

University Educators for Sustainable Development (UE4SD)**Press release: UE4SD project closes with the launch of a unique professional training resource****September 30th, 2016**

The University Educators for Sustainable Development project based on a partnership of higher education institutions for sustainable development across Europe is finishing at the end of September 2016. Over the last three years, UE4SD has achieved its aims through a range of activities and exchanges focused on the professional development of educators. The project has produced materials that provide a shared understanding of ESD within different cultural backgrounds, support professional development of educators' competences, and stimulate relevant education policies at different levels, from institutional to European. Key outcomes from the UE4SD project include:

- Development of the network of 53 European partners, through annual meetings, online communications and active contributions to the project processes and results.
- Inquiry processes that informed a series of mapping reports that have built a shared picture of current expertise and recent experiments in ESD professional development across Europe.
- Sharing of experiences and reflection on selected projects and initiatives, to produce the Leading Practice Publication of significant examples of ESD professional development.
- Initiation and pilot programme of the UE4SD Academy, offering a model and set of real experiences with university teams developing their ESD competence.
- Synthesis of the findings and insights of the project, as well as notable examples of practice and the UE4SD Academy products, into the Online resource platform.

The final and key activity of the project is the UE4SD Academy, which implements results reached in the previous stages. The Academy process was designed and co-ordinated by the UE4SD Steering Group, led by the University Autònoma Madrid, and involved four UE4SD partner institutions. The ultimate goal of the Academy is to support change for sustainability in HE institutions by supporting university educators to develop their own ESD competences, including leadership and change agency skills needed to facilitate institution-wide change processes towards sustainability. The Academy provided the space, time and support for these teams to think creatively to ensure that the fully developed and implemented individual Academy projects:

- critically reflect the cultural specifics in ESD,
- use dialogue to gain insights into ESD professional development,
- develop a personal and shared understanding of ESD in practice,
- identify challenges and opportunities in ESD projects.

Thus, the Academy will extend opportunities for the recognition of competences and implementation of professional practice in ESD. Based on the partners' institutional ESD related progress and other capacities developed within UE4SD project, the Academy will be an opportunity to continue the cooperation of higher education institutions in ESD beyond the project framework.

The next steps for the UE4SD project network are:

- Sharing results – dissemination and communication of the outputs and insights of the project, through its publications and at a range of events and forums
- Applying learning – taking the knowledge and experiences into the work roles of partners and using opportunities to put this into practice to advance ESD
- Ongoing collaboration – agreeing on ways to continue to connect and guide one another, through peer-to-peer exchanges and new initiatives forged through UE4SD
- Influencing practice – using the resources and findings of the project to initiate changes in policy and thinking about professional development across the sector

Overall, the UE4SD project delivered a new and leading practice in higher education professional development that contributes to the success of ESD policies, specifically those initiated at national level by the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD, and the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. It brought together key actors in education for sustainable development (involving 53 partners in 33 countries, impacting 3 000 European higher education institutions and more than 24 million students). Three years of intense cooperation was lead by the University of Gloucestershire (UK) and organized in 4 regional hubs – North (coordinated by University of Gloucestershire), South (Autonomous University of Madrid, ES), East (Charles University Prague, CR), and West (Leuphana University of Lüneburg, DE).

All UE4SD materials are available at <http://www.ue4sd.eu>. Key outcomes from the project and pathways for future are outlined here: <http://platform.ue4sd.eu/pathways.php>

The development of the Academy as an outcome of the UE4SD Project has been funded by the European Commission - Lifelong Learning Programme. Information on the Academy can be found here: http://platform.ue4sd.eu/ue4sd_accademy.php

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