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within European Regions,
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Virtual Opportunities for Students of the Green Sustainability Unit: Internships and Peer-to-Peer Projects WP3 Report

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the FORTHM Green Sustainability Unit activities, several virtual opportunities were developed to actively engage students in sustainability-related initiatives while strengthening their participation in Alliance activities.

The initiative combined curricular internships, virtual projects, and peer-to-peer collaboration activities addressing environmental sustainability, sustainable mobility, communication, and student engagement. Through these opportunities, students worked alongside academic coordinators and experts from the Green Sustainability Unit, contributing to the development of practical tools, policy documents, communication materials, and sustainability resources relevant to the entire Alliance.

The activities were designed not only to support the implementation of the Green Sustainability Unit work plan but also to provide students with meaningful international learning experiences, opportunities for intercultural collaboration, and practical training linked to their academic studies.

2. Objectives of the Activities

The activities pursued several complementary objectives:

- involving students directly in the Green Sustainability Unit initiatives;
- increasing student participation in Alliance-wide sustainability projects;
- supporting the development of sustainability-related resources and policies;
- promoting sustainable mobility and environmental awareness;
- encouraging intercultural collaboration among students from different institutions;
- integrating FORTHM activities into university curricula through recognized internships and ECTS accreditation.

More specifically, students were invited to contribute to research activities, data collection, policy development, sustainable mobility mapping, communication and dissemination actions, and collaborative peer-to-peer projects.

3. Organisation of the Activities

The Green Sustainability Unit coordinated three virtual internship projects and three peer-to-peer initiatives involving students from different FORTHM partner institutions.

A total of **Six** students participated in the internship activities. Four students from the Università degli Studi di Palermo and one student from Universitat de València carried out internships under the supervision of local academic coordinators and Green Sustainability Unit experts. **Five** internships (four at UniPa and one at UV) were formally integrated into students' curricula and recognized through ECTS credits.

The peer-to-peer activities were open to students across the Alliance. While three projects were proposed, registrations were received only for the initiative focused on sustainable travel routes, resulting in the participation of **thirteen** students coming from two FORTHM universities and one external higher education institution.

All activities were implemented online, enabling students to collaborate internationally and contribute directly to Alliance objectives regardless of their geographical location.

4. Methodology

A project-based learning methodology was adopted across all activities.

Students worked under the supervision of academic coordinators and subject experts,

receiving guidance, periodic feedback, and access to relevant resources and documentation. Depending on the activity, participants carried out:

- desk research;
- data collection and verification;
- benchmarking exercises;
- policy and document analysis;
- collaborative content creation;
- communication and dissemination activities;
- development of sustainability-related resources.

The outcomes of the activities were documented through reports, mapping resources, communication materials, and project deliverables that contributed directly to the objectives of the Green Sustainability Unit.

5. Internship Activities

5.1 Digital Internship of the FORTHM Green Sustainability Unit

Two students conducted a comprehensive analysis of sustainability initiatives implemented by FORTHM partner universities.

Their work included extensive desk research involving institutional websites, sustainability strategies, policy documents, and other relevant materials. In addition, direct contacts were established with representatives from partner universities to collect complementary information and identify good practices.

The students produced detailed benchmarking reports highlighting successful sustainability initiatives across the Alliance. These reports provided valuable evidence for the Green Sustainability Unit experts and constituted an important reference during the drafting process of the FORTHM Code of Conduct for Environmental Sustainability.

5.2 Green Travels Internship

The Green Travels internship focused on sustainable mobility within the Alliance.

Two students collaborated with Green Sustainability experts to identify, analyse and document environmentally sustainable travel solutions connecting FORTHM partner universities.

The internship contributed to the creation and expansion of the Green Travel Map through the collection and verification of transport routes, schedules, travel alternatives, institutional contacts, relevant databases, useful websites and comparative analyses of transport-related carbon emissions.

The work resulted in the development of practical resources supporting sustainable travel choices for students and staff participating in Alliance activities.

5.3 Innovative Communication Strategies Internship

This internship focused on communication and dissemination activities related to the FORTHM Code of Conduct for Environmental Sustainability.

One student supported the preparation of dissemination materials aimed at increasing awareness and encouraging adoption of the Code among students, academics and administrative staff.

The outputs included thematic communication cards, mini-guides and communication materials designed to facilitate the understanding and visibility of the Code of Conduct and its

sustainability principles.

6. Peer-to-Peer Activities

The Green Sustainability Unit launched three peer-to-peer projects:

Peer-to-Peer Project 1

Feedback on the Code of Conduct

Students were invited to review the FORTHM Code of Conduct and provide comments, recommendations and proposals for improvement regarding sustainability, inclusion and responsible behaviour.

[Peer-to-Peer Project 1 – Feedback on the Code of Conduct](#)

Peer-to-Peer Project 2

Creation of Visual Materials and Summary Sheets for the Code of Conduct

Students interested in sustainability communication were invited to produce visual resources, infographics and summary sheets supporting the dissemination of the Code of Conduct and its sustainability-related principles.

[Peer-to-Peer Project 2 – Creation of Visual Materials and Summary Sheets for the Code of Conduct](#)

Peer-to-Peer Project 3

Map of Green FORTHM Routes

This project focused on the creation of sustainable travel routes connecting FORTHM universities and promoting environmentally responsible mobility across Europe.

The project attracted thirteen students who collaborated under the supervision of the Green Sustainability Task Manager and experts from JYU. Participants worked on the identification, validation and documentation of sustainable routes connecting partner institutions.

As a result of the project, thirteen Green Routes were successfully completed and documented, providing practical information on travel options, travel duration, costs and environmental impact. The routes included detailed comparisons between different transportation modes and offered students and staff practical guidance for making more sustainable travel choices.

[Peer-to-Peer Project 3 – Map of Green FORTHM Routes](#)

7. Quantitative Results

The activities produced the following measurable outputs:

- 6 students involved in internship activities;
- 5 internships formally recognised through ECTS credits;
- 3 internship projects implemented;
- 3 peer-to-peer projects designed and promoted;
- 13 students involved in the Green Routes peer-to-peer project;
- 13 sustainable travel routes completed and documented;
- benchmarking reports supporting the drafting of the Code of Conduct;
- communication materials and dissemination tools produced;
- Green Travel Map expanded and enriched with additional data and analyses.

Overall, eighteen students directly participated in Green Sustainability Unit activities through internships and peer-to-peer projects.

8. Student Feedback and Learning Outcomes

Students generally described the activities as highly valuable learning experiences that allowed them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical and internationally oriented projects.

Participants involved in sustainability benchmarking reported significant improvements in research skills, data collection methodologies, policy analysis and comparative evaluation of institutional practices.

Students participating in the Green Travels activities highlighted the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge concerning sustainable mobility, environmental impact assessment and international transportation systems. Several participants emphasized that the project increased their awareness of the environmental implications of travel choices and enhanced their ability to identify sustainable alternatives.

Students involved in communication activities reported improvements in science communication, sustainability dissemination and the production of audience-oriented communication materials.

Feedback received through the individual reports produced by participants indicates that students appreciated the opportunity to contribute concretely to Alliance initiatives while simultaneously developing professional, intercultural and transversal competences.

Participants frequently mentioned improvements in:

- research and analytical skills;
- sustainability awareness;
- communication abilities;
- intercultural collaboration;
- problem-solving;
- project management;
- independent work and teamwork.

9. Impact on Sustainability and International Cooperation

The activities contributed directly to the strategic objectives of the FORTHEM Alliance concerning sustainability, student engagement and international cooperation.

The benchmarking reports supported the development of the FORTHEM Code of Conduct for Environmental Sustainability and strengthened the exchange of good practices among partner universities.

The Green Travels activities and the Green Routes project promoted sustainable mobility by providing practical tools and information that encourage students and staff to consider lower-impact travel alternatives.

Moreover, the collaborative nature of the projects fostered interaction among students from different countries, reinforcing the European dimension of the Alliance and promoting intercultural learning.

10. Integration into Curricula and Good Practice

A particularly significant achievement was the successful integration of internship activities into formal university curricula.

Five internships were recognised through ECTS credits and embedded within academic programmes, enabling students to receive formal academic recognition while contributing to strategic Alliance objectives.

The combination of sustainability-related activities, international cooperation, practical

outputs and curricular integration represents a particularly effective example of good practice that could be replicated in future Alliance initiatives.

11. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The activities generated several recommendations for future implementation.

First, student engagement is significantly enhanced when activities produce tangible outputs that can be used by the Alliance and have visible practical impact.

Second, sustainability projects benefit substantially from interdisciplinary collaboration involving students from different academic backgrounds.

Third, internship and peer-to-peer schemes should continue to be promoted as effective mechanisms for combining student learning with institutional objectives.

Finally, the Green Routes experience demonstrated the value of involving students directly in the collection and validation of sustainability-related data, producing resources that are both educational and operationally useful.

12. Conclusion

The Green Sustainability Unit activities successfully combined sustainability goals, student engagement and international cooperation through a set of internships and peer-to-peer initiatives.

The projects generated valuable outputs supporting the objectives of the Alliance, including benchmarking reports, communication materials, sustainable mobility resources and the Green Routes map. At the same time, they provided students with meaningful opportunities to develop professional and transversal competences in an international environment.

The results demonstrate that student-centred virtual opportunities can effectively contribute to Alliance priorities while creating tangible educational and institutional benefits.

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