



## BACKGROUND

The Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) is a partnership between several United Nations entities and the higher education community. For 2024-2025, the Initiative is chaired by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN University, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education (IESALC), and the Sulitest Association.

Each year, HESI organizes a global forum as a special event to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) – the UN’s main platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Forum highlights the critical role of higher education in achieving sustainable development. On the occasion of the **Global Sustainable Development Congress GSDC 2025** organized by THE in Istanbul, HESI will host an event titled **‘From frameworks to practice: unlocking the potential of sustainability competencies in Higher Education.’** The session will be led by one of its action groups: the Student Action Group (HESI - SAG).<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

As the global community works toward achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, defining the skills and competencies needed to support this transformative agenda has become a critical focus, particularly in higher education. This workshop will bring together key international initiatives that have developed frameworks for sustainability competencies, including the **UNESCO Competency Framework**, **GreenComp: the European Union’s Sustainability Competence Framework**, and national or sectoral frameworks.

Rethinking competencies is critical for preparing individuals to address complex socio-ecological challenges. Over the past two decades, significant attention has been given to identifying the key competencies required for sustainability, particularly within higher education. These include competencies such as systems thinking, anticipatory thinking, normative thinking, strategic thinking, interpersonal skills, as well as emerging competencies like implementation and integration. Numerous projects have led to the creation of frameworks. However, a lack of awareness and adoption of these tools has created obstacles to the practical implementation of pedagogical practices and curriculum changes needed to develop these competencies. Despite the absence of a universally adopted and harmonized

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<sup>1</sup> The SAG aims to foster a community of student change agents who actively drive sustainable practices, teaching and learning, and institutional policies, thereby contributing to a global transformation in higher education and leadership. <https://sdgs.un.org/HESI/StudentAction>

framework, there is a consensus that sustainability competencies bridge knowledge and action, facilitating collaborative problem-solving for societal transformation.

**This workshop** will bring together key international initiatives that have developed frameworks for sustainability competencies, including the UNESCO Competency Framework, GreenComp (the European Union's Sustainability Competence Framework) and others.

**The primary objective** of the workshop is to explore the similarities and differences among these competency frameworks while assessing how they align with the competencies necessary for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**The secondary objective** is to understand why these frameworks are not being sufficiently utilized and to identify ways to better support the essential evolution of program content through learning goals.

Following an introductory panel discussion featuring representatives from each initiative, participants will engage in an interactive workshop hosted by student representatives from the **Higher Education Sustainability Initiative** Student Action Group (HESI-SAG). This collaborative session will aim to identify actionable pathways for harmonizing these approaches and strengthening their contribution to education for sustainable development.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

Academic decision-makers, educators, students, and stakeholders engaged in developing sustainability-related competences.

## **OUTCOMES**

- To engage current students from HEI's in shaping learning priorities and outcomes on sustainable development.
- To inspire delegates at the GSDC to engage in a workshop shaping higher education curricula around green skills and sustainability competencies.
- To build HESI guidelines on how to embed green skills and sustainability competencies into curricula, leading towards the formation of a universally adoptable framework.

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## **COORDINATION**

- [JC Carteron](#), HESI Co-Chair and Sulitest President
- [Darren Axe](#), SOS-International Membership and Engagement Manager and HESI-SAG Representative.

## **HESI-SAG TEAM**

- Hannah Fitzpatrick: SOS-UK
- Iman Cumberbatch: PSEG Institute for Sustainability Studies and New York University
- Belinda Mensah: All-Africa Students Union
- Lisa Schivalocchi: European Students Union
- Hulya Afat: oikos consulting (Turkey)
- Patricija Zizyte: oikos co-president
- Benedicta Neysa Nathania: UNESCO GEP - Learning Planet Alliance

## PROGRAMME

Time	Session
02.00 – 02.10 PM	<b>Opening remarks &amp; Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Phil Baty</a>, Chief Global Affairs Officer, THE</li> <li>• <a href="#">JC Carteron</a>, Sulitest – HESI co-Chair</li> <li>• <a href="#">Francesc Pedró</a>, Director International Institute for Higher Education UNESCO</li> </ul>
02.10 – 02.45 PM	<b>Round table: Outlining the various Green Skills frameworks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bosen Lily Liu</a>, UNESCO IESALC HESI co-Chair - Greening Higher Education, UNESCO- ESDG Learning Objectives<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• <a href="#">Quinn Runkle</a>, SOS-international Green Skills and Green Jobs Youth Consultation <sup>3</sup></li> <li>• European Commission Green Comp <sup>4</sup>- <i>speaker TBC</i></li> <li>• <a href="#">Alexandre De Navailles</a> - CDEFM framework<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Case studies: is this being embedded at the institutional-level? - Student representation</li> </ul> <p>Moderated by: <a href="#">Iman Cumberbatch</a>, PSEG Institute for Sustainability Studies and New York University</p>
02:45 – 04.45 PM	<b>Two hours dynamic workshop, work together round-table (work on progress)</b> <p>Facilitated by: <a href="#">Patricija Zizyte</a>, oikos co-president</p>
04.45 – 04:50 PM	<b>Closing remarks</b> <p><b>Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi</b>, Director Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability, United Nations University</p>
04.50 – 05.00 PM	<b>Wrap up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Darren Axe</a>, SOS-International – HESI SAG Representative: What's next at the SAG?</li> <li>• <a href="#">Jonghwi Park</a>, UNU HESI Co-Chair: What's next at for HESI</li> <li>• <a href="#">Ishan Cader</a>, THE: what is next at the Istanbul GSDC ?</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. Paris: Division for Inclusion, Peace and Sustainable Development, Education Sector. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245056>

<sup>3</sup> *Green Skills and Green Jobs Youth Consultation, Report prepared for UN Environment Programme by SOS-International, on behalf of the Green Jobs for Youth Pact Youth Advisory Group July 2024* [https://sos.earth/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/20240717-Green-Skills-and-Green-Jobs-Youth-Consultation-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://sos.earth/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/20240717-Green-Skills-and-Green-Jobs-Youth-Consultation-Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U. and Cabrera Giraldez, M., GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework*, Punie, Y. and Bacigalupo, M. editor(s), EUR 30955 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, ISBN 978-92-76-46485-3, doi:10.2760/13286, JRC128040. [https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en)

<sup>5</sup> CDEFM. *Référentiel de compétences DD&RS de la CDEFM*. (Juin, 2023). <https://cdefm.fr/publications/referentiel-de-competences-ddrs-de-la-cdefm-2/>