

Proposal Sustainability in Education

To: Vice Deans of Education
Date: June 13, 2022
Purpose: Request for input and collaboration
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Background

Three years ago, the EUR [Working Group on Sustainability in Education](#) argued for a broad strategy to mainstream sustainability in education, based on the Erasmian values and the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education. The Working Group emphasised that for all EUR students to become sustainability literate, a compulsory sustainability course should be offered. This objective is included in the Sustainability@EUR Plan of Action 2022-2024.

The Sustainability in Education plan was integrated within the [Design Impact Transition](#) (DIT) platform, including the ambition to develop a university wide Sustainability Course. This course should be accessible for all BA/BSc EUR students to get introduced to and engaged with sustainability and related activities at EUR in a two-day programme (Plan of Action DIT, June 2021). To develop and embed this course, the EUR Sustainability Program Coordinator and DIT platform have joined forces.

A recent survey among EUR students (n=100) shows interesting results regarding their need for including sustainability in their professional development, in order to be able to analyse, understand and contribute to complex challenges in their future careers. Almost 90% indicate they want to learn how they could work on sustainability issues within their field of study. The same percentage of students are interested in attending lectures from other EUR sustainability programmes (see annex for more details).

Our proposal

We have an urgency as EUR: the world is moving quickly and the need for an understanding of sustainability challenges is clearer than ever, yet our university is not adequately responding to this. We have an agreed plan that is about three years old, and a continuing large demand from students to give sustainability a bigger place in the curriculum. In the redevelopment of the educational vision, sustainability will certainly get a place. However, we are over halfway through the strategic period, so we need to turn ambition into action now.

We therefore propose (1) to [develop a short elective module as a pilot](#) with the faculties where sustainability is already included in their own vision, or faculties that feel an urgency to offer a course in sustainability as an option to first year bachelor students and (2) to form a [working group on sustainability in education 2.0](#), parallel to the broadly based vision project in the autumn to provide input on the vision project and consider other possible interventions at portfolio level that allow students to develop competences to include sustainability in their academic and professional action framework.

We would like to explain both proposals:

Pilot Course on Sustainability

Since EUR's final ambition is that all students gain knowledge about sustainability (mandatory), this implies embeddedness in all programmes (core courses). A sustainability course for incoming students is a step towards this ambition. This introduction course could be piloted in one or (preferably) more of the faculties, improved and rolled out to all faculties.

The course would encompass three key elements: (a) knowledge: challenges in terms of grand challenges related to climate change, energy transition, biodiversity loss, etc. (facts and figures), (b) insight: introduce system and transition thinking as important ways to understand the patterns and mechanisms that could help move into desired direction (we have to do something different) and (c) action perspective (on personal level): what might this mean for students' personal and professional development, at EUR and their future careers (providing students with an action perspective (I can do something different)).

This course is inherently interdisciplinary as it will address different types of societal challenges as well as the roles of policy, business, NGO's, communities and science. In the course we will bring together lecturers and approaches from different Schools and integrate interactive and action-based elements in the course. Of course, we will link this course to the intended learning outcomes of the Schools programmes.

To develop the course, we will also ask input from and collaborate with Impact@Core and CLI. During the design sessions for the new HOKA project plans, three faculties have put sustainability on their agenda as part of their impact learning (ESL, ESHCC and EMC).

The envisioned timeframe is development of the course in summer / autumn 2022, to be able to offer the course in the spring of 2023.

Working Group Sustainability in Education 2.0

To deliver on EUR's sustainability actually and structurally, including the ambition to integrate sustainability in education, we propose to install a working group (as a successor to the working group of three years ago, hence the 2.0). This working group will contribute to the development of EUR's vision as planned for in the second half of this year.

The working group will (1) sharpen and consequently reformulate the educational vision on sustainability and (2) subsequently develops a proposal to convert this vision into a didactic framework and a broader palette within the educational portfolio: additional courses, internships and specific graduation assignments. Resources needed to develop sustainability in education are also part of the assignment of the working group.

The working group would consist of teachers, students, learning innovators of faculties, supported by DIT platform, the Sustainability Programme Coordinator and Impact@the Core.

The envisioned timeline would be to develop / contribute to the EUR vision in autumn 2022, development of courses in spring 2023 to be able to offer them in the academic year 2023/24.

Our request

1. To develop a pilot course on an interdisciplinary basis, we would like to ask support from the faculties, including suggestions for colleagues who could contribute.

2. To set up the working group sustainability in education 2.0, we would like to ask a vice dean education to act as the chair and lead.

Annex: Survey results among 99 Erasmus students regarding their opinion about the preparation they are receiving on environmental crisis issues and whether they feel they have sufficient access to all EUR has to offer on the interdisciplinary topic of sustainability? (Tanner Tuttle, 3rd year Psychology student, EUR, 2022).

Q1: EUR offers 43 bachelors degrees. Do you think each program should offer a picture of how students could transition from school to a career in working on sustainability/climate crisis issues?

89% YES, 11% NO

Q2: Has your degree program provided you with a picture of how you could transition from school into a career working on sustainability/climate crisis issues?

78% NO, 22% YES

Q3: Would you like to learn how you could work on sustainability/climate crisis issues, upon school completion, within your field of study?

87% YES, 13% NO

Q4: Assuming it is possible, would you like to work on sustainability/climate crisis issues upon school completion within your field of study?

74% YES, 26% NO

Q5: The climate crisis spans every area of society. Would you be interested in attending/viewing lectures from other EUR degree programs around the topic of addressing sustainability/climate crisis issues?

87% YES, 13% NO

Q6: Would you be interested in working with students from other programs on university or community projects around the topic of sustainability/climate crisis?

Example: psychology students and management-international-social-change (MISOC) students using their joint knowledge to create/execute a plan to lower EUR energy waste?

82% YES 18% NO