



SDGs and BSRUN members

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Universities have crucial role in the achievement of SDGs as society can ensure sustainable development through education, research and innovation. It is vital to understand how universities can effectively use SDGs in their everyday activities.

BSRUN member institutions are actively involved in learning, teaching and practicing SDGs. Many BSRUN universities hold different events, open courses and implement projects touching sustainable development in whole, energy issues, circular economy, climate changes, waste management, recycling, European Green Deal and other initiatives, etc.

For instance, Finnish universities are now on a way of implementation of ambitious programmes towards sustainable development. Thus, **University of Turku** is committed to the sustainable development goals published by the Universities Finland UNIFI in 2020 and has sustainable development as one of the key subjects of the University's Strategy for 2021-2030. The Steering Group develops, monitors, promotes and evaluates practical sustainable development activities of the university. Sustainable campus life and integration of sustainable development in education are among university's priorities as well. UTU is also committed to become carbon neutral by the end of 2025. And this goal is making significant progress. UTU was the first Finnish university to determine its carbon footprint and has already estimated it for the third time. In 2020 it was 10,500 tCO₂ which was about half of the total of the previous year. The reduced



emissions were due to the decrease in work commuting and mobility, as well as the University Properties of Finland Ltd (SYK), the largest landlord, compensating the carbon footprint of their properties. In addition to reducing the carbon footprint, compensation of emissions is also required. A national goal is that all Finnish universities reach carbon neutrality in 2030.

LAB University of Applied Sciences is developing an action plan to reduce its carbon footprint. The University promotes sustainability and responsibility in education, RDI activities, as well as stakeholder cooperation and everyday life practices in campuses. Mitigating climate change and a carbon-negative university by 2030 are LAB's strategic choices. Carbon neutrality is the first to achieve by 2025. LAB, together with LUT and Lahti Region Development LADEC Ltd are currently studying the regional concept of recycling of carbon dioxide emission. LAB also invests systematically in the development of circular economy in both teaching and RDI activities. Its expertise in recycling, development of carbon-neutral processes, development of sustainable materials and multidisciplinary circular economy module, held ten times already, are highly estimated.



Another example is shown by the **Estonian University of Life Sciences**. EMÜ, for example, is developing new approaches to the university's waste management aiming to harmonise the collection of waste at the university, make it compliant, convenient and understandable. The University has launched a Green University waste management website with practical information. All waste-related materials have QR codes linked to this website. IT solutions are implemented to increase waste recycling in Estonia by raising consumer awareness. The university intends to meet the targets: by 2025, each Member State of the European Union must recycle at least 55% of mixed municipal waste; at least 65% of packaging waste must be recovered.



Polish case includes the **University of Warsaw**, where the Rector appointed the rector's team for ecology and climate crisis. And at the **University of Lodz**, an advisory team for climate and environmental policy was appointed. The goal is to develop good practices for the environment protection, promote awareness, conduct pro-ecological activities, etc.



Many BSRUN member universities are also presented in THE Impact Rankings and UI GreenMetric assessing universities against the UN SDGs and their green policy and sustainability correspondingly. For example, **Riga Technical University** was among 60 greenest universities in the world in 2020 according to UI GreenMetric. And ten BSRUN members were ranked in THE Impact Rankings in April 2021.

These are only several examples of what BSRUN member universities are doing in order to contribute to SDGs achievement. Many other actions are undertaken in this direction in many universities worldwide. It is important that the universities use their big potential and resources in order to ensure sustainable development goals implementation.

BSRUN online seminar

BSRUN online seminar on **UN Sustainable Development Goals in Universities** will be held on **29 April 2021** and will highlight the role of universities in achieving SDGs, the ways of SDGs implementation in universities, as well as successful cases and the possibility of measuring the results of university activities in this direction.

The seminar is aimed to ❖ learn national approaches and strategies towards SDGs ❖ study the successful cases in research, teaching and management ❖ understand the role of community cooperation ❖ measure possible impact on international recognition and position in rankings.



Martin Eriksson
SDSN Northern Europe



Turo Kilpeläinen
LAB UAS



Duncan Ross
Times Higher Education

Three keynote speakers will review the possibilities of universities' compliance with the principles of sustainable development, challenges and benefits from adopting sustainable practices. **Martin Eriksson** will present the experience of SDSN Northern Europe in providing high-quality education for sustainable development, as well as advice and solutions for the transformation to a sustainable society. **Turo Kilpeläinen** will make overview of sustainable, responsible and carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences in Finland. **Duncan Ross** will cover the importance of sustainability as a different way of measuring university excellence, and the challenges in trying to do this in a way that is fair and equitable. After that, panelists will consider cases of universities from different countries in the way of SDGs implementation, as well as experience of QS World Merit in raising awareness of youth to take actions that tackle SDGs.

Zoya Zaitseva
QS



Mait Klaassen
EMÜ



Magdalena Gaete
UNAV



Dariusz Mikielwicz
GUT



Māris Kļaviņš
LU



Alexandra Kilina
ETU "LETI"



Sustainability issue in Finnish UAS

All the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences work together for sustainable future – case of LAB University of Applied Sciences

All the 24 Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) are committed to build together more sustainable and responsible universities.

The [Programme](#) for sustainable development and responsibility of universities of applied sciences was published by Arene ry (The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences) in November 2020. This kind of programme concerning the whole higher educational sector is worldwide exceptional. The sustainability and responsibility work of the universities of applied sciences is guided by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the sustainable development guidelines by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The programme includes 14 promises related to education, research, development and innovation (RDI), management of UAS and carbon footprint.



The common goal of the community of the universities of applied sciences is to reduce the footprint of universities' actions and to increase the impact, "handprint", in the development of society. The annual impact of the universities of applied sciences is created by the 30,000 graduating to the labour market and by the expertise that is produced for society through RDI worth EUR 220 million. All the Finnish Universities of applied sciences will be carbon neutral by 2030.

"This programme is made for implementation, because from a societal and corporate perspective, only results will matter. The programme itself does nothing. Together we make a difference".

All the graduates have basic knowledge of sustainability

The LAB University of Applied Sciences is committed to Arene ry's Programme for the sustainable development and responsibility of universities of applied sciences. LAB is an innovation institution for business and industry that promotes sustainability and responsibility in education, RDI activities, stakeholder cooperation and its operating methods in the everyday life at campuses. Climate change mitigation, carbon neutrality in 2025 and negativity in 2030 are LAB's strategic choices. LAB has more than 8,500 students and about 500 teachers and RDI-experts on the online campus and in Lahti and Lappeenranta.

In education, LAB has committed to produce experts who are able to promote sustainable development in industry, business, and society. All the graduates have basic knowledge of sustainable development and responsibility.

"These learning outcomes are ensured by a compulsory course of Orientation to Sustainability thinking, produced by LUT University (LUT), the other half of the LUT Group".

In addition to this, there is a commitment to integrate sustainability issues in all degree programmes.

Strong collaboration with LUT University

Sustainability and responsibility are cross-cutting themes in all the areas of strength of LAB's RDI activities: Circular economy, Design, Innovations and Health. Innovations promoting ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability are created in RDI activities in cooperation between students and companies. LAB creates new technological solutions, promotes the business of circular economy, develops the low-carbon economic structure of regions, and promotes the well-being of people and the environment.

To reach the carbon negativity target, LAB will utilize the expertise of LUT University. The carbon footprint is calculated annually with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) protocol and Group's expertise is also used in preparing a Climate Action Plan. Most significant sources of emissions at LAB's carbon footprint are commuting, business travelling and heating of premises.



LAB works closely with the owners of our campus properties, the University Properties of Finland Ltd (SYK) and the Isku Center. Strong cooperation with property companies enables the energy-efficient use of space while considering the potential need for change in the future. SYK aims to be the most responsible campus operator in Europe in 2030. Isku Center is at the forefront of smart energy.

LAB shares the objectives of a clean environment and a sustainable future with its campus cities, Lahti and Lappeenranta. In the European Green Capital Lahti, LAB promotes targets such as circular economy and the accessibility of recreational areas and a nature-first approach to entrepreneurship. In the European Green Leaf city Lappeenranta, LAB works with companies to develop methods for managing energy production and consumption as part of the Greenreality network.

“Companies, campus actors, the student union KOE, campus cities and campus property owners are the most important partners in reducing our carbon footprint and in achieving our goals”.

Turo Kilpeläinen,
*President and CEO of LAB University of Applied Sciences
Member of the Board of Arene*

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Universities' Sustainable Development in Latvia

Education for Sustainable Development: the University Perspective

Sustainable development (SD) in Latvia was set as a political target for development following the Rio meeting in 1992 as well as in accordance with the goal of sustainable development as laid out in the European Union's Lisbon Strategy and in the Renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy. In accordance with these international and EU commitments, the political target of sustainable development and corresponding objectives are to be declared in national-level planning documents. The responsibility for drawing up the National Development Plan and monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Plan of Latvia until 2030 is allocated to the Cross Sectorial Coordination Centre under supervision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, with the planning and control process taking place at the Ministry departments. Thus, the sustainable development planning and implementation process – sustainable development governance – is not a cross-cutting process in Latvia. Progress towards sustainability has largely been declarative, short of practical measures and outcomes. For example, impacts of restructuring of the economy and the recent recession arising from the economic crisis resulted not only in a major decrease in GDP but also in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and use of fertilizers, and in depopulation of the country due to massive emigration. These trends are mistakenly considered as progress with respect to sustainable development.



Universities play a key role in advancing the concepts of sustainable development in the society. University of Latvia is also a significant player promoting sustainable development. The most important contribution of the University pertains to research on SD as a process at a national level and studies of the development process done as part of sustainability reporting. However, the volume of analytical work dedicated to studying the development process is relatively small, given that sustainable development study is not recognised as a research priority, and analysis of the development process from a very classical perspective of the economy dominates in the existing studies. Notably, the main objective of the National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020 is “Breakthrough in Production”. Other major factors that hinder research on sustainability of the development of Latvia are the dominance of the public administration system in the national planning process, limited accessibility of data that characterise the development process, and obstacles for academics to participate in that process and discuss its results. Definitely, there is a large gap between the academic analytical process and the real planning process and evaluation of the development results. This situation is for the most part related to the national development plan being an instrument used in deciding on the allocation of EU Structural Funds to Latvia as a “new” EU Member State. Thus, the

development planning process, also including aspects of sustainability of the development, compliance with the 17 sustainable development goals and other aspects of SD were overwhelmed by economic and political interests of the national development planning process in Latvia, thereby preventing the involvement of academics in sustainability studies. The key impact of the existing barriers for academics to access the development process is limitation of the possibilities to influence the planning process at a national level and to participate in discussions about this process and achieved results.



Considering the complexity and diversity of the concept of sustainable development, it is extremely important for universities to identify the priorities and aims to gain the maximum input of academic stakeholders in promoting the ESD process. Their primary responsibilities might be related to: 1) development of the sustainability science; 2) integration of Education for Sustainable Development in the study process; 3) promotion of an active stance towards problems related to the sustainability of national development.

Sustainability aspects pertaining to University mostly are those related to the Education for Sustainable Development. Initiatives related to the development and implementation of ESD represent a bottom-up approach and emerge based on the results of local initiatives of academics and as result of active international cooperation, first of all in the Baltic Sea Region. Preparation of study materials on sustainable development basics and implementation of the Sustainable Development study course in the University of Latvia can be mentioned among other achievements of ESD in Latvia.

Māris Kļaviņš
*Head of Department of Environmental Science
University of Latvia*

THE Impact Rankings as means of global assessment of universities against UN SDGs

If you were to go out onto the streets of Helsinki, or Riga, or Gdansk and ask a random stranger to name the best universities in the world, you would probably get a very similar answer. The same is true the world around. There is a perception that certain universities are somehow the “best”.

These universities typically have some aspects in common: they are old, they are wealthy, and they focus their efforts and their reputation around research.

There is nothing wrong with this, of course. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, for example, look for this kind of performance.



But there are other roles for universities – ones that might be described as just as important if less well understood.

The role of universities in promoting and leading on sustainability is a vital one. Unfortunately it is an under-recognised role, and this is why we believe it is important that data is collected to help to understand how universities are delivering on sustainability across the world.

The international aspect of this is important. We can't achieve a sustainable future working within national boundaries. The impact of climate change will affect all of us and does not recognise these borders.

The THE Impact Rankings are one way that universities can choose to do this. To put their commitment to sustainability onto the world stage.

The rankings, now in their third year, are based around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We chose these as a framework because they balance ecological security with equality and sustainable development. They are designed for all parts of society: for governments, for industry, for individuals and also for higher education.

We have identified metrics across four areas for each SDG: research, stewardship, university outreach, and teaching. We think that this framework allows us to understand the positive steps that universities are taking, without being tied to the primarily research focused approach taken in other rankings.

Of course it still requires us to identify things that can be measured, and that can be measured consistently across many countries.

That is not a small task. In research focused rankings we see a domination of universities from Western Europe and North America. Any evaluation of sustainability must reach out beyond these geographies to seek out strong performance wherever it might be found.

The rankings are growing rapidly year on year. From 560 universities in 2019 to over 1240 in 2021. The entry criteria are deliberately kept as open as possible so that as many universities can participate as possible. This does mean that competition is tougher each year as more institutions join the rankings.



BSRUN members in the Impact Rankings 2021 (overall)

- University of Turku 301–400
- University of Latvia 201–300
- Riga Technical University 201–300
- Gdańsk University of Technology 601–800
- University of Warsaw 601–800
- University of Warmia and Mazury In Olsztyn 801–1000
- Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia 401–600
- Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University 401–600
- St. Petersburg State University 601–800
- St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University 601–800

This year ten members of BSRUN participated in the Impact Rankings, with the University of Latvia and Riga Technical University in the 201-300 group.

As well as an overall ranking our approach also gives insight into performance in each SDG. This is important as often universities will have special areas of interest in terms of sustainability. One of the approaches to our design has been to allow universities to reflect the needs of their local communities.

When looking at individual SDGs we can see even stronger performance by BSRUN members. In SDG 13: Climate Action the **University of Turku** achieved 49th place, and **Riga Technical University** achieved 64th place.

In SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, **Riga Technical University** achieved 82nd place.

How have universities used these rankings? Obviously there is an element of promotion of the work around sustainability that is being done. But universities are also using the rankings as a way of benchmarking themselves on a global platform, and also of encouraging cooperation and best practices.

On our part we are continuing to learn from universities about the best ways to understand progress in sustainability, and we hope to grow the ranking to encompass even more universities in the future.

If you would like to know more about the rankings please contact us on impact@timeshighereducation.com.

Duncan Ross
Chief Data Officer
Times Higher Education

SDSN Northern Europe – a network to create action for sustainable development



The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was established in 2012 under the auspices of former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to mobilize global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical problem-solving to reach the SDGs. The secretariats of the global SDSN are located in Paris, New York, and Kuala Lumpur. The Nordic chapter of the network, SDSN Northern Europe, was launched in February 2016

as a regional network to support the Nordic knowledge institutions.

SDSN Northern Europe gathers more than 60 Nordic universities and other knowledge institutions. The network connects Nordic knowledge institutions to localize, teach and promote the SDGs, and support their implementation by generating, applying and disseminating knowledge. Together with the private sector, policymakers, and civil society, we act as change agents at the local, regional and global levels to support the implementation of the SDGs.

In practical terms, we exchange information, insights and experiences, give each other support and feedback, and collaborate on projects. Here are some examples of our activities:

The [SDG Impact Assessment Tool](#) is a free online learning tool that visualizes the results from a self-assessment of how an activity, organisation, or innovation affects the SDGs. Feel free to try it out!

[Mistra Carbon Exit](#) – a program identifying pathways and policies for Sweden to reach the target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

[XPaths](#) – a global project to identify inclusive pathways to a sustainable future in global drylands.

[SDGs in Universities](#) is a joint focus area together with SDSN Australia, New Zealand and Pacific. This includes a special discussion group, shared events, a guide for accelerating education for the SDGs in universities, a database of good examples, and more.

The global SDSN offers a lot of official resources. The [SDG Index](#) and [SDGs Today](#) collect sustainability data from all UN member states and represent sources of knowledge, understanding, research, and education for the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Martin Eriksson
Network Manager
SDSN Northern Europe