The Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) aims at assisting Mediterranean countries to develop and incorporate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into their formal education systems. It aims for ESD to be integrated in all relevant subjects, also in non-formal and informal education. The Strategy serves as a flexible framework for the countries to fulfill regional, global and national agendas, given that its implementation is driven by a country-specific approach.

MSESD responds to Target 4.7, under Goal 4 of the SDGs which focuses on quality education, and refers explicitly to ESD, stating that: “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire 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.”

After being endorsed by the Union for the Mediterranean Ministers of Environment in 2014, MSESD was embraced as an integral part of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016-2025) of the MAP-Barcelona Convention system, under strategic direction 6.4 on education. At the 19th meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in Athens, MSESD was acknowledged as important to “enhance public awareness and promote sustainability and the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean”.

In line with promoting the action plan set for implementing MSESD, seven training of trainers workshops were organized over the past two years, in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Tunisia. Supported by the EU SWIM-H2020 Support Mechanism a regional workshop was also convened in Cyprus in 2017, together with the first meeting of the Mediterranean ESD committee. The training sessions gathered some 400 ESD professionals with advanced capacities on the potential application of AP/MSESD and ESD. The workshops were combined with inter-institutional consultation meetings to identify strengths, priorities and needs of countries for mainstreaming MSESD implementation.

Significant achievements were observed in many countries: Malta took into account the MSESD in the National Plan on Sustainable Management of Water; in Cyprus, the National ESD Plan was effectively linked with the Strategy; and Morocco is among the champion countries of the UNESCO Global Action Program (GAP) on ESD. The second Meeting of the Mediterranean ESD Committee convened in Greece in June 2019, combined with a regional workshop on ESD.

Although widely recognized as a prerequisite for the promotion of sustainable development and the SDGs, ESD does not yet receive the needed political backing and, therefore, is still not fully and homogeneously developed throughout the Mediterranean region. Better coordination is needed between formal, non-formal, and informal ESD initiatives, which are frequently supervised by different ministries, including those of education, environment, and health. Moreover, the availability of adequate human and financial resources is lacking, which hinders the much needed expansion of training and retraining programs of educators. The secretariat continues its efforts to attract more political support and mobilize resources for enhancing the implementation of the Strategy through its MSESD Action Plan.