a certain number of measures throughout a common approach;

- on the environmental ground: a perception of the necessity to preserve our environment, which is particularly marked and based on a voluntary approach and not only on the polluter pays principle;

- on the socio-economical ground: despite some quantitative disparities, the predominance of similar or close socio-economical characteristics with a high level of consumption, but also with the promotion of the social equity and human development.

In addition to these close or common characteristics, the EU countries are also confronted to major problems which require the implementation of a common policy able to ensure a development able to respond to everyone's needs, today and in the future, with respect to the great principles of sustainable development:

- the rarefaction of natural resources and in particular the energetic and mineral resources;

- the population aging and the inflow of immigrants announcing the most massive inflow of eco-refugees in the absence of strong initiatives toward the developing countries and particularly by the EU;

- the choc of globalisation and the concurrence of emerging countries.

These factors acts in favour of the reinforcement of actions on initial education in schools and universities, but also of continuous training and information for all the citizens to enable them to make well informed decisions concerning their present and future, and this is actually not the case.

These actions cannot be conceived outside a strategy, which is defining a perfect level of transverse proposition, realisation and evaluation of the diverse actions, through an integrated approach.

6. What kind of approach to promote?

The EEC text of December 2005 on the ESDS stresses that despite the progresses made and the achievement of rapid changes of various kind, Europe has to make increased efforts to sustain its position in the field of durability. The efforts concerning growth and employment, the preservation of the social and natural heritage, innovation and the promotion of the knowledge resulting from actions of education and research. The text also

mentions that education plays a major role in the promotion of the changes necessary for sustainable development. Education ensures the acquisition, for all citizens, of competences to adapt to the world's mutations, the diffusion of knowledge and the involvement of the actors in that change.

The public authorities define the framework of these diverse actions conducted by the citizens and the companies, however, sustainable development and related actions in the field of education, training, and information cannot exclusively rely on public action and all the involved actors – companies and citizens – should be able and stimulated to propose new ideas and to take actions. In the same manner, Europe cannot take these diverse challenges alone and should cooperate with the international partners.

The reflection should first rest on the identification of specificities and common denominators of a number of elements, and more precisely:

- what are the common approaches in the field of education, training and information, which should accelerate the process?
- what are the common ethical references?
- what are the respective roles of the citizen and the institutions?
- what are the shared factors and what might be the common objectives?
- what international cooperation can we develop and more particularly between Europe and EU and the countries of the UNECE?


These diverse actions can only be conceived if they fulfil two conditions: firstly the common definition of sustainable development and the relating actions of education and secondly, the implementation of a genuine strategy concerning ESD.

❖ ☑ The adoption by each EU countries of a common definition of sustainable development, of level of application, and of the related actions of education.

The particular objective of sustainable development allows to distinguish between ESD and education in a more general sense. The constitutive elements of ESD are linked to the definition of sustainable development. It appears, more often, that despite the efforts made by governments and diverse actors, our societies are far from having reached the level of sustainability suitable to reply to the exigencies defined in the Brundtland report and the terminology “sustainable” in itself is often used in a repetitive way, often in an incantatory

way, and goes against the approach, making it appear as ordinary.

The ESD has to bring a number of competencies but also has to go further and allow the individual to act as “individual educated to sustainability” and the education to environment is the first step.

❖  **The definition and the application of a genuine strategy of ESD intending to bring all EU countries to a comparable level of knowledge favouring the sharing of financial and human resources.**

ESD is currently lacking qualitative and quantitative data allowing through appropriate indicators to compare the level of action of each EU countries and to assess the achievement of the diverse actions: operational frames; relative importance of formal education; tools and measures of education and training, research and development in ESD; nature and level of cooperation in the field of ESD. This approach is currently implemented in the context of the Vilnius Strategy through specific indicators specifically elaborated in 2006 and 2007 and it might be interesting to adapt these indicators to the specificity of the EU countries.

The other important point consist in the implementation within the directorates general and the services of the European Commission, and in particular within the DG environment, education, culture and research, of a common transverse approach, allowing a better execution of the diverse actions linked to ESD and a better integration of the ESD in the European educative programmes. This point is particularly well emphasised in the ESDS in its paragraph 2 "Notre engagement en faveur du Développement durable" dit que : "le principal défi consiste à modifier progressivement nos modes de consommation et de production actuels qui ne sont pas durables ainsi que la manière cloisonnée d'élaborer les politiques".

The EU countries form according to their longstanding and recent history, geographical situation, culture and socio-economic development, a relatively homogenous whole, whose initiatives in the field of ESD contribute to make Europe – and the 25 countries member of the EU in particular – one of the major actors of the transition from a consumption society to a society which is more respectful of our planet, its environment and current and future inhabitants.

Each European country has developed, according to their own scheme and in accordance with common modalities, educative processes in order to train its inhabitants, to a better understanding and awareness of sustainable development. However it appears that Europe

has to increase its efforts in the field of sustainability. These efforts require the reinforcement of a common strategy in order to improve the valorisation of financial and human resources of the EU and each member country.

The analysis of the results coming from the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in liaison with the 2005-2014 Decade and of the various national or international meetings held during the last two years, shows that it is difficult to reach an harmonisation of the action of all the involved European countries and in some cases it might be prejudicial to the progress of the process and particularly while taking into account the European countries with a developing economy which are not yet member of the EU. In such conditions, it might be appropriate to implement in a number of fields relating to education for a sustainable development, pilot approaches, key actions, conducted by a number of European countries disposed to be involved in particular domains of the ESD. This would allow a better sharing of the progresses and a better efficiency in the development and evaluation of the educational programmes and research concerning sustainable development with, as a result, the considerable saving of time, financial and human means.

7. Conclusions

Education should provide everyone with a personality allowing to leave in today's world and to picture tomorrow's world with reference to everyone's roots. Education should prepare and open the future citizen to the world in which he is evolving and to the diversity of the human conditions, while contributing to inspire a feeling of belonging to the community of responsible citizens by the attainment of well-advised opinions allowing the citizen to become a real humanist. These multiple competences – social and civic most notably – should allow an efficient and constructive participation of every citizen to the social and professional life with consideration to the values of sustainable development.

Throughout the world, and notably in Europe, the ESD takes diverse forms, but globally we can notice that the countries that are less developed industrially are favouring initial education whereas the others are also taking into account the education of adults. According to that observation it appears important to underline that the changes in behaviour, which should lead to a more sustainable society can happen only if we have the corresponding offers of education, training and information from all the components of our societies in order to bring to everyone the elements, which would make a responsible citizen able to take well informed decisions in a context of freedom of choice.

This is a huge work to carry out and we are only in the initial phase of the process, particularly if we consider the field of education to consumption and the protection of the resources of our planet, in which the media have a prominent role to play provided that they get free – and this is particularly obvious for the TV media - of constraints such as advertising, whose role is, contrary to the approach of sustainable development, to promote consumption and subsequently to take part in the impoverishment of the resources of our planet.

However education, while contributing to the construction of everyone's personality and offering specific knowledge and know-how, should also give to everyone a common culture and shared values, which are necessary to provide our society with a sustainable lifespan. Europe and the EU in particular have to show the example of a concerted and reasoned approach in the field of SD and ESD, especially concerning the themes of values, in a context of over-consumption of the natural resources, the solidarity among people, generations and countries, with a particular reference to the migratory processes. In a more general and fundamental manner, the EU should show the example in the implementation of a new society not only based on material references.

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