



## Acting and Educating for Sustainable Development at Universities

### Key Takeaways and Recommendations of the IAU Cluster Webinar

With less than 10 years to go for Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, building back sustainably in response to the health, economic and social crises, the world is at a crossroads in 2021. Working together and forming lasting and effective partnerships is more crucial than ever.

Transforming learning to change and develop more sustainable societies is the aim of *the UNESCO ESD for 2030 framework*. This roadmap for ESD in 2020-2030 will be officially launched at the [UNESCO World Conference on ESD](#) taking place on 17-19 May 2021, online. Universities, as key actors for SDG 4: Quality Education, engage with the SDGs in multiple ways, including in the areas of teaching, research, leadership, and campus operations.

The [IAU Global Cluster on HESD](#) fosters strong university engagement with the SDGs and Agenda 2030, develops and strengthens (new) partnerships and generates (new) knowledge and (new) cooperation dynamics. In addition, universities have an impact in local communities and are in a unique position to advocate for the important role of higher education in addressing sustainable development to governments.

During the [IAU Webinar \(04 May 2021\) on "Acting and Educating for Sustainable Development at Universities"](#) the experts on the panel presented examples from the IAU HESD Cluster and their institutional contexts.

The **recommendations below from the higher education representatives are for Universities and other HEIs to:**

- Adopt a **Whole-Institution Approach** (WIA) when embedding sustainability at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): in their institutional strategy, in teaching and learning, research, campus operations and community engagement. It is recommended that all actors of an institution (including students) are invited on board the integration processes;
- Ensure **access** to high quality higher education;
- Acknowledge the **contributions and value of students** for their present and future role in society and as actors of positive change. Students need to be educated and equipped with the necessary skills to deliver change and innovation;
- Open up to different **understandings, approaches**, and socio-cultural contexts of working with sustainability in higher education and in engaging with **communities**;
- Consider environmental ethics, regenerative justice and shared responsibility for the wellbeing of future generations as informing the purposes of higher education appropriate to our times;
- Be bold and seize opportunities for transformative change towards sustainability in purpose, policy and practice while **committing** to middle- and long-term strategies;

- Foster **democracy, equity and inclusion**;
- Draw on the considerable body of **experience** that now exists in Higher Education to align **policy and practice** towards sustainability and collaborate to effect beneficial change within and beyond institutions;
- Advocate to **governments** for Higher Education's crucial role in developing sustainable societies and thus to support them adequately (through funding and trust).

We, individuals from the global academic community, have formulated the above recommendations to feed into the discussion on the role of higher education to advance on the SDGs at the UNESCO WC-ESD 2021, and beyond.

We see the **urgency to now accelerate action for the SDGs** and sustainable recovery, and see positive change starting slowly. The international HE community needs to be bold, keeping this enthusiasm for change and **joining forces to reach our common goals** for people, planet, peace and prosperity.

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#### **Further information:**

- UNESCO World Conference on ESD (17-19 May): <https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030>
- UNESCO WC-ESD [session on Higher Education with IAU \(19 May\)](#)
- IAU Global HESD Cluster: <https://www.iau-hesd.net/contenu/4648-iau-global-cluster-hesd.html>
- IAU Report on IAU Global Cluster on HESD 2019-2020 [click here for the pdf](#)
- Read more about the Cluster in the [special edition of IAU Horizons!](#)
- [IAU global survey on HESD 2019](#)
- Specialized IAU HESD Portal <http://iau-hesd.net/>
- Publications IAU <https://iau-aiu.net/Publications>