GEM – Good Practice Research on teaching sustainability

Analysis of a survey and interviews among the partners

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Good Practice Research on teaching sustainability

Analysis of a survey and interviews among the partners

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With the support of all partner institutions and the input of all Interviewees and all participants of the survey.

Abstract

Through the questioning of 24 people within the sphere of the GEM consortium (Green Media in Education) the status quo of the integration of ecological sustainability in media curriculums was assessed.

Introduction

The GEM Project

GEM (Green Education in Media) aims to reconnect media curricula to today's environmental reality by introducing subjects and methods that reflect on and work at the intersection between environmental reality and digitality. "Environmental reality" encompasses nature and its phenomena, as well as the interrelation of man-made environments and the natural environment.
One of the main goals is to create building blocks for a sustainable environmental curriculum that can be integrated into already existing media curricula.

Goals of the Good Practice Research

The initial goal of the research was to make existing practices on sustainability in media curricula visible by documenting them. All with the intention to define basic requirements and opportunities for curriculum integration, allowing for better targeted developments throughout the GEM project.
We aimed for insights into already existing and working elements for a sustainable environmental media curriculum, so that good practices can be incorporated into the workshop concepts and the curriculum design of the GEM project.
The goal was also to collect existing good teaching methods on sustainability and then make it publicly available and usable for third parties in higher education institutes.

Methodology

Procedure

The data for this good practice research is based on a survey and guided interviews. It was planned that 1-2 teachers or other relevant stakeholders at the participating organisations complete the survey and additionally one guided interview with one person (lecturer or other relevant stakeholder) per organisation will be carried out.
This means that between 9-18 completed questionnaires and 9 interviews were planned as the basis for this analysis.
The survey consists of a total of 20 questions, of which 5 are scale questions, two are multiple choice questions and the remaining 13 are free text questions. The questionnaire was agreed in advance with the entire consortium and every institution had the chance to comment and add questions.
Not every question was created as a mandatory field, as preliminary research has shown that teachers do not necessarily know what the status is at their university and then tend to cancel the survey
The survey questions should also serve as a guideline for the interview, with the note that any deviating topics that arise but are relevant to GEM should also be pursued during the interview.

Collected data (completed questionnaires and conducted interviews)

Institute / Organisation	No. of Surveys	No. of Interviews
Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF	2	1
Institute for Art and Innovation	1	2
Jagiellonian University in Kraków	2	1
Lodz Film School	1	2
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	2	1
Tampere University	1	1
Tampere University of Applied Sciences	1	1
University of Malta	2	1
University of Zagreb	2	1
Total	**14**	**10**

Participants Survey / Participants Interview

Participants Survey

NO.	Institute / Organisation	Role
1	Film University (FBKW)	Professor of Emerging Media Production
2	Film University (FBKW)	Professor Scenography
3	Institute for Art and Innovation (IFAI)	Director
4	Jagiellonian University (JU)	Researcher / Lecturer
5	Jagiellonian University (JU)	Deputy Director for Teaching at the Institute of Culture
6	Lodz Film School (LFS)	Production manager, lecturer
7	University of Athens (UoA)	Teaching staff
8	University of Athens (UoA)	Associate Professor
9	Tampere University (TAU)	University Instructor
10	Tampere University of Appl. Sciences (TAU)	Senior Lecturer
11	University of Malta (UoM)	Senior Associate Academic/PhD student
12	University of Malta (UoM)	Senior Lecturer / Course Director for Msc in Cog Science
13	University of Zagreb (UoZ)	Assistant Professor
14	University of Zagreb (UoZ)	Teacher

Participants Interview

Role	Interviewer	Interviewee	Role
1	FBKW	FBKW	Sustainability officer for teaching
2	IFAI	SRH*	Communication Scientist / Teaching at SRH
3	IFAI	Macromedia (MM)*	Teaching project management at the intersection of art and sustainability

4	JU	JU	Teaching: a.o. Degrowth, Consumption problems, climate crisis, ecological crisis
5	LFS	LFS	film coordinator
6	LFS	LFS	Production manager in School Films
7	UoA	UoA	Assistant Professor, Agri-food and Natural Resources Management
8	TAU	TAU	University instructor and doctoral researcher
9	UoM	UoM	Visiting Lecturer
10	UoZ	UoZ	Associate Professor at the Dance Department

*SRH and Macromedia are private universities with film and media programmes from outside the GEM consortium

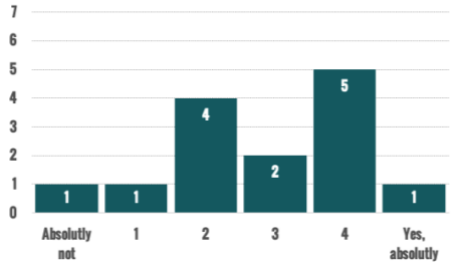
Limitations of the research

In this survey, we mainly asked lectures from all partner universities about the status quo of sustainability integration in the curriculum and good practices in teaching this.
It must be recognised that many lectures are not aware of all the plans for sustainability integration at their institution.

Quantitative analysis

Assessments of Sustainable Integration and importance

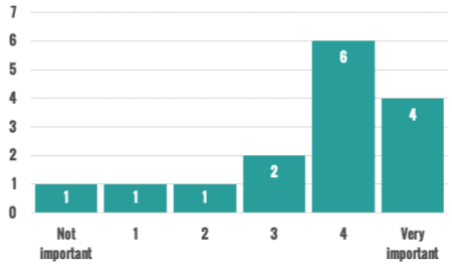
Are sustainability and environmental issues sufficiently integrated into your curricula?



Median = 3/ Average = 2,9

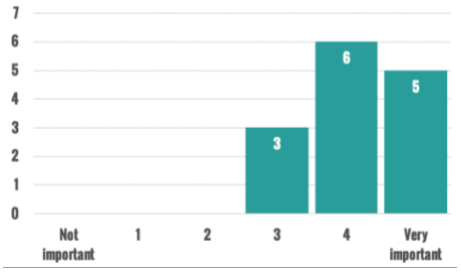
How should sustainability be integrated into the curriculum?

a) As dedicated courses



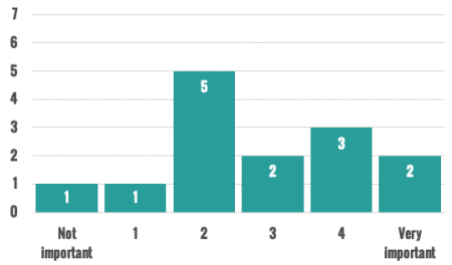
Median = 4/ Average = 3,8

b) As a pervasive theme across certain or all curricular courses



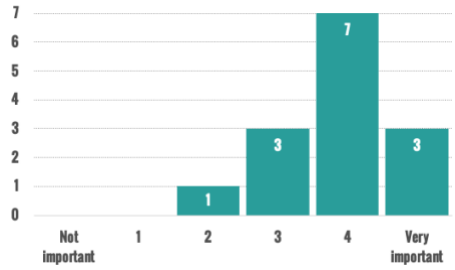
Median = 4/ Average = 4,1

c) As extra-curricular courses



Median = 2,5/ Average = 2,8

d) As initiatives outside any course structure



Median = 4/ Average = 3,9

Existing courses and Activities

Do you have any courses or activities on the following topics in your study programme and/or your institution? (Multiple selection possible)

a) We have no courses or activities
b) Sustainable and green media production
c) Carbon footprint calculation or estimation of media production and consumption
d) Green Storytelling
e) Sustainable design
f) Other...

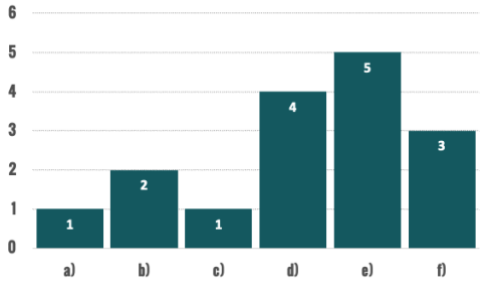
Institute	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	f)
Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF		x		x	x	
Institute for Art and Innovation				x	x	x
Jagiellonian University in Kraków						x
Lodz Film School	x					
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens				x		
Tampere University		x	x		x	
Tampere University of Applied Sciences					x	
University of Malta					x	
University of Zagreb				x		x

Other (f):

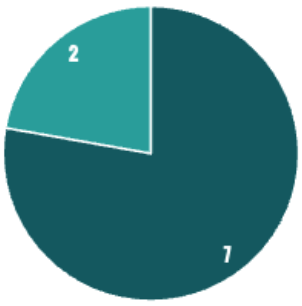
- University of Zagreb: We are dealing with ecological and environmental topics in photographic courses
- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens: Environmental and Sustainability Education, Teaching and learning methods in Environmental and Sustainability Education
- Jagiellonian University in Kraków: Degrowth, Green Entrepreneurship, Laboratory of Collaboration and Humanistic Management, Ethics of Management
- Institute for Art and Innovation: Interdisciplinary collaboration for systemic change

Number of existing courses per Category

a) We have no courses or activities
b) Sustainable and green media production
c) Carbon footprint calculation or estimation of media production and consumption
d) Green Storytelling
e) Sustainable design
f) Other...



Are there any student or staff initiatives at your university that inform sustainability and green production?



Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF	Yes
Institute for Art and Innovation	Yes
Jagiellonian University in Kraków	Yes
Lodz Film School	Yes
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	Yes
Tampere University	No
Tampere University of Applied Sciences	Yes
University of Malta	Yes
University of Zagreb	No

Status Quo of Sustainability Integration

Institutional Level

The level of ecological/environmental sustainability integration varies greatly within the consortium. It must also be said that the participating institutions differ greatly. Some consortium participants are part of a large university that can offer a diverse range of study programs. However, two of the consortium institutions are purely film schools, which also only offer corresponding study programs. Any knowledge transfer beyond this depends on projects with cooperation partners:
"And I think that's a big problem, because these collaborations are time-consuming and acceptance is not always present within the organisation."
But also project partners who are embedded in a larger university say that synergies between different departments are difficult to harness and profit from existing personal connections of individual staff members[1]. As a solution to this problem, Tampere University established the DIGISUS platform, which *"aims to create holistic and cross-disciplinary insights into digitalization and sustainability as societal transitions"*[2]. Also the case of JU is a little bit different, as their students focus on media management and the programme is embedded in a larger faculty, offering courses e.g. on Degrowth and Green Entrepreneurship. The institute itself already has built expertise in legal and managerial issues of sustainability in the field of culture and media management. UM has established a central Committee for Sustainability in 2018 to foster implementation of SDGs. The digital arts department in particular is part of an Erasmus+ funded sustainable media production project (SUMED). UoZ mentions that it would be desirable to be able to inform and educate staff members across all departments of their school, but logistical obstacles exist. At FBKW, sustainability is part of the organisation's mission statement, but a concrete overarching sustainability strategy still has to be developed. LSF has no comprehensive strategy yet, but reports that there is a bottom-up process driving sustainability coming from students discovering the topic[3]. At JU, a similar bottom-up integration of sustainable development and environmental protection is observed among the teaching staff, while a systematic organisation-wide coordination proves difficult. However, a review showed that already far more than a hundred courses and initiatives exist at the university.

[1] Though not part of this research, one observation from the GEM workshop at NKUA is worth sharing: Due to co-location of the digital media department and the engineering department on the same campus, the teachers report that engineering staff is often eager to help with media productions and also teach certain skills for DIY media installations. As a concrete example, when a student group during the workshop was in search of a power source for an installation in nature, an engineering professor provided a prototypical solar power device and even helped with transport and integration.
[2] https://research.tuni.fi/digisus/
[3] E.g. one student won an award sponsored by the Electrolux company for ecological green filming

Concept for Sustainability

Not all partners have an institutional sustainability strategy and if it exists, it does not mean that it is applied consistently. Larger Universities have a certain advantage in contrast to the smaller film schools in that they can search interdisciplinary collaboration inside the organisation. For example, the University of Malta has an Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, "set up to promote social sustainability and conduct interdisciplinary research in areas related to sustainable development and climate change."[4], while NKUA *"encourages collaborations with other institutions on projects that promote sustainability"*. Film Schools tend to develop their sustainability approaches in closer cooperation with the film industry and join film-specific initiatives, as they share similar problems because of their inhouse film productions. This has been reported by UoZ School of Dramatic Arts, Lodz Film School and Film University Babelsberg alike. A special case in the consortium is the Institute for Art and Innovation, which was founded on principles of sustainability and promotes interdisciplinary sustainable design. SRH has a high-level representative to foster a greener teaching approach, who also is in charge of cross-faculty activities, events and festivals on sustainability awareness.

Curriculum Level

The status quo on the level of curriculum and teaching is often independent from the general institutional state on sustainability and shows a wide variety of initiatives. In NKUA's media arts department, raising awareness for sustainability through creativity is actively promoted and the *"reuse of materials and technologies (upcycle, recycle, DIY approaches)"* is encouraged in project work. Also other universities report to encourage their students to include ecological themes in their artistic works on an individual level. One teacher notes the importance of being a role model in sustainable living through lifestyle and engagement in relevant NGOs, which can transcend beyond the curricular courses. Such NGOs can also be valuable external partners, UoM names *"Nature Trust Malta and Heritage Malta"* and FBKW collaborates with climate research institutions which happen to be co-located in the city of Potsdam. The approach of the "Sustainable Digital Life" programme in Tampere is that all courses shall highlight connections to sustainability, just as sustainability should be considered in everything we do. At TAMK, sustainability is notably a part of courses on career planning and study counseling, as well as practical project work.

A central question across the board was whether sustainability should be implemented as a lateral theme across existing courses or in the form of dedicated new courses. Compelling arguments for both views were named: Many study programmes are already packed with courses and additional courses come on top of an already high workload, as it is often difficult to create a consensus among faculty members to cut other courses. Also, sustainability has a natural connection to most of the subjects we teach. Yet without dedicated courses, the reference to sustainability in each course depends on the engagement of individual teachers - sustainability as a pervasive theme may as well come down to no sustainability at all, especially when it is played off against other cross-cutting topics (leadership, communication, digitisation, artificial intelligence etc.). The latter

[4] https://www.um.edu.mt/iccsd/

holds especially true in the early phase of curriculum integration, where creating awareness of the topic among staff and students is the primary concern. Likewise there is a discussion on whether sustainability should be offered as an elective or compulsory part of the curriculum. FBKW highlights that both approaches have their weaknesses especially in the case when working with external partners: If the course is an elective, you never know whether zero or 20 students sign up to the course. But if the course is compulsory, students may be less motivated, which in turn may estrange the external partner.
The participating institutions show diverse approaches to these matters, with some already having implemented dedicated courses and others focussing more on embedding sustainability as a lateral topic and fostering extra-curricular initiatives. A particularly notable example was given by MM, which recently established a system which allows students to study sustainability alongside their regular degree course, which gives a compact overview on the whole theme. At FBKW it is reported that in some areas, e.g. production design with sustainable set construction, the actual teaching is much more advanced than it is visible from the curriculum.
It is also worth mentioning that several respondents used a broad sustainability concept, integrating social and ecological sustainability. This is especially based on the experience that large student film projects can be very demanding and often put students under high duress. Thus, they recommend to include both aspects when curricula are redesigned.

Course Implementations

TAMK has embraced a holistic approach to sustainability in their User Experience Design Project course: The students can choose a project topic related to sustainability and in each project, regardless of the topic, sustainability is an aspect to be included in project planning and reporting. NKUA, UoZ and FBKW offer courses on Green Storytelling, both in theoretical foundations and practical screenwriting, as well as very specific courses like EcoAnimation. FBKW also introduced a campus-wide *"Green Screen Lecture Series"*[5] on cross-cutting green production topics for all study programmes, where they invited external experts.
At Tampere University, sustainable design, green media production and carbon footprint calculation are an integral part of the curriculum of the Sustainable Digital Life study programme, which aims to *"combine critical thinking with a creative mindset"*. Film schools among the consortium also offer workshops on green film production, which is closely aligned with current industry standards and demands. Often, practitioners from the industry are invited to hold or co-create those workshops. For example, JU closely collaborates with "Film for Climate" and KIPA (Polish Alliance of Film Producers) to run Green Filmmaking laboratory workshops[6]. SRH integrates sustainability in company cooperation projects. At UM, sustainability is increasingly at the core of art projects by students and staff members[7].

Extracurricular Initiatives

[5] This was actually the inspiration for GEM's "Green Screen International" lecture series, which is now integrated at FBKW as an extension to the existing lecture series.
[6] https://kipa.pl/zielona-produkcja/laboratorium-zielonej-produkcji/
[7] The project Beyond What Drifts Us Apart (https://www.unfinishedartspace.org/projects/magiccarpets) deals with topics around sustainability and respect for non-human communities, not only in subject, but also in the practices, methodologies and final outputs of the artists, moving towards a radical respect for the natural world in which the project is embedded.

Campus-wide initiatives by students or single institutes play an important role in making sustainability a visible topic on campus. UM initiatives comprise waste separation, reduction of single-use plastic, promotion of car-sharing and other. NKUA cites the Evia Film Project, which was created to offer support on the heavily wildfire-affected region of Northern Evia in 2022. They emphasize the high experiential learning quality of such initiatives. UoZ adds that initiatives and extracurricular activities are important because of the eye-level collaboration between staff and students often occurring there. JU cites the Climate Council and Climate Strategy initiatives at their university. However, one respondent argued that extra-curricular initiatives never can be sufficient, as only students who are already interested in sustainability will join, and in the end curricular change is always necessary. FBKW gave a compelling example on how a student-led initiative led to curricular and institutional change: Their "Green Initiative" was founded by students to foster sustainable production. Later, the institution created a staff position to support the work of the initiative, widening its reach and increasing student engagement and curricular integration. As student initiatives highly depend on individuals, this step was seen as crucial to lend continuity to the group and steadily attract new student generations. A lot of events organized by this group come up with concrete demands coming from experiences in the film projects, they do not run a planned curriculum. Yet their activities also have clear links to the curriculum, particularly the film exercises and thesis film production. They run the "Green Committee", which grants additional funding for projects meeting sustainability criteria. Connected with that, they maintain the "Green Guide", FBKW's guidelines for sustainable film production. The initiative also lobbies institution-wide for sustainability and advocates measurements like the use of recycling paper and the uses of cargo bikes. While this model is certainly successful, the supervising teacher reminds us to consider that students *"unlike employees, they ultimately have certain freedoms, including confrontational ones"*. JU tells as well of positive experience with empowering student initiatives. A grassroots initiative called KlimatUJ started before the pandemics with support of the institute of sociology and prepared a petition that ultimately led to the installation of JU's Climate Council, which is working on a university climate strategy with backing of the student body, which is due to be approved by the university leadership and will help to create a systemic approach to sustainability at JU. LFS emphasizes that student extracurricular engagement can have a profound impact on career options, e.g. one of their students became a green production coordinator after they graduated, even though they were not trained for it by curriculum. TAMK reports similar cases.

Experiences

Teaching Sustainability

TAMK made a clear statement on sustainability by including a corresponding assignment into the admissions test. At UoZ, the approach to teaching sustainability in film is two-fold: They teach *"in the first place, policy matters which deal with legislative procedures. Secondly, empirical know-how in the particular production processes"*. The combination of practical experiences with room for reflection is deemed important. LFS sees a challenge in getting all film departments committed to green production, not only the producing department. FBKW focuses on *"the process of film production and concrete sustainability measures along the phases of the production, with a focus on pre-production and film shoot"*. The Institute for Art and Innovation has developed a bespoke method for sustainable visioning and design as part "Art for Futures Lab": It has curated an archive of solutions for a green and sustainable future as a source of inspiration. In accordance with other participants Several interviewees highlight the importance of developing positive visions and not getting caught in gloomy dystopian scenarios, especially from an artistic

point of view. This is shared in In “Future Prototyping Workshops” they draw on these innovations to develop visions of sustainable futures in a project-based learning approach. In general, the participating organisations seem to favour participatory learning and teaching methods “such as role playing, ethical dilemma, community mapping, field study, etc.”.
A reoccurring topic is CO2 footprint calculation. Film schools in the consortium seem to mostly rely on external consultants who are also working in the film industry to teach this topic and it is considered important because film funding bodies may nowadays require it. For other study programmes, this competence is rather taught by inhouse researchers or in courses by other departments, but on a more abstract level.
NKUA describes the goal of teaching sustainability competence: *“I want the students, when they have their degree and they see something on the TV or to read the paper or read an article in a magazine that they can know if this is true”*.

Recommendations for Teaching Sustainability

TU highlights the importance of accessibility as an aspect of (social) sustainability. They use hybrid teaching to empower diverse students for learning and make sure their learning materials are created in an accessible fashion.
One teacher remarks that although considering sustainability in teaching is important, art professors are not sustainability experts and it is not their core expertise. As an art teacher, he sees his task as creating environments in which people can meet and reflect. Especially the topic of sustainability needs communication skills and openness to criticism and opinions, both in students and teachers. It is important to integrate experts from other disciplines, yet that as well is not without problems: Experts from other domains, especially natural sciences, speak a different language than art students and their talks often meet unprepared students. It seems appropriate to prepare students with artistic approaches to nature and sustainability, as well as contextual knowledge first and maybe use focused, blocked courses instead of weekly lectures. Experts should be chosen who have practical experience in the field, especially sociologists and anthropologists. However, the relation to the role of art, which is to reshuffle understanding and perspectives on the world, is not easy to grasp for students. UoZ states a central question was how to translate environmental problems into dance, choreography and theater, beyond just thinking about waste produced and resources consumed during the production. Already during study times, film students enter a constant production cycle, which tends to omit time for reflection and deep thought, yet art needs slow thinking and working to be disruptive. Thus, reflective and paced-down spaces should be created in the curriculum deliberatively. At MM, experience is that while students are generally very interested in sustainability topics, the particular aspect of social sustainability had a mixed reception when integrated into courses such as gender themes in project management. Yet, this may well be because of ignorance of statistical facts, so teachers should be prepared to thoroughly explain contextual information when teaching social sustainability, as well as to *“always make sure that there is an element of experience”* in the teaching - which is confirmed by the interviewee from NKUA. E.g. in the case of gender themes, interactive language experiments can go a long way into understanding the implications of gendered and non-gendered language. In general, MM recommends always including very specific information that students can apply in their everyday lives that gives them positive experiences with sustainability. At FBKW’s Green Initiative, teaching even focuses on facilitation and empowerment of students, who set the topics themselves based on concrete project experiences.

The way sustainability is woven pervasively into teaching is described by SRH university: *"When I give feedback, I'm always commenting, did you miss on the green aspect right here[...]So, I'm just trying to [..] make this a habit"*. They say that students seem to enjoy the way how SRH frames any problem from the perspective of sustainability and they tend to embrace this thinking quickly and pro-actively without any explicit instructions. The interviewed teacher stated they were always looking for novel, but theoretically grounded approaches, *"not [..] the common strategies, but rather those that should be out, but that not yet taught broadly"*. In project-based learning, they act as a creative coach in company collaboration projects, where theoretical and practical knowledge are intertwined in a deeper way. Already the choice of the company to collaborate with bears a lot of potential to lead students to more sustainable thinking. Multiple people share the assessment that project-based learning offers excellent possibilities to connect with SDGs, where the project drives the actual focus and demonstrates practical relevance.
NKUA confirms the importance of experiential learning and adds that it is *"the most important to bring them [the students] outside in nature"*, along with approaches to make inaccessible areas visible with e.g. drone videos or show sensible, but usually invisible organisms and eco-systems (deep water, mountain areas, bacteria and other microorganisms).

Obstacles for Integration

Multiple respondents agree that a primary challenge is staff training in sustainability, so it can be applied pervasively already in the basic courses. Even for teachers that are open to embracing sustainability in their courses, it is reported that they need ideas on how to actually do it, e.g. in more theoretical classes about accounting, insurance or legal aspects. Right now, it is taught by specialists and a few engaged teachers. Another obstacle is seen in the packed schedules of today's curricula, as well as the competition with other lateral competencies that seek attention. A specific challenge at film schools is the high number of very small and specialised study programmes, which each have different curricula and require a high effort when coordinating and agreeing upon changes. At FBKW, students gave the feedback that not all competencies necessary to implement sustainable production cannot be mapped inhouse and that external experts are often too far away from the concrete film production process - a challenge shared by all dedicated film schools. Yet even while respondents from larger universities highlight the opportunity for inter-department collaboration, it is demanding to do this in a structured way. When it comes to actual project work, often there is no extra funding available for green production measures. Also, artistic visions and ambitions of students often collide with sustainability requirements, LSF states. Of course it would be more sustainable to ban the use of diesel power aggregates in student film productions, but that would essentially mean no fiction film could be shot in nature settings. JU mentions an interesting case, where the conference of rectors of academies and higher education institutions in Poland created an expert team to devise a sustainability course that was meant to be compulsory for every first year student in Poland. The risk of such a mandatory course is that it is seen as a mere obligation, especially if it takes a one-size fits all approach.

Conclusion: Pathways towards Sustainability

Across the partner institutions, the integration of sustainability in higher education remains diverse, yet several promising pathways have emerged from the practices identified in this research. The most successful approaches combine institutional commitment, curricular innovation, and participatory engagement, particularly empowerment of student initiatives.

1. Institutional anchoring and leadership commitment

A recurring success factor is visible institutional commitment, which can take the form of sustainability committees or officers. Such measures increase continuity and coherence of efforts. Sustainability should not depend solely on individual engagement, but needs structural embedding. A "whole institution approach", linking administration, research, teaching, and campus operations, ensures that sustainability principles are reflected in decision-making and resource allocation. Simple but symbolic measures, such as banning single-use plastics, integrating sustainable catering, and reducing travel through hybrid event formats, reinforce institutional culture and visibility.

2. Curriculum integration and flexible formats

Curriculum and course design are at the core of a sustainability transformation. The research has uncovered two complementary models which proved effective:
Pervasive integration, in which sustainability becomes a transversal theme across all courses, fostering critical reflection in every discipline.
Dedicated modules or certificate tracks, which create clear visibility and allow students to gain explicit sustainability competencies.

Successful programmes show that sustainability teaching benefits from project-based learning and problem-driven approaches linked to real-world contexts. Moreover, embedding sustainability in artistic and media curricula works best when linked to creative exploration and critical inquiry—encouraging students to imagine alternative futures, while for film schools, alignment with industry standards remains equally important to ensure professional relevance.

3. Empowering students and bottom-up initiatives

The research reveals that sustainable transformation often begins bottom-up. Student-driven initiatives, such as FBKW's Green Initiative or Jagiellonian University's Climate Council, demonstrate how activism can evolve into institutional change once it receives official support. These initiatives create experiential learning spaces where sustainability is lived rather than taught. Assigning staff positions or seed funding to such groups ensures continuity across student generations and enhances institutional learning.

4. Interdisciplinary and experiential learning

Effective sustainability education thrives on interdisciplinary collaboration and experiential formats. Courses that combine ecological, social, and economic perspectives help students to understand systemic interconnections. Project work involving external partners—NGOs, climate scientists, or creative industries—enhances authenticity and employability. Likewise, experiential and outdoor learning methods (e.g., field studies, community mapping, role plays) have proven essential to foster emotional connection and reflective capacity. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theories and the co-creative learning methods promoted throughout the GEM project.

5. Staff development and capacity building

A major obstacle identified in the research is the lack of staff training. Even motivated teachers often lack concrete tools to implement sustainability within their disciplines. Universities should therefore establish faculty development programmes and peer exchange formats for sharing teaching materials, project templates, and evaluation criteria. Interdisciplinary mentoring between natural sciences, social sciences, and the arts can help bridge epistemological gaps and encourage innovative and collaborative teaching cultures.

6. Evaluation, recognition, and continuity

Sustainability efforts should be visible in order to foster a culture change in the institution. Universities should highlight sustainability in their reports and give visibility to excellence in sustainability in teaching and research, via awards, presentations and possibly individual incentives. The recognition of sustainability engagement – through certificates, awards, or ECTS-based modules – motivates both staff and students to continue their efforts. Linking sustainability outcomes to career development, as in the training of green production coordinators, reinforces long-term impact.

In conclusion, successful integration of sustainability at universities depends on mutual reinforcement between top-down commitment and bottom-up creativity. By combining strategic governance with participatory cultures, higher education institutions can move beyond isolated actions towards systemic, reflexive, and enduring sustainability practices – educating not only professionals, but engaged citizens capable of shaping a sustainable and imaginative future.