

What's up at young universities?

June 2024

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Dear YERUN news enthusiasts, welcome to the June edition of the YERUN newsletter, dedicated to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This month, we highlight the impressive efforts, initiatives, and achievements of YERUN member universities in advancing these essential global objectives. From promoting sustainability in education to pioneering climate protection strategies and fostering interdisciplinary research, our members are making significant strides in all critical areas of sustainability. Dive in to discover how these young research universities are driving positive change and contributing to a sustainable future. Enjoy the read!

Sustainable Development Goals

YERUN brings committed people together



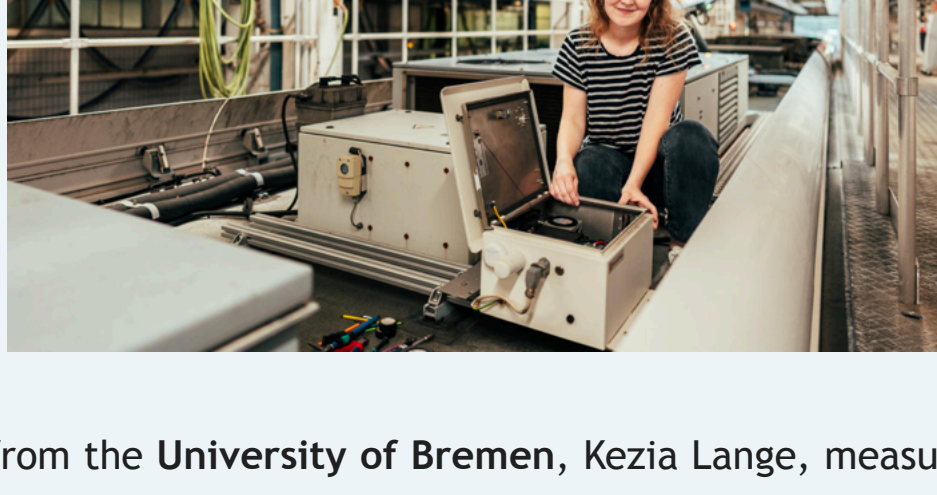
Twenty-one participants from twelve universities gathered in Norway for the second Erasmus+ "Driving Sustainable Futures in Higher Education" programme. Organised by University of South-Eastern Norway - USN Sustainability and led by Annette Bischoff, the programme features in-person sessions in June and online sessions in autumn. The initiative aims to foster collaboration and develop competencies for sustainable transitions, addressing interconnected SDGs and global challenges. This BIP (Blended Intensive Programme) was made possible through the YERUN SDG group, which facilitated connections with Universities of Limerick, Antwerp, and Southern Denmark. [Click here to discover more.](#)

UNESCO Chair "Global Citizenship Education - Culture of Diversity and Peace" at AAU



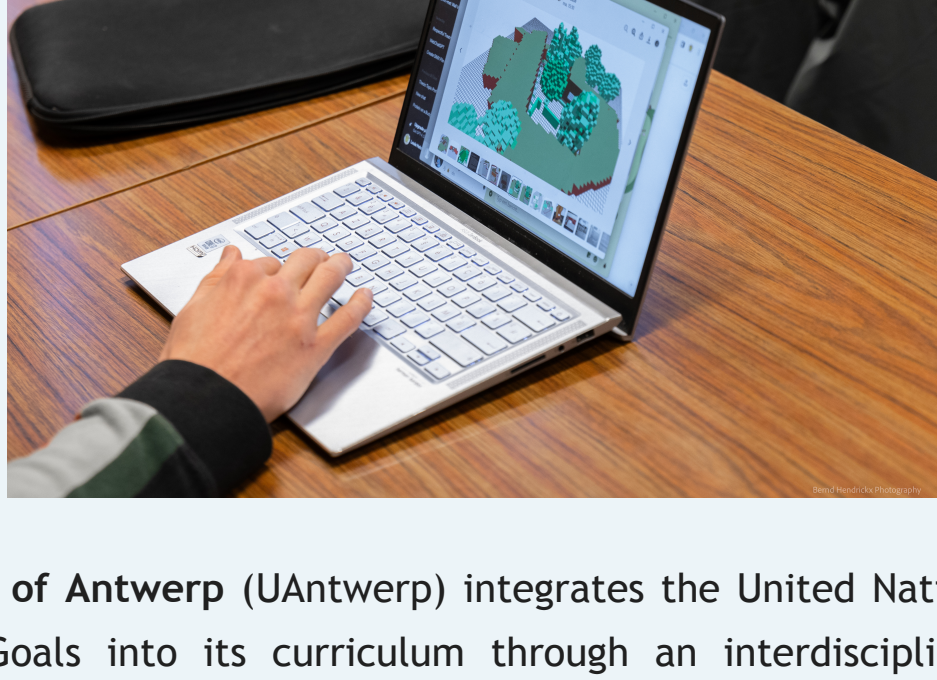
Hans Karl Peterlini, UNESCO Chair "Global Citizenship Education - Culture of Diversity and Peace," spoke at the University of Klagenfurt (AAU), highlighting the necessity of global citizenship to address issues like climate change and migration. He emphasised that these challenges require solutions beyond national borders. Projects such as "Transform4School" and "Global Campus Online" foster participatory school cultures and global collaboration. The chair supports educational programmes in diversity, global citizenship, and peace studies, encouraging collaboration across various sectors for enhanced global learning and responsibility. [Click here to discover more.](#)

Tram measures Bremen's air pollution



A PhD student from the University of Bremen, Kezia Lange, measures Bremen's air pollution using a tram equipped with a self-constructed device to track nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels across the city. This innovative approach, unique in Germany, leverages the tram's extensive and above-ground routes to collect comprehensive data. Findings highlight significant NO₂ pollution in West Bremen and around the Hastedt power plant, with higher levels in winter. Lange's research, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, aims to enhance understanding of urban air quality and contribute to healthier, more sustainable cities. [Click here to discover more.](#)

UAntwerp and SDGs: students learn to think and act sustainably



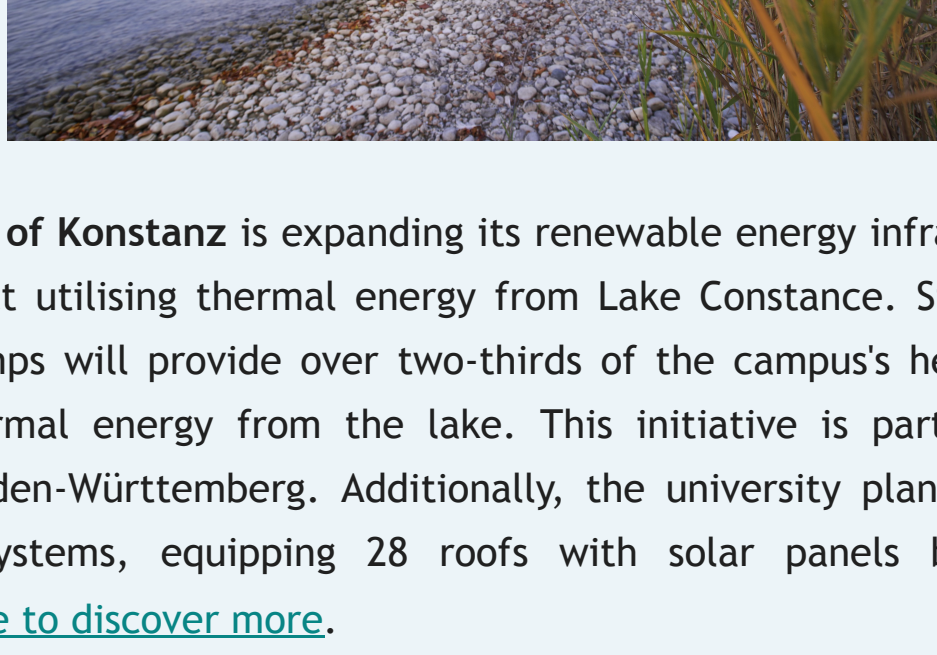
The University of Antwerp (UAntwerp) integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into its curriculum through an interdisciplinary course on sustainability. This course emphasises the planet's ecological limits, poverty alleviation, and quality of life improvement. Students explore diverse challenges such as renewable energy, recycling, and nature-based solutions, gaining scientific insights and solution-oriented skills. By the end of the course, students understand the interconnectedness of the SDGs, reflecting critically on sustainability standards and values, and preparing them to positively impact the world. [Click here to discover more.](#)

NCU: A sustainable university



Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (NCU) is advancing its sustainability efforts through various initiatives such as an edible garden, urban lab, and employee volunteer work. The urban lab focuses on improving campus accessibility for people with disabilities and addressing city-wide challenges. The Copernican Integration Centre promotes inclusiveness and environmental protection, while the edible garden educates on sustainable food practices. Additionally, NCU is reducing plastic waste by installing water filters and taps, and incorporating upcycling into its operations, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainable development. [Click here to discover more.](#)

Lake water for heating the university



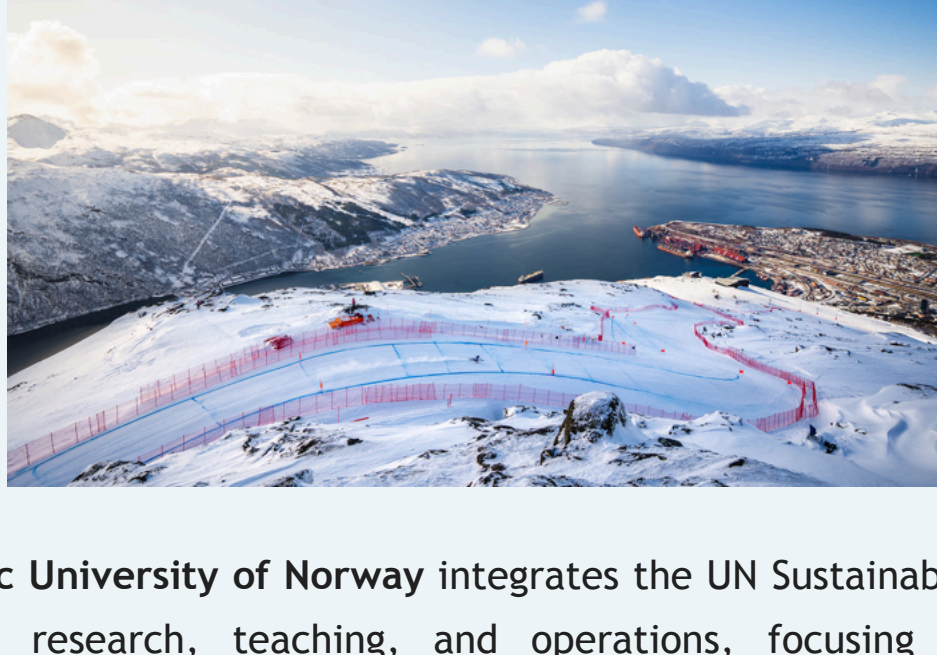
The University of Konstanz is expanding its renewable energy infrastructure, with a major project utilising thermal energy from Lake Constance. Starting in 2027, large heat pumps will provide over two-thirds of the campus's heating needs by extracting thermal energy from the lake. This initiative is part of eight pilot projects in Baden-Württemberg. Additionally, the university plans to expand its photovoltaic systems, equipping 28 roofs with solar panels by the end of 2025. [Click here to discover more.](#)

Collaborative sustainability efforts at UM



Maastricht University (UM) aims to fully integrate sustainability into every aspect of its organisation by 2030 through the Sustainable UM2030 programme. A key initiative is the Regional Transition Platform, which bridges academic knowledge and practical application to accelerate regional sustainability transitions. Coordinated together with Maastricht municipality, this platform fosters collaboration among local authorities and organisations, focusing on energy transition, circularity, and community resilience. The initiative underscores UM's commitment to impactful, real-world sustainability solutions. [Click here to discover more.](#)

In the Arctic, sustainability is our compass!



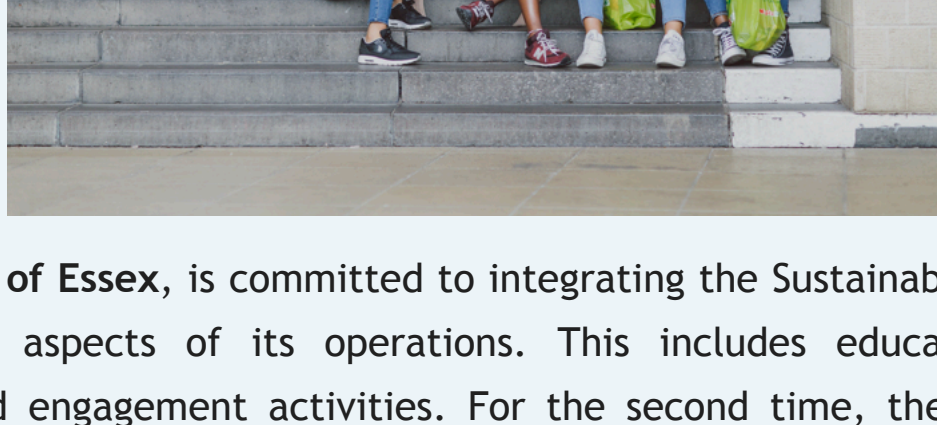
UiT - the Arctic University of Norway integrates the UN Sustainable Development Goals into its research, teaching, and operations, focusing on responsible consumption, climate action, and sustainability. Vice-Rector Rikke Gjørns Gjørns highlights their commitment to creating a sustainable environment for students and staff, emphasising digital meetings to reduce travel. Research at UiT addresses Arctic climate, biology, and ecosystems, with projects like the Climate-ecological Observatory for Arctic Tundra (COAT). The university also emphasises cultural sustainability and plans to showcase innovative SDG collaborations during the 2029 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Narvik. [Click here to discover more.](#)

A sustainable campus is attractive



The University of Potsdam, under Chancellor Hendrik Woithe, is committed to becoming a sustainable institution by addressing climate protection and broader sustainability goals (SDGs). Key initiatives include creating a Green Office, enhancing campus mobility with electric and cargo bikes, and integrating sustainability into research, teaching, and university operations. The university's Sustainability Guidelines aim to embed sustainability across all levels, from strategy and governance to societal impact. Continuous efforts include improving resource management, promoting green spaces, and expanding the university's climate protection concept to achieve climate neutrality by 2045. [Click here to discover more.](#)

Working towards a more sustainable future



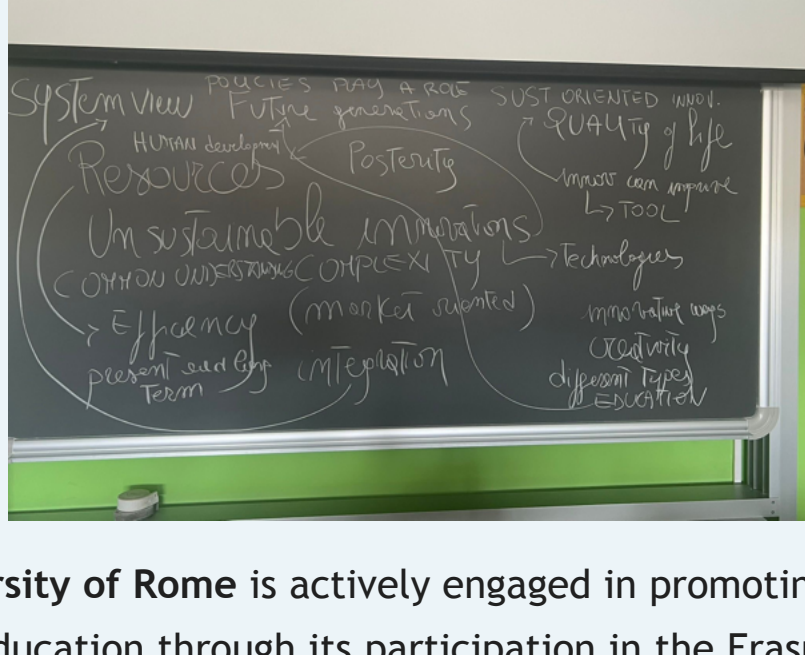
The University of Essex, is committed to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into all aspects of its operations. This includes education, research, leadership, and engagement activities. For the second time, the University has released a report detailing its actions towards achieving all 17 SDGs, demonstrating its dedication to a sustainable future through both its academic excellence and organisational practices. [Click here to discover more.](#)

A curious mind leads to a better world

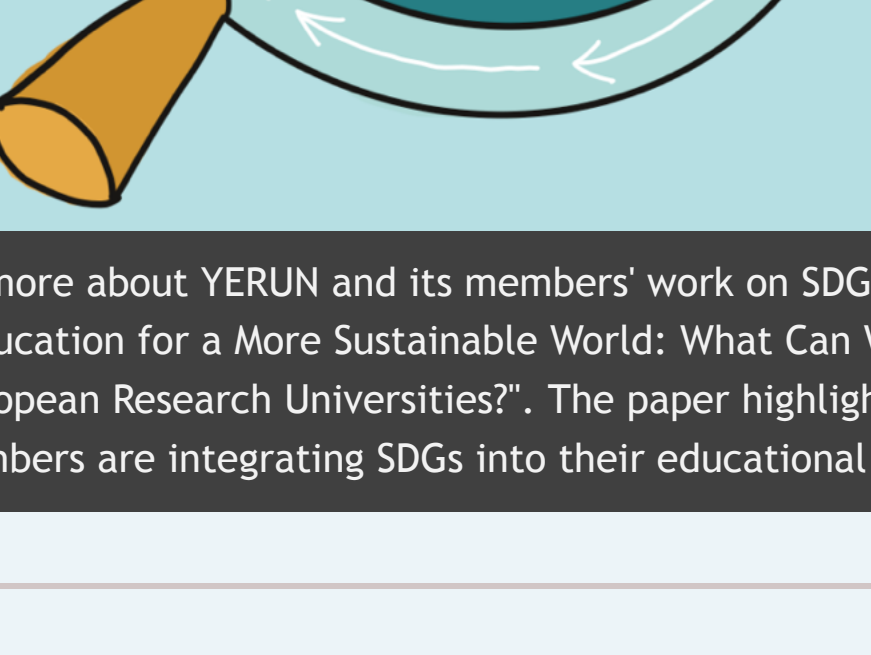


At the University of Limerick (UL), curiosity drives the mission to create knowledge for a better world. UL's research strategy, Wisdom for Action, aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on sustainability in materials science, energy, environment, circular economy, and food security. UL is piloting a digital twin of the campus to enhance sustainability monitoring and management. By fostering a vibrant research community, UL values creativity and innovation, encouraging researchers to address global challenges and positively impact communities locally and globally. [Click here to discover more.](#)

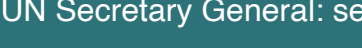
Tor Vergata University of Rome leading sustainability initiatives



Tor Vergata University of Rome is actively engaged in promoting sustainability and social enterprise education through its participation in the Erasmus+ Open Business for Community Development (OBCD) project and its long-standing Sustainable Labs initiative. The OBCD project, in collaboration with European partners, develops curricula for social enterprise managers, emphasising innovation, leadership, and ecosystem networks. Concurrently, the Sustainable Labs challenge students to propose entrepreneurial solutions to social and environmental issues, fostering public engagement and receiving multiple recognitions for impactful contributions. Both initiatives underscore the university's commitment to sustainable development and student empowerment. [Click here](#) and [here](#) to discover more.



To learn more about YERUN and its members' work on SDGs, explore the paper "Education for a More Sustainable World: What Can We Learn from Young European Research Universities?". The paper highlights how YERUN members are integrating SDGs into their educational courses.



Contacts:

Silvia Gomez Recio, YERUN Secretary General: secretarygeneral@yerun.eu

Mariangela Boe, Communications & Outreach Officer: mariangela.boe@yerun.eu



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