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EUSTEPs is a project carried out, under the leadership of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, by the strategic partnership between four European universities and non-governmental organisation Global Footprint Network, the official home of the Ecological Footprint methodology and applications.



Because education must nurture generations of sustainability-minded citizens and leaders who accelerate the transition to a one-planet compatible society.

For more information visit www.eusteps.eu

WHY

Living within the means of the only planet available to humanity is the starting point to creating a society where all people can thrive. "One planet" is not a goal, but rather the context that shapes our reality.

Education constitutes a major development driver and can play a role in achieving a sustainable future through the development of awareness, skills and competences. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are critical agents of societal change.

Becoming aware, through experiential education, of the scope of natural resources that are consumed on a daily basis, and understanding the impact of choices made by individuals and organizations, are prerequisites for designing steps towards sustainable practices and systems.

The critical role of education for sustainable development

Since being recognized at the 1972 UN Stockholm Conference as key in fostering environmental protection, education has gained a central role in easing the transition to a sustainable world. **With the adoption of the UN Agenda 2030 in 2015, education has become a core objective of SDG target 4.7** about "ensur(ing) that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development."

The emergence of the Ecological Footprint as a tool for sustainability

Based on UN data, **the Ecological Footprint measures humanity's demand on nature on the one hand and the capacity of the planet's ecosystems to renew ecological resources on the other hand.** It is being used in a wide range of contexts (from education to policy making) and at multiple geographical levels. Its most popular application is the Footprint Calculator, which individuals can use to measure their personal Ecological Footprint (www.footprintcalculator.org).

Photo credit: Markus Spiske / Unsplash

WHAT

EUSTEPs (Enhancing Universities' Sustainability TEaching and Practices) aims to educate European university students and the wider academic community about the complexity of sustainability and its interdisciplinary nature in an engaging and captivating manner.

It aims also to support the assessment and reduction of the environmental impact of EU Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through a collaborative experiential approach based on an innovative application of the Ecological Footprint.

HOW

By interweaving conceptual knowledge of **environmental, economic and social** principles of sustainability with popular digital tools and **innovative teaching and learning practices**, EUSTEPs aims to become the blueprint for HEIs teaching and practicing sustainability.

The project's ambition is to set the foundation for an innovative experiential approach that can be disseminated and scaled up at the European level – with a view to opening up the platform in due time to HEIs around the world.

The key outputs of the EUSTEPs project are:

E-Learning Platform

A set of learning modules and a MOOC customized for the four project target groups (**students, teaching staff, administrative staff, management bodies**), which are aiming to be interactive, innovative and applicable at European level and beyond, thus supporting efforts towards SDG 4.

University Footprint Calculator

Co-developed by academics, Ph.D. students, administrative staff, and NGO representatives through a participatory process. This tool will allow users to identify HEIs' unsustainability drivers & initiate a process of reducing their ecological impact, thus enhancing SDGs 11, 12, 13.

OUTCOME

EUSTEPs will contribute to shape a new generation of **sustainability-conscious citizens and professionals** who will be trained to assess and analyze impact drivers with the use of dedicated digital tools, thus introducing a new and necessary professional expertise in society.