

A close-up photograph of a student with long blonde hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and a watch, working on a wooden chair frame. The student's hands are visible, carefully weaving the wooden slats. The background shows a workshop setting with various tools and materials.

“Vocational education connects smart hands with smart minds. I am delighted to be receiving vocational training because it provides me with the concrete knowledge, skills and perspectives I need to help create the sustainable solutions of the future.”

Student from media and graphics

PRIMED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- A New Narrative About Vocational Education and Training

When vocational institutions commit themselves to creating a distinctive sustainability profile, they are able to attract more students. A clear profile also strengthens companies, who will benefit from trainees (and then employees) well-versed in the principles of sustainability. And this provides vocational institutions, companies and students with exclusive opportunities to collaborate at a local and international level, as well

as opportunities to expand their knowledge and strengthen their brand. These are some of the conclusions of the report “Primed for Sustainability – A New Narrative About Technical and Vocational Education and Training”, drafted and published by the Danish ‘Youth Town’ for the Danish National Commission for UNESCO.

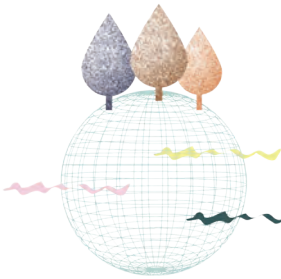
The report focuses on the work of Danish vocational institutions with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it confirms UNESCO's assumption that a sustainable profile does indeed attract more students. For this reason, a completely new narrative is required around vocational Education and training that educates for the future. This

task demands the active collaboration of all involved – not least the students themselves.

The Danish National Commission for UNESCO is keen to contribute to an ongoing dialogue and enter into partnerships helping to shape this new narrative.



Preface



Climate change is one of the greatest threats of our time. How we deal with it will be a defining issue for the future of mankind. Accelerating appropriate action across the world will be a social, environmental, and economic imperative.

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement serve as our common point of departure. These decisions prove that the international community is able to deliver both ambitions and plans to address the challenges ahead. The transformations needed will require the creation of new green industries and the greening of existing ones. We need multiple actions to reduce the environmental impact of industrial processes and products. All such actions rely on new green skills being available in key economic sectors.

Millions of young people have taken to the streets more recently to protest in favour of climate action. The youth want to be part of the solution, and they will deliver, if they are given access to the quality education, we promised them. They will need education to develop new skills – green skills. Young people should see Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a gateway to the furthering of green industries that actively demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility. Greening TVET is the way forward. Advancing green human capital will contribute to a new generation of skilled people being proud of their ability to act in favor of a more sustainable future. Their feeling of well-being in itself is important, and will contribute to making TVET more attractive. It is a journey and UNESCO provides a toolbox to assist key stakeholders – both TVET institutions and private companies – to take joint climate action across the world.

CARSTEN STAUR
Ambassador of Denmark to UNESCO

The report shows ...

- ... that almost a quarter of Denmark's vocational institutions have a strategic focus on the SDGs, both in their teaching and in their day-to-day operations.
- ... that teaching students about sustainability makes them agents of change, who are able to help create sustainable solutions within businesses and their local communities – roles that they continue to fulfil when they enter the labour market as newly qualified employees.
- ... that vocational institutions find that sustainability motivates students, particularly when the focus is on concrete action that can help overcome a sense of powerlessness with regard to environmental and climate problems. Developing an approach to sustainability based on inventive teaching methods engenders innovation and encourages creative thinking.
- ... that teaching sustainability also helps to produce insightful students with their own convictions, equipping them with the skills needed to identify new approaches to enhance sustainability based on inventive teaching methods engenders innovation and encourages creative thinking.
- ... that there is considerable potential in vocational institutions having an integrated institutional strategy with regard to sustainability in both their teaching and their day-to-day operations.
- ... that a quarter of all vocational institutions in Denmark include the SDGs and sustainability in their programmes in order to meet the labour market's demand for precisely these skills.
- ... that UNESCO's global network can reinforce the efforts of the vocational institutions by sharing new knowledge and through international recognition.

Sustainability is to be understood multidimensionally with regard to:

- **Environmental sustainability:**
Including waste sorting and the use of sustainable materials.
- **Economic sustainability:**
Including the development of products creating economic value, and business models building the foundation for sustainable solutions.
- **Social/cultural sustainability:**
Diversity among new students and future employees in business: women, men, LGBT+ people, people with disabilities and people with a different ethnic background.



UNESCO is paving the way for a new narrative:

UNESCO's evidence-based expertise and its global network provide new knowledge. They can also create impetus and branding for vocational institutions themselves, for the municipalities within and for the businesses they collaborate with and train their students for. When students, quoted in the report, refer to themselves as agents of change, it speaks to the global climate movement that is mobilizing youth all over the world. UNESCO's Global "Learning Cities" and "Creative Cities" Networks could prove extremely useful in the effort to construct a powerful new narrative around sustainability. These networks provide concrete tools to create frameworks for and to facilitate local initiatives engaging educational institutions, businesses and civil society. They also create opportunities for VET institutions to share fresh insights that can advance and improve their

teaching. UNESCO also runs the "UNEVOC Network", a global network of technical and vocational institutions whose objective is to encourage the development of technical and vocational training and transform vocational institutions into agents of change. UNESCO has produced a guide, "Greening technical and vocational education and training – A practical guide for institutions", which offers advice to leaders and professionals on how to set up educational courses focusing on a sustainable future.

Read the full guide:

<https://unevoc.unesco.org/up/gtg.pdf>

Recommendations:

- that collaboration should lead to the development of a new narrative about VET providing qualifications within the creative, innovative and sustainable sectors. This narrative should be developed in partnerships that include all parties involved in the provision of such training.
- that "sustainability" as a whole should be understood as the interplay between social/cultural, economic and environmental types of sustainability.
- that efforts should be made to attract students to the full range of vocational courses, cutting across gender, ethnic and social backgrounds.
- that knowledge about, and skills within, sustainability is linked to the focus on the production of fully rounded students, as outlined in the government paper "From pupil to skilled worker – vocational training for the future".
- that UNESCO's tools and "global cities" should be more widely known and made use of, with the objective of encouraging work with sustainability.

See further recommendations and the report in its entirety at: www.unesco.dk



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