

Task Group on the integration of good, sustainable work and productive employment (SDG 8) in higher education

Economic globalisation, climate change, digitalisation and most recently the pandemic spread of the Covid-19 virus pose major challenges to business and society.

Universities have traditionally been vehicles of innovation and social progress and are predestined to empower future leaders in business and society to create good work. Furthermore, addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is part of higher education institutions' commitment to ethics and responsibility and is an important criterion for their accreditation and impact ranking. Moreover, according to projections, student numbers are expected to grow up to 377.4 million by 2030, and nearly 600 million by 2040 (Calderon 2018).

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals cover a broad spectrum. An international working group is specifically addressing the integration of UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) to promote 'good, sustainable work and productive employment' in higher education.

The impetus for this came from the Karolinska Institutet and Gothenburg University's 'Rethinking Higher Education' conference, held in Sweden in 2019. Lennart Levi and Johannes Siegrist, who designed a workshop on Decent work and Economic development, initiated the project. Today, the project is one of the Task Groups of the Global Coalition on Safety and Health at Work, coordinated by the ILO: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/programmes-projects/WCMS_740999/lang--en/index.htm

So far, 14 experts from 8 countries (Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, UK, USA, Zimbabwe) participate in the Task Group. Since January 2021, the European Trade Union Committee for Education and Science (ETUCE) has been an official member of the Task Group.

The Task Group is chaired by Prof. Johannes Siegrist, University of Düsseldorf, and Dr Ulrike Bollmann, Institute for Work and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV).

The aim of the Task Group is to learn more about the implementation of the UN sustainable development goal 8 in educational programmes at universities and about innovative approaches to its implementation. To achieve this goal, an online questionnaire and a strategy for targeting higher education institutions were developed.

In a first step, educational programmes and their modules for the following professional areas are analysed: Occupational Safety/Occupational Hygiene/Ergonomics, Occupational Medicine and Human Resource Management. For the analysis, four thematic areas were distinguished for SDG 8 and three generic goals were formulated. The study analyses whether and how (how broadly, how deeply and with which methods) good, sustainable work and productive employment are integrated into educational programmes at higher education institutions. The first step of the study focuses on the European region for practical reasons. In a second step, an extension of the study to the international level is planned.

The current duration of the Task Group is January 2020 to June 2022.