

## UNESCO National Commission Consultation Report Form<sup>1</sup>

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC2022](#))

[Section for Higher Education](#) | Division for Education 2030

### Basic information

<b>Date of consultation</b>	12 May 2021 – 28 February 2021
<b>Location of consultation</b>	Online webinars / Italy
<b>Partner institutions</b> (higher education institutions, other organisations – include webpage if available)	<p>Over the course of the year 2021, thirty-seven Italian UNESCO Chairs took part in the project supported by the Italian National Commission for UNESCO: “Dialogues of the UNESCO Chairs: a laboratory of ideas for the world to come” <a href="http://www.dialoghicattedreunesco.it">www.dialoghicattedreunesco.it</a></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UNESCO Chair on Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and Communities of Knowledge, University of Basilicata;</li> <li>2. UNESCO Chair on Plants for Health in the Mediterranean Traditions, University of Salerno;</li> <li>3. UNESCO Chair on Heritage and urban regeneration, IUAV University of Venezia;</li> <li>4. UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Urban Quality and Urban Culture, notably in Africa, La Sapienza University of Roma;</li> <li>5. UNESCO Chair on Education, Growth and Equality, University of Ferrara;</li> <li>6. UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities, Politecnico di Milano;</li> <li>7. UNESCO Chair on the Prevention and Sustainable Management of Geo-Hydrological Hazards, University of Firenze;</li> <li>8. UNESCO Chair on Training and Empowering Human Resources for Health Development in Resource-Limited Countries, University of Brescia;</li> <li>9. UNESCO Chair in Urban and Regional Planning for Sustainable Local Development, University of Ferrara;</li> <li>10. UNESCO Chair on Health Education and Sustainable Development, Federico II University of Napoli;</li> <li>11. UNESCO Interdisciplinary Chair in Biotechnology, Tor Vergata University of Roma;</li> <li>12. UNESCO Chair in Energy for Sustainable Development, Politecnico di Milano;</li> <li>13. UNESCO Chair on Peace, Development and Cultural Policies, Jacques Maritain International Institute, Roma;</li> </ol>

<sup>1</sup> This template includes some elements used by the consultation developed by the [Futures of Education](#) initiative.

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17. UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights, Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, European University of Roma;
18. UNESCO Chair on Intersectoral Safety for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, University of Udine;
19. UNESCO Chair on Anthropology of health, biosphere and ecosystems of health, University of Genova;
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28. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Insubria University of Como;
29. UNESCO Chair on Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency, University of Reggio Calabria;
30. Network UNITWIN on Green Chemistry Excellence from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean and Beyond, Politecnico di Milano;
31. UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Development and Solidarity among Peoples (2018), Sacro Cuore Catholic University of Milano;
32. UNESCO Chair on Water Resources Management and Culture, University for Foreigners of Perugia;
33. Network UNITWIN on International Cooperation and Development, University of Pavia and University of Bethlehem;
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	<p>36. UNESCO Chair on Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Territorial Governance (2016), Benecon University Consortium of Caserta;</p> <p>37. UNESCO Chair on Innovative, Sustainable and Clean Energy Research and Education, University of Genova;</p>
<b>Name and email address of key contact person</b>	<p>Secretariat of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO. Ms. Silvia Mongardo: <a href="mailto:silvia.mongardo@unesco.it">silvia.mongardo@unesco.it</a></p>
<b>Complete name, title, and affiliation of moderator(s)</b>	<p>“Dialogues of the UNESCO Chairs” Technical and Organisational Secretariat: <a href="https://www.dialoghicattedreunesco.it/segreteria-organizzativa-e-di-coordinamento/">https://www.dialoghicattedreunesco.it/segreteria-organizzativa-e-di-coordinamento/</a> <a href="mailto:dialoghicattedreunesco@gmail.com">dialoghicattedreunesco@gmail.com</a></p> <p><b>WORKING GROUP:</b> <b>Chiara Biscarini,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Water Resources Management and Culture, University, University for Foreigners of Perugia;</i> <b>Claudia Fini and Serena Montefusco,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights, Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, European University of Roma;</i> <b>Cristina Giudici,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Population, Migrations and Development, Sapienza University of Roma</i> <b>Rita Locatelli,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Education for Human Development and Solidarity among Peoples, Sacro Cuore Catholic University of Milano;</i> <b>Nora Lombardini,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities, Politecnico di Milano;</i> <b>Valentina Mini,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair in Education, Growth and Equality, University of Ferrara.</i> <b>Dario Padovan,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair Sustainable development and territorial management, University of Torino</i> <b>Annateresa Rondinella,</b> <i>UNESCO Chair on Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and Communities of Knowledge, University of Basilicata;</i></p>
<b>Language of consultation</b>	Italian / English / French
<b>Time spent in consultation (minutes)</b>	90 min for each consultation/webinar (28 events in total)
<b>Number of participants</b>	On average, four experts took part in each event. It can be estimated that almost 1,000 participants in total attended the webinars.
<b>Participants profiles (please, briefly describe the composition of the group)</b>	<p>The following participants took part in each consultation/webinar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experts of International Organisations or of other academic institutions, both Italian and foreign;</li> <li>- Professors, researchers, academic staff</li> <li>- Students, civil society, NGOs</li> </ul>

<b>Countries represented by participants</b>	Italy, France, Switzerland, Kenya, Nigeria, Nepal, Lebanon, Panama, Netherlands, Holy See, Republic of San Marino, Spain, China, Brazil. The declaration was also signed by the UNESCO Chair on the Future of Education for Sustainability of the Pontifical Lateran University and by the Minister of Education of the United Arab Emirates.			
<b>Stakeholder groups</b> (please mark with an "x" as appropriate)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professors/ Researchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students/Youth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Higher education managers/authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Private sector
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGOs/civil society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy makers/government	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please, specify):

### Which theme did you choose for this consultation?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 7: Financing higher education                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theme 2: Higher education and the SDGs | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 8: Data and knowledge production                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 3: Inclusion in higher education            | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 9: International cooperation to enhance synergies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 4: Quality and relevance of programmes      | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 10: The futures of higher education               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 5: Academic mobility in higher education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please, specify):                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theme 6: Higher education governance              |  |

### Synthesis of contributions

Kindly provide a summary, synthesising and reflecting the ideas provided by all participants. There is no need to identify participants. Consultation reports should not exceed **1,200 words**, including the responses to the three questions outlined below (consider a balance of approximately 400 words per response). If necessary, add attachments. Remember that question 1 is general, but questions 2 and 3 should refer to the specific theme you have chosen (see list in **Annex 1**).

### Abstract

The achievement of the sustainable development goals set by the UN Agenda 2030 requires integrated thinking, the commitment of all and a profound change in our outlook on ourselves and the world. Italian UNESCO Chairs call upon everyone to face the new global challenge: to create a new paradigm of human development in harmony with our planet. "Dialogues of the UNESCO Chairs: a laboratory of ideas for the world to come" is a collaborative project organised by the Italian UNESCO Chairs whereby knowledge and ideas are shared through a process of participatory consultation and dialogues with scholars and experts on the issues that characterise the global challenge for sustainable development. The dialogue and search for solutions and best practices, the sharing of tools and strategies, collaboration and participation on a large scale are all key elements for success. In the age of digital knowledge, 28 webinar meetings were employed as a useful instrument of discussion culminating in "The Declaration for Sustainability". The Declaration represents the commitment of Italian UNESCO Chairs in the development of Education and Knowledge in relation to the global environmental challenge, offering a contribution of ideas to national, international and UNESCO policies. The

Declaration advocates higher education in complex thinking, through the development of skills to "learn to become" and through reflection on issues such as climate change. For those reasons, the Declaration promotes the central role of higher education and the reorganisation of knowledge to address the environmental and social challenge in their interdependence, with an approach to education as a "common good" and knowledge as a "global common good".

**Question 1:** *What should be the present and future role of higher education to favour the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies?*

As a result of the process of consultation that took place over the year 2021, promoted by a high number of Italian UNESCO Chairs, and supported by the Italian National Commission for UNESCO and by the Ministry of Education and of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were identified as key players in guiding our societies towards a more sustainable future, and as focal points in an ecosystem characterised by rapid and profound changes at the economic, social, and technological levels. This view is reflected and outlined in the Declaration of the Italian UNESCO Chairs entitled "Declaration for sustainability". The Declaration expresses a shared vision and commitment towards a programme of future actions which are fully in line with the direction given by UNESCO in the Report "Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education" officially launched during the November 2021 UNESCO General Conference.

In this framework, HEIs should take on their role as producers of new knowledge, preparing programs aimed at responding more promptly and independently to the renewed demand for new learning and research in a world undergoing rapid economic, social, and technological change.

The Italian UNESCO Chairs suggest that HEIs promote the implementation of transdisciplinary and transnational educational approaches and promote a culturally open educational and research environment. This is necessary to develop the appropriate skills to tackle the pressing complexity of environmental and social challenges. Indeed, the environmental issue is a perfect indicator and multiplier of differences and inequalities, where the inextricable interconnection between nature and human society is more evident.

More specifically, these skills should be developed thanks to the implementation of new programs which take into account the following dimensions:

- Educating for complex thinking,
- an 'integral' and peace-based sustainability 'that leads back to human-nature unity and an interdependent society-nature relationship',
- awareness of communities and self-awareness of people,
- educational processes and integrated, co-created knowledge, "in which all can contribute as 'knowledge carriers'".
- That is, fostering cooperative learning and the ethics of collective intelligence,
- This is to be developed 'through dialogue and integration between different cultures and by valuing bio-cultural diversity.

Methodologically, it is about facilitating a transdisciplinary research environment, becoming a "community of knowledge" capable of interfacing with other social actors. Epistemologically, the knowledge to be built is that of complex thinking and a "post-normal science", with the tools of "citizen science", for a "just and sustainable ecological society".

**Question 2:** What are the main **challenges/problems/gaps** in relation to... [rephrase content relative to the main theme you have selected]?

As a result of the interdisciplinary debate that defines the UNESCO Chairs, all participating views converged towards the future of our planet, a focal point in an ecosystem characterised by rapid and profound changes at the economic, social, and technological levels. The Declaration is a token of commitment of the Italian UNESCO Chairs to the development of education and knowledge in relation to the global environmental challenge. The many specificities of the Italian UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs converge on this point and, speaking with one voice, they intend to propose a contribution of ideas and expertise to national, European, and international policies and to UNESCO itself.

In this context, higher education institutions (HEIs) as producers of new knowledge are called upon to deal theoretically, conceptually, methodically, critically, and reflectively with the associated challenges and the processes in order to contribute to sustainable development. The tackling of these challenges requires a deep appreciation of three fundamental areas of concern, which can be summarised as: (1) the relationship between human being and nature, (2) environmental and demographic transitions, and (3) the exponential acceleration of changes in technological development.

The environmental crisis, including climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the destabilisation of ecosystems, emerges as a perfect indicator and amplifier of disparities, inequities and inequalities demonstrating the complex relationship between humanity and nature. In other words, of the fundamental human-nature relationship. This relationship is also one of the primary determinants of recent environmental and demographic transitions, including migration patterns which, in the coming decades, will require a deep understanding of the future of social composition across the globe.

Lastly, the human and the natural spheres are flanked by the new artificial ecosystem, underlined by the exponential acceleration in technological development and the progressive implementation of digital tools in every aspect of human life. This new human-machine relationship has the potential to provide rise to a plethora of internal challenges requiring an equivalent growth of awareness and responsibility by individuals, communities, social and institutional organisations.

The impact of digital tools on the natural environment is evident and its repercussions on the education system require attentive consideration.

**Question 3:** What needs to **change** or be **created** to face these challenges **within** and/or **outside** of higher education institutions?

The Declaration of Italian UNESCO Chairs advocates for the organisation of educational programs specifically developed to respond more promptly and independently to the renewed demand for learning, teaching and knowledge production. This important task first requires the re-establishment of a solid foundation of trust. In this context, initiatives should be specifically aiming at an ethical approach to education as a "common good" and knowledge as a "global common good", emphasising the importance of human dignity, common good and health, solidarity and subsidiarity in personal actions and political decisions, in the search for truth, freedom, justice and peace. The ongoing neglect to establish an ethical framework to education has led to a profound deficit in youth's ability to understand themselves and their surroundings in a growingly diverse and volatile ecosystem, concretized as a shortened understanding of rationality, and the marginalisation of fundamental ethical questions. Therefore, the present authors advocate for the development of an edifying discussion based on a solid understanding of ethics as "philosophy of science" and a norm-theoretical analysis specifically focused on the interconnected concepts of "responsibility" and "freedom".

Second, we believe that, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development set by the United Nations 2030 Agenda, a new education paradigm needs to be developed through an integrated and transdisciplinary approach to future thinking, the commitment of all, and a profound change in our perception of ourselves and the world.

Across all fields and disciplines, sustainability needs to be established as a core value and common goal that all stakeholders actively seek to put into practice. For instance, sustainability “involves rethinking the curriculum, campus operations, organisational culture, student participation, leadership and management, community relationships, and research”. This process must be fostered by financial and administrative support, training schemes, guidelines, and best practice models. In this context, interdisciplinary communication between individuals, institutions and transdisciplinary networks will guide the development of HEIs as sources of sustainability by linking research and practice on its own campus.

In this context, closing the numerous digital divides present in the social fabric is paramount if the promise of quality education for all is to be maintained in all countries of the world and across all population levels. This will entail a pervasive restructuring of knowledge and the implementation of both practical and thought skills for the validation and organisation of a higher education system that is digitally ready.



### Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were particularly emphasised during this consultation?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 1: No poverty                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 2: Zero hunger                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 13: Climate action                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 3: Good health and well-being | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 14: Life below water                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 4: Quality education          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 10: Reduced inequality                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 15: Life on land                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 5: Gender equality            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation |  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals      |

### You may provide additional feedback...

Are there any other issues that should be considered in relation to higher education challenges and options in your community, your region, the world?

*As mentioned above, UNESCO Chairs play a critical role in the development of new knowledge and research through an active participation in UNITWIN networks. However, the role of UNESCO Chairs is often poorly defined and not clearly recognised by National institutions: we believe, in fact, that the precious contributions UNESCO Chairs offer to the scientific and education spheres is not properly acknowledged nor taken full advantage of. UNESCO Chairs should represent a centre for thought development, engaging think-tanks where students from all educational backgrounds come together and participate in the generation and sharing of new ideas. We hope that this challenge will be faced by national and international educational institutions.*

Is there any other comment you wish to share with UNESCO or the organisers of the WHEC2022?

*The Italian Network of UNESCO Chairs will pursue the discussions and knowledge exchanges initiated last year under the framework of the “Dialogues of the UNESCO Chairs: a laboratory of ideas for the world to come” initiative. This is intended to take on to the invitation of the International Commission on the Futures of Education to engage Universities and HEIs as key players of the New Social Contract for Education. By fostering international cooperation and dialogue on the challenges relating to the future of the planet and of humanity, Italian UNESCO Chairs will therefore continue to contribute to the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and approaches to education and development.*



## List of participants

[Please, include the moderator (s)]

Mr. / Mrs.	First name	Last name	Title/organisation	Nationality	Email address (if the participant wishes to receive information about the WHEC2022)	Indicate with a “NO” if the participant DOES NOT want to be publicly identified as a participant in this consultation.
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Mr	Carmine	Gambardella	37. UNESCO Chair on Landscape, Cultural Heritage and Territorial Governance, Benecon University Consortium of Caserta	Italian	carmine.gambardella@ <a href="mailto:carmine.gambardella@unipegaso.it">unipegaso.it</a>	
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