Summary
State of the art report on mapping opportunities for developing education for sustainable development competences in the UE4SD partner countries

UE⁴SD

UNIVERSITY EDUCATORS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

What is the state of the art report about?

This report provides information about the status of education for sustainable development (ESD) in higher education and maps existing ESD professional development opportunities for university educators. It analyses and draws conclusions from four regional reports (UE4SD North, West, South, East), which summarised national mapping exercises conducted by 53 UE4SD partner institutions. The findings cover 33 countries across Europe, representing an area with more than 3,000 higher education institutions and over 24 million students.

Is ESD relevant for European higher education?

The report clearly shows that ESD is gaining importance in higher education across Europe. In many UE4SD partner countries guidelines or legislation exists that recognizes the importance of ESD, although not all these focus on the role of higher education. In some countries (often in the North and West regions) a growing number of higher education institutions have developed guidelines and mission statements that promote sustainability and ESD. Nevertheless, the understanding of ESD and approaches to it differ; in many countries these are initial academic discussions, although some countries have strategic and 'whole-of-institution' approaches to the development of ESD.

Do European university educators have opportunities for professional development of their ESD competences?

In many countries university educators lack ESD professional development opportunities. Very few countries have comprehensive programmes for university educators to acquire teaching competences in ESD. In most countries it is up to the interest and conviction of the individual educator to identify and participate in ESD training. It is crucial for university educators to recognise that ESD involves both "what" and "how" they teach. However many existing opportunities are linked to sustainable development research or topic-based teaching, rather than critical reflection and development of pedagogical approaches or ESD competences.

What are the needs for further development of ESD competences?

The development needs in this area vary according to the cultural and institutional context. Some countries (e.g. from the South region) see the opportunity for the exchange of experiences among colleagues as a crucial aspect. Raising awareness for ESD and initiating discussions with policy makers are also important, while in other countries, especially from the North region, initiatives address more advanced levels of ESD

implementation, supporting whole-of-institution change or pedagogy-led approaches to professional competence. The report has identified diverse approaches to professional development in ESD and several valuable examples of good practice. Many voices are demanding transdisciplinary and team-based approaches that closely react and contribute to social development and a wider involvement of stakeholders.

What are the further steps?

The results described in the state of the art report will inform further project activities – a selected number of good practice examples of ESD professional development opportunities will be elaborated in more detail in a leading practice publication. An online platform of resources will additionally collate valuable resources and materials identified through the national mapping exercises. These outcomes will in turn support the development of an academy for ESD in higher education.

The full report will be available at: www.ue4sd.eu

Partner countries in the UE4SD project

UE4SD partner countries
- ■ Regional partners NORTH
- ■ Regional partners WEST
- ■ Regional partners SOUTH
- ■ Regional partners EAST
- ■ No UE4SD partner

Lifelong Learning Programme