

The path of Greek conventional universities towards Sustainability

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Introduction

Higher education has been recognized worldwide for its strategic role in building a sustainable society [1]. Taking as a starting point the basic principles of the goal 4 (SDG4) of the agenda's 2030 sustainable development goals, universities draw up their policy with the aim of ensuring a free, equal and quality education for all, the protection of human rights and the promotion of peace [2,3].



The Sustainability Charter of Greek Universities

In Greece, conventional universities, by adopting the "Sustainability Charter" approved by the Chancellors' Synod in 2011, participate in the network of Greek Universities for sustainable development. Their ultimate goal is to strengthen their role in the transformation of society, to change perceptions and to form new standards that will ensure the consolidation of sustainability in Greek society [4]. In this light, the majority of conventional universities have become aware and have set up environmental offices and committees in order to coordinate the integration of the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability in their strategic planning.

The axes of action of this planning include:

- education (inclusion of courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level related to the SDGs)
- research (strengthening the research in the fields of environment, energy, quality of life and sustainable development)
- governance of institutions (university administration compatible with the principles of democracy, transparency and meritocracy, etc)
- application of principles and methods compatible with sustainability (environmental upgrading of buildings, promotion of renewable energy sources and recycling, proper waste management, etc)
- cooperation of universities with society [5].

Conclusions

The intention of Greek universities to adopt sustainability seems to be promising, however we have to admit that it is still at an early stage. The creation of green universities is a collective effort that requires the effective planning of actions and the participation of all members of the university community (administration, teaching staff, administrative staff, students) for its successful outcome.

References

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