



Special Session Proposal

Enhancing Responsible Higher Education for Regional Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Achieving regional sustainability requires a holistic and integrated approach that considers the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors. It often involves the development and implementation of strategic plans, policies, and practices that promote long-term well-being for both the current and future generations within a specific geographic area. Education, and particularly higher education, is usually seen as playing an important role. In the context of increasingly complex issues that affect the global society and the regional communities, this session proposes a curious and critical look at the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) for regional sustainable development.

For the discussions, we are interested at looking at the enhancement of higher education institutions' interaction with the surrounding communities (and other HEIs) in connection with the rethinking of their internal practices. Examples of this are:

- the articulation of the social dimension of HEIs and their "third mission" as institutions not only committed to addressing and solving societal problems, but also committed to fostering public-minded *alumni* through powerful experiences of engagement for both the students and the community (Isabel Menezes and Joe O'Hara),
- the case of European Universities alliances strengthening their European and international reach and partnerships based on values of sustainability, multiculturalism, and inclusiveness and being regional development-oriented (Maria Figueiredo),
- the specific answers that several HEIs are building regarding positive ageing in regions with a shift in the distribution of the population towards older ages, connecting research and social intervention, as well as bringing together several local and regional partners. This responses

are accompanied with initiatives for the students and by the students that also center on sustainable well-being and development (Lia Araújo).

We welcome contributions that focus on these themes or bring other ways of discussing the enhancement of the higher education responsibility regarding sustainable regional development.