

Universities as Beacons of Change: Education for Sustainability lighting up pathways for a new world

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Q1. How can universities become beacons of change and good practice in ESD?

TITLE

Perception of Spanish Universities Social Councils on the role that their institutions should play in sustainability

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Abstract

Universities promote Sustainable Development (SD) by transforming their missions and restructuring their curricula, research programs, life on campus and interaction with other social actors. As for the environmental aspect, these institutions can, in many cases, be considered a centre of experimentation of ideas, practices and behaviours related to energy efficiency and transport. Thus, many universities are changing the way they operate to integrate SD in managing their campus. In their statements, university leaders show an interest in getting their institutions to be sustainable and a belief that universities have an important role to play in this area. The main areas of activity, related to the environment, are mobility and transport, efficient use of resources and the reduction and treatment of waste. The principal obstacles identified are related to the financial resources needed to develop the projects.

In Spain the Social Council is "the societal participatory body in university and should act as an element of interaction between society and the institution", so it is key to understand the perception that its members hold about the commitment universities should take on issues of environmental sustainability. Therefore, the aim of this study is to know the opinion of the members of the Social Council - as the main body for participating in society and responsible for overseeing economic activity- about the effort the university should make in the field of environmental sustainability. The methodology is based on the qualitative analysis of the data collected through different methods as an exploratory survey, in depth-interviews and focus groups. The expected results should reveal the perception that these agents (members of the Social Council) have on the sustainable management of the university campus.

Keywords: Sustainability, Higher education, Social Council, Spain.