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The Main Challenges for Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Education and Care Institutions in Croatia

One of the priorities for a sustainable world is to educate early and preschool children how to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become effective agents of change, committed problem-solvers, and system-thinkers (Huggins & Evans, 2017). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) requires strategic planning, which involves incorporating sustainability principles into curricula and daily practice, as well as securing political and cultural commitment for increased investment. This approach also addresses professional preschool education staff shortages and their goal-oriented development.

The achievement of Goal 4 / quality education closely corresponds to other ESD goals. For example, poverty and the risk of poverty (Goal 1) undermine the quality of education (both the system and the individual). Migration and the emergence of social inequality and (in)justice that limit children's living achievements and mental health can also be linked to this. Achieving quality education for all encompasses civic education, gender equality and social equality, biological literacy, and high-quality pedagogical support for children and parents within the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system. These are the challenges of ESD in Croatia, which are currently, although declaratively stated as goals, being implemented through partial solutions, unsystematic monitoring, and non-strategic approaches. Research and discussion on these issues are necessary for progress.

Keywords: education for all; preschool children; sustainability.