



Contribution of universities to ecological, economic and social sustainability

Seventh EWORA Conference "Leadership in Higher Education and Research in Times of Dynamic Global Change"

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Overview

1. What does CESAER do concerning contribution of universities to sustainability?
2. How does Ghent University contribute to sustainability?
3. What do we do about UN SDG 5?
4. What role does university leadership play?

[Blue and underlined texts in this presentation contain links!](#)



**What does CESAER do concerning
contribution of universities to
sustainability?**

Association at a glance



Values of CESAER

Safeguard academic freedom, institutional autonomy and scientific integrity



Promote sustainable peace and prosperity



Tremendous local and global challenges

1. Recovery and resilience following Covid-19 pandemic
2. Climate change
3. Social exclusion
4. Resource depletion and biodiversity loss
5. Infectious diseases
6. Increasing inequality of share of wealth
7. Plastic pollution
8. Despotism and authoritarianism



Shape sustainable knowledge societies in Europe and beyond

Inspire on contribution of universities
of S&T to ecological, economic and
social sustainability



Promote leadership amongst
Members

Measure contribution of universities to
sustainability



White Paper Next Generation Metrics

June 2020

Over 1,200 volunteers and leaders from our association work towards this overall goal

Holistic approach to contribution of universities to sustainability

Science and technology:

- Direct contribution to policy and decision-making
- Direct contributions to sustainability
- Indirect contributions to sustainability

Learning and teaching:

- Direct contribution through (i) challenge-based learning, (ii) vertically integrated projects and (iii) dedicated degree programmes
- Integrating UN SDG and sustainability into curricula
- (Transversal) skills and competences for sustainability



Modes:

- Catalytic role of universities on local and national responses in home country
- Cooperation with partners worldwide
- Sustainable campus management
- Contribution to UN SDG 17

Innovation:

- From academia-industry collaboration to ecosystems and beyond ([n-tuple helices](#))
- Shaping markets to promote common goods
- Fostering innovators and entrepreneurs to tackle complex challenges

Towards conclusions and pledges

1. Key technologies for common goods
2. Link SSH with STEM
3. Importance of systems thinking and systems engineering approach
4. Importance of openness of research, education and innovation and digitalisation
5. Key role of infrastructures
6. Need to 'live' generic values and ethical frameworks
7. Special responsibility to contribute to UN SDG 5
8. Key role for university leadership



Declaration expected by 14 October



White Paper expected by end of 2021

How does Ghent University contribute to sustainability?

Combined bottom-up and top-down approach

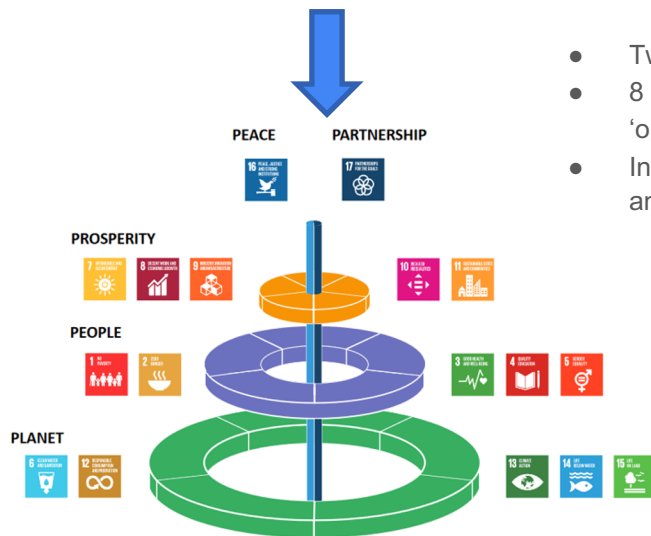


Bottom-up initiatives regarding sustainability since 2012

- Think Thank Transition UGent (2012)
- Sustainability Vision (2013)
- Green Office - Green Hub

A university-wide policy choice since 2019

- Two special commissioners
- 8 out of 11 faculties with at least 1 (out of 5) 'operational objectives' regarding sustainability
- Increased focus on sustainability in education and research/innovation



Sustainability at Ghent University



Organisation and daily operations

We want to set a sustainable example. With an energy transition plan, a mobility plan, a biodiversity plan, vegetarian food in our restaurants, ...

Check!

- Read our [sustainability vision](#) and [sustainability report](#)
- [Climate plan Ghent University](#)
- [Policy instruments, projects and action on sustainability](#)
- [Green Office](#) in the [Green Hub](#) (in Dutch)



Commitment

Do you want to take action in the sustainability policy? Do you want to create support? Do you have any ideas of suggestions? Do you want to get started with specific projects? Go!

- Join our [Sustainability pact with your department](#) (in Dutch)
- Join the thinktank [Transitie UGent](#)
- [Be an activist! Run the climate](#) (in Dutch)



Education

Are you interested in sustainability and are you looking for this in your curriculum, thesis, student project, ...? Or are you looking for tools to integrate that in your lessons? Learn!

- [Initiatives for students](#) (in Dutch)
- [Informations for professors](#) (in Dutch)



Research

Multidisciplinary research teams work on solutions for a social and ecological future. interested in their results? Or do you have a specific research question? (Re)search!

- [Research platforms](#)
- [For research questions](#) (in Dutch)

What do we do about UN SDG 5?

Principle: Safeguard equality, diversity and inclusion

Our Members and association recognise the need to accelerate the achievement of equality, diversity and inclusion at our institutions through personal leadership, institutional vigour and societal change.



We support our Members to achieve pledges with online seminars
[EDI.Lab](#) sharing best practices in EDI

Rectors and equivalents from our Members collectively and individually committed to concrete pledges through

CESAER

The strong and united voice of universities
of science and technology in Europe

DECLARATION ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
AT UNIVERSITIES OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DATED 18TH OCTOBER 2019

see our [Declaration](#)

Universities of S&T have special responsibility to achieve gender balance, see our [Equality Survey 2018](#)

Equal opportunities for men and women in research

- Encourage equal participation of men and women in research teams at all levels
- Create working conditions and a culture of trust that allow men and women to have equally fulfilling careers



- Address both men's and women's realities (in e.g. clinical trials which historically exclude women)
- Consider gender-specific research to fill knowledge gap

- Recruitment and career progression of women, incl. equal pay measures and tackling consequences of Covid-19
- Measures to deal with gender-based violence, incl. sexual harassment
- Work-Life-Balance and institutional culture
- Female careers and women in decision making

- Respect value of diversity brought by students and staff to institution, learn from and offer helping hand to those in need
- Issues with standardisation of data collection along various dimensions
- Promote openness and critical thinking with students and staff empowering them to act as guardians of what is true and what is not

What role does university leadership play?

Evolving idea of university of science and technology

Visions and institutional development paths empowering institutions to release unprecedented forces and:

- Act as autonomous agents of great transformation
- Deliver excellent investigator-driven frontier research
- Offer cutting-edge and innovative education and training to diverse, open and truthful student body
- Transfer and manage S&T towards multiple players, including governments, public services, business & industry and non-governmental organisations
- Provide an inspiring space for researchers, innovators, teachers, students and administrators
- Deploy international, open and eco-friendly campuses
- Transmit equality, diversity, inclusion, ethics, democratic citizenship and universal values to researchers, innovators, teachers, students and administrators
- Engage with civil society and shape knowledge societies for a sustainable future as both local and global player



Imminent questions for university leadership to answer

What is the role of the leadership in promoting a culture of change towards contributing to sustainability?

- What are the mechanisms to assess and reward contributions to sustainability?
- How do we safeguard and live scientific integrity, academic freedom and institutional autonomy?
- Is the university's high-level vision and strategy translated into a concrete programme of activities and deliverables focused on particular sustainability outcome objectives?
- How is the university organised in order to face sustainability issues?
- Is there central coordination concerning contribution to sustainability?
- What is the percentage of the total university budget associated to initiatives and actions related to sustainability?
- How does the university calculate and reduce its carbon-emissions ecological footprint?





For more information:

- CESAER at www.cesaer.org
- Ghent University at www.ugent.be/en
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