



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. Education, and particularly higher education, is usually seen as playing an important role in defining policies and providing conceptual tools to increase sustainability awareness and pro-environmental behaviours. 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 in 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 (i) 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); (ii) 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 (Sebastian Stride); (iii) the processes through which HEIs can deal theoretically, conceptually, methodically, critically and reflectively with current changes in the earth's system to become pioneers in climate protection as part of an overall institutional approach, particularly focusing on innovation through curricula and transfer and networking at the regional level (Marco Rieckmann); (iv) 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. These responses are accompanied with initiatives for the students and by the students that also centre 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.