

Strengthening International Higher Education Cooperation for Sustainability

29 April, 2025

Session 3: Whole-Institution Approach Workshop for Sustainability through International Cooperation

Background

Global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and resource depletion continue to disproportionately impact the Global South, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable development approaches rooted in collaboration and innovation. As emphasized in UNESCO's [*Futures of Education Report "Reimagining Our Futures Together"*](#), education—and higher education—is a powerful catalyst for systemic change toward sustainability.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are uniquely positioned to contribute to solutions through research, teaching, and community engagement. Yet addressing the complex, interconnected dimensions of sustainability demand cross-border, cross-sectoral cooperation—particularly in the Global South, where localized challenges and opportunities require context-sensitive solutions.

To this end, international higher education networks are playing a pivotal role in connecting institutions, sharing best practices, and accelerating collective progress. The session, 'Networks in Action: Leveraging Global Collaboration for Systemic Transformation in Higher Education,' will feature a dynamic dialogue among global networks and partnerships, highlighting how joint efforts and a shared vision can drive systemic change and promote sustainability across institutions and regions.

This collaborative spirit sets the stage for the Whole-Institutional Approach Workshop, which invites key stakeholders to collectively generate insights and recommendations for a co-designed policy brief aimed at embedding sustainability across all institutional dimensions. The workshop will focus on capacity building, knowledge sharing, and identifying strategies for South-South cooperation, public-private partnerships, and other impactful collaborations.

Through participatory group work and multi-stakeholder engagement, the workshop aims to generate innovative solutions that are locally relevant, inclusive, and scalable—especially for institutions in the Global South.

By uniting diverse voices and leveraging global collaboration, the workshop will contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)—and foster long-term alliances for a sustainable and equitable future in higher education.

Objectives

- Highlight opportunities for international cooperation grounded in shared strengths, contextual needs, and mutual learning among higher education institutions.
- Promote networking and participatory knowledge-sharing, encouraging the collection of innovative ideas and actionable recommendations to address common sustainability challenges through a horizontal and transformative lens.
- Align inter-institutional cooperation initiatives with the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the systemic transformation of higher education.
- Strengthen the capacities of universities—particularly in the Global South—for strategic planning and collaborative insight generation, enabling the formulation of policy solutions that drive joint action for sustainability in higher education.

Expected outcomes

- Identified strategic entry points for embedding sustainability across institutional functions through a whole-institution approach.
- Collected key insights and recommendations that promote international cooperation as a mechanism to advance sustainability in higher education.
- Generated actionable proposals addressing shared challenges and opportunities for cross-regional collaboration between institutions.
- Strengthened peer learning and exchange, fostering mutual understanding of diverse contexts, institutional strengths, and innovation potential.

- Drafted elements that will contribute to a co-designed policy brief supporting the implementation, scaling, and piloting of sustainability strategies rooted in inter-institutional cooperation.

Details

- Date: 29th of April 2025
- Location: UNESCO Headquarters (Paris, France)
- Time: 150 minutes
- Room capacity: 96 people
- Language: English
- Interpretation: This session will not have interpretation services. Interventions during the panel must take place in English. During the group work, rapporteurs and facilitators will be available to provide support in different languages if needed.

Agenda (15:30 – 18:00)

Time	Session
15:30 – 15:35 (5 mins)	<p>Welcome to Sustainable inter-institutional cooperation models Workshop</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Yuma Inzolia, Chief of Capacity Building, UNESCO IESALC

15:35 – 16:05

(30 mins)

Networks in Action: Leveraging Global Collaboration for Systemic Transformation in Higher Education

Exchange between International Higher Education Networks on advancing Sustainability together.

Moderator:

- Mr. Marco Pasqualini, Education Programme Specialist, SDG 4 Global Cooperation Section and Inter-Agency Secretariat, UNESCO

Speakers:

- Ms. Julia Carlow, Associate Head of Sustainability, American University of Sharjah; Leader University, South-South University Cooperation Network (SUCN) - 4 mins
- Mr. Jean-Christophe Carteron, President, Sulitest; Co-Chair, United Nations Higher Education Sustainability Initiatives (HESI) - 4 mins
- Ms. Isabel Toman, Programme Officer for Sustainable Development, International Association of Universities (IAU)– 4 mins
- Cecilia Alexandra Paredes Verduga, Rector, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, ESPOL; Member Network of Rectors for Sustainability – 4 mins
- Ms. Katerina Ananiadou, Programme Specialist, UNESCO – 4 mins
- Prof Luis Manuel Chicharo, Coordinator, UNESCO Chair in Ecohydrology: Water for ecosystems and societies, University of Algarve – 4 mins

What is your network's/partnerships's specificity and unique added value in addressing sustainability, can you share a tangible achievement in this domain, what main challenge still needs to be overcome in the coming months and years, and how can others get engaged?

16:05 – 16:10

(5 mins)

Workshop Introduction & Context

Brief framing on the strategy of the workshop and value of South-South cooperation in higher education.

Moderator:

<p>16:10 – 16:15 (5 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Yuma Inzolia, Chief of Capacity Building, UNESCO IESALC <p>Group Formation Participants are divided into diverse working groups</p> <p>Facilitators/Rapporteurs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Lulu Campbell / Mr. Antonios Tashejian <i>(English and French if needed)</i> Ms. Katerina Ananiadou / Ms. Layal Beyhum <i>(English and French if needed)</i> Mr. Mathias Bouckaert / Ms. Maria Viladegut <i>(English, French, and Spanish if needed)</i>
<p>16:15 – 17:05 (5 mins)</p> <p>17:05 – 17:30 (25 mins)</p>	<p>Group Work: Co-Design the Model Groups will collaboratively collect insights and ideas for a policy brief on South-South cooperation for sustainability, guided by key questions.</p> <p>Group Presentations Each group presents the main insights and recommendations discussed.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Yuma Inzolia, Chief of Capacity Building, UNESCO IESALC
<p>17:30 – 18:00 (30 mins)</p>	<p>Closing and final remarks</p> <p>High-Level Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC <p>Group photo</p>

Target Audience

- University and higher education institution administrators.
- Faculty and educators involved in curriculum development and sustainability education.
- Policymakers, particularly those focused on education and sustainability in the Global South.
- Private sector partners with a focus on sustainability through education and innovation.

- Civil society organizations committed to education and sustainability.
- Youth, students, and future thinkers focused on driving sustainable change.