

## **UNESCO announces new global cooperation network on Education for Sustainable Development and Social Transformation with teacher education at the core**

Lüneburg / Crete / Heidelberg / Makhanda / Toronto / San José  
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Heidelberg University of Education and her partners announces a new global UNITWIN cooperation programme on Education for Sustainable Development and Social Transformations called UNiESD&ST. The Network is based on six UNESCO and SARCHI Chairs from Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Greece and South Africa. The global network of higher education institutions and internationally engaged organizations focuses on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a transformative force towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and a sustainable future for all. Leuphana University of Lüneburg will lead the coordination of the network co-hosted by five other eminent institutes of higher education and supported by leading organizations and think tanks on sustainability learning spread across the world. The new cooperation programme under the UNESCO UNITWIN Network will address teachers at all levels as key players to foster sustainable development and peace through education.

UNESCO Chairs from Leuphana University, Heidelberg University of Education (Germany), University of Crete (Greece), Earth Charter Center/University for Peace (Costa Rica), York University (Canada) and SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning System from South Africa join forces with their partners from 30 countries, comprised of universities, internationally engaged associations and UN-related institutions to strengthen the role of quality education in achieving the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) through research, policy development and implementation of ESD with a focus on teacher education. Speaking on the occasion, Professor Matthias Barth, Board of Director at Institute for Sustainable Development and Learning and Principal Investigator of the project says “It is an honor to steer this global alliance co-hosted by ISDL at Leuphana University, as it is one out of 40 UNITWIN Networks worldwide and only the second one in Germany. Teachers are the cornerstone of our education systems and with the recognition of ESD as key enabler of all the SDGs, they are crucial in preparing future generations to understand and foster sustainability”. He continues to say that this global partnership will also bring knowledge and experience to contextualize the role of ESD in various regions.

Dr Lutz Moeller, Deputy Secretary-General at German National Commission for UNESCO says “ESD is one of humanity’s best tools to hopefully solve global sustainability challenges. The Berlin World Conference on ESD, hosted in Berlin by UNESCO and Germany in May 2021, made a powerful call to action through the Berlin Declaration. Strengthening the role of teachers in promoting ESD and empowering young people as change agents are two particularly important demands. We are proud and grateful that through UNiESD&ST, a new and strong network will support us in this endeavour.”

Through this global network UNiESD&ST, the six founding partners will spearhead the collaboration to build capacities of teachers to impart quality education to learners to foster action on the SDGs with special focus on building forward better from COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO announced the establishment of this cooperation programme as a [UNESCO](#) programme promoting international cooperation and networking between universities. It fosters worldwide collaboration and knowledge mobilization towards the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Teachers have always been at the frontlines of the responses towards sustainable development. To continue the focus on teacher capacity building while focusing on ESD for 2030 framework, UNiESD&ST will focus on three key areas: research, policy development and implementation of ESD at all levels of education with special focus on building global perspectives on ESD and teacher education. Under the partnership, focus will be given to regenerating the role of teachers by enhancing the quality of teacher education within the scope of the partners work and impacting policy work through research to build the national capacities for teachers to equip learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to live healthy lives, promote sustainable development and engage with the world as responsible global citizens. During the pandemic, the unprecedented disruption faced by the education system across the world has once more shown the importance of teachers to ensure access and retention in a quality education for all.

In 2019, UNESCO also adopted the [ESD for 2030 framework](#) to emphasize the role of ESD for the entire 2030 Agenda. UNiESD&ST will support UNESCO's work with particular research designed to address the challenges of the [ESD for 2030 Roadmap](#). The new framework which builds upon the previous work on ESD identifies ESD as a key enabler of all SDGs and an important measure of educational quality.

Leuphana University's UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development and the [Institute for Sustainable Development and Learning](#) will co-host the global network with its other five founding UNESCO Chairs and over 30 further partner institutions from Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania and the Americas. The founding partners in this new alliance are:

- **Germany:** UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development, Leuphana University with its interim chair holder Professor Daniel Lang and the [Institute for Sustainable Development and Learning as co-host](#).
- **Canada:** UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability, [York University](#) with its chairholder Professor [Charles Hopkins](#)
- **Costa Rica:** UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development with the Earth Charter, The Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development and the [University of Peace](#) with its chairholder Professor [Mirian Vilela](#)
- **Germany:** UNESCO Chair on Observation and Education of World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve, [Heidelberg University of Education](#) with its chairholder Professor [Alexander Siegmund](#)
- **Greece:** UNESCO Chair in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education for Sustainable Development, [University of Crete](#) with its chairholder Professor [Vassilios Makrakis](#)
- **South Africa:** DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems, [Environmental Learning Research Centre](#), [Rhodes University](#) with its chairholder Professor [Heila Lotz-Sisitka](#)

The cooperation programme will be launched via poster exhibition at the forthcoming 5th UNESCO forum on Transformative Education and a virtual launch event at the second edition of "Sustainable on the Go Conference" being organized by York University on the occasion of International Day of Education (24 January 2022).

## Background Information:

### About Heidelberg University of Education

The [Heidelberg University of Education](#) is a higher education institution with a university profile. Its members teach and research primarily in the fields of education sciences, subject didactics and special needs education. They are also specialized in the transfer of their expertise, for example to companies, (non-profit) organizations and the public. Since 2016 Heidelberg University of Education holds the [UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education](#); Professor Alexander Siegmund is the Chairholder. In 2018, Heidelberg University of Education established the [Heidelberg Center for Education for Sustainable Development](#) (BNE-Zentrum). The center forms a university-wide scientific network of various departments, institutes and other scientific institutions of the Heidelberg University of Education.

### ESDfor2030 Framework

“ESD for2030” framework builds upon previous work of UNESCO on ESD. The framework explicitly recognizes ESD as a core element of educational quality and that ESD is integral to engagement with all of the SDGs and an important area of educational development in its own right. To implement the framework, ESD for 2030 Roadmap was launched in 2019/2020 year as policy and action guidelines to realize the ideas as mentioned in the document.

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