EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

Edited by
Adrianna Nizińska & Andrea Galimberti

Partners:

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The book is the result of cooperation between researchers from four European universities: DSW UNIVERSITY OF LOWER SILESIA, GOETEBORGS UNIVERSITET, UNIVERSIDADE DO ALGARVE, UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA, which formed a consortium for the implementation of the ESDEUS project: European Universities as Community Leaders of the Education for Sustainable Development (2023 – 2025) co-financed by the European Union under the agreement number 2023-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000156638 (www.dsw.edu.pl/esdeus).

Under EUGreenComp(2022), all educational settings provided by the university develop awareness and civic competences to take action to transform society into a more sustainable one. ESDEUS aims to build university capacity as a leader in Education for Sustainable Development. It focuses on ESD-relevant teaching and collaboration with stakeholders.

The main activities are (i) mapping and collecting HE ESD policies, strategies, and instruments, (ii) identifying stakeholders' ESD perspectives and collective actions in the ESD field, (iii) comparing ESD practices in different EU regions, and (iv) designing-implementing a course called "Introduction to ESD". The consortium implements these activities by conducting research (desk research and field research), organizing Intersectoral Teaching Learning events, using various methods based on problem-solving, peer learning, and exchange of good practices, as well as typical academic activities like publishing articles, books, podcasts and conferences.

The book is one of the project results. It is a catalogue of the universities' policies in the field of ESD, and at the same time, a toolbox of solutions, practices and tools in university education. We believe that the book will contribute to building bridges between higher education and Education for Sustainable Development, and strengthen the concept of European universities as a Lifelong Learning University.

Winter, 2024

Ewa Kurantowicz
ESDEUS project leader

PART I

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POLICIES, STRATEGIES, VISIONS

Edited by
Adrianna Nizińska

INTRODUCTION

Adrianna Nizińska

The main goal of this report is to contribute to increasing the quality of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) teaching and learning in higher education institutions (HEIs). The policy comparison of various European countries, such as Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy, provides a more complete understanding of the structural reasons behind the approaches being used to teach and learn about sustainability in HE across Europe. Examining the approaches used in different countries and universities, can give all actors a better sense of the different strategies being used and how successful they are. It can help educators (from both the HE sectors and other educational providers) to develop their own approaches to teaching and learning about sustainability that are tailored to their particular region or country. In addition, by gathering data from different countries, educators can identify potential areas for improvement in their own approaches and then incorporate successful strategies from other countries into their own teaching and learning plans.

A starting point in this endeavor is the process of mapping ESD-related policies in European universities in Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy. To grasp the complexity of policy landscape successfully, the research team has analyzed each country by reading two types of policies: national, macro-level policies and mezzo, local ones produced by educational institutions. This analysis allowed for going beyond content and identifying interconnectedness, coherence but also tensions and out-of-sync, dispersed policies. The first chapter contains quotations from the discussed documents. All citations are published in color boxes (the source is provided in the link to the document)

The next step, addressed in Chapter 2, is the attempt to provide a more comprehensive but also critical view of the policies and their particularities at the national level, in relation to their local contexts, as well as ways policies can govern ESD. The chapter also addresses a problematic positioning of ESD as a new buzzword that tends to devour pre-existing concepts education was built around in specific countries (for example, lifelong learning, environmental education or community education). Finally, having a snapshots of each country's key trends, the research team has conducted a comparative analysis from the critical perspective to identify the challenges and advocate for new spaces to create ESD that is relevant, critical and politically engaged.

NATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ESD-RELATED POLICIES IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES. STATE OF THE ART

1.1 POLAND

Ewa Kurantowicz and Pawel Rudnicki
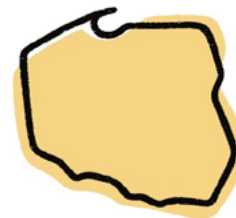
NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

**National Strategy
for Sustainable Development**

Title: Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego
Rozwoju (SOR) do 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030);
Strategy for Responsible Development (SRD)
until 2020 (with an outlook to 2030)

**Voluntary National Review Report
VNR 2023**

Title: Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego
Rozwoju w Polsce. Raport 2023, VNR Report 2023

**Development Cooperation Program
for 2021-2030**

Title: The Multiannual Development Cooperation
Program for 2021-2030. Solidarity for Development

LOCAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

GTA Strategy Plan

Title: Strategia GTA (Grupa TEB Academia),
the owner of DSW University of Lower Silesia

**DSW University of Lower Silesia Strategy
for Development 2022-2025**

Title: Strategia rozwoju
DSW na lata 2022-2025/DSW University of Lower Silesia
Strategy for Development 2022-2025

Gender Equality Plan for DSW University 2023-2026

Title: Plan równości płci dla Uniwersytetu
Dolnośląskiego DSW na lata 2023-2026/ Gender
Equality Plan for DSW University 2023-2026

**Declaration of Social Responsibility
of the University 2017/2019 ULS**

Title: SOU: Deklaracja Społecznej Odpowiedzialności
Uczelni/Declaration of Social Responsibility
of the University

Document 1:
National Strategy for Sustainable Development

TYPE:	Government Policy Document
TITLE:	Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju (SOR) do 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030); Strategy for Responsible Development (SRD) until 2020 (with an outlook to 2030)
ISSUED BY:	Government of Poland
ENACTED BY:	Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This document presents Poland's holistic approach to sustainable economic and social development, focusing on balancing economic growth with care for the environment and social justice. The strategy underscores the need to transform Poland's development model by emphasizing innovation and education as key elements for future development, while also highlighting the importance of protecting natural resources and social equality.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The document is significant for ESD, as it promotes the integration of sustainable development goals into the education system. It emphasizes the importance of fostering ecological awareness, social responsibility and innovation among young people. The strategy underlines the necessity of preparing the younger generation for active, responsible participation in social and economic life, with an emphasis on sustainable development.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	The document details initiatives and policies aimed at supporting a knowledge-based economy, social inclusivity and regional balance. It contains detailed plans and goals concerning education, innovation and regional development aligning with ESD principles. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral and regional cooperation to achieve sustainable development.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	The strategy could significantly impact higher education (HE) in Poland, as the emphasis on a knowledge-based economy and innovation could increase demand for education and research in these areas. This increase could result in changes in curricula and research priorities at Polish universities, particularly in science, technology and the social sciences. Such changes might also affect international collaboration and industry partnerships.
LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:	http://tinyurl.com/PLdok1

POLAND | NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

Document 2:
Voluntary National Review Report VNR 2023

TYPE:

Government Report

TITLE:

Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce. Raport 2023, VNR Report 2023

ISSUED BY:

Government of Poland

ENACTED BY:

Council of Ministers of Poland

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The VNR 2023 Report provides a comprehensive evaluation of Poland's strides toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It thoroughly assesses the nation's progress across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering detailed insights into government policies, initiatives and the challenges encountered. The report focuses on Poland's response to global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, examining their impact on sustainable development efforts. This response includes an analysis of economic, social and environmental aspects, with an emphasis on balancing economic recovery with long-term sustainability goals. The document serves as a critical tool for understanding Poland's approach and commitment to the global sustainable development agenda.

ESD RELEVANCE:

The report's relevance to ESD is profound, underscoring Poland's dedication to embedding the principles of sustainable development within its educational system. The report details how educational reforms and initiatives have been geared toward integrating sustainability concepts, aiming to cultivate a deeper understanding of global challenges and sustainability issues among students. It highlights efforts to align education policies with the SDGs, ensuring that future generations are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a sustainable future. The document reflects a national commitment to fostering an education system that not only informs students but also empowers them to participate actively in sustainable development.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:

The report features significant sections on Poland's strategy for infusing sustainability into education and other key sectors. These sections elaborate on various initiatives to raise awareness of sustainability issues, enhancing educational content and preparing students for a rapidly changing, globalized world. It discusses the introduction of new curricula and educational programs that emphasize sustainable development, environmental stewardship and social responsibility. The report also delves into collaborative projects and partnerships to reinforce sustainability in educational settings, highlighting the role of academia, government and industry in fostering a more sustainable future.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:

The reports implications for HE in Poland are significant. The emphasis on sustainability, as outlined in the document, could lead to substantial changes in HE curricula, research priorities and institutional policies. This report includes the development of new study programs and research initiatives focused on sustainable development, environmental conservation and social responsibility. HEIs might see an increased focus on interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, aligning academic efforts with the SDGs. The report suggests a shift toward a more globally aware and sustainability-focused educational landscape, preparing students for the challenges of a globalized world.

LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:

http://tinyurl.com/PLdok2

Document 3:
Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030

TYPE: Governmental Strategic Plan Document

TITLE: The Multiannual Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030. Solidarity for Development

ISSUED BY: Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Department of Development Cooperation

ENACTED BY: Council of Ministers

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A government program that addresses priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda of the SDGs of Polish foreign policy. It adopts assumptions about the interdependence of three elements of development: economic, social and environmental, and the 5xP: People Planet Prosperity Peace Partnership plan. This document is an action plan for the Polish government in humanitarian aid. Cooperation with various entities and stakeholders, both in Poland and abroad, is intended to foster the achievement of such SD objectives as: No 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions, No 4. Quality education, No 8. Decent work and economic growth, No 10. Reduced inequalities, No 3. Good health and well-being, No 6. Clean water and sanitation, No 11. Sustainable cities and communities and No 13. Climate action. The program's horizontal priorities will be climate action and equality between men and women.

ESD RELEVANCE: Education is one of the priorities of this program, based on quality, equal access for all (girls, women, groups at risk of exclusion). Topics of civic education include humanitarian law and human rights, as well as ESD. Cooperation on all levels of education, including HEIs and Adult Education is needed for ESD. This document often equates or connects ESD with global education.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES: *The Solidarity for Development program assumes conducting educational activities about the state of the world and its development, called global education. Global education forms part of civic education, extending its scope by making students aware of global events and interdependencies. Its main objective is to prepare students to face the challenges that affect all of humanity. By interdependencies, we mean mutual ties and blending of cultural, environmental, economic, social, political, technological and legal systems, particularly as regards protecting human rights. Our mission is to share knowledge and experience on both the local and global levels. One of the assumptions of global education is to explain why implementing the 17 sustainable development goals is necessary and to make students aware of their importance. (p. 39)*

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE: The document sets out such tasks for universities as financially supporting international students; cooperating with universities abroad; promoting and implementing global education; preparing educators in global education; and cooperating with and supporting of government activities with expert knowledge in consultation and advisory activities by academics.

LINK TO THE DOCUMENT: https://www.gov.pl/web/polishaid/the-multiannual-programme-for-development-cooperation-for-2021-2030-solidarity-for-development

Document 1:
Strategia GTA (Grupa TEB Academia), the owner of DSW University of Lower Silesia

TYPE:	Strategic Plan Document
TITLE:	GTA Strategy Plan
ISSUED BY:	GTA Grupa TEB Academia
ENACTED BY:	GTA Executive Board
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This document presents the GTA's strategic plan for 2022 to 2025, projecting toward 2030. It focuses on scaling operations, increasing profitability and expanding geographic market presence. Key initiatives include digital transformation, rebranding and international student recruitment, aimed at adapting to evolving educational trends while maintaining financial stability.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The plan's alignment with ESD is evident in its commitment to sustainable operational practices and educational approaches. Emphasizing digital transformation and international outreach, the strategy supports inclusive education and global connectivity – key aspects of ESD.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	The strategy outlines goals and actions for integrating sustainability into educational offer. It emphasizes preparing students for global challenges through innovative and adaptable learning methodologies, reflecting ESD's core principles.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	This strategy could significantly influence HE trends, particularly through its focus on digital innovation and global market integration. These initiatives may reshape HE curricula and research priorities, reflecting a shift toward more globally interconnected and technologically advanced educational paradigms.

Document 2:
Strategia rozwoju DSW na lata 2022-2025/DSW University of Lower Silesia Strategy for Development 2022 - 2025

TYPE:	Strategic Plan of ULS
TITLE:	DSW 2022-2025 Strategy
ISSUED BY:	Dolnośląska Szkoła Wyższa (DSW University of Lower Silesia)
ENACTED BY:	Senate of the DSW/ULS
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	The strategic plan of DSW University of Lower Silesia for 2022 to 2025, with an outlook toward 2030, focuses on enhancing educational offerings, embracing digital transformation and expanding market position. It includes initiatives for academic excellence, internationalization and developing new study programs, especially in the health and business sectors.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The strategy aligns with ESD by emphasizing innovative, inclusive and environmentally conscious education. It aims to equip students with skills for a globalized, digital world, focusing on societal needs and sustainable development.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	The document highlights various projects supporting ESD, such as digitalization initiatives, development of new educational programs and international cooperation. These efforts contribute to sustainable academic and operational practices.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	The strategy's emphasis on digital education, internationalization and market-responsive programs can significantly influence higher education trends. The strategy may lead to curriculum reforms and new partnerships, aligning with global educational standards and market demands.
LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:	http://tinyurl.com/PLdok4

Document 3:
Gender Equality Plan for ULS 2023-2026

TYPE:	Strategic Document of ULS
TITLE:	Plan równości płci dla Uniwersytetu Dolnośląskiego DSW na lata 2023-2026/Gender Equality Plan for DSW ULS 2023-2026
ISSUED BY:	DSW University of Lower Silesia
ENACTED BY:	Senate of the DSW ULS Ordinance of the Rector of UD DSW No. 1/2024
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	A strategic document aimed at ensuring a safe, friendly workplace and learning, counteracting all discrimination, with particular emphasis on gender-based discrimination. The document applies to the entire academic community. The most important value for the university resulting from the document is professional development (including scientific development) in harmony with private life and personal development.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The plan indicates the need to conduct anti-discrimination education in all groups of employees and students, and in various forms: periodic workshops, attitude training, workshops developing the teaching and nonteaching staff's managerial and leadership competences; training on gender equality in research and development projects, and social campaigns.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	A document based on the European documents such as: European Charter for Researchers www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/europeancharter; Gender Equality in Academia and Research https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming; A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	The goals and activities presented are intended to strengthen equality at the University of Lower Silesia DSW. They cover various areas of the university's functioning to respond as comprehensively and innovatively as possible to the needs and policies related to increasing equality.

Document 4:
Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University 2017/2019 ULS

TYPE:	The bottom-up HEIs document facilitated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education
TITLE:	SOU: Deklaracja Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni/Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University
ISSUED BY:	Ministry of Science and Higher Education and Ministry of Regional Funds and Policy
ENACTED BY:	160 HEIs signatories of Declaration
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	The declaration's aim is to build broad public awareness of universities' role in shaping the conditions for Poland's sustainable socio-economic development. The declaration is a voluntary commitment by colleges and universities to promote the idea of sustainable development and social responsibility in educational programs, as well as universities' management and organizational solutions. Addressed to public and private HEIs, it consists of 12 points dealing with academic values, sustainable development of the university, research and teaching, and cooperation with business and society.
ESD RELEVANCE:	HEIs, as educational institutions, may appoint university-wide units within their structures responsible for the SDGs and EDS in education, research and cooperation based on social responsibility (e.g., the Center for Sustainable Development), the Rector's Plenipotentiaries for the SDGs and ESD, or other structural solutions.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	Cyclical reporting of good practices of universities in the field of social responsibility, including the Sustainable Development Goals (Catalogue of Practices 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022), issued by ministries, developed as part of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	The implementation of the commitments contained in the Declaration will contribute to the reform of universities in terms of educational offer (fields of study) and curricula. Fields of study will be more closely linked to the labour market and the future professions. Curricula will take into account the shaping of the attitudes of students and academic staff in the field of social responsibility of universities. The declaration can have a significant impact on shaping social awareness of the university's role in local communities.
LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:	https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/spoleczna-odpowiedzialnosc-uczelni

1.2 SWEDEN

Adrianna Nizińska
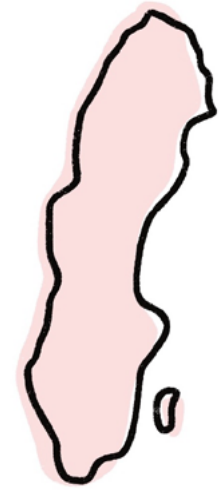
Sweden has established a robust framework for integrating sustainability into its educational policies, particularly since 2006. This framework emphasizes the crucial role of universities in promoting sustainable development (SD) and environmental sustainability education.The Swedish government mandates that HEIs actively engage in sustainability efforts, supported by national legislation including the Higher Education Act and guidelines from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKA).

Despite the autonomy of Swedish universities, they are clearly expected to collaborate with external stakeholders and society in their sustainability initiatives. This engagement not only fulfills a social responsibility but also serves as a strategic branding opportunity for institutions like Göteborg University (GU). In 2016, the Swedish government commissioned UKA to evaluate the progress of SD integration across all 47 HEIs in the country, categorizing them based on their effectiveness in embedding sustainability into their educational processes. This evaluation underscored the government's commitment to enhancing sustainability practices in higher education, signaling a need for continued investment and oversight in these initiatives. Two national-level and four local-level policies have been analyzed.

NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

Swedish Higher Education Act

Title: Swedish Higher Education Act

Higher Education Authority (UKA) Report

Title: Universities and colleges work to promote sustainable development. A thematic evaluation. 2017

LOCAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

University Strategic Vision 2021-2030

Title: 'A university for the world' University Strategic Vision 2021-2030

Environmental Policy

Title: Environmental Policy

Faculty of Education Operational Strategy 2022-2025

Title: Färdriktning För Utbildningsvetenskapliga Fakulteten

Faculty Development Strategy 2022-2026, School of Bussiness

Title: Independent Thinking for the Sustainable World. Strategy document 2022-2026

Document 1:
Swedish Higher Education Act

TYPE:	Legal act
TITLE:	Swedish Higher Education Act
ISSUED BY:	Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden
DATE:	Dec. 17, 1992
ENACTED BY:	Riksdag (Parliament)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The Swedish Higher Education Act, enacted by the Riksdag, outlines the regulations governing the operations of HEIs in Sweden. This legal framework is often supplemented by the provisions detailed in the Higher Education Ordinance. The act establishes fundamental regulations concerning the courses and programs offered by HEIs, ensuring a structured approach to higher education in the country.

ESD RELEVANCE:

Since 2006, the act has mandated that HEIs in Sweden promote SD in all their daily operations, emphasizing the importance of sustainability in the educational landscape.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:

Section 5 of the act specifies that higher education institutions *must promote sustainable development to ensure a sound and healthy environment, economic and social welfare, and justice for present and future generations*. It also highlights the necessity of considering and promoting gender equality within the operations of HEIs. In addition, it mandates that each institution's international activities enhance the quality of its research and education while contributing to sustainable development nationally and globally. Furthermore, HEIs are required to actively promote wider recruitment and support lifelong learning within their operations.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:

The Higher Education Act on HEIs is perceivd to have high impact because of its regulatory power over university strategies and daily operations. It imposes a duty on universities to promote sustainable development and enhance research and education through contributions to ESD.

MORE INFORMATION:

Swedish Higher Education Act, https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Swedish-Higher-Education-Act/#chapter2.

(...) the evaluation was a wake-up call for several HEIs and several activities have been initiated at several HEIs. In the appropriation directions for the Swedish HEIs for the year 2020, it is also a requirement that the HEIs should report back to the government on their work on promoting SD and specifically also on how they are addressing the recommendations in the evaluation.

(Agenda 2030-delegationen, 2019).

Document 2:
Higher Education Authority (UKA) Report

TYPE: Report commissioned by the government

TITLE: Universities and colleges work to promote sustainable development. A thematic evaluation. 2017

ISSUED BY: Higher Education Authority (UKA)

ENACTED BY: Swedish HEI

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: In 2016, the Swedish government asked its higher education authority (UKA) to evaluate how the process of promoting SD in HE, mandated by the government in 2006, was proceeding. The authority chose to focus on education. Each of the 47 HEIs in Sweden was asked to write a self-evaluation report based on certain criteria. A panel was appointed, consisting of academics and representatives of students. The panel wrote an evaluation of each HEI – a report on general findings and recommendations – and gave an overall judgment of each HEI in terms of whether it had well-developed processes for integrating SD into education and whether the HEI needs to develop its processes.

ESD RELEVANCE: As a result of the evaluation, recommendations for HE and for the government regarding implementation of ESD in HE have been formulated.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES: These recommendations have been formulated for HE:

  a. *Decide on overall goals for integration of SD and make sure there are follow-up processes.*

  b. *Create an organization for the work on SD and make sure it has resources it needs.*

  c. *Let established definitions of SD and Agenda 2030 be the starting point for the HEIs' sustainability.*

  d. *Avoid solutions that involve only a part of the HEI.*

  e. *Look for knowledge and engagement on SD when recruiting leaders.*

  f. *Create sustainable, resilient structures and "institutions" for SD.*

  g. *Support development of competence in faculty and staff members.*

  h. *Focus not only on content, but also on ways of teaching, creating transformative learning environments and pedagogic expressions.*

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE EVALUATION: The evaluations had a high impact on both policy and practices of HEIs in Sweden. The government did use the evaluation in its yearly dialogue with the HEIs. The results from the evaluations were on the agenda, and the HEIs were asked to comment on their results and future activities. The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation (national experts representing Sweden in the UN work on the Agenda 2030) also picked up on evaluators' suggestion to do another evaluation in a couple of years in its final report to the government.

SWEDEN | INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS
UNIVERISTY OF GOTHENBURG

All university-level policies align with national-level ESD policies and guidelines for HE. GU as a whole and its Faculty of Education clearly follow the UKA recommendation:

Let established definitions of SD and Agenda 2030 be the starting point for HEIs' sustainability.

This and other guidelines provide standardization but reduces the space for critical debate around sustainability as a contested concept, as advocated by critically oriented researchers. Four documents produced by GU under the framework of two national policies are included in this section:

1. University of Gothenburg Strategy (mission and vision)

2. University of Gothenburg Environmental Policy

3. Faculty of Education strategy

4. School of Business, Economics and Law strategy

These specific, local-level, university-wide policies, can indicate how the centralized mechanism of forced de-problematization of the concept of sustainability (applying Foucauldian lenses) traveled from top to bottom through a series of policy iterations, producing depoliticized consensus, empty signifiers and educational practices.

Document 1:
GU Strategy. University Strategic Vision 2021-2030

TYPE:	Strategy – Steering document
TITLE:	*"A university for the world" University Strategic Vision 2021-2030*
ISSUED AND ENACTED BY:	The University Board. These university-wide goals and strategies are formulated for three years at a time. The strategy periods are 2021to 2024, 2025to 2027 and 2028 to 2030. Based on these goals and strategies, an annual university-wide operational plan is prepared containing prioritized activities decided by the Vice Chancellor.
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	GU's vision expresses the university's ambition in terms of what it endeavors to be and the core values on which the institution rests. The vision provides the basis for the university's goals and strategic planning. This vision also affirms that the university's operations rest on the core academic values formulated in the *Magna Charta Universitatum* and that these are sustained within the framework of the principles that govern Swedish public administration. Taking the university's core values as a starting point, the vision is built around three commitments (quality education and research, sustainable societal development and coherent organization) that show the way for the University's development over the coming decade. Specific goals to realize the vision have been listed.
RELEVANT TEXTS:	In general, it is important to highlight that there is no explicit way of using the term ESD; rather, sustainability in teaching is mentioned. Still, the term is omnipresent and appears in multiple sections in the document. Often it feels like an add-on.

A University for the World envisions an international higher education institution that assumes responsibility for societal development while helping to build a sustainable world. Among the goals for 2021 to 2024, sustainability is listed first.

> *Our goal: By 2024, the University of Gothenburg will have strengthened its position as a leading university with regard to sustainable development.*

Work on sustainability issues in education and research is an internationally recognized feature of the University of Gothenburg. The university will take this work further in the years ahead, augmenting its relevance as an agent and a partner in society at large, and thereby contributing to Agenda 2030 and the global goals set for sustainable development, including economic, social and ecological dimensions.

This commitment entails responsibility for developing specialist competence and for building new knowledge through interdisciplinary collaboration in education and research. The university will also cooperate with other agents in society in ways that enable students and staff to develop fresh insights and contribute to joint solutions. As a large organization, the University of Gothenburg has a considerable impact on its environment. Consequently, it is under an obligation to increase its internal efforts in the field of sustainable development.

From 2021 to 2024, the University of Gothenburg will:

- *Communicate the university's role in society's endeavor to improve sustainability with clarity and emphasis.*

- *Strengthen the development of sustainability perspectives in education and research.*

- *Initiate and improve collaboration with organizations and other agents in the surrounding world to further sustainable development throughout society.*

- *Reduce the university's own unfavorable effects on the environment by continuing to pursue long-term systematic work on sustainability.*

Sustainability is also mentioned, but not explicitly formulated, in another goal relevant to the project, related to collaboration with external stakeholders, labeled as: "Working with the world around us." The world 'sustainable has been added to the goal description:

Working with the world around us

Our goal: By 2024, the University of Gothenburg will be generally perceived as a natural partner in sustainable social-development work based on knowledge.

The rest of the text is more focused on what was previously understood as university third mission and lifelong learning. SD is not mentioned in the section again:

Good relations with the surrounding world are necessary if the university is to play an active part in social-development work based on knowledge. Ever since its creation, the University of Gothenburg has cooperated closely with the world around it. To be a University for the World, the university will need to reinforce and build on that profile, meeting increasing demands and expectations that the university will be a prominent agent in society.

Top-class education and research develop within the framework created by the quality criteria and procedures that govern the scholarly-scientific community, but also in relation to the world around the university. Carefully integrated internationalization efforts form part of this context. Cooperation at local, regional, national and international levels will see the university extend its contributions to social development in a variety of spheres. Thanks to responsible, dedicated collaboration that engenders palpable benefits for all parties, higher education and research have a favorable social impact while encouraging continuous development in the university and augmenting its relevance as a force for good in society.

All collaborative plans pursued by the university will be rooted in its core values.

From 2021 to 2024, the University of Gothenburg will:

- Strengthen collaboration with other seats of learning and with various organizations in society in local, regional, national and international networks that add value to the development of education and research.

- Stimulate international perspectives by increasing and extending international exchanges for students and staff;

- Develop frameworks for encounters between Academe and society at large, with a special focus on innovation, life-long learning, and practical utilisation of knowledge, by means of shared efforts and a wide dissemination of research findings;

- Promote interaction between the University and the world around it, increasing its visibility to external parties.

Document 2:
Environmental policy

TYPE: University wide-policy

TITLE: Environmental Policy

ISSUED BY: University of Gothenburg

ENACTED BY: All GU faculties and units

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: The University of Gothenburg is certified according to the international standard for environmental management system ISO 14001. This means the university works continuously to improve its operations to reduce negative environmental impact and enhance positive impact for sustainable development through education, research and collaboration. Environmental policy is a brief but encompassing policy that highlights the ambition and goals set up in all operations of GU as an organization.

ESD RELEVANCE: High relevance for all activities and operations, including research and teaching. Mulitple detailed policies and procedures are linked to the GU Environmental Policy.

FULL TEXT OF THE POLICY

Environmental policy

1. *The University will endeavour to make its students and personnel aware of environmental and development problems and, through research, education and interaction with the community, stimulate concrete activities that promote sustainable development.*

2. *The University will, through its systematic and focused environmental work, aim to prevent or reduce its negative environmental impact. The Environmental Management System at the University will be certified.*

3. *Environmental considerations will be incorporated into all decision making processes. Research, teaching, administration, management and technical functions, will be characterised by environmental accountability.*

4. *The University's environmental work will be continually improved and evaluated by regular environmental audits.*

5. *The University will comply with applicable environmental legal requirements and with other environmental requirements to which the organisation subscribes.*

The environmental policy significantly impacts the university by embedding sustainability into its core operations and culture. It is very ambitious in its goals. It aspires to raise awareness among students and staff about environmental and development issues, fostering a community that values and actively participates in sustainable practices. This educational approach ensures that future leaders are well-versed in sustainability principles as part of the strategy GU Vision (document 2). Both documents are highly related to each other and can be seen as complementary.

The policy also mandates systematic efforts to minimize the university's environmental footprint, including the certification of its Environmental Management System. Obtaining certification not only enhances the institution's credibility but also ensures compliance with environmental standards, reducing potential legal and financial risks. As a result, it leads to a series of actions and policies related to ISO standards and the certification requirements.

Incorporating environmental considerations into all decision-making processes is intended to ensure that sustainability is a key factor in research, teaching, administration and technical functions. Since it definitely translates into multiple documents and actions, raising awareness across all units and departments, it may be perceived as high-impact document.

The policy itself has been also monitored. Regular environmental audits drive continuous improvement, ensuring that the university's environmental strategies remain effective and up to date. This continuing evaluation helps identify areas for improvement. Last but not least, it connects to values, also expressed in GU Vison: the policy integrates environmental responsibility into the university's ethos, comprehensively influencing its policies and operations.

Document 3:
Faculty of Education Operational Strategy 2022-2025

TYPE: Strategy

TITLE: FÄRDRIKTNING FÖR UTBILDNINGSVETENSKAPLIGA FAKULTETEN

ISSUED AND ENACTED BY: GU Faculty of Education

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES

The Faculty of Education's research, training and collaboration focus on educational and health issues, especially in the field of education. The importance of education and health to an individual's life cannot be overemphasized, and the Faculty's activities on many levels are central to both the basic functioning and the future development of society. The faculty's activities are thus in line with the U.N.'s global sustainability goals in Agenda 2030. In particular, goals 3 and 4, which deal with health, well-being and education, and goals 5 and 10, which deal with gender equality and reduced inequality, are central, both as goals in themselves and as prerequisites for development. The Faculty's activities are characterized by a breadth in which professional and applied perspectives are important elements, along with critical and emancipatory perspectives. In this way, the Faculty contributes to sustainable social development and knowledge formation, as well as to good living conditions for individuals as well as collectives. The ambition is to contribute to global development and sustainability by taking these goals into account in the operations.

Research environments

The Faculty's research is well recognized in both a national and international perspective. It has high social relevance and affects people's living conditions and quality of life, as well as opportunities for learning and development. It thereby contributes to strengthening societal democratic values. For this knowledge-intensive society, great challenges await relating to education and health. The Faculty's research takes a central role by reflexively, critically and creatively contributing to knowledge development and sustainable development reflexively, critically and creatively.

Monitoring the strategy

Direction for the Faculty of Education 2022-2025 aims to articulate the Faculty's long-term goals and its strategies to achieve them. Annual business plans with prioritized activities are linked to the goals. Another purpose is to express a self-understanding that is continuously developed through strategic follow-up and analysis based on accumulated knowledge about the business as a whole and integrated into the Faculty board's work with its review groups and in the Faculty's meeting structure. In doing so, the direction intends to concretize Gothenburg University's overall vision: a university for the world, based on three positions: education and research of the highest quality; sustainable and knowledge-based social development; and as cohesive organization understood as attractive workplace and study environment.

IMPACT ON THE FACULTY'S OPERATION

Medium impact. The goal has been set, but general policy level does not always produce actual engagement and change. The Strategy definitely encourages the policy iterations and "concept traveling; key words like "sustainability" are being used more often and added to existing texts. More evidence can be provided once the periodic evaluation of the goals achievement are issued.

Document 4:
Faculty Development Strategy

TYPE:	Development Strategy
TITLE:	*Independent Thinking for the Sustainable World. Strategy document 2022-2026*
ISSUED AND ENACTED BY:	The GU School of Business, Economics and Law
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This document presents the main strategies for the development of the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg (the School) for 2022 to 2026. It outlines further steps in the School's development, expressing continuity as well as increased ambitions, and taking into account fundamental changes in the societal and global contexts within which the school operates. Throughout, the document tries to link the School's development with sustainability in a clear, central and coherent way. It also advocates a multidisciplinary approach and a strong connection with external actors. The disciplines covered by the School, economics and business, can facilitate such an approach more organically than other disciplines.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The strategy's objective is to guide the School further along a number of clear development paths:

- Continuous development of high quality and relevance in research and education, thereby contributing to ecological, social and economic sustainability.

- A closer link between research and education.

- An increasingly structured and entrenched internationalization of the School's activities.

- Active engagement in contemporary societal development.

Main goal: To develop knowledge, educate and foster independent thinking for a sustainable world.

Sustainability actions in the School' Policy

The School policy outlines a comprehensive approach to sustainability, emphasizing the integration of sustainable practices across research, education and operations.

Mission and vision

The policy is informed by the United Nations Agenda 2030, aiming to be "at the international forefront of providing high-quality research and education" that contributes to addressing fundamental societal challenges. The School commits to integrating sustainability into all its operations, highlighting the importance of "cross-disciplinary collaboration" to tackle such issues as climate change, social exclusion and technological developments.

Research priorities:

Research at the School is driven by decentralized processes, with a focus on topics that align with sustainable development goals. The policy states that research should "relate to sustainable development as specified in Agenda 2030" and emphasizes the need for "an up-to-date research infrastructure" to support cutting-edge research.

Education for sustainability

The School prioritizes educating students to understand and address global challenges in sustainability. The policy aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills to "lead the way toward a more sustainable world." This includes fostering "critical, independent and ethical thinking" and ensuring that education evolves in line with societal needs.

Sustainability in operations

The School aims to be a leader in sustainability among similar institutions, actively implementing international commitments such as the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). This policy includes specific targets, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions from 2019 levels by 25% by the end of 2023 and by 50% by the end of 2029. The School also commits to maintaining an environmental policy that meets the ISO 14001 standard, ensuring continuous improvement through "time-specific targets and annual controls."

Collaborations and partnerships

The School emphasizes the importance of collaboration with external organizations to advance sustainability agendas. It aims to be an active partner in such initiatives as the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI) and the Global Business School Network (GBSN), enhancing its contributions to a sustainable future.

Student engagement strategies

The School emphasizes the importance of students' **taking on professional roles** *that influence societal development. This goal includes instilling an understanding of ethics and responsibility, ensuring that students are prepared to make decisions that make a positive impact on society and the environment.*

The policy highlights the importance of close **collaboration** *with private, public and volunteer organizations. Such engagement gives students opportunities to participate in real-world projects and initiatives that address sustainability challenges.*

The School is committed to being an **active partner in global initiatives** *such as the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI) and the Global Business School Network (GBSN). These partnerships expose students to international sustainability efforts and give them opportunities to contribute to global discussions and solutions.*

IMPACT ON THE FACULTY'S OPERATION

High. The goal has been set; given the specifics of the discipline, indicators have been established, and measurement of the impact is in place. Policy therefore generates and pushes for specific activities to be reported and accounted for. There is more direct demand to create learning opportunities for students outside academia, which would better resonate with the Faculty of Education. Even though the agenda is strongly rooted in economics, it also has a strong focus on building connections with the outside world. More evidence can be provided once the periodic evaluation of the goals' achievement is issued.

KEY FEATURES OF THE SWEDISH POLICY FRAMEWORK:

- Strong presence of sustainability issues in educational policies since 2006.

- A clear role for universities; the demand and a mandate from the state.

- Alignment of national and local policies (issued by universities).

- Universities' role in reaching out and networking with external stakeholders and society in SD efforts.

- SD as a responsibility and mission, but also as a branding strategy for GU.

1.3 PORTUGAL
Sandra T. Valadas and António Fragoso

Implementation Report

Title: Relatório do Tribunal de Contas sobre
a implementação dos objetivos
de desenvolvimento sustentável/Court
of Auditors Report about the implementation of SDGs

**National Strategy of Education
for Development (2018-2022)**

Title: Estratégia Nacional de Educação para
o Desenvolvimento 2018-2020 (ENED)/
National Strategy of Education
for Development (2018-2022)

**Sustainable Development Goals. 2030 Agenda.
Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022**

Title: Sustainable Development Goals. 2030 Agenda.
Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022

NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

LOCAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

Sustainability Report 2021

Title: UAlg Sustainability Report 2021

Gender Plan

Title: UAlg's Inclusive Plan for Gender Equality/Plano
Inclusivo para de Igualdade de Género da UAlg

Letter of Intent 2019

Title: The Letter of Intent. Commitment of Higher
Education Institutions to sustainable development/ Carta
de Intenções. Compromisso das Instituições de Ensino
Superior com o desenvolvimento sustentável

Document 1:
Implementation Report

TYPE:	Implementation report (Relatório n. º 2/2023 – OAC)
TITLE:	Relatório do Tribunal de Contas sobre a implementação dos objetivos de desenvolvimento sustentável/Court of Auditors Report about the implementation of SDGs
ISSUED BY:	Portuguese National Court of Auditors
ENACTED BY:	Portuguese National Court of Auditors
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This is a very good report about the implementation of SDGs from 2016 to 2022. Six SDGs were established as priority in 2017 (SDGs no.: 4, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 14). A new model of implementation was approved in January 2023 because until the end of 2022 Portugal performed above/below? the medium when compared to other countries.
ESD RELEVANCE:	Several difficulties and critiques were identified concerning coordination, monitoring, implementation plans, planning documents, financial resources and stakeholder involvement. Audits and other control actions in quite different dimensions of the communities were performed, including a national program to support people in need, air quality, agri-food measures, a higher education funding model, early school-leaving, employability, plastic municipal waste management and fighting desertification.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	Reports from the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE)/National Statistics Institute and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	Global impact is expected, but because of Portugal's political situation, it is impossible to measure the impact at this point.

Document 2:
National Strategy

TYPE:	National Strategy
TITLE:	Estratégia Nacional de Educação para o Desenvolvimento 2018-2020 (ENED)/ National Strategy of Education for Development (2018-2022)
ISSUED BY:	Portuguese Government
ENACTED BY:	Portuguese Government
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	The document defines Education for Development (ED) and its main goals: strengthening capacity for ED intervention; extending the reach and quality of development intervention; affirming the importance and promoting the mainstreaming of ED; and consolidating the implementation of the National Strategy for Education for Development. This is a kind of political commitment made by public bodies and civil society organizations to jointly define and implement a strategic framework for action in ED.

This ENED succeeds the ENED 2010-2016. Both were developed through an extensive process of debate and reflection, promoted by several public and civil society entities.

The preparation of this strategy benefited from the experience of implementing the previous strategy and from its external evaluation process, which recommended "updating the ENED, considering the national and international recognition of its social, political and educational relevance," as well as changes in a wider context, as the approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

ESD RELEVANCE:	First, it must be stressed that the focus of the document is not on education for sustainable development, but on education for development. The document may be a natural product of the institutions that collaborated to produce it. For example, the group of civil society organizations includes the Portuguese platform of ONGDs and the Amílcar Cabral Center for Intervention for Development which strongly promote actions toward development at large.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	In this document, ED seeks to raise awareness and mobilize citizens through educational approaches and themes that cut across development issues, as well as through the promotion of interculturality, non-discrimination and gender equality, with a view to raising awareness of these issues' importance to the well-being of all and as a condition for sustainable development. The document compares several definitions of ED from several meetings that have been organized in recent years to reach a consensus definition of ED: "(...) understood as a lifelong learning process, committed to the integral formation of people, the development of critical and ethically informed thinking, and citizen participation" (p. 13).

It is important to stress that this document is result of the political commitment made by public bodies and civil society organizations to jointly define and implement a strategic framework for action in ED. This political commitment marks both the content and the language of the document itself. It is much more similar to the habits and uses of civil society organizations than to common government documents.

The National Strategy for Education for Development stresses some elements in conceptual terms:

- The promotion of critical and ethically committed thinking.

- The constant promotion of the deconstruction of stereotypes and the defense of non-discrimination, equality and the dignity for all, etc.

- The promotion of participatory, collaborative and horizontal learning processes.

- Promoting learning that interconnects different types of knowledge and levels of analysis (local, transnational and global; individual and collective) and promotes intercultural approaches.

In Portugal, the insistence in participatory and collaborative processes, as well as the emphasis on non-discrimination and promoting intercultural approaches, are common in academic or civil society organizations' discourses. But usually these elements are not so explicitly mentioned on national strategies issued and assumed as such by the state.

Throughout the document, higher education is rarely mentioned. The only exception the researchers can find is in the section that draws on objectives and measures that should contribute to achieving those objectives. So, within objective 1 (Reinforce the capacity for intervention in ED), measure 1.1. (Formation of educational agents), higher education is mentioned but appears at the same level as all educational agents[1]. At specific points in the document, schools and their cooperation with civil society organizations are mentioned. But the fact is that this national strategy for development seems to assume that education for development is to be given at the earlier stages of human development and that higher education has, at best, an instrumental role in training human resources. The document refers explicitly to the actors in education for development as follows:

[1] Again, this is natural when we look at the institutions (both public and from civil society) that cooperated to produce this document.

- Schools – educational communities, including all levels and cycles of education, teaching and training.

- Civil society organizations and social movements.

- Organs of sovereignty and public administration at the local, regional and national levels.

- Political parties.

- Enterprises, businesses and work organizations.

- Opinion-makers.

The focus on civil society organizations and social movements is understandable (and the same reasoning goes for political parties and enterprises). And while it is odd that "opinion-makers" appear so bluntly as a category is fuzzy. Higher education appears only implicitly, belonging to "educational communities" but nevertheless included in "schools" (an expression not used in Portugal for HEI).

In short, the national strategy on ED seems to ignore higher education or, at least, give it a limited importance and an instrumental function of "training." These notions forget (among other) that i) HEIs have a history of promoting the development of entire regions in Portugal, namely many inland parts of the national territory; ii) ignores that universities have been assuming many other functions besides the traditional function of "training" young adults to work in a profession in instrumental terms.

https://ened-portugal.pt/

Document 3:

TYPE:	Report
TITLE:	Sustainable development goals. 2030 Agenda. Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022.
ISSUED BY:	Instituto Nacional de Estatística/Statistics Portugal
ENACTED BY:	Instituto Nacional de Estatística/Statistics Portugal

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Statistics Portugal produces national reports that review progress toward SDGs. This report considers indicators of the SDGs (2015-2022), including the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Performance is briefly analyzed, considering the evolution and implementation of SDGs in Portugal.

The report describes the behavior of 17 SDG indicators of the United Nations global list, from 2015 to 2022 the last year for which information is available. Each indicator's behavior is evaluated in relation to the goal and target under which it is included. A summary of the main progress and challenges accompanies this review.

ESD RELEVANCE:

The report **does not** consider ESD but is focused particularly on the Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda). Nevertheless, it gives importance to the idea of "leaving no one behind," which includes issues concerning gender, territory, minorities, vulnerable groups and inequalities.

The indicators cover links to the SDG thematic file, as well as to the INE dissemination database [BDD], to the Eurostat database and, where applicable, to validated external sources.

The report allows researchers, politicians and others interested in the theme to compare indicators, but particularly to reflect on the implementation of SDG and, in a certain way, about the relevance of ESD on the national and European levels. The indicators available are continually being updated and demonstrate its relevance in the national context.

Several initiatives and products of a complementary nature to the global list of indicators are emphasized: the thematic files that INE makes available in different domains (e.g. COVID-19, gender, territory, etc.); at the level of civil society, initiatives to identify SDG information, such as the ODS local platform, dedicated to monitoring the evolution of the SDGs in municipalities. Other, continuing initiatives address data gaps, particularly in the environmental, geographical and socio-demographic dimensions.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:

Sustainable Development Goals. 2030 Agenda. Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022. Survey on Adult Education and Training conducted in 2016.

SDG 4 (Quality Education) refers to the right to an equitable and quality education from kindergarten to lower secondary education, upper secondary education and higher education. Nevertheless, *no indicators concerning higher education are available*, although this report may have potential impact on higher education.

The goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality in higher education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4). Portugal has long had a public education system, which is currently compulsory until upper secondary education or age 18, as well as national education plans that integrate initiatives leading to training in new technologies starting in childhood.

Considering that education is one of the main, if not the main, factor in the development of people and society, the improvement of literacy and mathematics proficiency, as well as the right to vocational training and to experience new technologies, are considered essential requirements for such development.

SDG 8, related to decent work and economic growth, must also be analyzed in this context because of the potential impact on higher education on the national and international levels.

The reduction of inequality within and among countries (SDG 10) is dedicated to the need to diminish economic inequalities, which also imply social inequalities. These stem from multiple conditions, including territory, gender, age, social class, resources, education, politics and religion. In this logic, potential impact on HE can also be assumed.

Document 4:
Letter of Intent (UAlg as a co-signatory)

TYPE:	Joint Letter of Intent among HEIs of Portugal
TITLE:	The Letter of Intent. Commitment of Higher Education Institutions to sustainable development
ISSUED BY:	The participants of the 1st Sustainable Campus Conference in Portugal, 2019
ENACTED BY:	The University of Algarve as a co-signatory (among other HEIs)
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	At the 1st Sustainable Campus Conference, which took place on October 31, 2019 at Polytechnic of Porto in Portugal, 12 out of 14 universities, 12 out of 15 polytechnic institutes and 4 out of 5 non-integrated higher education schools signed a Letter of Intent that constitutes a commitment to sustainability principles and practices in higher education. The Letter was an adopted version of Copernicus – The University Charter for Sustainable Development.
ESD RELEVANCE:	By signing the Letter, the University of Algarve (UAlg) underscores the institution's commitment to the integration of sustainability into its core mission. It promotes the incorporation of sustainability principles into the curriculum, fostering a culture of environmental awareness among students and staff. It also enhances UAlg's role in community engagement by encouraging partnerships and collaborative projects focused on sustainability. Aspirations are high, however, there is no mentioning of the resources (personal, financial) allocated to achieve them. Instead, the duty of monitoring and measuring has been introduced.
RELEVANT TEXT OR SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT:	The Letter of Intent signed at the 1st Sustainable Campus Conference in 2019 outlines several key commitments for higher education institutions. The main points include:

1. **Integration of Sustainability Principles into Curriculum:** Universities and polytechnics commit to incorporate sustainability principles into their educational programs and research activities.

2. **Sustainable Campus Operations:** Institutions pledge to adopt sustainability practices in campus operations, including energy efficiency, waste management, and green mobility.

3. **Community Engagement:** The commitment extends to engaging with local communities to promote sustainability beyond the campus.

4. **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Signatories agree to collaborate with other institutions and share best practices and knowledge related to sustainability.

5. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Institutions commit to regularly monitor and report on their progress on sustainability initiatives.

POTENTIAL IMPACT:	High. Following the signing of the Letter, University of Algarve (UAlg) has taken several actions to promote sustainability. In an annual Sustainability Report UAlg describes actions taken in relations to specific SDGs in the area of teaching and learning, research, community and governance, according to the commitment taken by signing

the Letter. Other examples of practices showing the realization of the commitments taken are:

- **Sustainable Campus Initiatives:** UAlg has expanded sustainable initiatives on the Gambelas campus, including the creation of three outdoor classrooms and a shelter for animals. These spaces are designed using sustainable and recycled materials to support innovative teaching practices and provide informal meeting areas.

- **H2O & Sustainability Summit:** UAlg hosted the H2O & Sustainability Summit in October 2024, bringing together international leaders, experts, and academics to discuss practical solutions to environmental challenges.

- **Internal Competitions for Sustainability Projects:** UAlg organized an internal competition titled „Greening our campus: building sustainable projects for a better future" as part of the SEA-EU initiative. The competition encouraged the development of sustainable projects within the University.

It needs to be stressed that these actions were taken also in the context of a broader policy demand for sustainability in Portugal and Algarve and were supported by other initiatives and documents predating the signing of the Letter of Intent.

LINK:

http://www.redecampussustentavel.pt/carta-de-intencoes/

OTHER RELEVANT LINKS:

UAlg Strengthens Spaces for Sustainable Campus Initiatives

 H2O & Sustainability Summit 2024 - The Portugal News

University of Algarve Takes a Green Step Forward in Support of Task 4.4 ...

Document 1:
Sustainability Report

TYPE:	Report
TITLE:	UAlg Sustainability Report 2021
ISSUED BY:	The University of Algarve
ENACTED BY:	The Rectorate of the University of Algarve
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This report seeks to describe UAlg's activities toward each SDG. In each, SDG points out the university's contribution in four dimensions: teaching, research, community and governance. In teaching, for example, for each course responsible professors have to indicate one to three SDGs that the course deals with. Considering the number of courses offered at UAlg, the most frequent SDGs indicated by professors are: SDG 8, Decent work and economic growth; SDG 5, Gender equality; SDG 9, Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 10, Reduce inequality within and among countries; SDG 3, Good health and well-being. The report is organized by SDG and points out for each facts, statistics, important initiatives, projects, etc., in the four dimensions.
ESD RELEVANCE:	It is difficult to analyze the importance of education for sustainability in a clear way by reading this document. As in other Portuguese documents, the focus is on SDG. SDGs are turning into a kind of national "obsession," even if the critiques mentioned before stress that this "obsession" quite often does not relate to concrete measures that ensure such SDG fulfilment. The document from Tribunal de Contas points out objective critiques in this direction.
	This report presents a good picture of how the university is moving toward the fulfilment of SDG, but unfortunately ESD does not lie at the core of this action. In addition, it is arguable that an institutional strategy to achieve SDG even exists. More precisely, the "strategy" seems to be one of identification or recollection of what the academy is doing, but there was no previous institutional policy that allowed the members of the academy to contribute to the achievement of the principles underlying SDGs. Professors' obligation to point out the more important SDG their courses dealt with, for example, appeared as a rule without the institutional policy attached. Thus many professors may have performed the task as they do any other bureaucratic procedure: mechanically. However, an optimistic position might be advisable at this earlier stage. In the future, it may be possible to turn these de facto events into a clear policy orientation for the university as a whole.
	Although ESD is not a focus in UAlg university, the report seems relevant in the sense that it gives good clues about the main local and regional stakeholders, and clear indications where to look and whom to talk to/interview in studying ESD's institutional importance. For example, the section on community presents a set of partners that develop community projects or community interventions, and some of these seem to be in the area of ESD.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:

The report identifies academic bodies, projects and initiatives that target both the academic and the wider community (for example, social services, the work of the UAlg volunteer group, services to students with disabilities, etc.). Because it also indicates the proportion of staff members with disabilities or points out the university policy on anti-discrimination and anti-arrestment, etc., the impact can be quite high. It is also important to note that this report is annual. (This edition refers only to 2021.) But future editions (the 2022 edition should be released soon) may also provide a comparative perspective, or an idea of how UAlg action regarding SDG is evolving.

LINK:

https://www.ualg.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/202211/ualgsdgsustainabilityreport2021.pdf

Document 2:
Gender Plan

TYPE:	Institutional program
TITLE:	UAlg's Inclusive Plan for Gender Equality/Plano Inclusivo para de Igualdade de Género da UAlg
ISSUED BY:	The University of Algarve
ENACTED BY:	Rector (Despacho RT.91/2021)
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	This program about inclusion in HE intends to contribute to gender equilibrium and non-discrimination; identify strategies to mitigate inequalities; and spread good practices from UAlg in the public and private regional ecosystem. The report is structured in phases diagnosis of needs in the context of: research, teaching and human resources, and community perceptions about gender issues, among others, to define the major goals and related measures to achieve a more inclusive university regarding gender.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The program is aligned with regional, national and European strategies (e.g. Estratégia Nacional para a Igualdade e não Discriminação (ENIND) 2018-2023 – Portugal + Igual; Plano de Desenvolvimento Social Supraconcelhio do Algarve 2021-2027. Although gender equality is hardly a new issue in academia, the report shows that various inequalities continue unnoticed. This report is very important because makes the invisible visible and establishes a concrete plan to reach higher levels of gender equality at the university. Moreover, this plan will be monitored annually.
OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS	European Commission: A Union of Equality. Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, 2020 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152 Global Gender Gap Report 2021, World Economic Forum https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/digest SHE Figures Report 2021, European Commission, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, Brussels: 2021 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_shefigures-2021-report.pdf Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509 GE-HEI – Igualdade de Género nas Instituições de Ensino Superior-DGES https://gehei.dges.gov.pt/
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	High impact is expected, and the institution intends to mitigate imbalances concerning gender not only in teaching, but also in research in certain scientific areas. Another purpose is to intensify an organizational culture that can promote gender equality and inclusion, considering formal and informal media, active and inclusive practices.

1.4 ITALY
Andrea Galimberti

Italy has made significant strides in aligning its national policies with the global sustainability agenda. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022), issued by the Ministry of the Environment, provides a strategic framework for programming, monitoring and evaluating the sustainability of public policies across various territorial levels. This document emphasizes the importance of collaboration between public and private institutions, as well as the involvement of non-state actors, to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In addition, the Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development highlights the collective efforts of 86 Italian universities to promote environmental sustainability and social responsibility. This network aims to spread sustainability culture and best practices, enhancing the positive impacts of university actions both locally and internationally. Macro-level policy initiatives also produce multiple local practices at the universities nationwide.

National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022)

Title: National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022)

Italian University Network Agreement

Title: Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development

Italy and Sustainable Development Goals

NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

Title: Italy and Sustainable Development Goals

LOCAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Title: Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Sustainability Report 2020

Title: University Sustainability Report 2020

Sustainability Report 2024

Title: University Sustainability Report 2024

Performance Report 2023

Title: Report on 2023 performances

Document 1:
National Strategy

TYPE:	Government document
TITLE:	National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022)
ISSUED BY:	Ministry of the Environment
ENACTED BY:	Public and private institutions
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	The primary objective is to propose a strategic framework for the activities of programming, monitoring and evaluating the sustainability of public policies, at the various territorial levels, to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in Italy. To this end, through a long process of institutional comparison at the different territorial levels and with the non-state actors, the 2017 framework was enriched in terms of objectives, target values (targets) and indicators. The role of territories and non-state actors is central: the document recognizes the work done so far by the **Forum for Sustainable Development**. Forum's aim is the strengthening and making continuous interaction between institutions and non-state actors toward the sustainability of public policies.
ESD RELEVANCE:	Universities are members of the permanent Forum for Sustainable Development,
ESD RELEVANT TEXT OR SUMMARIES:	*The definition of evaluation tools proceeds in parallel with the definition of spaces and mechanisms of confrontation between institutions at different levels and with civil society/non-state actors (with reference to the „NSDS/PCSD labs"), in a process of constant sharing that can also count on the support of academia and research (p. 36).*

Document 2:
University Network Agreement

TYPE: Agreement

TITLE: Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development

ISSUED BY: Italian University Network for Sustainable Development

ENACTED BY: 86 italian universities

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: In 2020 Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (CRUI)/National Permanent Committee of University Deans – promoted the *Rete delle Università per lo Sviluppo sostenibile* (RUS)/University Network for Sustainable Development) as the first experience of coordination and sharing among all Italian universities committed to the issues of environmental sustainability and social responsibility. The main aims of the RUS, alongside the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals, are to spread the culture and good practices of sustainability, both inside and outside the universities, pooling skills and experiences to increase the positive impacts of the actions implemented by individual universities. The Network is also intended to strengthen the recognition and value of the Italian experience at the international level. The RUS also stands as a model of good practice to be extended to other areas of public administration, education and the territory (Italian administrative units) in general, encouraging the development of collaborations between universities and cities, spreading social innovation in the territory and providing cultural stimuli for the entire country.

ESD RELEVANCE: The network's main purpose is the dissemination of sustainability culture and best practices, both within and outside the universities (at the urban, regional, national and international levels) to increase the positive impacts in environmental, ethical, social and economic terms of the actions implemented by the members of the network; to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs; and to strengthen the recognition and value of the Italian experience at the international level.

There are eight thematic working groups: Climate Change, Food, Education, Energy, Inclusion and Social Justice, Mobility, Resources and Waste, and Industry.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES: These are institutional objectives of RUS:

- Harmonization of institutional activities and improvement of the management of members' environmental andsocial aspects

- Strategies will include permanent monitoring of the universities' state of sustainability and the definition of a shared framework and appropriate metrics for monitoring their environmental, social and economic performance and related benchmarking activities.

- Creation of a community capable of developing, disseminating, transferring and adapting national and international best practices, as well as adequately representing members and the RUS itself at the national and international levels, with a focus on sustainability dimensions in international rankings international rankings and the achievement of SDGs.

- Promotion of projects already successfully tested by one or more members and joint development of initiatives related to new projects in the fields of knowledge and skills transfer, teaching, and the universities' conduct and management activities,with a view to learning and multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary collaboration.;

- Development of university programs' transdisciplinary educational dimension to contribute to the growth of sustainable development culture and to the students' adoption of sustainable lifestyles, through new pedagogical approaches and devising initiatives that are engaging and innovative.

- Training and refresher courses on sustainable development issues for faculty and staff (teaching, technical administrative, and collaborators and linguistic experts) of all Italian universities, possibly also for school teachers.

Document 3:
Italy and SDG Report

TYPE: Annual report

TITLE: Italy and Sustainable Development Goals

ISSUED BY: **The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development** (ASviS),

ENACTED BY: ASviS, which brings together almost 300 member organizations from civil society. It aims to raise awareness in Italian society, economic stakeholders and institutions about the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to mobilize them to pursue the SDGs.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: At the beginning of autumn, before the parliamentary debate on the budget law, ASviS presents its yearly Report in Parliament, written with the contributions of the over 300 experts from ASviS's member organizations. The report represents the Alliance's primary contribution to transparent governance in Italy and aims to **support Italian policy-makers at all levels in designing efficient and coherent strategies for sustainable development.** Each edition contains an evaluation of the policies implemented by the government in the previous year in the economic, social and environmental fields. It also advances policy proposals to lead Italy along a path to sustainable development.

ESD RELEVANCE: Some universities are members of the Alliance.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:

Quality education: The share of university graduates, although on the rise, is still 9.5 percentage points below the European target of 50 per cent for 2030 (p. 35).

*The Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility (MIMS) and the Ministry of Universities and Research (MUR) was strengthened via the signing of a memorandum of understanding, which provides for joint cooperation in **university education to encourage the transition** of the mobility and infrastructure sector with a view to achieving the emissions reduction targets by 2030 and the decarbonization targets by 2050, in line with the European Green Deal and the 2030 Agenda (p. 69).*

*Ensure people's engagement and awareness by undertaking **public information and communication initiatives** relating to sustainable development and climate change to be implemented in cooperation with **university,** cultural and scientific institutions, associations and private stakeholders, in order to accelerate the necessary cultural change (p. 165).*

*Aims: By 2030, ensure **equal access** for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. By 2030, substantially increase the **number of youth and adults** who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, (p.165)*

Document 1:
Strategy of UNIMIB

TYPE: Strategic document

TITLE: Strategic Plan 2023-2025

ISSUED BY: Board of the University of Milano-Bicocca

ENACTED BY: University of Milano-Bicocca

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: The planning document that defines the university's mission, strategic goals, objectives and the actions put in place to achieve them.

ESD RELEVANCE: The strategy outlines goals and actions for integrating sustainability into educational offerings and third mission.

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES: The document traces a strong link with third mission and the National Resilience and Recovery Plan Projects in which the university is involved:

The university world is going through a phase of rapid change, in which logics of sustainability and accountability of academic institutions need to be fostered. A first significant step in this direction is to consider universities as actors in their territory, capable of interacting with the productive fabric and civil society, imagining new trajectories for teaching and research. At the same time it is it is necessary to increase collaborations with the public, private and third sectors to foster the development of territories and enhance their vocations. This approach finds total correspondence with the principles underlying the National Resilience and Recovery Plan, the activities of which will already dominate the scene of our university in the immediate future. (p. 8)

The document also mentions the BASE center (Bicocca Environment Society Economy) as pivotal in managing sustainability impacts of the atheneum and for connecting with national academic networks relatd to sustainability issues:

Universities are called to act for sustainability not only by improving facilities and services, but also as a reference for the context and the territory in which they operate. In this regard, Bicocca was one of the first universities in Italy to have a center for sustainability. BASE – Bicocca Environment Society Economy – proposes, plans and implements the university's sustainability plan through management-structural actions and with activities training and education aimed at changing user behavior. With BASE, Bicocca is making a difference – in training and social inclusion, in the protection of global resources and in reducing waste – by promoting energy efficiency and sustainable mobility to decrease the impact in our footprint on the planet. (p. 67)

In relation to didactic strategies, sustainability is one driver for the future and new experimentations: an innovative master's degree program will be developed, and "Microcredentials on Sustainability" represents another effort in proposing new kind of teaching modules.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE: The strategy's emphasis on public engagement connected to National Recovery Plan projects and the role of BASE can significantly influence higher education trends. These perspectives and experiences may lead to elaborate new partnership strategies and innovative centers totally dedicated to sustainability issues.

LINK TO THE DOCUMENT: https://www.unimib.it/sites/default/files/2024-07/PianoStrategico_2023-2025_ Universit%C3%A0_di_Milano_Bicocca_gennaio2023.pdf

Document 2:
Sustainability Report 2020

TYPE: Report

TITLE: University Sustainability Report 2020

ISSUED BY: Admistrative board of the University of Milano-Bicocca, BASE center, third mission area

ENACTED BY: University of Milano-Bicocca

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A quadriennial report aiming to tell its community and all stakeholders how the university is putting into practice its commitment to carry out its activities by pursuing environmental, economic and social objectives. The report willprovide a snapshot of the university's commitment, enabling it to invest, in an increasingly effective way, in a sustainable development program with have clear, monitorable and verifiable goals and commitments over time.

ESD RELEVANCE:

ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES: The document is entirely based on sustainability issues. The sections are: a) performance indicators, b) third mission c) each department's governance and commitments to SDGs d) BASE and partnerships; e) communication activities (events); f) actions for students (inclusion and well-being); f) mobility, and g) environmental impact (emissions, energy, waste, water, etc.)

The document is explicitly framed in the Agenda 2030:

The theme of sustainability has entered the political and administrative agendas of many local and territorial authorities, incorporating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030 into the objectives of their governance and interventions for socio-economic and environmental development. This has created a common ground for dialogue between scientific and educational institutions, including like universities, and entities like municipalities, metropolitan cities, and regions.

The focus is on change and the role of interdisciplinary research, training and third mission:

The School aims to be a leader in sustainability among similar institutions, actively implementing international commitments such as the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). This policy includes specific targets, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions from 2019 levels by 25% by the end of 2023 and by 50% by the end of 2029. The School also commits to maintaining an environmental policy that meets the ISO 14001 standard, ensuring continuous improvement through "time-specific targets and annual controls."

Pure and applied research is crucial to create thing necessary innovation for developing skills, technologies and processes increasingly suited to addressing sustainability and sustainable development goals. The third mission is essential because to change the world, the cities and neighborhoods where universities are located must first be capable of change themselves.

The role of BASE is stressed in both the direction of promoting sustainable behaviors among the academic population and connecting the university to existing national networks:

In 2015, the university established BASE (Bicocca Ambiente Società Economia), an interdisciplinary and intersectoral center focused on governing and implementing interventions and activities for the university's sustainability. Integrated into the RUS, the Network of Universities for Sustainable Development (of which our university is a member of the coordinating committee), BASE promotes and supports sustainability initiatives not only within Milan-Bicocca but also in the neighborhood, nationally through the network of universities committed to sustainability, and internationally as a part of the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN) and other reputable international organizations dedicated to sustainability and social responsibility.

In relation to didactic programs, new actions for a more coordinated strategy among the different Departments are set:

To understand how the Agenda 2030 has been integrated into the programming of the departments, a survey was conducted focusing on the directors to assess the connections with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the three areas of education, research, and the third mission. Departments were asked about the specific SDG themes addressed in each area during the year 2019.

These collaborations and initiatives showcase a commitment to addressing SDGs within various academic disciplines, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary efforts in promoting sustainability and social responsibility.

In terms of research activities, the document highlights the importance of multidisciplinarity, participation in European networks and the need to enhance international standing:

To enhance its international standing, the university is pursuing these objectives: (1) strengthening connections between research areas by leveraging the benefits of multidisciplinarity; (2) systematically monitoring research infrastructures and their utilization, promoting internal sharing, and participation in European research networks.

The role of third mission is stressed in terms of transferring knowledge to the territories:

The university's third mission is dedicated to enhancing and transferring its knowledge through diversified strategies, including public engagement, Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) activities, support for spinoffs, and networking with businesses. In this context, the university consolidates itself as a central actor for the growth of local and regional systems, increasingly participating in defining strategies for sustainable development and intervention at the territorial level.

Alongside traditional actions in education and scientific research, the University of Milan-Bicocca continues its commitment to local and regional development, fostering collaboration with businesses, public and private institutions in the region.

Social engagement and community are also accentuated:

On a local level, the library contributes to social engagement initiatives through events promoting scientific culture, workshops for schools, book presentations, exhibitions and concerts open to the public as part of the cultural series „CuriosaMente: Cultural Events in the Library.

The University of Milano-Bicocca is actively involved in accompanying the cultural and artistic transition of spaces through environmental redevelopment interventions in new areas geared toward fostering social interaction and recreation within the neighborhood. These commitments aim to strengthen Bicocca as a new multifunctional hub in the Milanese landscape.

Alongside these objectives, a tension toward employablity of students and their "entrepreneurial spirit" emerges in some points of the document:

To promote the entrepreneurial spirit among students, through Bbetween, the university continues its efforts to provide soft skills increasingly demanded by businesses. Simultaneously, it supports the aggregation of students and researchers in relation to innovation proposals.

New univeristy rankings (such as the UI GreenMetric World University Ranking) are also mentioned as strategies to make the sustainability efforts more visible and acknowledged by the international community.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:

The emphasis on the role of interdisciplinary research, training and third mission can significantly influence higher education trends. It may lead to curriculum reforms and new strategies of combining universities' missions.

LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:

https://www.unimib.it/sites/default/files/Base/Report_di_Sostenibilita_2020_web.pdf

Document 3:
Sustainability Report 2024

TYPE:	Report
TITLE:	University Sustainability Report 2024
ISSUED BY:	Admistrative board of the University of Milano-Bicocca, BASE center, third mission area
ENACTED BY:	University of Milano-Bicocca
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	A quadriennial report that tells its community and all stakeholders how the university is putting into practice its commitment to carry out its activities by pursuing environmental, economic and social objectives. The report provides a snapshot of the university's commitment, enabling it to invest, in an increasingly effective way, in a sustainable development program with clear, monitorable and verifiable goals and commitments over time.
ESD RELEVANCE:	The document is entirely based on sustainability issues. The sections are academic identity, didactic activities and training, research, third mission and public engagement, human resources and social justice, environmental resources and financial resources
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	A clear accent is put on new courses dedicated to sustainability issues, as well as to the commitment to the National Resilience and Recovery Plan:

New interdisciplinary bachelor's and master's degrees, and now a newly established industrial Ph.D. program (Strategic Innovation for Sustainable and Smart Ecosystems), bear witness to this. So does the growing number of researchers engaged in ordinary and PNRR research programs aimed at creating increasingly appropriate skills, technologies and processes to meet the goals of sustainability and sustainable development.

The reference to the PNRR program allows for the introduction of an additional new element of the new report: the inclusion of data and interventions dedicated, in the national program, to realizing sustainability goals. Among the PNRR many programs in which the University of Milano-Bicocca participates, some are dedicated specifically to sustainability: in particular Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action (MUSA), of which the university is national coordinator, and the National Center for Sustainable Mobility (MOST), whose finalities, interventions and results are described in the report along with those of the ordinary intervention programs.

PNRR projects have a clear impact in terms of strategies of mobility management for the academic population and on campus green spaces (vivarium, birch tree garden, transformed squares).

Sustainability is articulated in three directions, ecompassing environmental, social and economic dimensions, and a "new phase" of its relationship with universities is announced:

This report comes out in a new phase in the path of universities, in which sustainable development has taken on the quality of a new scientific paradigm to guide, with third-mission activities, those dedicated to teaching and research.

Various areas of intervention and on heterogeneous objectives converge in the programmatic lines:

They focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative action, collaboration between organs, and the involvement of departments and students in the university's development choices. They define a clear, articulated and public vision of the quality of teaching; research and third mission; public engagement; social responsibility; welfare and sports; internationalization, and enhancement of human capital, as well as other institutional and management activities.

Regarding didactic strategies, a clear accent is -placed on multi-disciplinary perspectives and transversal skills with a strong relation with sustainability themes:

The University of Milano-Bicocca has always paid great attention to the development of transversal skills, which it fosters mainly through the Bbetween project, intended for the entire academic community and partly extended to the territory. The 72 Bbetweens active to date are short training courses aimed at developing individual soft skills and reinforcing stronger and more versatile interests, potentials and skills. About half these pathways deal specifically with topics related to sustainability in its various declinations.

The report also descrfbes the first results of the process of labeling training activities with SDGs, including a map of the most quoted ones (3, Good health and well being; 4, Quality education; 5, Gender equality).

The entire educational offer of the university's undergraduate and graduate degree programs have been mapped in terms of sustainable development goals. The objectives addressed by each activity are reported in the relevant syllabus published on the university's website. Out of a total of 3,455 teaching activities, about 78 percent deal with topics related to at least one sustainable development goal.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:

The document creates a strong link between sustainability issues and a new scientific paradigm guiding, with third-mission activities, those dedicated to teaching and research in a multidisciplinary perspective. These ideas, embedded in different projects described in the document, can significantly influence higher education trends.

LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:

https://www.unimib.it/sites/default/files/2024-10/Report_Sostenibilit%C3%A0_Bicocca_2024_0.pdf

Document 4:
Performance Report 2023

TYPE:	Report
TITLE:	Report on 2023 performances
ISSUED BY:	Admistrative board of the University of Milano-Bicocca
ENACTED BY:	University of Milano-Bicocca
BRIEF DESCRIPTION:	The annual report on academic organizational performances addressed to internal and external stakeholders.
ESD RELEVANCE:	This document is quoted in both in strategic plans and the univeristy sustainability reports.
ESD-RELEVANT TEXTS OR SUMMARIES:	It is interesting to note that, alongside the indicator of financial and economic sustainability, the GreenMetric indicator is proposed. In relation to the latter, a report on the results also highlights the need to deconstruct some assumptions to contextualize it in a different country:

The assessment obtained was mainly conditioned by two factors. First, the way in which the international ranking was constructed favored the model of English and North American colleges, which are configured as large autonomous green areas closed off from the land, occupied exclusively by university buildings including sports/cultural facilities and student housing. The 2023 version of the ranking introduced new indicators and a requirement to produce "evidence" sheets that would allow GreenMetric managers to verify and evaluate the data provided and direct actions taken by the university. In past years such evalution was not mandatory, making the data less interpretable and even more enhanced such types of university campuses structured and organized in a very different way from ours. Being urban and polycentric, it has in its endowment areas not owned, but under concession and for public use, and operates many services under concession and in a manner closely interconnected with the city. The second factor is internal to our organization, since the university has promoted a series of initiatives for the active involvement of the university community and is carrying out important infrastructural and renovation interventions aimed at the ecological transition. The results, however, can be reported only in the coming years, among them the reduction of CO2 emissions as part of the progeram to build energy efficiency, within the MUSA project and as part of the Climate City Contract that Bicocca has signed with the City of Milan. In addition, the university is constantly growing, with a population (students and staff) that has increased from 35,130 to 41,610 from 2018 to 2023.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HE:	The document could be useful in interrogating the effects of indicators and metrics related to sustainability issues and applied in countries with different HE systems.
LINK TO THE DOCUMENT:	https://trasparenza.unimib.it/archiviofile/unimib/utente175/Relazione%20Performance/Relazione%20sulla%20Performance%202023.pdf

NATIONAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS:

POLAND

National Strategy for Sustainable Development

Title: Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju (SOR) do 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030); Strategy for Responsible Development (SRD) until 2020 (with an outlook to 2030)

Voluntary National Review Report VNR 2023

Title: Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce. Raport 2023, VNR Report 2023

Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030

Title: The Multiannual Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030. Solidarity for Development

SWEDEN

Swedish Higher Education Act

Title: Swedish Higher Education Act

Higher Education Authority (UKA) Report

Title: Universities and colleges work to promote sustainable development. A thematic evaluation. 2017

PORTUGAL

Implementation Report

Title: Relatório do Tribunal de Contas sobre a implementação dos objetivos de desenvolvimento sustentável/Court of Auditors Report about the implementation of SDGs

National Strategy of Education for Development (2018-2022)

Title: Estratégia Nacional de Educação para o Desenvolvimento 2018-2020 (ENED)/ National Strategy of Education for Development (2018-2022)

Sustainable Development Goals. 2030 Agenda. Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022

Title: Sustainable Development Goals. 2030 Agenda. Indicators for Portugal 2015-2022

ITALY

National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022)

Title: National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2022)

Italian University Network Agreement

Title: Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development

Italy and Sustainable Development Goals

Title: Italy and Sustainable Development Goals

Table 1. National-level documents ALL countries

LOCAL-LEVEL DOCUMENTS:

POLAND	SWEDEN	PORTUGAL	ITALY
DSW University of Lower Silesia	**University of Gothenburg**	**University of Algarve**	**University of Milano-Bicocca**
GTA Strategy Plan Title: Strategia GTA (Grupa TEB Academia), the owner of DSW University of Lower Silesia	**University Strategic Vision 2021-2030** Title: 'A university for the world' University Strategic Vision 2021-2030	**Sustainability Report 2021** Title: UAlg Sustainability Report 2021	**Strategic Plan 2023-2025** Title: Strategic Plan 2023-2025
DSW University of Lower Silesia Strategy for Development 2022-2025 Title: Strategia rozwoju DSW na lata 2022-2025/ DSW University of Lower Silesia Strategy for Development 2022-2025	**Environmental Policy** Title: Environmental Policy	**Gender Plan** Title: UAlg's Inclusive Plan for Gender Equality/Plano Inclusivo para de Igualdade de Género da UAlg	**Sustainability Report 2020** Title: University Sustainability Report 2020
Gender Plan for ULS 2023-2026 Title: Plan równości płci dla Uniwersytetu Dolnośląskiego DSW na lata 2023-2026/Gender Plan for DSW ULS 2023-2026	**Faculty of Education Operational Strategy 2022-2025** Title: Färdriktning För Utbildningsvetenskapliga Fakulteten	**Letter of Intent 2019** Title: The Letter of Intent. Commitment of Higher Education Institutions to sustainable development/ Carta de Intenções. Compromisso das Instituições de Ensino Superior com o desenvolvimento sustentável	**Sustainability Report 2024** Title: University Sustainability Report 2024
Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University 2017/2019 ULS Title: SOU: Deklaracja Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni/ Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University	**Faculty Development Strategy 2022-2026, School of Bussiness** Title: Independent Thinking for the Sustainable World. Strategy document 2022-2026		**Performance Report 2023** Title: Report on 2023 performances

Table 2. Local-level documents ALL countries

MAIN TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND LOCAL PARTICULARITIES IN ESD POLICIES
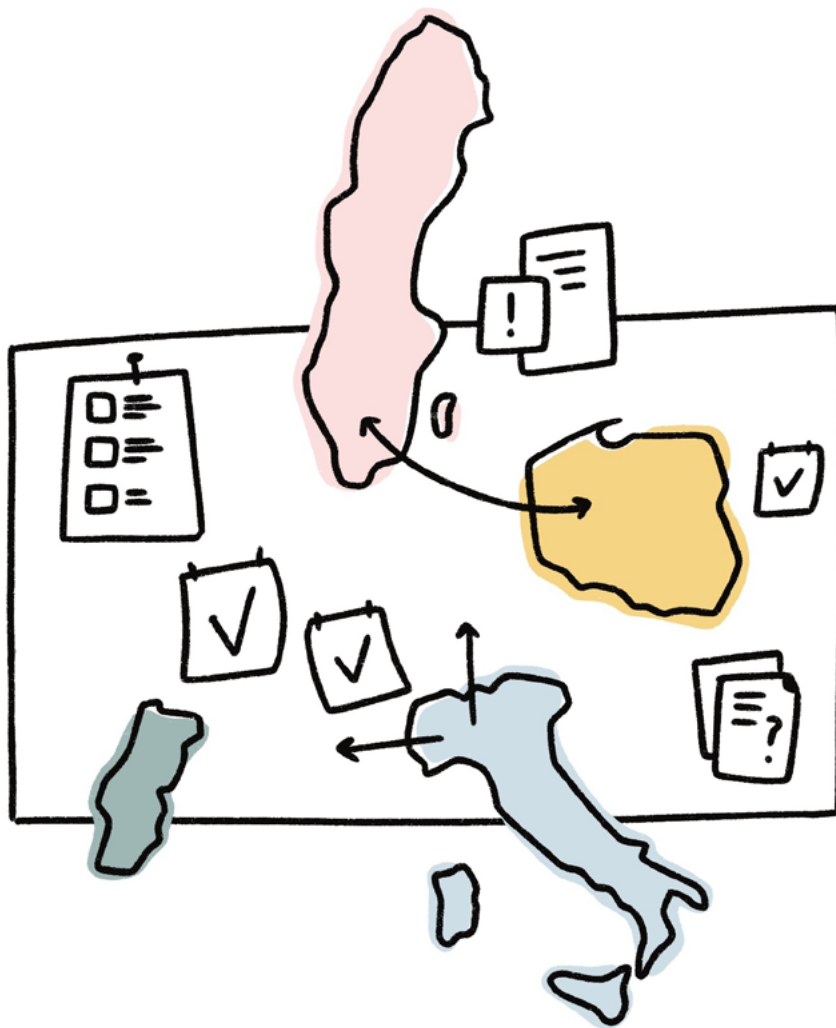
2.1 POLAND: BETWEEN TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP

Ewa Kurantowicz and Pawel Rudnicki

INTRODUCTION

At the national level, the main document defining the objectives and directions of Poland's social, economic and spatial development is the country's medium-term development strategy. Currently, these objectives are served by the Strategy for Responsible Development (SRD) for the period up to 2020 (including the prospects up to 2030). In addition to the SRD, eight integrated strategies were developed that focus on specific sectors or thematic areas. In addition, the Act on the Principles of Development Policy prospects the implementation of a development plan (Recovery and Resilience Facility).

At the regional level, the voivodeships (administrative divisions similar to provinces) prepare appropriate strategies that take into account the objectives of the medium-term national development strategy, the national regional development strategy and relevant supra-regional strategies, as well as the objectives and directions of other development policies (Article 11 of the Act on the Voivodeship Self-Government). Most regional governments have prepared strategies up to 2030. At the local level, gminas (municipalities) have the option of implementing development strategies independently or jointly with other gminas. In both cases, the strategies take into account the social, economic and spatial dimensions. The Act on the Principles of Development Policy legally regulated and guided local strategies in 2020. These strategies are not mandatory but can potentially provide a strategic framework for applying for EU funds.

The level of consideration of the SDGs in the eight sectoral (integrated) strategies varies. Some strategies are strongly based on the SDGs, while others contain only brief references to the principles of sustainable development. It is important to support the implementation of activities that help identify areas where the implementation of the SDGs could potentially be accelerated and where actions could have a greater cross-sectoral impact.

DOCUMENTS:

National Strategy: Strategy for Responsible Development for the period up to 2020 (including the perspective up to 2030)/ Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju SOR do 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030).

VNR 2023: Voluntary National Review Report: Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2023 National Report/Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce. Raport 2023.

2021. Development Cooperation Program for 2021-2030: The Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2021-2030. Solidarity for Development/Wieloletni program współpracy dla rozwoju na lata 2021-2030. Solidarność na rzecz rozwoju. 2021.

2017. Declaration of Social Responsibility of the University/**DSOU**: Deklaracja Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni

Additional if necessary in Polish: **Act on the Principles of Development Policy** (In 2020, the provisions on long-term strategies were removed.) https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20062271658/U/D20061658Lj.pdf

SDGS: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

These SDGs are priorities in Poland: SDG 16, Peace, justice and strong institutions; SDG 4, Quality education; SDG 8, Decent work and economic growth; SDG 10, Reduced inequalities; SDG 3, Good health and well-being; SDG 6, Clean water and sanitation; SDG 11, Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 13, Climate action (VNR 2023, p. 29).

Rankings:

- Global SDG Index (2022): 12/163 countries (the best positions in: SDGs 1,4,6,9,12,15; challenges: SDGs 13, 14, 17,7)

- Eurostat's report "Sustainable development in EU. Monitoring report on progress toward the SDGs in an EU context" (2022) indicates that Poland, compared to the EU average, has made the most progress from 2015-16 and 2020-21 on 3 of the 17 SDGs: reducing inequality (SDG 10), fighting poverty (SDG 1) and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17) from 2015-16 and 2020-21. The most challenging targets are those related to sustainable food production (SDG 2) and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).

- The OECD, in its 2022 publication "Measuring distance to the SDG Targets – Poland" on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, indicated that Poland **had met 18 of the 130 individual targets.** Poland has a rapidly developing economy, records strong economic growth and has a thriving labor market (SDG 8, Decent work and economic growth). It also performs better than other OECD countries with regard to the implementation of SDG 15, Life on land. Poland's biggest challenges remain **improving skills in adults** (SDG 4, Quality education) and issues related to **greening the economy** (SDG 7, Affordable and clean energy; SDG 13, Climate action).

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

The aim of education for sustainable development is to transform global interdependence into conscious solidarity. Education should be based on the perception of interconnectedness in different systems and the ability to connect and balance problems arising on different levels, such as the economy, the environment and the building of an environmentally friendly society or governance (VNR 2023, p. 52).

ESD is one (in the last position) of the national priorities in SDG 4. among others (vocational education; education development all over the country and equalization of educational opportunities; wider engagement of adults in learning in various forms and places, with recognizing learning outcomes acquired outside formal education; improved innovation in education). The progress in ESD has beennoted since 2018, acording to the reports.

Poland has carried out numerous measures in ESD, including implementation of educational and informational projects to raise awareness on the principles of SDGs and Agenda 2030 in various environments and social groups. ESD is part of the Polish school curiculum through the issues of climate protection, air quality and appropriate citizenship. Tasks promoting ESD have been carried out both in the formal and informal education systems.

The Team for environmental education, has prepared lesson plans for primary and secondary schools on various aspects of climate change. The Youth Climate Council was established as an advisory and opinionmaking body by acts of the Minister of Climate and Environment.

The **Capacity Building Program for Public Administration to support the implementation and execution of actions for SDGs and sustainable development"** was formulated to strengthen the integrated approach to sustainable development in public policy and effective implementation of the policies of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. The training module and website **SDG Knowledge Platform** are dedicated to all and may be used by various institutions involved in decision-making under SDGs.

In addition, stakeholders have taken many educational measures in the form of workshops open debates with participation of the local government and residents, and other thematic events. **Public libraries** play an important role in the context of education for sustainable and cultural development. The principle of **Leaving No One Behind** is particularly reflected in the activities of social organisations. NGOs and social institutions are interested in education to **eliminate the wage gap and support family-friendly policies in the workplace.** The number of organizations working on topics related to the social impacts of climate change, waste management and increasing energy efficiency has increased.

A prerequisite for the effective implementation of sustainable development is the active participation of an informed, well-educated society. In the catalogue of problems that translate into the scale of NGOs'activities and the efficiency of their actions appears **the lack of sufficient financial resources to implement projects and day-to-day activities.**

More details: SDG 4, Quality education (pp. 82-88, review of progress under each goal, including the future challenges on SDG 4, 2023 VNR).

HEIS: THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The National Program for Sustainable Development includes a section on ESD, which outlines the need for universities to promote it in their curricula and research. The program also outlines specific measures universities can take to promote ESD, such as developing courses and research on sustainable development topics, developing university-wide policies on ESD and incorporating ESD into existing courses. In addition, the Polish Ministry of Education has issued Guidelines for the Implementation of ESD in Higher Education, which outlines a range of strategies for universities to promote ESD. The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network has researched the challenges of implementing ESD at Polish universities. According to the report, the main challenges include a lack of institutional capacities and resources, a limited culture of ESD and a lack of awareness of its importance. The report also recommends that universities build on existing initiatives, set clear ESD objectives, and develop effective strategies and action plans to implement ESD.

Integrating HEIs' social responsibility and sustainability objectives into the strategic plans of HEIs in Europe is also a top priority of Polish universities (documents: the Talloires Declaration 10-Point Action Plan (http://ulsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/TD.pdf), declaring the inclusion of sustainable development and environmental awareness in teaching, research, operational and information activities at universities signed by AGH and UW.

The University's Declaration of Social Responsibility closely corresponds to the goals of the SDGs mentioned above:

- SDG 4, Quality education, to which the declaration refers, among others, in points 1, 2, 4 and 12 regarding the cultivation of academic values, shaping the attitudes of subsequent generations, and enriching study programs and ethics in teaching,

- SDG 5, Gender equality, and SDG 10, Reduced inequality, of the SDGs in the area of equality, as indicated in the Declaration in points 3 and 5 relating to diverstiy, among others.

- The environmental aspects of the SDGs (including goals SDG13, Climate action, SDG 14, Life below wWater, and SDG15, Life on land) are visible in point 10 of the Declaration, whichhighlights minimizing the negative impact of the activities of the academic community on the natural environment.

- Social aspects of the university's impact (including goals SDG1, No poverty, SDG2, Zero hunger, SDG8, Decent work and economic growth) and business support (SDG9, Industry, innovation and infrastructure and SDG12, Responsible consumption and production) are included in the Declaration in points 2, 4 and 6.

- Partnership as a need for cooperation and dialogue is another point connecting items 6, 7 and 11 of the SOU Declaration with the SDG 17, Partnerships to

achieve the goal. The SOU Declaration itself is another proof of the connection with the 17th goal because it is the result of cooperation between many universities.

- The remaining nine points of the SOU Declaration refer to typical values resulting from the specific nature of the university (Inspirownik dla uczelni, 2023; Inspirownik dla uczelni (accessed 18 November 2023). https://dobrecele.pl/baza-materialow/ www.dobrecele.pl

CASES: THE LOWER SILESIA UNIVERSITIES (ULS, TECHNICAL WROCLAW UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMY) – REFLECTIONS FROM THE DOCUMENTS STUDIED

Universities in Poland find their own commitment to ESD in two ways: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down means activities related to the university's development strategy (ESD issue is mentioned, often indirectly), but participation in activities to benefit the university's social responsibility is emphasized (for example signing a declaration). ESD activities are more often bottom-up, inspired by the activities of students, teachers, researchers or external stakeholders in universities.

Large public universities establish structures responsible for sustainable development at the university, including education for SD (SD Centers), and cooperate with the ministrial SD, ESD or SR (social responsibility of universities) working groups. They collabroate on the publication of catalogues of universities' good practices by collecting specific activities for sustainable development and education at their universities and local communities.

There is a lack of research and debate on SD and ESD from a critical perspective, and of practices sensitizing stakeholders to manipulation of ESD by academics/university managment. ESD is urgently needed, especially critical ESD in collaboration with bottom-up initiators of activits for sustainability learning.

2.2 SWEDEN: BETWEEN SYSTEMIC AFFIRMATION AND SCHOLARLY CONTESTATION

Adrianna Nizińska
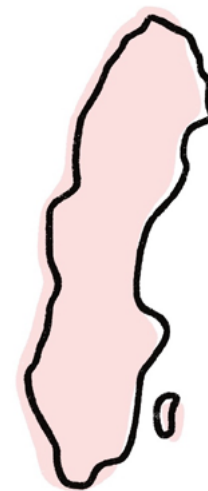
Key features of Swedish educational policies related to and affecting ESD, as presented in the Chapter 1, may be summarized as follows:

- Sustainability issue have had a strong presence in educational policies since 2006.

- Policies formulate a clear role for universities, with a clear demand and a mandate from the state to act.

- National and institutional policies (those issued by universities) are clearly aligned.

- The university is reinventing and invigorating its :third mission" by reaching out and networking with external stakeholders and society in SD efforts.

- Sustainable development is seen as a responsibility and mission, but also as a branding strategy for many universities.

Looking at educational policy development on sustainability and ESD, on both the national and local levels, one can state that despite the relatively high autonomy of Swedish universities, **there is clear, explicit demand for universities to engage in sustainability efforts and invest in ESD.** At the central, national level, the demand has been expressed in the Higher Education Act and reinforced by the guidelines issued by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKA). Since 2006, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sweden has been mandated to promote SD in all its daily operations, so that such regulation has a major impact on universities' policies. In 2016, the Swedish government asked the UKA to evaluate how the process of promoting SD in HE was proceeding. All 47 HEIs in Sweden were evaluated and classified into two categories: HEIs with well-developed processes for integration of SD in education or HEIs that need to develop their processes. This was a clear message that the government expects more investment in setting up and maintaining the processes of integrating SD into education, to be monitored by UKA. UKA's experts have formulated their recommendation for HE and for the government regarding implementation of SD in HE, affecting policy-making at the **institutional level.**

At the University of Gothenburg, all policies align with national-level policies and guidelines for integrating SD in all HE operations. In "A university for the world: University Strategic Vision 2021-2030," GU's vision expresses its ambition and the core values on which the institution rests:

*The vision of **A University for the World** expresses the endeavor to be an international higher education institution that assumes responsibility for societal development while helping to build a sustainable world. Among the goals for 2021-24, **sustainability is listed first** Our goal: By 2024, the University of Gothenburg will have strengthened its position as a leading university in sustainable development.*

Work on sustainability issues in education and research is also seen as a recognizable trademark for GU at the international arena, and such investment shall be continued, according to the Vision. More effort is also promised in terms of **networking with external stakeholders.**

The university will take this work further in the years ahead, augmenting its relevance as an agent and a partner in society at large and thereby contributing to Agenda 2030 and the global goals set for sustainable development, including economic, social, and ecological dimensions. (...)This commitment entails responsibility for developing specialist competence, as well as for building new knowledge by means of interdisciplinary collaboration in education and research. The university will also cooperate with other agents in society in ways that enable students and staff to evolve fresh insights and contribute to joint solutions.

Based on the university's common vision, goals and strategies, faculties and equivalent organizational units prepare **operational strategies** for education, research and collaboration. These strategies are elaborated in annual **operational plans** containing prioritized activities. Two strategies have been included in the sample, from GU's Faculty of Education and School of Business, Economics and Law. Following the common vision, both have prioritized sustainability goals in their teaching, research and outreach. The Faculty of Education's operational strategy is mapping and linking its activities with UN SDGs in a very direct way, via specific goals of Agenda 2030:

The faculty's activities are thus in line with the UN's global sustainability goals in Agenda 2030. Especially goals 3 and 4, which deal with good health, well-being and education, and goals 5 and 10, which deal with gender equality and reduced inequality, are central both as goals in themselves and as prerequisites for development. The faculty's activities are characterized by a breadth, where professional and applied perspectives as well as critical and emancipatory perspectives are important elements. In this way, the faculty contributes to sustainable social development and knowledge formation as well as to good living conditions for individuals as well as collectives. The ambition is to contribute to global development and sustainability by taking these goals into account in the operations.

While the Faculty of Education is communicating that its operations were always sustainability-related, the School of Business is promoting sustainability as a brand and trademark, even in its title. "Independent Thinking for the Sustainable World: Strategy document 2022-26" highlights the need the School can fulfill in society at large by responding to challenges from the perspective of the multiple disciplines it is representing. The document (...) *tries to link the development of the School with sustainability with a clear, central and coherent way (...). It also advocates a multidisciplinary approach and strong connection with external actors. The disciplines covered by the School can facilitate such an approach as more organic than in other disciplines.* UN SD goals are also central to the policy, and, interestingly, there is a clear goal of contributing to it by means of future policymaking and in the business area, which can be read as a way of gaining power and revenue under the umbrella of Agenda 2030.

Informed by the United Nations Agenda 2030, the School shall be at the international forefront of providing high-quality research and education, resulting in knowledge and competence that can contribute to policymaking and assist businesses in their handling of fundamental societal challenges. Accordingly, sustainability is integrated into all operations at the School.

In summary, faculties are adopting the language and logic of central policies and complying with the requirement of reinventing and rebranding as "sustainable organizations." Operational plans are fully aligned with central documents.

In terms of **terminology,** "sustainability" and "sustainable development" are used in the Higher Education Act (HEA). The term **lifelong learning** also appears in the HEA, obliging HE to promote lifelong learning, along with **gender equality**, in a similar manner as SD. UKA's report, on the other hand, speaks about the need to **integrate SD into education** but, again, not directly about ESD. The term ESD does not appear directly in any of the documents analyzed, but the phrase borrowed from the HEA – "to include sustainable development (or sustainability) in every operation, including teaching and research" – is being reiterated in local policies and it governs university's "conduct of conduct," a wide range of practices that attempt to shape behaviors.

CONTROVERSIES

Many scholars perceive the concepts of SD and ESD as political and refuse to be guided by them in an uncritical way. A parallel may be drawn with lifelong learning or employability, well-known terms used to govern and shape subjects by depoliticizing and privatizing public concern in pursuits of the neoliberal agenda. The UKA had noted the debates and disagreements around the notion of sustainable development while issuing its recommendation. Yet, surprisingly, the advice is to ignore or leave behind the debate and apply a strictly policy-based, unproblematic and smoothed-out definition – a strange suggestion from an organization that is supposed to be at the forefront of critical thinking. Here is exactly what the reviewers recommend:

Let established definitions of SD and Agenda 2030 be the starting point for the HEIs' sustainability work. SD is a contested concept (Robinson, 2014; Wals and Jickling, 2002), and the evaluation showed some uncertainty about the definitions of SD at some HEIs. Those that received the higher grade are typically using established definitions, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach. This is also something that may have to be communicated from top management.

One can clearly read that GU as a whole and the Faculty of Education follow the UKA recommendation. There is no encouragement to scrutinize and discuss the term SD or criticize

Agenda 2030, but rather to focus on goal-setting and measuring performance indicators. Yet both the GU vision and both faculty-level policies speak of the need to educate critical and independent thinkers for the purpose of bringing more sustainable world.

Overall, the Swedish policy on sustainability in higher education reflects an ambition to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing sustainability challenges. It focuses on integrating sustainability into all aspects of university operations and promoting universities as key actors in achieving national and international sustainability goals. However, the policy may also raise questions about the extent to which critical perspectives and debates are encouraged within higher education.

Another aspect that remains problematic is the matter of addressing deeply seated systemic issues. The Swedish policy on sustainability in higher education does reflect on some systemic issues leading to unsustainability, albeit indirectly.

By mandating the integration of sustainable development into all aspects of HE operations, the policy indirectly acknowledges systemic issues causing unsustainability. It implies recognition that traditional higher education practices may contribute to **unsustainable societal trajectories** by not adequately addressing environmental, social and economic challenges. The policy places **responsibility on HEIs to** engage in sustainability efforts, indicating an understanding that institutions play a role in perpetuating or challenging systemic issues. HEIs are seen as key actors in promoting sustainability and addressing societal challenges, suggesting an acknowledgment of their influence within broader systemic contexts. Many scholars find such role of universities problematic, given the neoliberal entanglement of contemporary HE. The policy's alignment with national and international sustainability goals, such as Agenda 2030, **implies an awareness of systemic issues** at these levels. Agenda 2030 addresses interconnected global challenges, recognizing that issues like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation are deeply rooted in systemic structures and require systemic solutions. Yet debate here is not encouraged, or is even tamed by depoliticizing the discussion on the power-related issues around sustainable development as a concept. The policy also highlights the **importance of HEIs' reaching out** and networking with external stakeholders and society in sustainability efforts. This emphasis suggests an understanding that addressing systemic issues requires **collaboration across sectors** and levels of governance, as sustainability challenges are often complex and interconnected.

While the policy indirectly acknowledges systemic issues, it may not explicitly address or confront them, even though it would probably be one of the best assets of universities as communities of critical thinkers. Instead, the focus seems to be more on integrating sustainability into institutional practices and promoting universities as agents of change, rather than directly challenging the underlying systemic factors that contribute to unsustainability. Therefore, while the policy lays a foundation for addressing systemic issues through higher education, further actions or policies may be needed. Other forces and factors need attention to address these challenges critically, highlighting injustice and power imbalance as key contributors to an unsustainable world. These elements are often obscured and erased in the process of promoting ESD, since *EVERYONE needs to take responsibility and actions* (as expresses in multiple UN documents), without reflecting on the differences between individuals and global actors, silently privatizing public concerns.

2.3 PORTUGAL: BETWEEN NORMATIVE OBSESSIONS AND STRATEGIC-POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES

Sandra T. Valadas and Antonio Fragoso

INTRODUCTION

This introduction will indicate in a synthetic manner some points that derive from the analysis of the six documents selected. These points will be developed and justified above, in the hope we can compare them with the ESDEUS partners contributions. In our view:

a. In policy terms, the Portuguese state pursuits the implementation of SDGs according to the guidelines for Agenda 2030. A majority of the documents are clear in this objective and seek the political mechanisms to better coordinate national efforts and evaluate the country's performance periodically.

b. This concentration on SDGs produces a web of policy-related documents that affect various sectors of public administration.

c. There has been no articulated strategy on ESD but rather a national strategy on ED.

d. ED principles and strategy rely mostly on the connections between the public sector and the organized civil society sector. The focus on development as a category and an aim to pursue it is understandable, as powerful civil society organization still focus on development issues and cooperation. The national ED strategy seems to stress cooperation between associations/ONGDs and schools, leaving higher education out of this equation.

e. There is no specific legislation for higher education concerning sustainability, in any of its various roles and functions, nor any kind of specific policy recommendations issued by the state toward the implementation of SDGs in HE.

f. Although HEIs seem worried about the issue, their action seems to depend on the individual, non-coordinated efforts of the academic community members (namely teaching faculty members), and unified clear policies or plans to achieve SDGs are lacking (with the possible exception of the governance dimension).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Council of Ministers adopted the first intragovernmental guidelines for the 2030 Agenda on Feb. 25, 2016. Although all SDGs of relevant, SDG were identified as national priorities:

- SDG4, Quality education

- SDG5, Gender equality

- SDG9, Industry, innovation and infrastructure

- SDG10, Reducing inequalities

- SDG14, Protecting marine life

In policy reports, Portugal appears discursively committed with the implementation of the 17 SDGs and dedicated to eradicating poverty; fighting inequalities; and promoting fair, inclusive and equitable global sustainable development based on human rights and dignity. There is sometimes the feeling that principles underlying SDGs are as or more important than the SDGs themselves, namely the "Build Back Better" and "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principles.

The recent VNR 2023 contains a reflective exercise based on a critical diagnosis of the challenges and progress made from 2017 to 2022. Regarding progress in implementing SDGs, Portugal has evolved, performing better than the EU average, in SDGs 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16 and 17. The country shows progress but performed below the EU in SDGs 3, 9, 11 and 12. In relation to SDG 10, one of the Portuguese state's priorities, it recorded results above the EU average, but the country is moving away from the SDG, not progressing.[2]

According to a 2022 OECD report, Portugal has achieved or is in the process of achieving targets on inclusion (immigrants, minorities and gender equality), renewable energy, air quality, waste and water. However, the report indicates that economic challenges (low productivity, low wages, poor economic performance) remain. It points out the challenges of progress in SDGs 2 and 3 as regards risk factors and behaviours (alcohol consumption, tobacco, obesity); in SDGs 8, 10 and 17., raising the standard of living and financial transfers; in SDGs 11, 12 and 15, in the form of land use and environmental objectives; and in SDG 16, strengthening confidence in the judicial system.

The national Court of Auditors Report thoroughly analyzed the SDG implementation. Several difficulties and critiques were identified in coordination, monitoring, implementation plans, planning documents, financial resources and stakeholder involvement. Audits and other control actions in quite different dimensions of the communities were performed: a national program to support people in need, air quality, agri-food measures, a higher education funding model, early school-leaving, employability, plastic municipal waste management and combating desertification, among others. Since the court of auditors is an entity independent from the government, these views may avoid the natural biases present in the Portuguese government policy documents.

Two final notes are important to stress in policy terms:

1. In the VNR 2023 Portugal, the government seems to have adopted a new interinstitutional coordination mechanism to strengthen this commitment toward SGD. The supervision and monitoring of the Agenda 2030 has been repositioned, internally, in the center of the government, at the level of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM). The external coordination remains within the sphere of competences of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (MNE). A monitoring structure has also been set up; it includes representatives of the governments of the two autonomous regions, of the local authorities, of the Economic and Social Council (ESC) and members of civil society of acknowledged merit in the sustainable development field.

2. The government report VNR 2023 dedicates a concluding section to the actions that need to be implemented in the future, corresponding to major challenges faced by the country:

   • The need to *strengthen institutional mechanisms for sustainable policy-making, combining both sustainability and a perspective of long-term planning and investment (p. 46).*

   • *The incorporation of the long-term vision into the political process, enhanced by scenarios and foresight exercises, is another challenge to be developed. This is an aspect in which Portugal does not yet have a tradition. Portugal has traditionally organized its planning cycles according to its political cycles or funding from Europe. Looking at policies over the long term, taking a holistic approach such as that of the 2030 Agenda, requires skills to think ahead, identify trends or build scenarios for the future (p. 46).*

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As explicitly stated in the National Strategy of Education for Development (2018-22), Portugal does not focus on ESD, but on ED, possibly as a natural result of the institutions that collaborated to produce it. For example, civil society organizations include the Portuguese platform of ONGDs and the Amílcar Cabral Center for Intervention for Development, which very strongly promote promoting actions toward development at large.

In this document, ED seeks to raise awareness and mobilize citizens through educational approaches and themes that cut across development issues, as well as promotion of interculturality, non-discrimination and gender equality, with a view to raising awareness of the these issues' importance to the well-being of all and as a condition for sustainable development. The document compares several definitions of ED from organized in recent years

to reach a consensus definition of ED: *(…) understood as a lifelong learning process, committed to the integral formation of people, the development of critical and ethically informed thinking, and citizen participation (p. 13).*

The National Strategy for Education for Development stresses these elements in conceptual terms:

- Promotion of critical and ethically committed thinking.;

- Constant promotion of the deconstruction of stereotypes and the defense of non-discrimination, equality and the dignity of all, etc.

- Promotion of participatory, collaborative and horizontal learning processes;

- Promotion of learning and connections among different types of knowledge and levels of analysis (local, transnational and global; individual and collective), as well as intercultural approaches.

In Portugal, the insistence on participatory and collaborative processes, and the emphasis on non-discrimination and promoting intercultural approaches, are common in academic or civil society organizations' discourses. But usually these elements are not mentioned so explicitly in national strategies issued and assumed to be such by the state.

In the report, education appears mainly in a version in which schools and their cooperation with civil society organizations are key. National strategy for development seems to assume that an education for development is to be given at the earlier stages of human development. Higher education is mentioned just briefly as having the generalist and instrumental function of "training."

National reports don't usually evaluate ESD, but instead the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, importance is given to the idea of "leaving no one behind," which includes issues concerning gender, territory, minorities, vulnerable groups and inequalities.

The VNR 2023 report points out that ESD is the main factor contributing to ownership of the 2030 Agenda by all stakeholders and sectors of society in a bottom-up approach.

Although it now appears ESD and not ED, VNR 2023 again points to the National Strategy of Education for Development (2018-22) as a referential – reports that never mentions ESD. So the Portuguese government changed only the expression in use (ESD), but the meaning and conceptual content remain the same – that is, Education for Development.

VNR 2023 stresses that Portugal recognizes education as a central and transformative tool in empowering *children* and *young people* (not adults?) with competences key to their aspirations and future opportunities, as well as to addressing many of the world's challenges. At the UN Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, Portugal supported the commitment to an inclusive and equitable humanistic education, ensuring gender equality and quality education for all at all stages of life.

Yet IT is (only) school that appears at the center of this strategic view of ED. The themes to develop in schools are orientated to the 2030 Agenda (e.g., human rights, gender equality, health, sustainable development, environmental education, consumer education, security, defence and peace, among others). The report indicates that the General Direction of Education (DGE) has been developing, in this regard and in conjunction with other public bodies and institutions and with various civil society partners, reference documents to guide teachers/trainers/educators connected with the promotion of citizenship.

THE ROLE OF HEIS

VNR 2023 is the only report found at national level that specifically mentions higher education. The first unusual fact in this report in that the space dedicated to the "academia" comes within a section titled "Pursuits of SDGs among civil society organizations, together with companies and "organised civil society." This is disturbing from a political point of view, especially because the importance of public HEI in Portugal is unquestionable.

The second unusual point regarding this report that it clearly states that there is no specific legislation for higher education concerning the pursuit of sustainability, in any of its different roles and functions. Yet the state that issued this report would unquestionably be responsible for legislation in this direction.

The evaluation of academia's role regarding SDG implementation is present in VNR 2023

after a survey combined with focus-group debates. The report mentions that HEI leaders are beginning to show some sensitivity to the subject. The report also shows that existing activities arise to a large extent through initiatives of the academic community, in particular teachers. In curricular terms, the report shows that most of the HEIs offer formal and lifelong learning courses devoted exclusively to sustainability issues, often in an integrated manner, while also promoting sustainability in teaching practices.

The report identifies these challenges related to SDG implementation in HE:

- Lack of policy coordination between the various levels of governance to create a coherent framework with instruments and mechanisms that facilitate the pursuit of the SDGs.

- Existing information is dispersed and disconnected, lacking a clear structure to allow alignment between government guidelines and institution's internal policies/strategic plans.

- Lack of generalized training for teachers and students to enable everyone to own the SDGs, thus facilitating commitment to their pursuit.

- Lack of human resources allocated to the pursuit of the SDGs, which would enable coordination of the areas of education with research associated with the SDGs, as well as lack of financial resources (which, ironically, would depend mainly on the state).

- Lack of a uniform public procurement policy in which mechanisms are created to reward the good implementation of the principles of sustainability.

This report points the most relevant results regarding HEI and SDG implementation:

1. Practices and initiatives associated with gender equality (SDG 5) are still very few in the reporting HEIs.

2. Most production and food consumption experiences in various fields focus on the relationship of food to health and the pressure for the low-cost supply of balanced and healthy meals, showing that this topic is still handled in a very incipient way at the level of such institutions (SDGs 12 and 3).

3. Many initiatives or projects target sustainable cities and communities and involve a large number of stakeholders (SDGs 11 and 17).

4. Most HEIs do not develop or implement consistent and integrated sustainable mobility policies. Some sundry practices are related to parking for bicycles and electric vehicles (SDGs 7 and 13).

5. Procedures are in place for monitoring energy consumption, water consumption and waste production (lower in this area), although often in a disaggregated way and with low investments in efficiency measures (SDGs 6, 7, 12).

6. Most HEIs surveyed do not monitor the procedures associated with the circular economy, but several promote various actions for their implementation and promotion. Some very interesting questions arise concerning the role of HE in Portugal. The state seems to detach itself from the public sector and have no particular interest in producing either recommendations or policy documents toward SDG. In addition, the state does not consider it relevant to look on HEIs as partners in achieving the principles and aims of ED. The issue of public funding arises as important in this equation, particularly because a considerable part of the potential action of HEIs would require it – for example, allocating human resources to crucial areas within SDG implementation, or funding in a sustainable manner the university spaces as more sustainable and environmentally friendly. This kind of positioning, assumed by the Portuguese state, seems coherent with the lack of investment in HE and with the reduction of provision to HE. It is almost like a hidden statement – as if HEIs would have a natural responsibility to contribute to SDG aims, as long as the state is exempted from defining HE's role and especially, to provide the necessary resources.

In the Portuguese context, SDG and ESD may be valuable opportunities, but at the same time, it would be important to evaluate the conditions for HEI to make this opportunity come true.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

The University of Algarve's action toward SDGs or ESD comes in the continuity of the above. Its 2022 and 2023 sustainability reports presents a good picture of the university's actions toward the fulfilment of SDGs, but ESD is not at the core of this action. Moreover, it is arguable whether there is an institutional strategy to achieve SDG.

More precisely, the "strategy" seems to be one of identification or recollection of what the academy is doing, but there was no previous institutional policy that allowed the members of the academy to contribute explicitly, willingly and consciously to the achievement of the principles underlying SDGs. Professors' obligation to point out the more important SDGs their courses dealt with, for example, appeared to be a rule without an institutional policy attached. Thus, many professors may have fulfilled the requirement as they do any other bureaucratic procedure – mechanically. However, an optimistic position might be advisable at this earlier stage. Maybe in the future there is a possibility of turning these *de facto* events into a clear policy orientation for the university as a whole.

Although ESD is not a focus at this university, the report seems relevant in the sense that it gives good clues on the main local and regional stakeholders, and clear indications where to look and whom to talk to/interview, in studying the institutional importance of ESD. For example, the section on community present a set of partners that develop community projects or interventions, some of which seem to be in the area of ESD. The relevance of this report does not lie in its conceptual aspects, but it is important to further develop ESDEUS investigation.

The University of Algarve seems determined to focus on gender equality. It is true that Portuguese HEIs started to build gender-inclusive plan under EU pressures via the Horizon programs – *sine qua non* condition for the national access to those programs. But the gender equality plan in continuing, and its periodic monitoring as well.
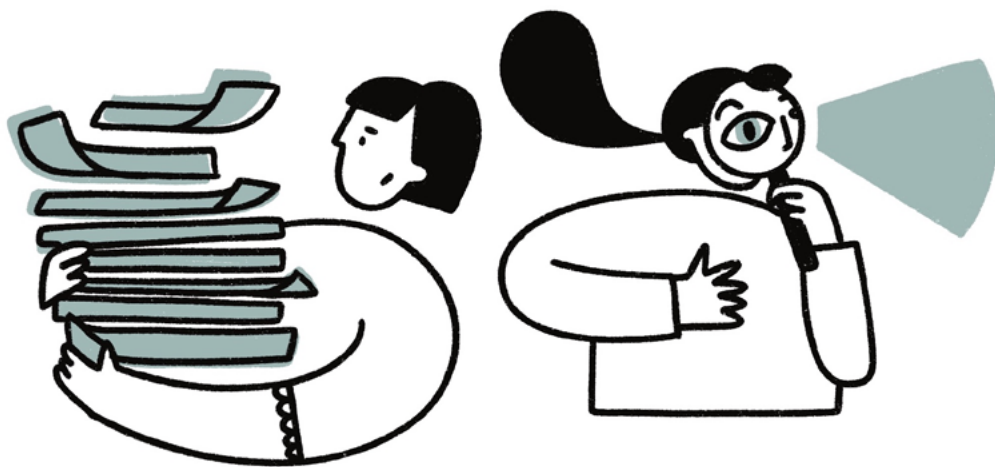
2.4 ITALY: BETWEEN LINEAR PERSPECTIVES AND POTENTIAL COMPLEXITY

Andrea Galimberti

Universities are asked to be active protagonists in ESD. All documents issued by national government bodies and by other key actors likethe **Forum for Sustainable Development** and **Asvis** (National Association for Sustainable Development) are all aligned on this point.

The university's role focuses mainly on the possibility of disseminating a new culture and new ideas that could enhance the realization of sustainable development:

Ensure people's engagement and awareness by undertaking **public information and communication initiatives** *relating to sustainable development and climate change to be implemented in cooperation with* **university***, cultural and scientific institutions, associations and private stakeholders, in order to accelerate the necessary cultural change* (ASviS report, 2022, p. 165).

An interesting aspect: this idea of dissemination not only based is on an instructional model but also entails changes in educational processes and innovation in learning paradigms:

The direction to pursue is, therefore, to invest in overcoming the transmissive model and adopting open models of active and experiential teaching in situations of continuous learning, educating for **critical and systemic thinking, creativity, transdisciplinarity, and the ability to act for change"** *(National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2022, p. 57).*

Development of the **transdisciplinary** *educational dimension of university programs to contribute to the growth of the* **culture of sustainable** *development and to affect the adoption of correct lifestyles by students, also using* **new pedagogical approaches** *and devising initiatives that are engaging and innovative* (Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development, 2020).

The task of training competent individuals with a focus on sustainability and creating widespread awareness of issues related to climate change, the use of non-renewable resources, pollutant emissions, and resource cycle management. **The achievement of these goals is inherently linked to the ability to innovate the educational approach by integrating knowledge from various disciplines** (University of Milano-Bicocca Sustainability Report 2020).

Another key role for universities is related to third mission, specifically in relation to multi-stakeholder projects aimed at developing territories.

promotion of **projects ...with a view to learning and multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary contamination** (Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development, 2020).

The theme of sustainability has entered the political and administrative agendas of many local and territorial authorities, incorporating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda into the objectives of their governance and socio-economic and environmental development **interventions. This has created a common ground for dialogue between scientific and educational institutions such as universities and entities like municipalities, metropolitan cities and regions.** *In recent years, the University of Milano-Bicocca has initiated fruitful collaborations with these entities within institutional working groups dedicated to sustainability-related issues* (University of Milano-Bicocca Sustainability Report 2020, p. 34).

The University of Milano-Bicocca was among the first 50 signatories of the Lombardy Protocol for Sustainable Development, aiming to implement the Regional Development Program of Lombardy CITATION?.

An interesting point on this side is the explicit connection – found in different documents – with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) that combines investments and reforms designed by the Italian government to overcome the economic and social effects of the pandemic.

*A first significant step in this direction is to consider universities **as actors in their territory, capable of interacting with the productive fabric and civil society, imagining new trajectories for teaching and research.** At the same time, it is necessary to increase collaborations with the public, private and third sectors to foster the development of territories and enhance their vocations. This approach finds total correspondence with the principles underlying the **National Recovery Plan**, the activities of which will dominate the scene of our university in the immediate future* (University of Bicocca strategic plan 2023-2025, p. 8).

In terms of **terminology**:

There is a clear connection between the need to change the cultural paradigm and the idea of skill.

On one side, this idea of skill has a certain neoliberal flavor:

It is no longer just about transmitting notions and knowledge, but ensuring that they are meaningful in terms of individuals' education, transforming into the skills (abilities, attitudes and values) necessary to play the role of change agents. *It is essential, therefore, that educational paths in schools and **universities** provide in-depth knowledge (both theoretical and practical) and tools that encourage a change in behavior, but above all, are useful in stimulating innovative solutions to redesign processes and products in a sustainable way* (National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2022, p. NEED PAGE).

Investing in quality education is equally necessary, along with the development of **new sustainability-related skills (disciplinary, methodological, digital, social, personal, entrepreneurial, cultural, etc.)** and essential capacities to implement change, also through paths aimed at consolidating the system of Higher Technical Institutes (ITS), strengthening their active presence in the entrepreneurial fabric of individual territories. This includes developing degree programs in soft skills and skills for the world of work, as well as **doctoral programs and research contracts on sustainable development** (National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2022, p. 57).

In other cases, the relation to skills is more connected with the opportunity for personal emancipation and social justice (traditional themes of adult education):

*By 2030, ensure **equal access** for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. By 2030, substantially increase the **number of youths and adults** who have **relevant skills**, including technical and vocational skills, for employment* (ASviS report, 2022, p. 165).
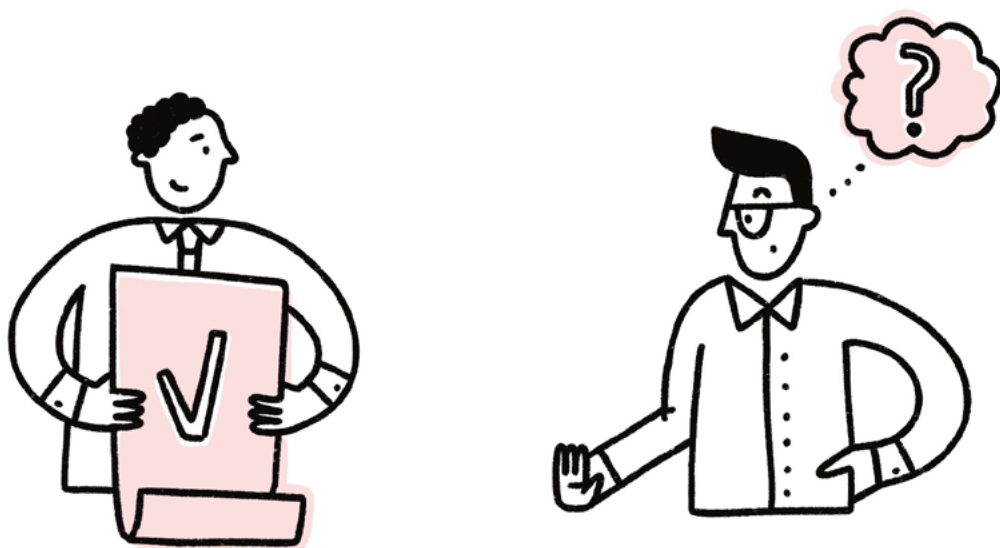
CONTROVERSIES

The potential role of HE in terms of scrutiny and critical thinking about the wider scenario and the assumptions underpinning the concept of ESD is downplayed. When universities are asked to assume a role of critical reflection, this task is limited to a "technical" evaluation of tools/instruments and mainly focused on an evaluation of performance (related to certain policies or interventions, etc.).

*The definition of **evaluation tools** proceeds in parallel with the definition of spaces and mechanisms of confrontation between institutions at different levels and with civil society/non-state actors (with reference to the „NSDS/PCSD labs"), in a process of constant sharing that can also count on the support of academia and research"* (National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2022, p. 36).

In fact, it is difficult to find indications about the possibility of addressing sustainability as a contested concept: its ambivalence and its potential for becoming a new buzzword or paradigm for governing subjects – issues well known in scientific literature – are not declared in national documents. In this sense, the potential in terms of critical thinking that universities may offer on this side is not at all considered.

It is also possible to note that the role of universities in ESD is explicitly asked to be measured through rankings, introducing, in this way, the risk of a performative and competitive logic (see Marginson, 2009; Ordorika and Lloyd, 2018):

*to adequately represent members and the RUS itself at the national and international levels, with a focus **on sustainability dimensions in international rankings*** (Agreement of the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development, 2020).

In the University of Bicocca's strategic plan for 2023-25, for example, it is named the UI GreenMetric World University Ranking (https://international-sustainable-campus-network.org/)

ON A GREAT ABSENCE OF EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ESD POLICIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CRITICAL THEORY

Adrianna Nizińska

The comparison of ESD policies in Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy reveals several important insights into how these countries approach the integration of sustainability into higher education. While there are commonalities in their commitment to sustainability, the degree of centralization, focus and implementation varies significantly. Here are the key conclusions drawn from the analysis:

All four countries demonstrate **a strong commitment to integrating sustainability** into higher education. This commitment is reflected in their national policies, strategic plans and institutional initiatives. However, the specific approaches and emphasis differ, highlighting the diverse ways sustainability can be promoted within higher education systems (Bonilla-Jurado et al., 2024).

National **governments play a crucial role in shaping ESD policies**. In Sweden and Italy, universities have a clear mandate from the government to engage in sustainability efforts, supported by comprehensive frameworks and guidelines. In contrast, Poland and Portugal show more variation, with a mix of top-down and bottom-up initiatives. The involvement of government bodies in providing strategic direction and support is essential to the successful implementation of ESD policies (Li et al., 2023).

A common theme across all four countries is the **emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration**. Integrating sustainability into various disciplines and promoting cross-sectoral cooperation are seen as key strategies for achieving sustainable development goals. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also prepares students to address complex global challenges (Leal Filho et al., 2015).

Universities in all four countries are encouraged to **engage with societal issues** and promote social responsibility. This engagement includes fostering ecological awareness, social responsibility and innovation among students. The integration of social responsibility into educational programs and institutional practices is a critical component of ESD (Barth et al., 2007).

Sweden and Italy have more **centralized and coordinated ESD policies**, which provide clear guidelines and frameworks for universities. This centralization helps ensure consistency and alignment across institutions. On the other hand, Poland and Portugal exhibit more decentralized approaches, with individual universities taking the lead in implementing ESD initiatives. This approach can lead to variability in the implementation and reach of ESD policies (Sterling, 2004).

The **terminology** and focus of ESD policies vary among countries. Portugal, for example, focuses on education for development, emphasizing social justice and critical thinking. In contrast, Sweden and Italy focus more directly on sustainability, integrating it into all aspects of higher education. Understanding these differences is important to tailoring ESD strategies to each countrys specific context and needs (Bonilla-Jurado et al., 2024).

Several challenges hinder the implementation of ESD policies. Ensuring coordinated and integrated ESD policies across different levels of governance and institutions remains a challenge, particularly in Portugal. Adequate funding and resources are crucial to the effective implementation of ESD policies. Poland and Portugal face challenges in this area, affecting the sustainability of their initiatives. Promoting a culture of sustainability within universities requires significant institutional change and commitment. Achieving this cultural shift can be challenging and requires continuous effort. Regular monitoring and evaluation of ESD policies and their impact are essential to continuous improvement, but so is revisiting the idea and underlying principles. Robust mechanisms for tracking progress and outcomes are needed to ensure the effectiveness of ESD initiatives (Li et al., 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2015), but they also need to serve a purpose of continuous reflection, beyond the culture of measuring achievements and setting milestones.

To enhance the effectiveness of ESD policies, several opportunities can be explored. Improving coordination between national and local levels of governance can help ensure a more cohesive approach to ESD. Allocating sufficient funding and resources to support ESD initiatives – infrastructure training and research – is critical to their success. Universities should prioritize fostering a culture of sustainability, encouraging faculty, staff and students to embrace sustainable practices and values. To achieve these goals, education and research need to change too. Developing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks can help track the progress and impact of ESD policies, providing valuable insights for continuous improvement (Barth et al., 2007; Sterling, 2004). Still, from the perspective of critical theory, the very notion of effectiveness may be questioned, as it may obscure policies' political dimension and serve mainly an instrumental agenda rather than an emancipatory one.

In the policies analyzed, the voices of critical scholars are not adequately reflected; often they are neutralized or ignored, for the purpose of achieving instrumental forced consensus on what sustainability means (see Sweden). This absence of diverse and often radical educational discourses may in itself be the major risk or threat to a meaningful "effective policy implementation" (in the language of the globalized mainstream industry of sustainability) preventing critical reflection on the very root causes of the current crisis. It may leave us with a conclusion formulated by Stein et al. (2022) that we, in academia, do not engage in education for sustainable development but, in fact, in "the education for the end of the world as we know it." Still, even if critical voices of engaged scholars are not depicted or represented in policies, their presence in itself represents untapped potential, an asset that allows for hope in imagining a new pedagogy and new sustainability. In that respect, taking a step back, **universities can provide both resources and obstacles for a critical change**, being a sort of proverbial Schrodinger's cat, both the agent of change and the agent of conformity.

From the perspective of critical theory and radical social change, several hindrances and obstacles can be identified around ESD policies in Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy. These are deeply rooted in the broader socio-political and economic structures that shape educational practices and policies, such as depoliticization or governmentalization, to name but two. To be blunt, one can speak of **the great absence of emancipatory potential of ESD policies**, despite the declared need for deep critical and transformative acts, shaped by the aforementioned policies.

POLICIES ON ESD AND ITS (ABSENT) EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL. HINDRANCES AND OBSTACLES	
NEOLIBERAL INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION	One of the primary challenges is the pervasive influence of neoliberal ideologies on education systems. Neoliberalism emphasizes market-driven approaches, competition and efficiency, often at the expense of social justice and equity. This influence may be seen in the emphasis on performance metrics, rankings and the commodification of education. In the context of ESD, it can lead to a focus on measurable outcomes and economic benefits rather than transformative learning and critical engagement with sustainability issues.
DEPOLITICIZATION OF SUSTAINABILITY	ESD policies often depoliticize sustainability by framing it as a technical or managerial issue rather than a deeply political one. This depoliticization can obscure the power dynamics and structural inequalities that underpin environmental and social issues. Critical theory emphasizes the need to recognize and address these power relations to achieve genuine sustainability. However, current ESD policies may fail to engage with these deeper political questions, limiting their transformative potential.
LACK OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	Critical pedagogy, which encourages students to question and challenge dominant ideologies and power structures, is often lacking in ESD initiatives. Instead, ESD may focus on imparting knowledge and skills without fostering critical thinking and social activism, possibly resulting in a superficial understanding of sustainability that does not challenge the status quo or promote radical social change. Incorporating critical pedagogy into ESD is essential to empowering students to become agents of change.
INEQUITABLE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES	The allocation of resources for ESD is often inequitable, reflecting broader social and economic inequalities. In countries like Poland and Portugal, limited funding and resources can hinder the effective implementation of ESD policies. This inequity can perpetuate existing disparities and limit access to quality education for marginalized communities. Addressing these resource gaps is crucial to ensuring that ESD promotes social justice and inclusivity.
INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE TO CHANGE	Universities and educational institutions may resist change, particularly when it involves challenging established norms and practices. In that sense, universities may simply reflect and reinforce the broader trends of globalized governance and invest in maintaining the status quo. The resistance can stem from bureaucratic inertia, vested interests and a lack of institutional commitment to radical change. Overcoming this resistance requires strong leadership, a clear yet nuanced vision for sustainability, and the involvement of all stakeholders in the change process. It may also require universities to revisit the mission of being critical agents of change and the very own values they stand for.
FRAGMENTATION AND LACK OF COORDINATION	Fragmentation and lack of coordination in ESD policies may undermine their effectiveness. In Portugal, for example, the decentralized approach to ESD leads to variability in implementation and outcomes. This fragmentation can prevent the development of a cohesive, comprehensive strategy for sustainability education. Enhancing coordination and collaboration across various levels of governance and institutions is essential to creating a unified approach to ESD. At the same time, the approach should be critical and embrace the "wickedness" (sustainability as 'wicked problem') of the concept to stay attuned to its core mission of bringing the transformation.
SUPERFICIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE	While ESD policies often emphasize social responsibility, they may engage with social justice issues superficially. Addressing social justice requires a deep commitment to challenging systemic inequalities and promoting equity. This involves not only integrating social justice into curricula but also addressing institutional practices and policies that perpetuate inequality. A more profound engagement with social justice is necessary if ESD is to contribute to radical social change.
CHALLENGES IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Effective monitoring and evaluation of ESD policies are critical to ensuring their impact and continuous improvement. However, current evaluation mechanisms tend to focus on quantitative metrics rather than qualitative outcomes, leading to a narrow understanding of success and overlooking the transformative aspects of ESD. Developing robust, comprehensive evaluation frameworks that capture the full range of ESD impacts is essential to driving meaningful change.

Table 3. Policies on ESD and its (absent) emancipatory potential. Hindrances and obstacles

From the perspective of critical theory and radical social change, the implementation of ESD policies in Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy faces significant challenges. These challenges are rooted in broader socio-political and economic structures that shape educational practices and policies. Addressing such challenges requires a commitment to critical pedagogy, social justice and transformative learning. By engaging with these deeper issues, ESD can become a powerful tool for promoting radical social change and achieving genuine sustainability. However, it requires an uncomfortable critical analysis of ESD itself, dealing not mainly with *the how?* but with *the what?* Are we confident that education alone can solve the global crisis, be the ultimate answer? Isn't it a naïve approach, from the critical perspective? And where would it lead us, if we will follow the writer Audre Lorde's famous statement (1984) that *one cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's tools?* Questioning the status quo, education as we know it and ESD as a concept may also push societies toward despair and lack of hope, as some scholars say. It will undoubtedly open a vast area of possibilities as well. As expressed by Pedersen at all:

How, then, is it at all possible to educate in the midst of this harsh reality, if education itself, and educational critique, cannot be conceived beyond its own illusive patterns of simulation and repetition? As educators, working within these multiple tipping points, where do we stand? Are schools and universities and even ESD becoming an extension of the globalizing economy and unwillingly accelerating unsustainability by equipping people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth? (2021, p. 225)

The research of the ESDEUS project will further explore this question in part II of this research report by analyzing examples of educational practices and initiatives in education at Polish, Swedish, Portuguese and Italian universities. The intention is to create a toolbox that can inspire and stimulate the search for a pedagogy that is deep, critical and engaged. It will also provide an opportunity to search for links, both present and missing, between policies described in this report and educational practices at European universities.

The integration of ESD into higher education is a complex, multifaceted endeavor that undoubtedly requires coordinated efforts from governments, universities and other stakeholders. At same time, and perhaps more important, it also requires a critical approach to the concept of sustainability as such and open debate embracing "the wickedness" of it, often against the midst of taming it and "normalizing" it in a governmentalized manner. Poland, Sweden, Portugal and Italy each have unique approaches to ESD, but at the macro level expressed in national policies, they all share a common goal of promoting sustainability and social responsibility within higher education. By responding to and engaging with key challenges, and by leveraging opportunities for addressing systemic issues of social justice behind the apparatus of globalized policies, these countries, their universities and societies at large can definitely make a difference, contributing to a more sustainable future.

PART II

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICES AND INSTRUMENTS

Edited by
Andrea Galimberti

Within the ESDEUS consortium, each partner collected meaningful teaching and learning experiences developed along the years in their institutions that can be directly connected to Education for Sustainable Development. In order to create a framework and be able to depict and organize the wide range of activities, three areas of interventions were created: labelling practices, teaching activities addressed to students and framed in academic "standard" learning offer (e.g. specific courses, masters/ PhD programmes, summer schools) and other "collateral" activities such as microcredentials, awards,etc.

Authors of this part are: Antonio Fragoso, Andrea Galimberti, Ewa Kurantowicz, Adrianna Nizińska, Paweł Rudnicki, Sandra Valadas.

Andrea Galimberti

ESD LABELLING PRACTICES FROM THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

LABELLING PROGRAMMES | SWEDEN

DESCRIPTION

GU sustainability labelling is based on criteria that reflect the multidimensional concept of sustainable development. There are two different sustainability labels: (i) **Sustainability focused programmes.**These programmes have a strict focus on sustainability. (ii) **Sustainability related programmes**. These programmes, issues related to sustainability are addressed.

The content of the programmes fits into at least one of university's 10 sustainability criteria. In both types of programmes, for student, the sustainability label means guidance, quality assurance and a guarantee that the programmes contain a pronounced perspective on sustainability.

In connection to the University of Gothenburg's ability to mark courses and programs with sustainability labels, a set of criteria (10) was developed to determine whether an education could receive the sustainability-focused or sustainability-related label. The criteria are the following:

- **Sustainability as a concept**. The history in a global context of the concept of sustainability and sustainable development and the current study field related to global challenges.

- **Analysis from a globalisation perspective**. How products, services, or activities in present or in the future professions affect the natural environment, social conditions and the economy in a global perspective, both today and in the future.

- **Natural limits**. Demographic trends and lifestyle in relation to the exploitation of natural resources, or the finite capacity of natural ecosystems to provide for human needs.

- **Maintaining ecosystems**. Conservation of natural resources and practices to protect and maintain the integrity of viable ecosystems in the face of rising human demands.

- **Human rights and social equity**. Distribution, discrimination, health and poverty issues and the mutual interaction between social inequality, poor health, the natural environment and people's opportunities for good living conditions.

- **Values, culture and ethics.** How norms, culture, religion, ethics and social conditions can shape human behaviour toward the natural world.

- **Consumer and customer power.** How demands for environmental consideration and social responsibility from private and public clients and consumers affects individuals, policies and corporate strategies and business opportunities.

- **Governance and management.** How regulations, policies, economic policy instruments, voluntary agreements, and leadership shape human behaviour and the actions of nations and companies in respect of the natural world and social issues.

- **Planning and design.** How community planning and product and service design can influence human well-being and human impact on the natural environment.

- **Actors' work and responsibility.** The efforts of various global and local actors, and their monitoring of environmental performance and social and economic responsibility.

The foundations and criteria for the labelling have been revised over the years. In 2022, the Education Board endorsed the following:

1. Faculties that consider sustainability labelling to still be an adequate tool for quality work in education continue to label courses and programs according to the established criteria of the University of Gothenburg, for which there is system support in GUBAS (an open course syllabus data base).

2. Faculties that wish to include the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda in the integration of sustainability perspectives in education make this visible in course syllabus and programme syllabus.

3. Faculties that determine that sustainability labelling has served its purpose, consider and ensure instead sustainability perspectives in education through other means within the framework of regular quality and development work.

TEMPORAL DIMENTION

Since 2006, the University of Gothenburg has been using a special system for labelling courses and study programmes that are related to sustainable development issues.

LABELLING COURSE SYLLABUS | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

Labelling practice established by the University of the Algarve was the requirement to include up to three SDGs in the public materials of each course (available via Moodle) that are central in this context. The logic of such a requirement was to force the teaching staff to at least be aware of the importance of the issue. Nevertheless, many professors may have done it like any other bureaucratic procedure - mechanically.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Temporal dimension: the activity of course syllabus labelling started from the academic year 2021-22

LABELLING COURSES | ITALY

DESCRIPTION

In the syllabus of each course, published on the University's educational website (e-Learning – UNIMIB), there is the possibility to specify (by choosing from a drop-down menu) whether the topics covered in the classes deal with the themes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda.

At present, the entire educational offer of the first and second level degree courses has been mapped in terms of Sustainable Development Goals. Out of a total of 3,455 educational activities, about 78% deal with topics related to at least one Sustainable Development Goal. In the academic year 2022/2023 the labels more used were related to the following SDGs: "Good Health and Well-Being" with 1340 course tags, "Quality Education" with 901 course tags, "Gender Equality" with 478 course tags and "Reduce inequality within and among countries" with 366 course tags.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The activity of course syllabus labelling started from the academic year 2022-23

LABELLING
STUDY PROGRAMMES |
PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

In the syllabus of each course, published on the University's educational website (e-Learning – although the visibility of labels is sometimes relative, it is perhaps fair to highlight some study programmes that have been specifically designed to contribute to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation, among other sustainability issues: Degree programmes in Food Engineering, Marine and Coastal Management; Master's programme in Marine and Coastal Systems (part of the Erasmus Mundus in Applied Eco-hydrology); Erasmus Mundus in Coastal Risks, Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation; Sustainable Management of Rural Areas and the Urban Water Cycle. Masters and Doctoral Courses in Sustainability Sciences.

It is easy to observe that the majority of the research and products (or at least the most visible) produced at UAlg come from the marine sciences, and many of them contribute to the SDG 14 (Life Below Water). It has been a strong and priority area for more than three decades.

The majority of these projects and research products therefore have a direct link and impact on the sustainable development of the region/country/planet. This does not mean, however, that in all cases the label is immediately visible as a contribution to the SDGs. However, the descriptions and detailed information on such activities generally highlight these links. course syllabus labelling started from the academic year 2022-23.

LABELLING
RESEARCH PROGRAMMES |
PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

At the University of Algarve, there are numerous research programmes in line with the 17 SDGs defined in the context of the United Nations (UN). Some of the more significant research products include (among others):

RESEARCH PRODUCTS

Diversifying tourism products and services by developing local traditions and culture.

Research into the heterogeneity of breast cancer, with the aim of adapting treatment to the specific needs of each patient and improving survival rates.

Developing new treatments for female infertility to prevent premature menopause.

Developing therapeutic strategies for a group of incurable diseases affecting the central nervous system.

Work to help doctors to develop more effective treatments for people at risk of congenital heart disease.

Studies of marine forests and their adaptation to different thermal conditions, with the aim of preventing their extinction, which would be detrimental to the marine ecosystem as a whole.

Comprehensive mapping of marine habitats and fishing grounds to facilitate more sustainable exploitation of marine resources.

The impact of microplastics on marine organisms is being studied with the aim of developing strategies to remove these pollutants from the oceans.

Research into tidal energy to provide an inexhaustible source of clean energy.

Contributing to the development of the next generation of biofuels using microalgae as biorefineries.

First to successfully grow a variety of species in aquaculture and transfer this knowledge to fishing companies.

Research and product transfer to the island of Culatra as a centre of excellence in renewable energy research. The main objective is to make the island completely self-sufficient in terms of resources by 2030.

Significant contribution to the development of a standardised measuring instrument for use in European ocean observatories, which will enable the real-time assessment of our impact on marine life.

Marine observation data is aggregated to create products and services that benefit the economy and society.

Using plant species that can survive in extreme conditions is helping to develop healthier cooking practices. Could invasive species become a food source in the future? With the emergence of a threat comes the prospect of new business opportunities.

UAlg is facilitating a paradigm shift in the use of textile fibres on a global scale. We use natural compounds that are widely available, renewable and of low economic value.

We advise the relevant authorities on containing oil spills before they reach vulnerable regions and reducing waste.

UAlg is a pioneer in several dimensions of human archaeology, including the analysis of archaeological evidence for the use of fire by Neanderthals and the first anatomically modern humans in Europe.

Research that has helped entrepreneurs and agri-food businesses to become more profitable in a competitive and sustainable business model. These activities have been developed directly or in partnerships with other local, regional, national and international institutions.

The Active Ageing Group has promoted creative and viable solutions to improve the quality of life and health of older adults as a means of preventing poverty.

It is easy to observe that the majority of the research and products (or at least the most visible) produced at UAlg come from the marine sciences, and many of them contribute to the SDG 14 (Life Below Water). It has been a strong and priority area for more than three decades.

The majority of these projects and research products therefore have a direct link and impact on the sustainable development of the region/country/planet. This does not mean, however, that in all cases the label is immediately visible as a contribution to the SDGs. However, the descriptions and detailed information on such activities generally highlight these links.

LABELLING RESEARCH PRODUCTS | POLAND

University Social Responsibility Label. Research publication: *Uchodźcy pośród nas. Pomaganie w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej*, [Refugees among us. Aid in an Interdiscipilnary Perspective] ed. E. Kurantowicz, Wyd. Naukowe DSW [e-book], https://www.dsw.edu.pl/aktualnosci/uchodzcy-posrod-nas-pomaganie-w-perspektywie-interdyscyplinarnej-raport-pod-red-prof-ewy-kurantowicz

DESCRIPTION

The decision to place the University Social Responsibility USR label was optional. The decision was made among the editors, authors and publishing house of the university. ULS signed the Declaration of University Social Responsibility in 2019 together with other universities in Poland. The social responsibility of the university is based on and directly refers to the goals of sustainable development.

The publication is based on research and studies of various nature (educational, philosophical, ethnographic, historical, sociological), relating to learning, art, management, media and school, as well as personal refugee's experience. All the results of the research are related to helping refugees at the local, legal, business and organizational levels.

The USR label is visible on the editorial page of the monograph together with the applicable graphic sign of the USR Declaration.

The monograph is diverse and inclusive. It is published in Polish with a translation of the title, table of contents, and chapter summaries in Ukrainian and English. The authors are students, doctoral students, young and mature researchers from various university centres. The approaches, research strategies and topics vary.

Dissemination of publications through the website of the publishing house, university, social media. Handing over the publication to non-governmental organizations, city authorities and the embassy of Ukraine in Poland. Publication is available in open access.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The idea for the publication was born in April 2022. The publication was published in electronic and paper versions in December 2022. The impetus for inviting researchers from various academic disciplines was the need for the publisher, editor, authors of the monograph to document social, institutional or individual behaviour in the face of the war and to help refugees from Ukraine who came to Wrocław in February and March 2022.

FEEDBACKS COLLECTION

The idea for the publication was born in April 2022. The publication was published in electronic and paper versions in December 2022. The impetus for inviting researchers from various academic disciplines was the need for the publisher, editor, authors of the monograph to document social, institutional or individual behaviour in the face of the war and to help refugees from Ukraine who came to Wrocław in February and March 2022.

LABELLING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS | ITALY
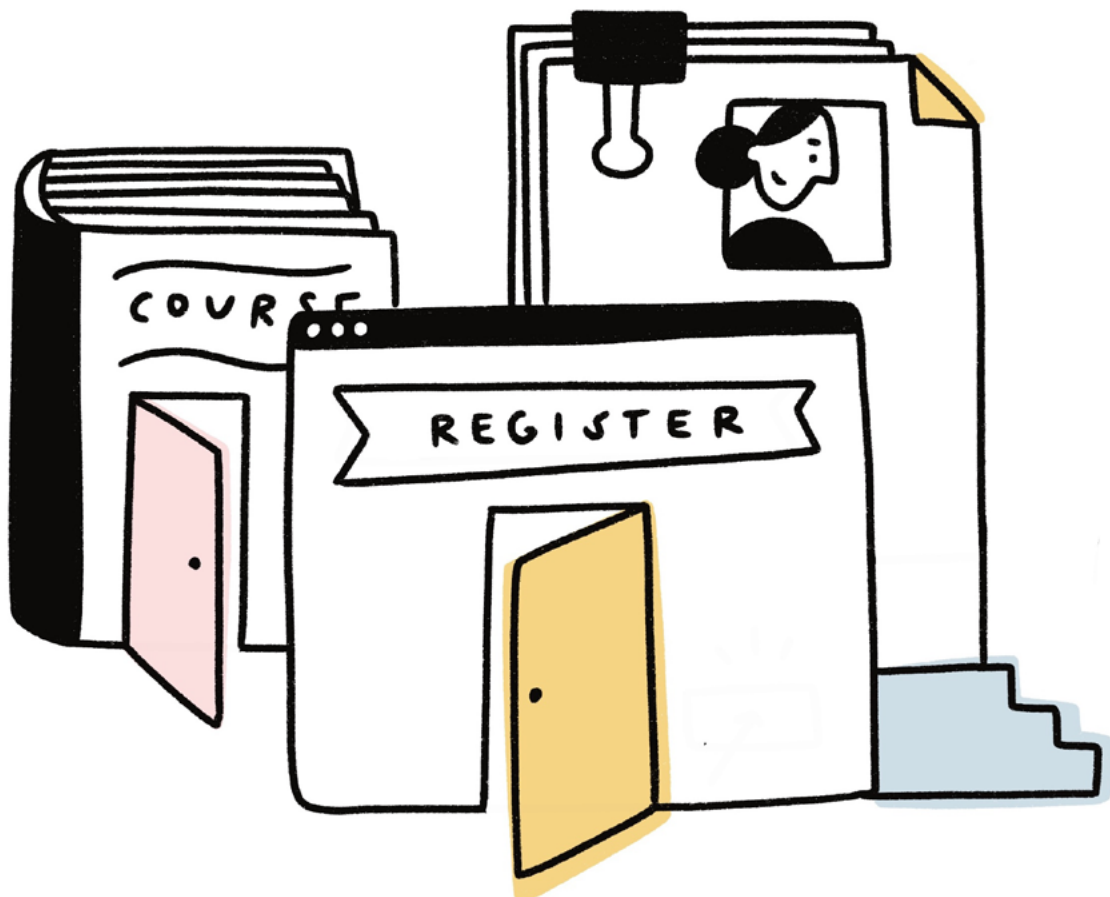
DESCRIPTION

It was decided to introduce the SDG classification in various areas: from Public Engagement activities to research projects and publications in IRIS-BOA (https://boa.unimib.it/). In the case of publications imported from the Clarivate Web of Science database, the SDG field can be populated automatically since many products indexed in Web of Science have already been classified according to one or more SDGs. The SDG data entered in BOA can then be easily extracted through the Reporting and Analysis module. Analysing these values is interesting because the mapping allows to identify the areas of sustainable development to which the University's research contributes most through the work of its researchers, and to identify possible areas of interest towards which new research opportunities can be directed. Search in Elsevier's SciVal platform indicates that Bicocca is particularly interested in the third Sustainable Development Goal: "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" – a trend in line with the national one – and the first: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere". Goals 5 (Gender equality) and 10 (Reduced inequalities) also receive particular attention. Less focus is placed on Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), and, contrary to what happens at the national level, also on goals 2 (End hunger, guarantee food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation) and 13 (for the adoption of urgent measures to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments i n renewable energy).

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The labelling practice started in January 2024.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES FRAMED IN ACADEMIC "STANDARD LEARNING OFFER"

PHD PROGRAMME "STRATEGIC INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AND SMART ECOSYSTEMS" | ITALY

DESCRIPTION

The Program for the Industrial Doctorate on Strategic Innovation for Sustainable and Smart Ecosystems (SIS2E), started in agreement with companies ENI, Italfarmaco, Intesa San Paolo, A2A, AVSI, offers four areas of specialization: Process Innovation; Product Innovation; Innovation in Society and Organization; Innovations in Welfare Systems. The programme aims at training researchers in the fields of digital innovation (from Data Science to Artificial Intelligence), sustainability (from the circular economy to energy transition), the social area (from contrasting social and economic inequalities to managing innovation in welfare systems) and the medical field (from drug design to innovation in digital medical devices). The PhD graduates will be able to: (1) contextualize their own research output; (2) set up and participate in high level innovative research projects with practical implications; (3) link research projects to the Sustainable Development Goals; (4) participate actively in the political and societal debate at local, national and supranational levels; (5) think cross-disciplinary, in line with the university's mission.

EXAMPLE OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The programme offers a semi-flexible approach to each student with a focus on specific projects. During the first year, it starts with a common track introducing advanced research and theoretical skills, then, during the second and third year, it becomes more specialized by focusing on the specific research topic which is anchored in one of the four specialization tracks. Educational and research methods are stretched and oriented towards spanning the scientific world with the 'real' world where science contributes to society. Through systematic mentoring, students are guided their research findings with stakeholders from business and social entities, thereby participating in the societal and political debate: in this sense the curriculum includes a stay of 3 to 6 months abroad and an internship in a public or private company.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The PhD Programme started in 2024 with a duration of three years for each cycle.

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN MARINE, EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

This doctoral programme aims to promote advanced, multi- and interdisciplinary training in scientific areas related to environmental, marine and earth sciences. Students should develop skills and scientific training at the highest level, including scientific analysis, innovation, critical thinking, decision-making and independent research. Doctoral students are expected to conduct research in cutting-edge areas and to be integrated into international research teams.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

This course was created and accredited in 2017.

TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The degree is awarded in one of the following scientific fields: Biological Sciences; Environmental Sciences and Technology; Marine Sciences; Earth Sciences; Fisheries and Aquaculture. These different majors have a similar curriculum including dissertation (210 ECTS), seminars (6 ECTS), dissertation plan (4 ECTS) and optional courses (20 ECTS). Optional Courses include curriculum courses (from other graduate programmes), advanced training courses or internships in any scientific field, previously approved by the Coordinating Committee under the guidance of the supervisor.

Finally, we would like to emphasise that sustainability in all its dimensions is becoming increasingly important. As a result, UAlg is now building two new programmes - Master's and Doctoral - in Sustainability Science (expected to start 2025/26).

COURSE "INTRODUCTION TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY" TO PHD STUDENTS | ITALY

DESCRIPTION

The course (2 CFU/ 16 hrs) is part of the transdisciplinary offer (common to all PhD programmes) organised by the PhD School of the university and can be attended by any PhD student of the ateneum. The aim of the course is to promote transdisciplinary approaches in sustainability issues, highlighting their importance in leveraging the change of paradigm needed to match sustainability goals.

The course is divided in four different teaching modules designed and managed by an ecologist, a psychologist, a sociologist and a pedagogist: each module focuses on peculiar issues and a specific perspectives and the students are asked to connect these dimensions with their doctoral research topics. The modules are structured as follows:

- Part 1: **Concept of sustainability**

  The Anthropocene epoch
  Scientific approaches to sustainability epoch
  Ecosystem services and Ecological footprint evaluation

- Part 2: **Social justice and social inclusion**

  Sustainability, social justice and social inclusion
  Sustainability and Education: policies, strategies and practices

- Part 3: **The (un)sustainable consequences of current urbanization and transport system**

  Main factors related to mobility increase
  Impact of human mobility on environment and society
  Strategic lines and policies for sustainable mobility

- Part 4: **Sustainability in social sciences**

  Promoting sustainability through behavioral interventions

TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The course style is process-oriented and interactive. Theoretical inputs are followed by exercises, partner work, role-plays, case studies and group-work, when appropriate. Each class has a focus on a specific topic, witch hooks with all the others. The language and the level of details are tailored to the specific needs of the actual audience; in case of lack of basic

elements or knowledge, these are provided either by the lecturer or using specific documents. During the classes participants receive references to the literature needed and vison papers, as well as suggestions of relevant platforms and websites that can be useful.

INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAMMES THAT ARE RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES | SWEDEN

DESCRIPTION

UG offers 9 sustainability focused and 8 sustainability related international programmes. The programmes are designed to fit into at least one of the UG 10 sustainability criteria.

TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS

A permanent standard learning offer

TEACHING STRATEGIES

GU offers a wide range of courses and programmes in various subject areas that equip students with the knowledge to become part of the solution to global problems. Examples of sustainability focused International Master's programmes:

- **Sea and Society** – historical relationship between humans and the sea, sustainable use and spatial context of marine resources, and the governance and management of the marine environment

- **Design** – design methods concerning built and unbuilt environments, welfare, spatial justice, labour, heritage, and resilience to conflict

https://www.gu.se/en/study-in-gothenburg/study-options/sustainability-labelled-programmes

elements or knowledge, these are provided either by the lecturer or using specific documents. During the classes participants receive references to the literature needed and vison papers, as well as suggestions of relevant platforms and websites that can be useful.

MASTER PROGRAMME ON COASTAL RISKS, CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND ADAPTATION | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

COASTHazar Erasmus Mundus is a programme that was built by a consortium between UAlg, the University of Cantabria (Spain) and the Delft Institute for Water Education (The Netherlands). The COASTHazar master's degree aims to prepare students for professional careers that help societies cope with and adapt to coastal risks, while responding to the global need for qualified professionals in coastal engineering and management. Students are also expected to acquire the necessary skills to design and implement climate change adaptation measures in vulnerable areas.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

This course was created and accredited in 2022.

TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The course lasts 2 years (120 ECTS). COASTHazar students spend the 1st semester at the University of Cantabria (Santander), the 2nd semester at the IHE (Delft) and the 3rd semester at the University of the Algarve (Faro). The 4th semester (dissertation) can be done at one of these institutions, in partnership with one of the other institutions or with partner institutions (including companies). At the end of the 2nd semester, students attend a summer school in the Netherlands. Throughout the programme, there is also a number of complementary short courses and the possibility of an internship in a company (with an associated partner). The detailed course structure can be found in Coastal Hazards - Risks, Climate Change Impacts and Adaption | University of Algarve

THE SUMMER SCHOOL FOR SUSTAINABILITY | SWEDEN

DESCRIPTION

The school is organized to create an opportunity for students from all over the world to take action on sustainability and deepen their understanding of global challenges. The Summer School offers a programme of courses at bachelor level (7,5 ECTS per course) and activities to create synergy around sustainable solutions and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.

https://www.gu.se/en/study-in-gothenburg/exchange-student/summer-school-for-sustainability

The school typically features a blend of lectures, workshops, group projects, and field trips. Participants engage with faculty members, industry experts, and practitioners in the field of sustainability. The program is designed to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating various perspectives on sustainability issues. The primary aim of the Summer School is to equip students and professionals with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to address complex sustainability challenges. It promotes critical thinking, fosters creativity, and enhances practical skills for real-world application in sustainability practices.

The curriculum covers a wide range of topics related to sustainability, including:

- Environmental science and ecology
- Sustainable development goals (SDGs)
- Climate change and adaptation strategies
- Circular economy principles
- Social justice and equity in sustainability
- Policy frameworks and governance

The Summer School typically lasts for two to four weeks, depending on the specific program offerings for that year. Each session includes daily classes and activities, culminating in a final project or presentation.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The Summer School for Sustainability at Gothenburg University began in 2015. Since its inception, it has aimed to address the increasing need for sustainable practices across various sectors.

EXAMPLE OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

One innovative teaching strategy employed in the Summer School is the use of project-based learning. Participants work on real-life sustainability challenges, collaborating with local organizations to develop actionable solutions. This hands-on approach fosters deeper understanding and engagement with the subject matter. Additionally, interactive workshops and peer-to-peer learning sessions enhance the learning experience.

FEEDBACKS COLLECTION

Feedbacks from participants are collected through surveys and informal discussions at the end of the program. Common themes in feedback include:

- Appreciation for the interdisciplinary approach and diverse perspectives presented.

- Positive remarks on the interactive nature of the workshops and field trips.

- Suggestions for including more case studies and practical applications in the curriculum.

Overall, participants often report an increased understanding of sustainability issues and enhanced skills for future work in the field.

THE SUMMER SCHOOL "WATERSCAPES IN HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT" | ITALY

DESCRIPTION

"Waterscapes in Heritage and Environment" is an interdisciplinary Summer School that focuses on water as a natural element, a socio-cultural construct, an opportunity for subjective repositioning and a change of perspective through which to observe historical, cultural and environmental relationships and dynamics between communities, places and heritage. Promoted for the first time in 2022 by Elena Bougleux, professor of anthropology at the University of Bergamo and researcher Sanja Inguman Glušac from the Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory at the University of Belgrade, in this third edition it extends its partnership to the National Biodiversity Future Center and the Department of Human Sciences for Education 'Riccardo Massa' of the University of Milano-Bicocca. This collaboration is in addition to those already in progress with other institutions such as the University of Straslund, the University of Rijeka, the University of Zadar and various local stakeholders.

The school takes place on board a boat sailing along the coast of Croatia, with stops at sites of particular naturalistic, architectural, historical and anthropological interest.

The programme includes seminars, naturalistic explorations on land and at sea, individual and group project work, and is developed by teachers and students with different disciplinary backgrounds ranging from anthropology, marine sciences, cultural heritage, environmental pedagogy, sociology and tourism. Among the recent activities it is worth mentioning the implementation of a special toolkit for naturalistic explorations: a biodiversity education tool and method developed by a team of pedagogists from the National Biodiversity Future Center.

TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The summer school brings together, in the same practical and ideal framework, cultural heritage and environmental preservation and it is based on a deep interaction among academics, students and local communities who provide a rich data set to read the places in a commonly developed perspective. The main actors involved with the use of these pillar concepts are local

communities, who maintain heritage and environment the deepest relation, as these represent their familiar contexts, the premises and background for their sustainable living.

The Summer School is articulated through seven daily Seminars and Workshops on board and six field visits. The seminars are held by professors and researchers from Italy, Serbia, Croatia and France. All destinations are reached by boat, according to the itinerary, and are introduced by visiting lecturers and local experts. All activities are compulsory, and the participation of students is intended for the full week.

The core idea is learning in a cooperative way while sharing limited resources. In the context of the Anthropocene all fundamental resources are limited and they need to be managed carefully. On the boat, water and space are limited resources, so the first didactic goal is their virtuous and careful sharing.

The Summer School focuses on Water. Water is the connecting medium, the material link among communities and places, across history and today. Water belongs to everybody, it is alive in its motions and transformations. Water connects heritage sites and environmental emergencies. Water requires that any action is collective, shared, fluid, and global. Water represents not only a natural resource, but also a socio-cultural construct and the basis of a methodology that moves from the classical fieldwork approach to a new water-work approach. The boat is in fact, the living and working space shared by the community for a week and invites a deep reflection on the sustainability of maritime life as well as on the attention to distributed responsibility. The perspective that offers is on the Croatian coasts – a perfect examples of Anthropocene complexity: identity, history, shared territories and heritage clash against borders, exploitation, regulations and scarcity.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The summer school started in 2022 and the duration is one week (generally in June).

ACADEMY OF SKILLS | POLAND

DESCRIPTION

The Academy of Skills of DSW University of Lower Silesia is a program implemented by the Rector of the ULS in 2020. It has its own regulations and a leading university unit, which is the ULS Career and Internship Department. The Director of the Careers and Internships Department is responsible for the organization of each edition of the competition, formal assessment, appointment of the competition committee to evaluate the merits of applications, the course of the competition and the announcement of results, as well as monitoring the implementation of student projects in accordance with the regulations of the Academy of Skills.

The main objective of the programme is to develop academic research and social competences and to shape attitudes committed to local and global affairs of ULS students. The programme implements learning outcomes in terms of competences and attitudes. The programme is addressed/offered to students of all fields of study and cycles of education.

The aim of the competition organised as part of the Academy of Skills is to support students of the university in the development of interpersonal, social, professional and information and technological (ICT) competences by enabling them to obtain funding for the following types of initiatives:

- implementation of an original project of scientific, research and development, social, artistic nature, practical solution to a problem, etc. (related to the field of study)

- participation in certified trainings, courses, workshops of an industry and professional nature and in the field of development of information and technological competences (related to the field of study)

Examples of topics of selected projects that have received funding under the ULS Academy of Skills: "Re: Circular Fashion and Sustainable Design" (2022); "PANDEMUSIC – the image of culture in the era of COVID-19". The impact of the pandemic on creative processes, discovering opportunities in the development of art in a situation of restrictions and lockdown – a series of interviews" (2021); "An Intergenerational Bridge: Writing and Reading Lower Silesian Biographies" (2020); "Educational program 'My StandUp, My StartUp'" (2023); "The use of VR technology for the purposes of speech therapy for children on the example of the author's tool design" (2021).

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The ULS Academy of Skills began its activity in 2020; twice a year, the recruitment of student projects is organized by the ULS Career and Internship Department.

EXAMPLE OF INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

The ULS Academy of Skills is a non-compulsory program for students. Its aim is to establish relations between the university, students and external stakeholders and to work together for the benefit of the non-academic community. Each project is evaluated by experts for the value it brings to the community in terms of its sustainable development. The implementation of the projects teaches students responsibility in practice.

FEEDBACKS COLLECTION

Student publications, exhibitions, meetings with stakeholders at the University, student conferences, activities of scientific circles involved in student projects, Rector's awards for the „ULS Ambassador" awarded to participants of the ULS Academy of Skills.

BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAM (BIP) – SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL INNOVATION ON THE MOVE | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

This BIP was organised by the University of Algarve in collaboration with the Universities of Gdansk and Naples Parthenope within the framework of SEA-EU (SEA-EU Alliance - European Universities alliances - project „SEA-EU For All", from 2023 to 2027, funded by the European Commission).

The course aimed to explore the concept of sustainability and its relevance in addressing global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion and biodiversity loss. It examined the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic systems and their impact on sustainability efforts. In addition, the BIP addressed environmental, sustainable and social/community strategies synchronised with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

It was an opportunity for participants to gain a broad understanding of sustainability principles and practical insights to contribute to a more sustainable future.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

Hosted by the University of Algarve, 19 students from the Universities of Split (Croatia), Kiel (Germany), Gdansk (Poland) and Naples Parthenope (Italy) participated in this BIP in Portugal (Island of Culatra, Algarve) from 17 to 21 June 2024. Another edition of this BIP is planned for 2025. Total hours: 40 (virtual: 5h; physical: 35h). The programme was divided into two main phases: 1. Initial Online Workshops (14 and 17 May 2024) and 2. Presence Workshops (17 to 21 June 2024).

TEACHING STRATEGIES/INSTRUMENTS

Through case studies and discussions, participants learned about sustainable practices in various sectors, including energy, the water cycle, seafood production and tourism. They also explored strategies to promote sustainability at individual, organisational and community levels. The module on community development and empowerment: learning for the future/ learning to endure was led by Cátia Martins, Sandra Valadas and António Fragoso. Contents included: 1. The basic principles of community development and empowerment; 2. The role and importance of different actors in the community development and empowerment process (e.g. governmental, non-governmental and community organisations, as well as local leaders and individuals); 3. The challenges communities face in their development (e.g. poverty, inequality, limited access to resources and services) and the identification of empowerment strategies.

FEEDBACKS COLLECTION

The programme evaluation revealed that students gained a deeper understanding of basic sustainability concepts, particularly within coastal communities. They gained knowledge about the potential of the blue economy at the local level and strategies for community development and empowerment. The programme emphasised building social capital, enhancing community cohesion and promoting environmental sustainability. This intensive programme provided a unique opportunity for participants to gain practical experience and insights, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to effectively contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future.

CHAPTER III

OTHER ESD ACTIVITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
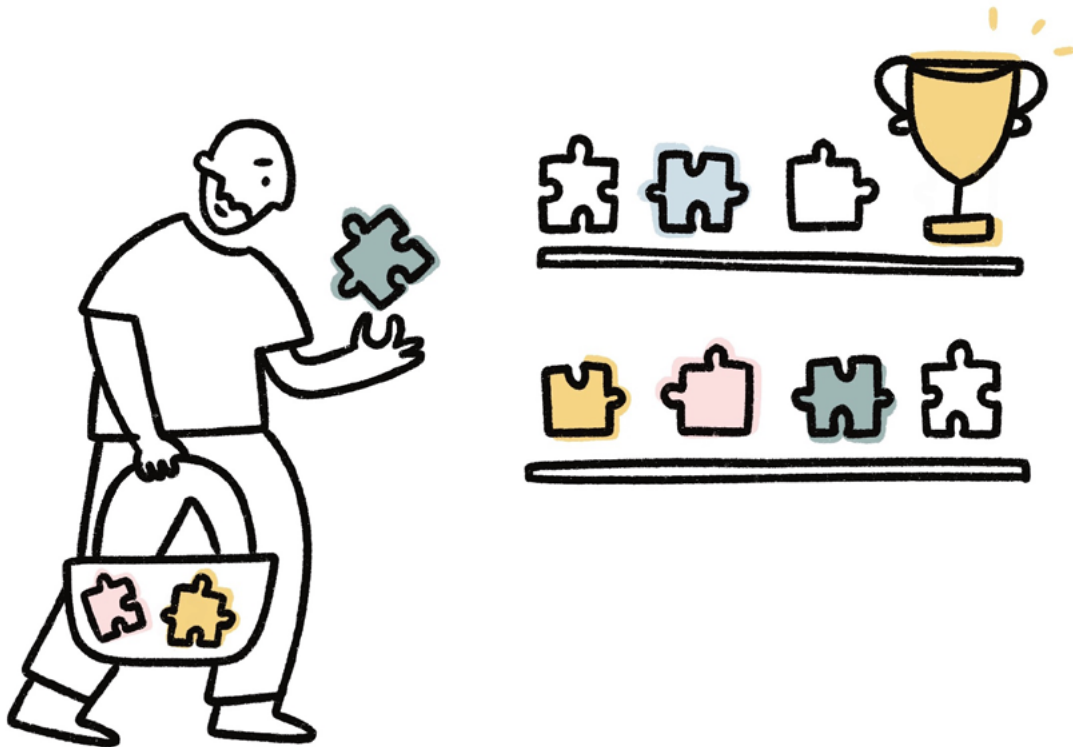
MICRO CREDENTIALS "BBETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY" | ITALY

DESCRIPTION

The University of Milano-Bicocca has always paid great attention to the development of transversal skills, which is fostered mainly through the Bbetween project, a panoply of teaching activities intended for the entire academic community and partly extended to the territory. The project encourages people to nurture their interests based on the belief that personal skills are the most important and versatile of all. The teaching activities are called 'modules' and have been organised into different areas: civic engagement and science outreach, digital, languages, media, performing arts, reading and writing, sports and games and sustainability.

Participants gain a "Bicocca Open Badge", a digital certifications for skills acquired through extra-curricular activities. The badge is internationally recognised and compatible with electronic CVs and social media. Bbetween Open Badges can be found on BESTR cineca platform (https://bestr.it/?ln=it).

In 2024 the project counts 72 Bbetween courses and half of them deal with issues related to sustainability. More specifically, from 2023 the project 'Bbetween Sustainability' (https://www.unimib.it/bbetween/sustainability) explicitly aimed at addressing the issues of sustainability and applying them to the various disciplines represented in the academic offer: each module directly addresses issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The learning activities for each module are available on a page of the e-learning platform, managed directly by the professors responsible for each individual module and are delivered mainly in distance learning or e-learning mode. Each individual module includes an assessment of the knowledge and skills acquired.

Students are invited to select modules based on disciplinar domains other than those of their degree programme, offering them an overview of current issues relevant to any profession and promoting interdisciplinary knowledge.

If fewer than four or six modules are taken (depending on the Degree Curriculum), each of these will be certified by an Open Badge that will be included in the Diploma Supplement at the end of the career, but will not be included in the calculation of the credits necessary to obtain the final degree; If the modules taken are four or six (depending on the Degree curriculum), students will, in addition to receiving the Open Badges relating to the individual modules taken, automatically have the activity recognised in the free choice. The activity will be included in the curricular credits upon completion of the study plan. Any module acquired in excess of four or six (depending on the Degree curriculum) will be certified by the relevant Open Badge, which will be included in the Diploma Supplement at the end of the course, but will not be included in the calculation of credits required to obtain the final degree.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The Bbetween sustainability modules started from academic year 2022/2023.

FEEDBACK COLLECTION

Feedbacks are collected in terms of number of enrolments and course evaluations.

MICRO CREDENTIALS | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

As part of UAlg's participation in the SEA-EU Alliance (https://sea-eu.org/), we are creating and developing **micro-credentials.** Micro-credentials are small learning units worth 1-5 ECTS that can be taken as elective courses as part of different degree programmes. There are some common micro-credentials developed by the 9 universities that make up this alliance (https://sea-eu.org/microcredentials/): French for Professional Purposes; English for Professional Purposes; Academic Writing and Presentation in the Digital Space; Global Citizenship SEA-EU Micro-credential. These courses are 100% online, 3 ECTS. In this context, 1 ECTS = 25 to 30 hours of work (including 24 hours of contact and 75 hours of self-study).

Apart from that, the interest in micro-credentials has increased among us and there are other examples of units developed by the faculties and schools of the UAlg. Small learning units of 1 ECTS are now very common and they are integrated in free courses - that is, people can take 1 ECTS learning unit at a time and build if they want a thematic free course.

TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS

These courses started to be offered in 2024.

EXAMPLES

Below is a list of such courses, made up of micro-credentials (most of them for strengthening people's digital skills' and funded by the Recovery and Resilience Plan):

Free 2-D Digital Puppet Animation Course	Free Course in Good Data Protection and Privacy Practices	Free Course in Cyber Hygiene and Good Cybersecurity Practices	Free Course in Visual Communication for Presentations
Vulnerability Basics Free Course	Free Course in Basic Cryptography Concepts	Free Course in Fundamentals of Network Protection with Firewalls	Free Course in Visual Communication for Posters
Free Course in Building Web Documents - Using HTML and CSSs	Free Course on Introduction to the Universe of Statistics and Data Processing with Python and Pandas	Introduction to Cybersecurity Free Course	Free Course in Visual Communication for Social Networks
Free Course in Creating Animated Digital Content	Unravelling the Principles of Object-Oriented Programming in Python Free Course	Free Course on Introduction and Concepts of Cybersecurity	Free Photography and Image Editing Course I
Free Course in Creating Interactive Content with Dynamic JavaScript	Mastering the Client-Server Paradigm Free Course	Free Course on Cybersecurity Legislation	Free Photography and Image Editing II Course
Free Course on Boosting Frontend Interactivity with JavaScript	Free Course Exploring the Advanced Universe of Statistics and Data Processing with Python and Pandas	Free Computer Network Security Course	Animated Typography Techniques Free Course
Free Audio-visual Pre-Production Course	Free Course Exploring the Principles of Programming in Python with Cycles and Conditions	Free Course in Security in Digital Technologies	Free Course Navigating Exceptions, Unit Tests, Files and Expressions
Free Audio-visual Production Course	Free Course Exploring the Principles of Programming in Python with Functions	Free Course Exploring Web Server Resources	

Each of these free courses consists of three units of 1 ECTS respectively. However, it is doubtful how many of these courses will survive and continue to be offered after the end of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Some of these courses also work with a single unit of 5 ECTS, namely:

Free Course on Statistical Applications with Python and Pandas

Free Cybersecurity Course: Vulnerabilities, Cryptography and Security

Free Visual Communication Course

Free Web Development Course

Python Programming Fundamentals Free Course

Free Audio-visual Production and Animation Course

Free Course in Basic Cybersecurity Concepts

However, it is fair to say that the tendency to offer free courses unrelated to micro-credentials has been going on for many years and is growing. Some of these are offered to secondary school students as part of the university's recruitment strategy, but many others are offered to the general public - anyone can access these free courses - ranging from language courses, history of the Algarve, psychology for non-psychologists, etc.

„WROCŁAWSKA MAGNOLIA" – A COMPETITION FOR THE BEST MASTER'S THESIS | POLAND

DESCRIPTION

The „Wrocław Magnolia" competition is addressed to graduates of Wrocław universities (public and private) who in their master's theses take up the subject of improving the broadly understood quality of life of Wrocław residents (protection of the natural environment and human health, development of green areas). The proposed solutions must be possible to apply for the benefit of the city's residents. The organizer is the Wrocław City Hall and the competition is carried out by the Wrocław Academic Centre of the City Hall at the request of the Mayor of Wrocław together with universities of Wrocław. The award encourages the most talented graduates to stay in Wrocław.

TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS

It has been organized since 2003. The Wrocław Academic Centre (WCA) is a link between the city government and the academic community, created and financed by the local government.

EXAMPLES OF TITLES OF AWARDED MASTER'S THESES FROM ULS

The University submits 3 proposals for the competition every year. In recent years, 3 graduates have received distinctions. These are works under the following titles: Wojciech Jarosz [field of study: creative media: game design and animation, supervisor dr. Sz. Makuch], *Grafika 3D w edukacji dzieci i młodzieży* [*3D graphics in the education of children and youth,* distinction 2022]; Marta Kirpa [field of study: Pre-school and early-school education, supervisor prof. J. Zwiernik], *Dziecko z cukrzycą w grupie przedszkolnej. Studium przypadku* [*Child with diabetes in a preschool group. Case study,* distinction 2022]; Kacper Krzyżosiak [field of study: HR and Coaching, supervisor dr. A. Piasecka-Robak], *Specyfika pracy w samorządzie w opiniach pracowników oraz klientów urzędu* [*The specificity of work in local government in the opinions of employees and clients of the office,* distinction 2023].

GUSTA AWARD - UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG'S SUSTAINABILITY THESIS AWARD | SWEDEN

https://www.gu.se/en/study-gothenburg/student-in-political-science-one-of-the-2021-gusta-award-winners

DESCRIPTION

the GUSTA (Gothenburg University Sustainability Thesis Award) is an annual award presented to students who have completed outstanding master's theses that contribute to the field of sustainability. The award is open to students from all disciplines at the University of Gothenburg. Nominations can be submitted by faculty members or students, and a panel of judges evaluates the submissions based on specific criteria.

The primary aim of the GUSTA is to encourage students to engage with sustainability issues through their research. It seeks to recognize exemplary work that advances knowledge in sustainability and inspires other students to address environmental and social challenges through their academic efforts.

An innovative aspect recognized by the GUSTA is the encouragement of interdisciplinary research. Students are motivated to approach sustainability topics from various disciplinary perspectives, fostering collaboration across fields. Additionally, some theses incorporate stakeholder engagement, where students actively involve community members or organizations in their research process.

The award focuses on a wide range of sustainability-related topics, including:

- Environmental science and ecology
- Sustainable development and policy
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Social equity and justice in sustainability practices
- Circular economy and resource management

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The Sustainability Thesis Award was established in 2016 as part of the University of Gothenburg's commitment to promoting sustainability research and education. It has been aimed at highlighting the importance of academic contributions to the sustainability agenda. The GUSTA

has been awarded annually since its inception. The nomination and selection process typically occurs over several months, culminating in an award ceremony, often held in conjunction with sustainability-focused events at the university.

FEEDBACK COLLECTION

Feedback about the GUSTA is collected through surveys from participants, faculty, and judges. Key insights include:

- Recognition of the high quality of submissions, showcasing diverse and innovative approaches to sustainability.

- Positive impact on student motivation to pursue sustainability-related research.

- Suggestions for increasing awareness of the award among students and enhancing support for interdisciplinary projects.

Overall, the GUSTA has effectively highlighted and celebrated significant contributions to sustainability from the student body at the University of Gothenburg, promoting a culture of research-oriented problem-solving within the university.

Winning Thesis of 2023. The winner of the University of Gothenburg's Sustainability Thesis Award (GUSTA) in 2023 was **Cecilia Bäcklund.** She received the award for her thesis titled „Tracing the Climate Footprint of City Logistics," which focused on sustainable logistics practices in urban environments. This research highlighted the importance of integrating sustainability into urban planning and logistics.

PARTNER OF THE REFUGEE SUPPORT PLATFORM | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

UAlg is concerned about the inclusion of people from under-represented groups and has developed effective measures to this end and it has become a partner of the Refugee Support Platform. In direct response to the refugee crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine, UAlg welcomed Ukrainian students to study and train in Portugal, as well as professors and researchers to continue their work here. In this context, a guide for students in humanitarian emergencies resulting from the conflict in Ukraine was also published.

CAMPUS WORLD CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

In 2020, the Healthy Campus World Certification Programme included 93 universities from more than 31 countries. Today, it has spread to all continents and includes more than 140 higher education institutions. The aim of FISU (International University Sports Federation) is to create an interdisciplinary system dedicated to wellbeing, healthy lifestyles and raising awareness among students. The project also aims to share knowledge and good practice at local and global level, with an impact on other areas related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The programme also focuses on criteria such as gender equality, reducing inequalities, increasing inclusion, sustainable community development, climate action, partnerships

and synergies, among many others. UAlg has been awarded the Platinum Certificate (the highest degree of certification) within the FISU Healthy Campus Programme for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024.

BICOCCA
VIVARIUM |
ITALY

DESCRIPTION

The Bicocca Vivarium (https://vivaiobicocca.unimib.it/home-2/) is a space owned by the Municipality of Milan and given in concession to the University of Milan-Bicocca. It represents an urban oasis, a point of contact between the citizens and the academic world. The spaces of the Vivaio Bicocca are dedicated to participatory science actions aimed at the knowledge and protection of functional biodiversity at the basis of ecosystem services such as pollination, seed dispersal, and ecological connectivity. The Vivaio is focused on the biodiversity of urban contexts, preserving environments in the most natural state possible and providing insects, birds and small mammals with a space to thrive and take refuge. The social change that the University of Milan-Bicocca wants to promote is to move from a passive use of the city's green areas to the promotion and care of them, through interventions that enhance biological ecosystem services and through the definition and promotion of good practices in order to ensure wide use and resilience over time.

The vivarium spaces are dedicated to lessons and teaching (44 lessons held in the two-year period 2022-2023), as well as awareness-raising activities aimed at knowledge and protection of functional biodiversity at the basis of ecosystem services such as pollination, seed dispersal, ecological connectivity (more than 70 days dedicated to awareness-raising, 2022-2023). As part of the PNRR National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC) project, new greenhouse spaces dedicated to plant research and education are being created, equipped with solar energy production systems aimed at energy efficiency.

TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The Bicocca Vivarium has been used for lessons and other didactic activities starting from January 2022.

ACADEMIC POLICY DOCUMENTS | PORTUGAL

DESCRIPTION

Labelling can be seen in different dimensions of the life of the institution. One of these is the governance dimension. In terms of sustainability, in 2021 the University of Algarve created the „UAlg+ Council for a Healthy and Sustainable Algarve", which „aims to affirm the University of Algarve as a promoter of healthier and more sustainable lifestyles, economic development, social well-being and environmental preservation, through the creation and dissemination of knowledge and actions to promote its sustainable development and that of society". (https://www.ualg.pt/en/sustainability).

The sustainability reports focus on each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030, and include UAlg's contribution in four main components: Teaching, Research, Community and Governance. This report also accompanies our contribution to other relevant international agreements, namely the Paris Agreement or the European Green Deal and COP 26. However, the central logic of the reports is to recall what is being done by academics, rather than to provide strategic or instrumental directions for steering sustainable development. Also in the area of governance, we can highlight the Inclusive Gender Equality Plan, which aims to contribute to SDG 5. This plan was prepared by an institutional group appointed by the Rectorate in 2021 (https://www.ualg.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/202205/planoigualdadedegeneroualg20220506.pdf). The University of Algarve seems determined to focus on the gender equality dimension. It is true that the Portuguese university started to develop a gender equality plan under pressure from the EU through the Horizon programmes - it was a sine qua non for national access to these programmes. But the Gender Equality Plan is ongoing and its regular monitoring. This plan follows international guidelines in this field, in particular those of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

	LABELLING PRACTICES	TEACHING INSTRUMENTS	OTHER HEIS ACTIVITIES
POLAND	Labelling research products	Academy of Skills	„Wrocławska Magnolia" - a competition for the best master's thesis
SWEDEN	Labelling programmes	International study programmes that are related to sustainable development issues The Summer School for Sustainability	GUSTA Award - University of Gothenburg's Sustainability Thesis Award
PORTUGAL	Labelling course syllabus Labelling study programmes Labelling Reseearch Programmes	Doctoral Programme in Marine, Earth and Environmental Sciences Master programme on Coastal Risks, Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Blended Intensive Program (BIP) - Sustainability and Social Innovation on the Move	Micro credentials Partner of the Refugee Support Platform Campus World Certifiction Programme Academic policy documents
ITALY	Labelling courses Labelling public engagement activities, research projects and publications	PhD Programme „Strategic Innovation for Sustainable and Smart Ecosystems" Course „Introduction to multidisciplinary aspects of sustainability" to PhD students The Summer school „Waterscapes in Heritage and Evironment"	Micro credentials „Bbetween Sustainability" Bicocca Vivarium

Table 3. ESD practices and instruments in the European Higher Education Institutions

CONCLUSIONS

Adrianna Nizińska

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY

University teaching is one of the most powerful and prominent tools to create more opportunities for ESD. McCowan (2016) provides an analytical framework by emphasizing the role of universities in the post-2015 development agenda. He identifies three key dimensions: value, function, and interaction. The value dimension considers whether knowledge is treated as intrinsically or instrumentally worthwhile. The function dimension examines the role of universities in storing, transmitting, producing, or applying knowledge. The interaction dimension looks at the flow of ideas and actors between universities and society. This framework is one of many that may help to understand the diverse roles universities play in sustainable development and highlights the importance of integrating sustainability into all aspects of higher education, not only in the context of classrooms, but beyond, in the process of knowledge production and building links with communities.

The integration of sustainability into higher education is a without a doubt, a multifaceted endeavour that requires systemic changes in academic culture, curriculum design, and institutional governance. Nizińska and Kurantowicz (2019) argue that universities must reorient their teaching and research to address sustainability challenges effectively. This reorientation involves **embedding sustainability into the core activities of universities**, including teaching, research, and public engagement. For instance, the University of Gothenburg's labelling system for sustainability-focused and sustainability-related programs, in place since 2006, provides a structured approach to incorporating sustainability into higher education. This system ensures that students receive guidance and quality assurance, knowing that their programs contain a pronounced perspective on sustainability. It can be seen as an important step towards communicating ESD opportunities to students, communities and society at large.

Teaching activities that emphasize **interdisciplinary and experiential learning** are also crucial for addressing sustainability challenges. Programs like the ULS Academy of Skills in Poland support students' projects that develop competences related to sustainable development, exemplifying the practical application of sustainability concepts. Similarly, the Blended Intensive Program (BIP) in Portugal, which involves multiple universities and focuses on practical sustainability efforts, aligns with the need for interdisciplinary and experiential learning. These programs prepare students to tackle complex sustainability issues by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge through innovative teaching strategies and real-world applications.

Public engagement and **community-oriented initiatives** further reinforce the commitment to sustainable development. "The Wrocławska Magnolia" competition in Poland, which encourages practical applications of research to improve the quality of life of Wrocław's residents, exemplifies how universities can engage with local communities to address sustainability challenges. Additionally, UAlg's Refugee Support Platform in Portugal demonstrates the university's commitment to social responsibility by supporting the inclusion of under-represented groups, including refugees from Ukraine. These initiatives highlight the importance of universities not only as centres of learning but also as active participants in **promoting social and environmental sustainability within their communities.**

Finally, the development of **flexible learning opportunities,** such as micro-credentials, supports the diverse educational needs of students and professionals. The Bbetween Sustainability project in Italy offers modules on sustainability with digital certifications, promoting interdisciplinary knowledge and personal skill development. This approach aligns with Nizińska and Kurantowicz's (2019) argument that sustainability should be embedded in the curriculum to foster a holistic understanding among students. By offering flexible and accessible learning opportunities, universities can ensure that sustainability education reaches a broader audience, equipping more individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to address global sustainability challenges.

But let us not forget about the intrinsic values and ethical and political dimension of the sustainability teaching. Van Poeck, Östman, and Öhman (2019) argue that sustainability

education must address the complexity and ambiguity of sustainability issues, requiring educators to develop teaching practices that engage with these challenges. Their work emphasizes the need for **teaching models that incorporate ethical and political dimensions,** preparing students to navigate the multifaceted nature of sustainability. This perspective aligns with the interdisciplinary and experiential learning approaches seen in programs like the ULS Academy of Skills and the Blended Intensive Program, which aim to equip students with the skills to address real-world sustainability challenges.

However, a critical perspective of scholars like Stein et al. (2022) points out that mainstream sustainable development presumes the possibility of perpetual growth and consumption on a finite planet, which is inherently unsustainable. This critique highlights a fundamental weakness in current ESD teaching practices: they often fail to challenge the underlying assumptions of modernity and coloniality that drive unsustainable practices. Stein et al. (2022) emphasizing the need to confront the inherently violent and unsustainable nature of our modern-colonial modes of existence in teaching, to take a revolutionary turn. This perspective calls for a **more radical rethinking of education** that goes beyond merely adding sustainability to the curriculum and instead fundamentally reorients the values and goals of education to **address the root causes of unsustainability.**

REFERENCES:

Barth, M., et al. (2007). Developing Key Competencies for Sustainable Development in Higher Education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 8* (4), 416-430.

Bonilla-Jurado, D., et al. (2024). Advancing University Education: Exploring the Benefits of Education for Sustainable Development. *Sustainability, 16* (17), 7847.

Leal Filho, W., Manolas, E. and Pace, P. (2015), The future we want: Key issues on sustainable development in higher education after Rio and the UN decade of education for sustainable development, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education,* Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 112-129.

Li, Y., et al. (2023). Optimizing Higher Education for Sustainable Development through the Design and Implementation of the Global Engagement Program. *Sustainability, 15* (13), 10098.

Lorde, A. (1984). *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House.* Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Ed. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. Pp. 110-114. 2007.

Marginson, S. (2009). University Rankings, Government, and Social Order: Managing the Field of Higher Education According to the Logic of the Performative Present-as-Future. In M. Simons, M. Olssen, and M.A. Peters (Eds.), *Rereading Education Policies: Studying the Policy Agenda of the 21st Century* (pp. 2-16). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

McCowan, T. (2016). Universities and the post-2015 development agenda: an analytical framework. *Higher Education*, 72, 505–523. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0035-7

Nizińska, A., & Kurantowicz, E. (2019). Sustainability and universities. Re-orienting higher education, reorienting teaching. *Forum Oświatowe*, 31(2), 27–40.

Ordorika, I., and Lloyd, M. (2018). International Rankings and the Contest For University Hegemony. In S. Ball (ded.), *Governing by Numbers: Education, Governance and the Tyranny of Numbers* (pp. 87-107). London: Routledge.

Pedersen, H., Windsor, S., Knutsson, B., Sanders, D., Wals, A., and Franck, O. (2021). Education for sustainable development in the "Capitalocene." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54 (3), pp. 224–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1987880

Stein, S., Andreotti, V., Suša, R., Ahenakew, C., & Cajková, T. (2022). From „Education for Sustainable Development" to „Education for the End of the World as We Know It". *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54(3), 274-287. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1835646

Sterling, S. (2004). Higher Education, Sustainability and the Role of Systemic Learning. In P. B. Corcoran and A. E. J. Wals (eds.), *Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability: Problematics, Promise, and Practice,* pp. 49-70. Springer

Van Poeck, K., Östman, L., & Öhman, J. (2019). *Sustainable Development Teaching: Ethical and Political Challenges.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351124348

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT:

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

ESD: Education for Sustainable Development

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

SD: Sustainable Development

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UN: United Nations

POLAND

SOR/SRD: Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju/Strategy for Responsible Development

VNR: Voluntary National Review

ULS: DSW University of Lower Silesia

GTA: Grupa TEB Academia

SWEDEN

UKA: Swedish Higher Education Authority

GU: University of Gothenburg

PORTUGAL

INE: Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Statistics Institute)

ENED: Estratégia Nacional de Educação para o Desenvolvimento (National Strategy of Education for Development)

UAlg: University of Algarve

ENIND: Estratégia Nacional para a Igualdade e não Discriminação (National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination)

ITALY

ASviS: Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development

CRUI: Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (National Permanent Committee of University Deans)

RUS: Rete delle Università per lo Sviluppo sostenibile (University Network for Sustainable Development)

UNIMIB: University of Milano-Bicocca

BASE: Bicocca Environment Society Economy

PNRR: National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The book discusses international research results on a crucial topic: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It explores innovative concepts to elevate educational initiatives in sustainable development at the university level, driving substantial changes in how we address pressing environmental and societal issues. It clearly underscores the transformative potential of classrooms and students to effect meaningful change during a period of urgent eco-social transformation, characterized by heightened environmental awareness and societal responsibility. This transformation is intrinsically linked to learning and critical thinking, which are pivotal in formulating strategies for sustainable development that are of global importance. The study meticulously examines several key aspects, including entrepreneurship, didactic innovations, sustainability, „degrowth" (a lifestyle choice), cross-sector cooperation, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences between universities across different countries.

The team of researchers from Poland, Sweden, Portugal, and Italy has demonstrated a remarkable ability to promote critical learning by first identifying diverse national policies and then integrating an educational approach that respects and enhances the cultural and environmental diversity of various countries. The purpose of this integration is to devise solutions for an immediate, unpredictable future, firmly anchored in sustainable human actions. Consequently, the studies presented here serve as a source of inspiration for university curricular regulations and practices in both member and non-member countries of the European Union.