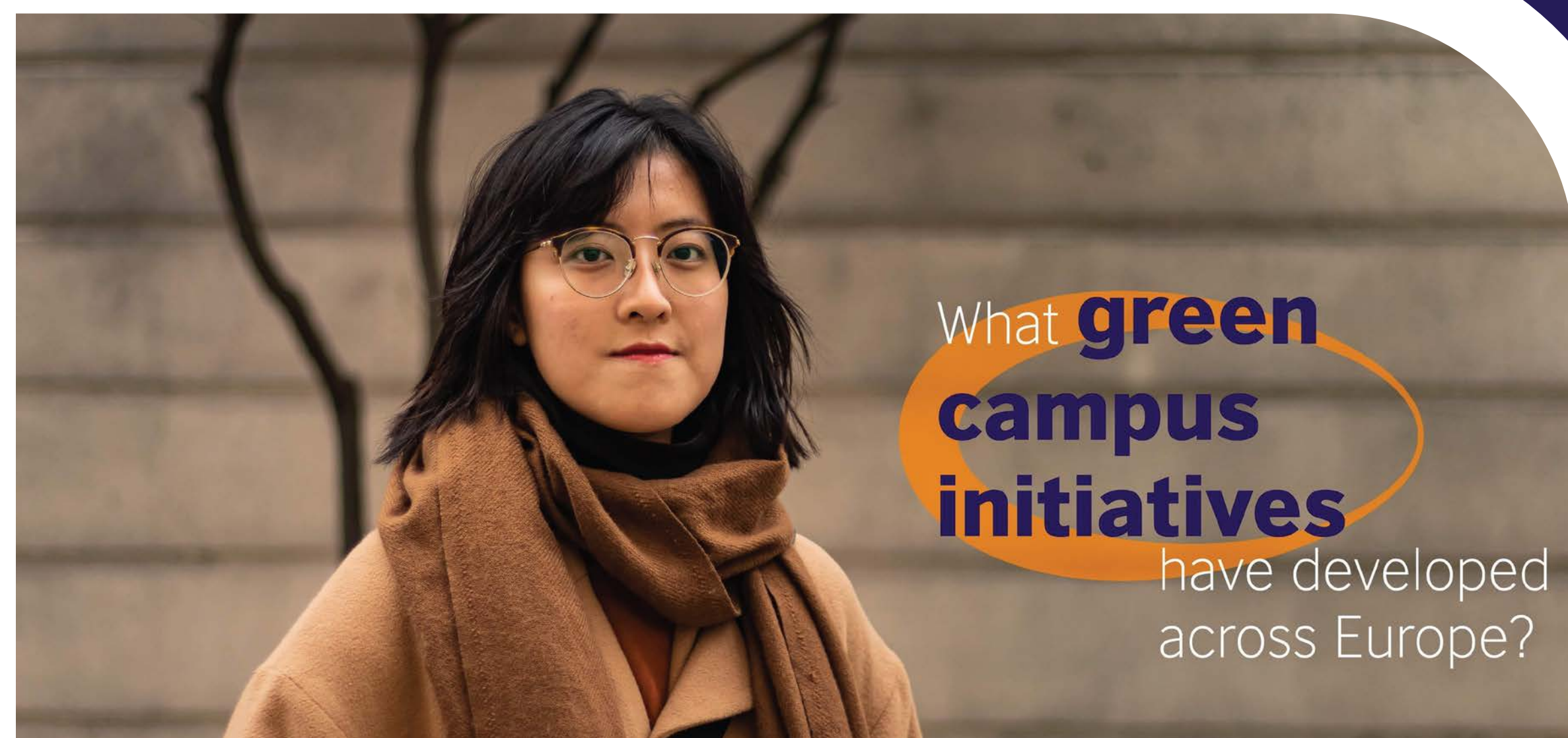


Editorial: Second Policy Dialogue France

**Reaching Sustainable Development Goals:
universities and students looking for solutions.**



5 June, webinar
within the Going Global 2020 online
conversations on higher education

#GoingGlobal2020

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations' Member States in 2015, are a universal call to action to protect the planet and ensure that all populations enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

On 5 June, PSL and the British Council France organised a joint webinar "Reaching Sustainable Development Goals: universities and students looking for solutions" to serve as a platform for dialogue between several university leaders and student representatives.

This event was also part of a series of conferences launched by British Council's Going Global 2020 to debate the future of Higher Education.

The angle chosen to address the main challenges in implementing the SDGs in Higher Education was the voice we wanted to give to student representatives. Alongside the leaders of universities, including academics and administrative staff, students have turned out to be essential representatives and powerful voices in the reframing of the university of tomorrow.

In several countries, students' associations are calling for revised curricula, integrating sustainable development and asking for impactful initiatives on campuses.

Moreover, the **Covid-19 crisis** emphasises the need for universities to remap their education to meet the SDGs, not only by helping curb global warming but more generally, by fostering new cross-disciplinary approaches in teaching and research.

Considering Covid-19, **community engagement is also being put at the core of many universities' overall strategic plans**, with evolving practices whereby academics, students, local communities, national policy makers and the industry are working closer together, more than ever before.

The Covid-19 crisis has impacted community and societal engagement of universities in a positive way, with numerous innovative and more holistic propositions for a sustainable future and **a recognition of their role in informing future public policies.**

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The inclusion, from undergraduate level onwards, of a largely interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development issues should become a priority for universities worldwide.

At PSL, we are responding to this need by launching in September, a new interdisciplinary bachelor's degree dedicated to sustainable development, the first of its kind in France.”



Alain Fuchs
President,
University PSL

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To champion the SDGs, it is crucial to respond to student demands as they are preparing the world of tomorrow.

Though it is a big task, it is also a tremendous opportunity for universities, education organisations and students associations to meet not only SDG number 4, which is at the heart of our work, but also all the others, especially in the current political and environmental context.”



Bianka Stege,
Director of Education and Society
British Council Europe

As Secretary General of the International Association of Universities (IAU), Dr. Hilligje van't Land insists on the role of global advocacy as a key driver of IAU value-based education policy.

In her engagement with the SD Agenda 2030 of the United Nations, she has worked tirelessly to ensure HE is recognised as a key stakeholder to meet the SDGs, strengthening the role of connectivity between universities of all types and sizes around the world, thanks to IAU global clusters on HESD, launched in 2018.

For her, even though HE is becoming crucial in meeting the SDGs, only nine SDGs specifically mention the role of HE in their wordings. Therefore, efforts need to be sustained at all levels and an integrated approach is required, coming from leadership, academics, administrative staff and student representatives.



Dr. Hilligje van't Land
Secretary General
International Association
of Universities (IAU)

“Siloization in Higher Education is still an issue to meet global challenges. Interdisciplinarity work gains momentum and is yet challenged.

It needs to be scaled-up to the global level. ”

“**Conscious** of the major role of SDGs for the future society, **we need to enhance student participation and bring more students on board.**”



Carole Meffre,
Coordinator of Sciences Po
Environnement Paris

Carole Meffre, Coordinator of Sciences Po Environnement Paris, emphasised the role of her association in raising awareness on the ecological transition at Sciences Po to leverage the SDGs in one of the most renowned French Grande Ecoles worldwide.

She stressed 4 main tasks her association has been working on:

- 1.** to revise the existing curricula with the award of an SDGs certificate and the integration of SDGs in a wider range of courses.
- 2.** the need to raise awareness of the institutional governance to ensure better implementation of the SDGs and to adapt the narrative at the highest level of decision making.
- 3.** to reduce the ecological footprint on the campus through targeted initiatives like recycling and the controlling of energy consumption.
- 4.** to adapt and support professional careers in sustainable development. This turned out to be a daunting task because most of the jobs aren't made public and are still seen as pioneer niche opportunities.

Professor Jasha Oosterbaan, Director of ISIGE at Mines Paris Tech-PSL, concentrates on how to best teach the sustainable goals at universities. To take on these challenges, Prof. Oosterbaan insists on six pillars related to what should be learnt and the necessary skillset students in the future will need to be equipped with. Alongside scientific expertise and the ability to critically analyse, teachers will need to deal with a large amount of uncertainty and thus, adopt a prospective attitude towards knowledge gathering and sharing.

As for students, a tryptic bringing together “Head-Heart-Hands” was presented as one of the ideal ways to deal with the complexity of the world we are living in.

For students, championing the sustainable development goals will mean leveraging hard skills and also to ensure their interplay between teamwork and personal engagement. Also, the capability to test innovative ideas on the ground through case studies and challenge-based problem solving will be more required than ever.

Written by:

Dr. Catherine Saracco, Head of Education
British Council France

Dr. Minh-Hà Pham

Vice President for International Relations
University PSL

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SDGs are not just about fighting climate change.

To curb climate change, we will need to better connect hard and social sciences and to promote holistic approaches.”

Prof. Jasha Oosterbaan
Director of ISIGE
Mines Paris Tech-PSL



Watch the live event here:
britishcouncil.org/going-global/live-events/reaching-SDGs