

UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development:

Perceptions of Portuguese's Higher Education Institutions

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INTRODUCTION

This poster shows partial results of a cross-sectional research project investigating the perceptions of stakeholders of four Portuguese Higher Education Institutions about the importance of integration Sustainable Development (SD) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

PROBLEM

- To help reach goals of UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014 UN-DESD), HEIs must contribute for SD education and learning with the participation of its main stakeholders.
- At the end of this Decade it is pertinent to assess if Portuguese HEIs are implementing practices that promote SD.

OBJECTIVES

- This work explores the perceptions that key stakeholders have about the importance of SD integration in HEIs' systems regarding the following aspects:

Teaching SD across all disciplines of study

Encouraging research and dissemination of SD knowledge

Implementing green campuses

Supporting local sustainability efforts

Engaging and sharing information with international networks

METHODS

- Qualitative approach study, with semi-structured interviews.
- Sample:** Were interviewed five stakeholders (one leader, one faculty, one staff member, one student, and one external stakeholder) from 4 institutions, involving a total of **20 individuals**.

RESULTS

Teaching the concepts of SD in HEIs' curricula and courses

- Were perceived as very important.

Encouragement of research on SD issues

- Was perceived as very important.
- For some respondents there are subjects where it is more pertinent to investigate the topic than others (e.g., in social sciences, engineering, and environmental areas).

Green and environmentally friendly campuses

- Was perceived as forefront concern.
- There seems to be a tendency for believing that the adoption of green and environmentally friendly campuses result in cost savings in the future, however, the lack of action regarding these initiatives is equally noted and it is justified by the lack of financial and human resources.

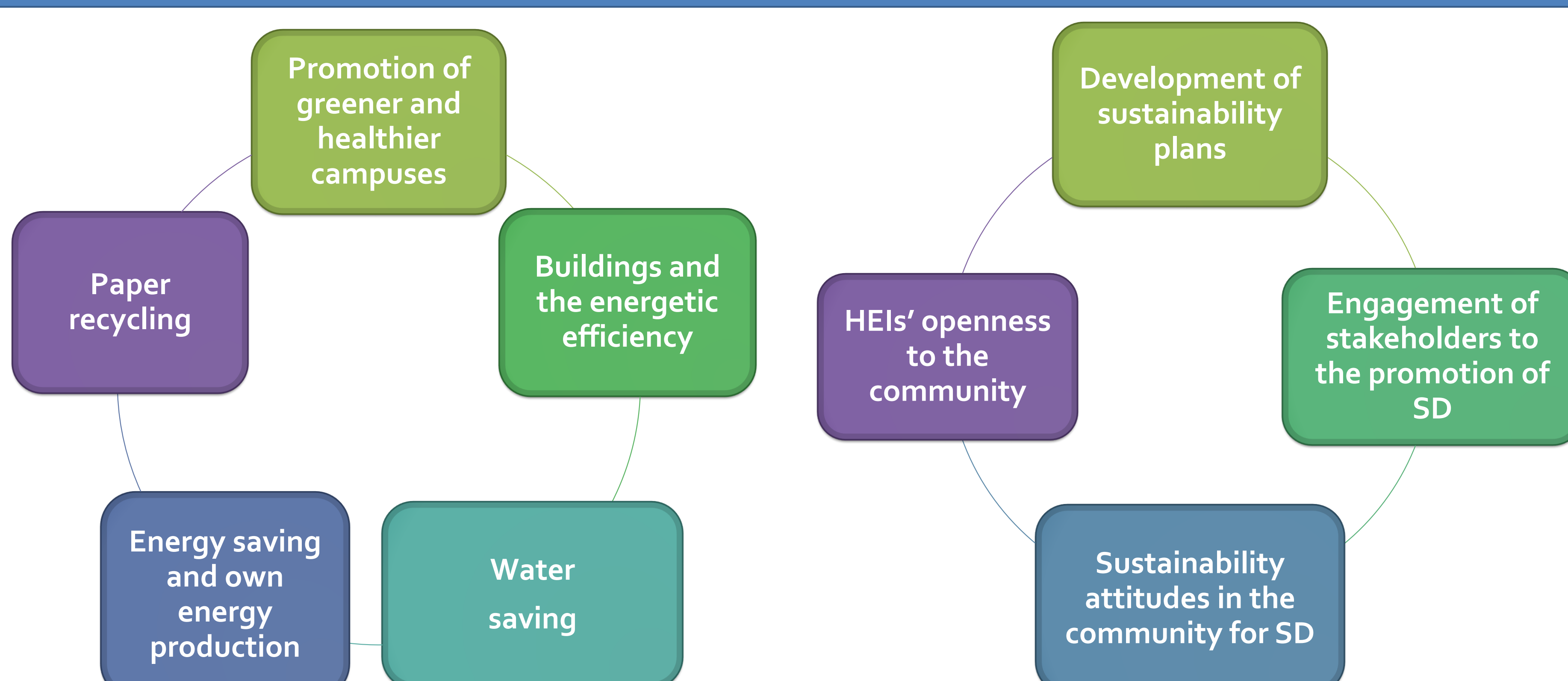
Cooperation between HEIs, local authorities and civil society to promote more sustainable communities.

- The respondents agree about the need of cooperation between HEIs, local authorities, and civil society regarding SD.

Commitment to results and actions through international structures

- All sample agree about its importance.
- The HEIs can benefit from the networks, as well as from the positive image they share and from the benchmarking of best practices.

PRACTICES TO PROMOTE SD



CONCLUSION

- This research contributes to a better understanding about what some Portuguese HEIs are doing in what concerns SD education.
- Despite all stakeholders being **unanimous in accepting the importance of the SD education**, in the opinion of the interviewed stakeholders there are **no formal statements encouraging its implementation**.