



**VIRTUAL BRIDGE**  
BETWEEN EUROPEAN & AFRICAN STUDENTS  
FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



# UnaVEx virtual exchange framework for sustainability education

*Project Deliverable 2.1 “UnaVEx virtual exchange  
framework for sustainability education”*

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**UNIVERSITE  
DE KINSHASA**



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This document is the “Design of Virtual Exchange Framework for Sustainability Education UnaVex project”. The document has been written by the UnaVEx teams of Helsingin Yliopisto (FI, coordinator, *Una Europa partner university*), Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (IT, *Una Europa partner university*), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (BE, *Una Europa partner university*), University of Johannesburg (ZA), University of Nairobi (KE) and Université de Kinshasa (CD).

This document is the 1<sup>st</sup> version of an interactive document, which will be expanded in a cumulatively manner by the UnaVEx teams based on experiences of the UnaVEx Virtual Exchanges (VEs) for moderators and students.

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## 1. VIRTUAL EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK

During the three years of the project’s lifespan (Jan 2024 - Jan 2027), UnaVEx aims to bring together **2500 higher education students** from across the partnership and actively train between **10-15 university staff per participating institution** (lecturers, teachers, researchers and others) as moderators of online exchanges. This project targets interested students at all levels of higher education but focuses particularly on students at Master’s level. Furthermore, the project will look to empower students to later become moderators themselves and create an **active UnaVEx alumni community** with a virtual space to exchange beyond the limited lifetime of this project.

The basic scheme for becoming a Climate Advocate is illustrated in Figs.1 and 2: The student will first take the UnaEuropa “Introduction to Sustainability” MOOC (3 ECTS), followed by the UnaVEx Virtual Exchange (1 ECTS). Finally, the students will need to take at least a further 2 UnaEuropa MOOCs from the 4 available (Climate.now 2 ECTS; Biodiversity.now 2 ECTS; Political Economy of Sustainability 2 ECTS; Sustainability and the Arts 1 ECTS).

# 10 ECTS Micro-Credential

consisting of five MOOCs:



**Introduction to sustainability, 3 ECTS**  
University of Helsinki  
/Laura Riuttanen



**Climate.now, 2 ECTS**  
University of Helsinki  
/Laura Riuttanen



**Biodiversity.now, 2 ECTS**  
University of Helsinki  
/Iryna Herzon



**Political economy of sustainability, 2 ECTS**  
Jagellonian University  
/Maciej Grodzicki

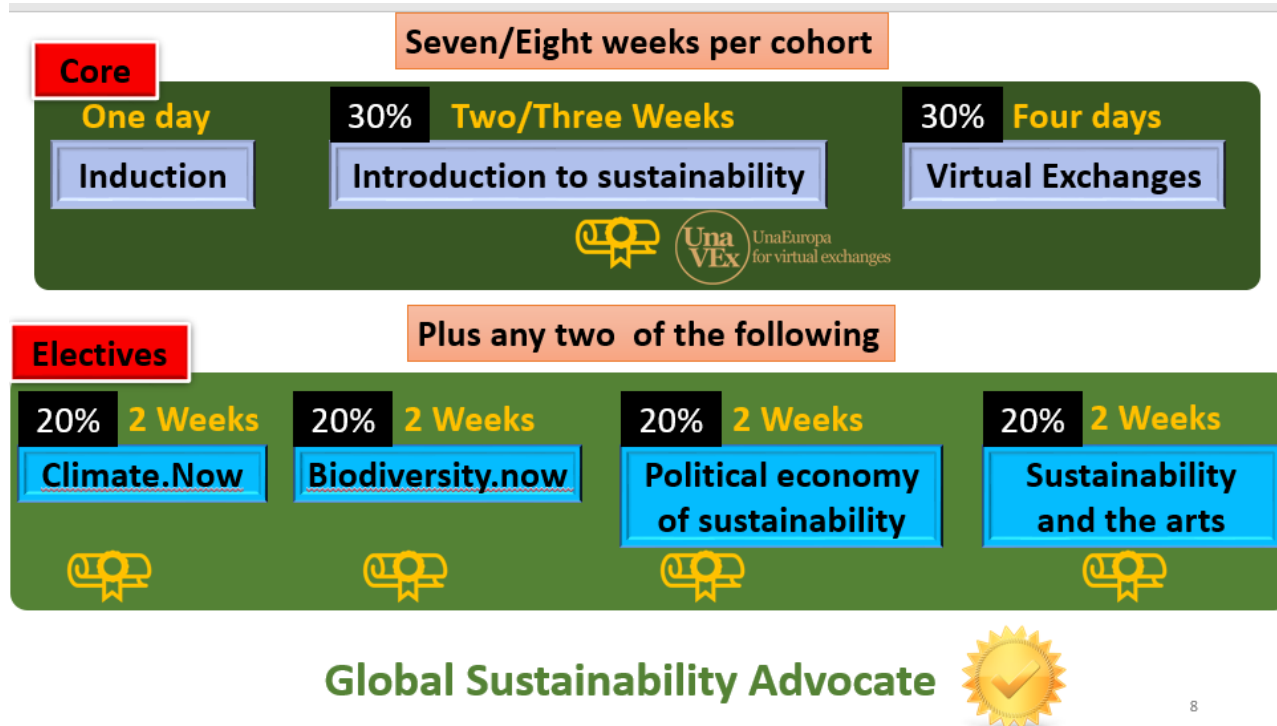


**Sustainability and the arts, 1 ECTS**  
University of Bologna  
/Francesco Maria Spampinato

[www.una-europa.eu/study/microcredential-sustainability](http://www.una-europa.eu/study/microcredential-sustainability)

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Fig. 1 - The five Micro-Credential MOOCs available by UnaEuropa.



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Fig. 2: The basic scheme for becoming a Climate Advocate (4 ECTS + 3 or 4 ECTS).

- ❖ In 2024-2027 UnaVex organises 5 iterations of the VE virtual workshops
- ❖ Students register for the Virtual Exchange workshop through the “Open University” of the University of Helsinki
- ❖ When the student is registered, (2 weeks) before the workshop the University of Helsinki opens the “DigiCampus” platform, where they can find the necessary background material for the workshop
  - ❖ 500 students will participate in each workshop.
- ❖ Joint lectures can be scheduled for students, after which they go to break-out rooms.
  - ❖ Small groups are 10 students and one trained moderator.
- ❖ In small groups, they discuss and go through a joint exercise related to sustainable development

The expressed aim of this project is to achieve parity in terms of participation, ensuring a **50% balance of both students and moderators** coming from the partner countries associated to the programme on the one hand and from the third countries not associated to the programme, Region 9 - Sub-Saharan Africa, on the other. This geographical balance - hand in hand with a strong commitment to achieving gender balance - of participating students and trained moderators is a priority for the UnaVEx project consortium.

UnaVEx will employ tools and tested methods and pedagogical expertise across the project consortium to co-design a **virtual exchange framework for international sustainability education**. Building on the **Una Europa Micro-credential in Sustainability**, this project will capitalize on the complementary expertise of the partner universities to co-create innovative Virtual Exchange (VE) interactions to the benefit of all students. Co-developed by three Una Europa partner universities, the Una Europa Micro-credential in Sustainability consists of five interconnected MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) covering environmental, economic, and social aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Embedding the Micro-Credential provides this project with a solid digital platform and supporting materials to be used as a basis, while also opening up the possibility to award ECTS credits.

Within UNAVEX, the timeline of the Virtual Exchange Calls will be adjusted to the UnaEuropa online MOOCs’ annual schedule. All the current UnaEuropa on-line courses are continuously carried out and the courses are evenly distributed throughout the year (<https://www.una-europa.eu/study/microcredential-sustainability>)

During a three-year period, in total, 5 VE Calls will be announced (for First and Second semesters, with the first Call starting from February/March 2025). Each VE Call will invite 500 students from the Partners’ Universities as well as other Universities in European (50%) and Region 9 - Sub-Saharan Africa (50%), on the other.



The consortium will produce Virtual Exchange (VE) guidelines, which will include:

- VE implementation plan, including Integration of VE into curricula
- Code of conduct
- Calls for participation (for moderators and students), including selection criteria
- Recommendations regarding online communication, including use of digital tools, language barriers, etc.
- lessons-learned: existing VE initiatives

## 2. PROGRAM FOR VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

### 2.1 Structure of the Virtual Exchange

The Virtual Exchange component will be made up of 5 online synchronous sessions, of 3 hours each, and additional independent work developing Sustainability Action tasks. The first session will take place before the students engage with the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC. Before the first synchronous session, the students will be asked to introduce themselves asynchronously on Digicampus online learning platform, so that they can start getting to know their cohort and the moderators. During the first synchronous session, the educators (and moderators in their small groups) will introduce the resources, respond to students' expectations, clarify doubts and ensure everybody is onboard. This initial session aims to ensure engagement and commitment on the part of all those involved.

The students will then have **two weeks** to complete the "Introduction to Sustainability" MOOC, (<https://courses.mooc.fi/org/uh-inar/courses/introduction-to-sustainability>) and respond to questions and prompts in an online forum.

Finally, the students will meet for 4 weekly sessions of 3 hours each. Following a plenary intervention, the students will meet in small groups of 10-15 students from different partner and associated institutions, moderated by facilitators. During these group discussions, they will be able to explore different perspectives on the issue of sustainability, including ecological, social, economic and cultural aspects. In addition, the UnaVEx project consortium will look to collaborate with arts collectives from across the universities' ecosystems, such as the Ndaku Ya La Vie Est Belle Arts Collective. This way, the students will be able to build their knowledge and consider how their new understanding can develop into impactful action, both at a global and local level.

In addition to the 5 x 3-hour sessions, students will be expected to work independently for 10 additional hours to develop their Sustainability Action tasks (total 15 + 10 hours, corresponding to 1 ECTS).



The plenary interventions will include keynote lectures and activities that will help the students to investigate other perspectives on the topics presented in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC, particularly those coming from Sub-Saharan Africa. The main idea is that students will experience the complexity of local and global environmental issues and climate change and engage in discussions with students located in different geographical areas, to deepen their understanding on the issues from different perspectives and be able to act within their communities.

Below is a tentative plan regarding the content of the virtual exchange sessions:

Date	Time	Plenary topic & guest speaker	Group activity
24.2.2025	12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)	Introduction to UnaVEx & the MOOCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know one another and brainstorming your group's <i>Sustainability action task</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Pre-task:</b> Find a sustainability action that took place in your local community or home country to share with your group members.</li> </ul>
7.3.2025	12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)	Sustainable Development as a Concept and in Politics Guest: Tarja Halonen, the former president of Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the day's topic</li> <li>• Continue planning the <i>Sustainability Action task</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Pre-task:</b> Complete the <a href="#">Introduction to Sustainability MOOC</a></li> </ul>
14.3.2025	12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)	Ecological sustainability Guest: Professor Daniel Olago, ICCA University of Nairobi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the day's topic: reflect on your Sustainability action in terms of ecological sustainability.</li> <li>• Draft your practical implementation action plan (local individual actions/online format).</li> <li>• <b>Pre-task:</b> start implementing your group's Sustainability Action.</li> </ul>
21.3.2025	12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)	Social and economic sustainability Guest: Evans Njewa, Least Developed Countries' lead climate negotiator on climate finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the day's topic: reflect your action plan in terms of social sustainability.</li> <li>• Update the process and advance the task if possible online.</li> <li>• <b>Pre-task:</b> Continue implementing your group's <i>Sustainability Action</i>.</li> </ul>

28.5.2025	12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)	Cultural sustainability Guest: Ezio Manzini, author and design academic in social innovation and sustainability design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on the day's topic; reflect your action in terms of cultural sustainability.</li> <li>• Reflect and finalize the <i>Sustainability Action</i> task.</li> <li>• Fill in the feedback survey.</li> </ul> Joint closing session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pre-task:</b> Create a summary of your sustainability action task.</li> </ul>
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Questions for the small group discussions:

## 28.2.2025: Introduction to UnaVEx and the MOOCs

### Round of introductions

Tell your group members about your home country, study background, and interest/relationship to climate change and sustainability issues. What does sustainability mean to you?

Can you name sustainability-related issues that affect you and your local community? Do they have global consequences?

- Which areas of sustainability are most interesting or familiar to you?
- Is there an overlap between sustainability and your study discipline?
- Do you have some skills or knowledge that are beneficial for sustainability action?
- Can you name some distinct sustainability issues affecting your life/home community?
- Think of 2-3 SDGs that will guide your group's *sustainability action*

## 7.3.2025: Sustainable Development as a Concept and in Politics

Discuss one element of the keynote speech on sustainability that

1. Complemented and deepened the course content of *Sustainability as a concept and in politics* in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC. In what ways was this enlightening?
  2. Was in contrast to the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC. How do you interpret this?
- How is sustainable development viewed and approached in your home country?

- Which of the SDGs are highlighted, which do not seem as relevant in your local context? Why is that?
- In which SDGs does your country do well, and which are more challenging?
- How can progress in sustainability be measured?
- Do you know the difference between the concepts of weak and strong sustainability?
- Can you name examples of both views?
- How does this definition relate to your sustainability action?

Continue working on the **Sustainability Action task**. When you have formed the idea, start planning its execution (see case studies in Appendix II for inspiration).

- Think of 2-3 SDGs that guide your sustainability action task
- Who does your sustainability action affect? (locally and globally)
- Where will your action take place, and what is the format of your action? If locally, everyone does something in their living environment and reports weekly to the group. Another option is to do a shared online output that you will work on during the virtual exchange sessions.
- What is the desired outcome of your sustainability action? Reflect from different sustainability perspectives (climate change, ecological, socio-economic, cultural ...)

### 14.3.2025: Ecological Sustainability

Discuss one element of the keynote speech on ecological sustainability that

1. Complemented and deepened the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC.
2. Was in contrast to the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC. How do you interpret this?

Reflect on your relationship with nature. How does this influence your perspective on sustainability?

Planetary boundaries

- For which of the planetary boundaries has the threshold of acceptable risk been transgressed?
- What are the consequences of crossing these boundaries?
- What do you think should be done to mitigate the challenge? Do you think it is possible to return to safe operating space?

Which moral community framework aligns most closely with your views about ecological sustainability? Why?

Can you think of links between your action task and the planetary boundaries?

What are the ecological impacts of your sustainability action?

Which moral community type aligns most with your group's Sustainability Action?

## **21.3.2025: Social and Economic Sustainability**

Discuss one element of the keynote speech that

1. Complemented and deepened the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC.
2. Was in contrast to the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC.

### **Social goals for sustainable development**

Key social goals for sustainable development include

- No poverty (SDG 1)
- Zero Hunger (SDG 2)
- Good health and well-being (SDG 3)
- Quality education (SDG 4)
- Gender equality (SDG 5)

Evaluate and discuss how well these goals are met in your local communities and home regions.

Urbanization

- Can you name some sustainability challenges related to urbanization?
- How would you describe urbanization in your home region?
- Can you name some local sustainability issues?

Key economic goals for sustainable development include

- Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
- Industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9)
- Reduced inequalities (SDG 10)
- Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)
- Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12)

Evaluate and discuss how well these goals are met in your local communities and home regions.  
Looking at the social goals, can you find synergies or conflicts among these SDGs?

Compare the benefits and challenges of **1) linear economy** (take, make, dispose) and **2) circular economy** (reduce, reuse, recycle)

- Can you come up with examples of both approaches?

What are some social and economic impacts of your sustainability action?

If your task can be linked to economic sustainability, does it resemble the logic of a linear or circular economy?

### 28.3.2025: Cultural Sustainability

Discuss one element of the keynote speech on cultural sustainability that

1. Complemented and deepened the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC.
2. Was in contrast to the course content in the Introduction to Sustainability MOOC. How do you interpret this?

How do you understand the concept of cultural sustainability?

Looking at the three definitions for cultural sustainability in the MOOC learning material, can you name examples of each of them? How do they relate to the keynote speech?

1. Culture in sustainable development: protecting and supporting valued characteristics of culture (cultural heritage or art).
2. Culture for sustainable development: culture is used as a tool or an instrument to advance sustainable development.
3. Culture as sustainable development: culture itself is transformed towards sustainability. Culture is understood in broad terms as an entire lifestyle and a constantly changing process.

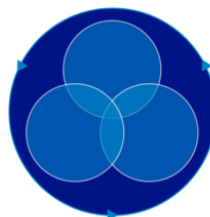
**Culture in  
sustainable  
development**



**Culture for  
sustainable  
development**



**Culture as  
sustainable  
development**



Can you name some cultural impacts of your sustainability action?

Which of the three definitions for cultural sustainability is most aligned with your sustainability action?

### Suggested keynote speakers

UNAVEX will invite several keynote speakers from the participating countries and beyond. All the guest speakers have done significant work in the field of sustainability. Potential keynote speakers for UNAVEX include:

- Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco (Morocco)
- Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (Denmark / Kenya)
- Ali Mohammed, Kenya's special envoy on climate change (Kenya)
- Tanseem Essop, Executive director of Climate Action Network - International (South Africa)
- Evans Njewa, Least Developed Countries' lead climate negotiator on climate finance (Zambia)
- Tarja Halonen, Former president of Finland, involved in the UN sustainability work (Finland)
- Lara Martins, Climate Executive, Youth20 G20 delegates (Brazil)
- Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Professor in social anthropology in University of Oslo (Norway)

### 4.2. Pedagogical approach: Engaging head, hands and heart for transformative sustainability learning (Sipos et al., 2009)

'Head, hands and heart' is a pedagogical approach for transformative sustainability learning. In this approach, learning processes are rooted in individuals' cognitive (head), psychomotor (hands) and affective (heart) domains (Sipos et al., 2009).

Applying these principles to UNAVEX,

- *Head* refers to learning MOOCs.
- *Hands* refer to the Sustainability Action task to be planned and completed during and in between the VE sessions.
- *Heart* refers to interaction and discussions during the Virtual Exchange Week.

## 2.3 Dates of the VE implementation

After the first Pre-MOOC session, the virtual exchange sessions will be organized once a week for four consecutive Fridays. Due to practical reasons, the weekly format makes it easier to attain a larger number of participants compared to a one-week VE. The five-week format is also more flexible as it enables to make possible improvements and adjustments already during the first VE.

The virtual exchanges will take place:

- 1st VE : Feb-March 2025  
Dates of the sessions: 24 Feb, 7 March, 14 Mar, 21 Mar and 28 Mar.
- 2nd VE: Oct-Nov 2025
- 3rd VE: Feb-March 2026
- 4rd /5th: September-December 2026

## 2.4 Learning outcomes for the VE component

The 5 MOOCs offered within the Microcredential have their specific Learning outcomes (LOs). The VE component adds to these outcomes with the following (see also APPENDIX 2):

After completing the VE, students will be able to:

- 1. Explain the basic concepts linked to sustainability (sustainable development, ecological sustainability, social and economic sustainability and cultural sustainability), and how these impact societies, globally and locally.
- 2. Critically reflect on their own views on sustainability, resilience and climate justice, and how these views have changed as a result of the VE.
- 3. Explain different international and intercultural perspectives on sustainable development, ecological sustainability, social and economic sustainability and cultural sustainability, with reference to different European and Sub-Saharan perspectives.
- 4. Explain the difference between working face-to-face and in digital environments also in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- 5. Carry out teamwork and manage small projects in diverse international/intercultural settings.
- 6. Communicate and present their work in English, while activating their plurilingual repertoires to communicate effectively with their peers.

## 2.5 'Global Sustainability Advocate' certificate

An **interdisciplinary and international online environment** is key to teaching about interrelations of global challenges and the complexity of achieving common sustainability goals in all parts of the globe. It is precisely the value of international, intercultural and interdisciplinary exchange that will form the basis of the UnaVEx Virtual Exchange programme described above.

Following the initial part of the programme (Introduction MOOC + VE), students will have the option to dive more deeply into different aspects of sustainability from ecological, social and economic perspectives with the option to select between four different MOOCs:

- ❖ Climate.now
- ❖ Biodiversity.now
- ❖ Political Economy and Sustainability
- ❖ Sustainability and the Arts.

Upon completion of all steps of the programme, students will receive a dedicated '**Global Sustainability Advocate' certificate**. This certificate will attest that students have successfully passed the UnaVEx virtual exchange programme, equipped with skills to critically analyse issues related to sustainability in diverse economic, socio-cultural, technological, political, legal, and scientific contexts. In addition University of Helsinki provides one credit point via Open University.

## 2.6 Recruiting moderators & their training

Moderators will be recruited to facilitate the small-group online discussions during the VE sessions. The call for Moderators will specify the ideal profile, which includes:

- Having a high level of proficiency in English and/or French
- Having fluent English, French language skills are an advantage (Virtual Exchange Week and MOOC materials are in English)
- Having at least a Bachelor's degree (preferably Master's or PhD)
- Having some experience moderating online discussions, or the motivation to learn
- Having an interest in issues related to sustainability
- Being available during the Training and VE periods, preferably for two iterations of the VE.


Moderators will be offered training including the technical skills (using Zoom), soft skills (handling challenges and conflicts effectively) and content, e.g., group exercise based on issues related to the plenary talk; ensuring ethical and responsible behaviour online.

For recruiting the moderators, an internal call text was distributed among the UNAVEX partner universities in June. For the internal call, each partner university aims to recruit 10-15 moderators



by August 27th 2024. After this, the call for moderators will be made public. Moderators can and are encouraged to facilitate more than one of the UNAVEX virtual exchange units.

## Call text for moderators



**Join the Moderators' training Program for Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability (UnaVEx)**

**Call for Moderators is open – opportunity for work, training and credits!**

Are you passionate about fostering **international connections** between Europe and Africa and facilitating meaningful discussions? Are you eager to take on a leadership role in sustainability within a **dynamic online community**? If so, join our team of moderators for the UnaVEx virtual exchange!

As a UnaVEx moderator you play a central role in **creating an engaging environment** for students **worldwide**. You host interactive Zoom sessions, facilitate **interdisciplinary** discussions in sustainability topics, and inspire active participation. You gain valuable skills in **communication** and **leadership** through comprehensive training. If you're passionate about promoting collaboration, diversity, and sustainability, **apply now** to shape the future of virtual exchange and make a global impact.

**As a Moderator you will:**

- Gain experience on remote facilitation and education
- Participate in Moderators' training @DigiCampus online platform
- Host for two or more iterations, each 5 sessions (2-3 hours) for your own intercultural group of students (approx. 10 students)
- Facilitate active and fair discussion forums for all participants
- Learn about the *Introduction to sustainability* MOOC

The 5 sessions to be hosted by moderators during 1st Virtual Exchange will be in February and March 2025 (Fri. 24 Feb, Fri. 7 March, Fri. 14 Mar, Fri. 21 Mar, Fri. 28 Mar).

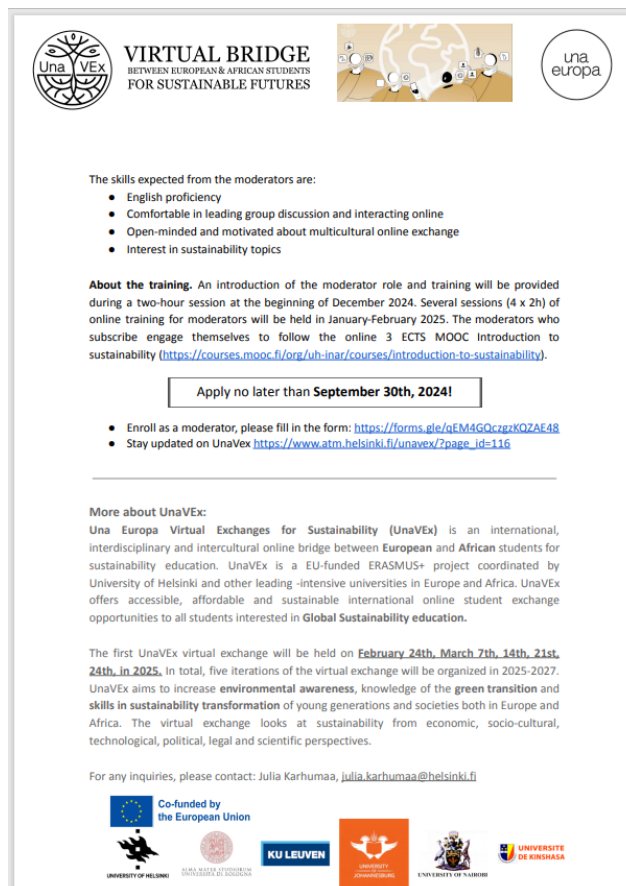
**Apply no later than September 30th, 2024!**

To enroll fill in the form:  
<https://forms.gle/qEM4GQczgKQZAE48>

Dates for the following Virtual Exchanges have not been decided yet. Moderators will be able to acquire 3 ECTS point credits from open university by moderating at least 2 iterations of the virtual exchange.

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UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI ALMA MATER STUDIUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA KU LEUVEN UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI UNIVERSITE DE KINSHASA



**Join the Moderators' training Program for Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability (UnaVEx)**

**Call for Moderators is open – opportunity for work, training and credits!**

The skills expected from the moderators are:

- English proficiency
- Comfortable in leading group discussion and interacting online
- Open-minded and motivated about multicultural online exchange
- Interest in sustainability topics

**About the training.** An introduction of the moderator role and training will be provided during a two-hour session at the beginning of December 2024. Several sessions (4 x 2h) of online training for moderators will be held in January-February 2025. The moderators who subscribe engage themselves to follow the online 3 ECTS MOOC *Introduction to sustainability* (<https://courses.mooc.fi/org/uh-lnar/courses/introduction-to-sustainability>).

**Apply no later than September 30th, 2024!**

- Enroll as a moderator, please fill in the form: <https://forms.gle/qEM4GQczgKQZAE48>
- Stay updated on UnaVEx [https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/unavex/?page\\_id=116](https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/unavex/?page_id=116)

**More about UnaVEx:**

Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability (UnaVEx) is an international, interdisciplinary and intercultural online bridge between European and African students for sustainability education. UnaVEx is a EU-funded ERASMUS+ project coordinated by University of Helsinki and other leading -intensive universities in Europe and Africa. UnaVEx offers accessible, affordable and sustainable international online student exchange opportunities to all students interested in Global Sustainability education.

The first UnaVEx virtual exchange will be held on **February 24th, March 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, in 2025**. In total, five iterations of the virtual exchange will be organized in 2025-2027. UnaVEx aims to increase **environmental awareness**, knowledge of the **green transition** and skills in **sustainability transformation** of young generations and societies both in Europe and Africa. The virtual exchange looks at sustainability from economic, socio-cultural, technological, political, legal and scientific perspectives.

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## 2.7 Recruiting students to participate in the VE programme


A Call-for-Students will be issued among Partner and Associated institutions in order to recruit the 5 cohorts, as defined in the project proposal, following the steps described below:

- Preparatory work for opening “Students’ DigiCampus” for registration and materials organised by the University of Helsinki
  - Preparation of the Call text
  - Opening 1st Call-for-Virtual Exchange
    - Use of networks for distributing the call
      - UnaEuropa Associated partners’ universities (see Appendix)
      - UnaEuropa - Africa Working Group
- UnaEuropa–Africa Partnership African universities:
- Eduardo Mondlane University
  - Kampala International University
  - Makerere University




- University of Ghana
  - University of Johannesburg (UnaVEx partner)
  - Université de Kinshasa (UnaVEx partner)
  - University of Nairobi (UnaVEx partner)
  - University of the Witwatersrand
- 1st Virtual Exchange week in February-March 2025

## Call text for students



**VIRTUAL BRIDGE**  
BETWEEN EUROPEAN & AFRICAN STUDENTS  
FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES




**Join the UNAVEX virtual exchange!**  
Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability

**Call for Students is open!**

Are you interested in **global sustainability** and **international environments**? Have you considered applying for a **student exchange**? If so, UnaVEx virtual exchange might be just for you!

UnaVEx offers a versatile look into sustainability – topics of the virtual exchange include:


- Introduction to sustainability
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- Climate change
- Biodiversity
- The intersections of political economy and the arts in sustainability



UnaVEx is a five-week long virtual exchange unit consisting of a total of five sessions. During the virtual exchange you will attend **inspiring plenary talks** on different perspectives to sustainability. You will also be introduced to your own **international small group** and a moderator. In your groups you will discuss and develop a collaborative, sustainability-themed action task.

No previous sustainability or natural science studies are required. UnaVEx is a platform for **multidisciplinary** and **intercultural** encounters for university students interested in sustainability and the future of our common planet. UnaVEx welcomes students from EU and African nations, building a bridge between the continents for sustainable futures.

Co-funded by the European Union




**VIRTUAL BRIDGE**  
BETWEEN EUROPEAN & AFRICAN STUDENTS  
FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



UnaVEx is organized by:

- University of Helsinki (Finland)
- University of Bologna (Italy)
- KU Leuven (Belgium)
- University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- University of Nairobi (Kenya)
- University of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo)

**WHEN:** 24. Feb – 28. Mar 2025  
**PLACE:** Online on Zoom  
**COMPLETION METHOD:** online participation and a collaborative group assignment.  
**REGISTER ON DIGICAMPUS,** course name: UH: 2. UnaVEx Virtual Exchange 1  
<https://digicampus.fi/course/view.php?id=5314>

**Course key:** WHO CAN APPLY: BSc, MSc, PhD, PostDoc students  
**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** 30 Sep 2024  
**LANGUAGE:** English  
**COST:** no fee

**More about UnaVEx:**  
Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability (UnaVEx) is an international, interdisciplinary and intercultural online bridge between European and African students for sustainability education. UnaVEx is a EU-funded ERASMUS+ project coordinated by University of Helsinki and other leading -intensive universities in Europe and Africa. UnaVEx offers accessible, affordable and sustainable international online student exchange opportunities to all students interested in Global Sustainability education.

The first UnaVEx virtual exchange will be held on **February 24th, March 7th, 14th, 21st, 24th, in 2025**. In total, five iterations of the virtual exchange will be organized in 2025-2027. UnaVEx aims to increase **environmental awareness**, knowledge of the **green transition** and **skills in sustainability transformation** of young generations and societies both in Europe and Africa. The virtual exchange looks at sustainability from economic, socio-cultural, technological, political, legal and scientific perspectives.

- UNA VEX website: <https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/unavex/>
- Stay updated: [https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/unavex/?page\\_id=116](https://www.atm.helsinki.fi/unavex/?page_id=116)
- For any inquiries, please contact: Julia Karhumaa, [julia.karhumaa@helsinki.fi](mailto:julia.karhumaa@helsinki.fi)

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Call status Jan 2025

## 2.8 Technical setup

- Selecting and installing the e-platforms and e-tools (e.g. Open University DigiCampus, Miro, Zoom).
- Selecting approaches and technical tools to overcome language barriers.



- Recruiting technical staff for the VEs to support stable and effective technical connections and communication channels.
- All the materials for the VEs as well as the access to zoom sessions are located on Digicampus online learning platform (<https://digicampus.fi/>). The moderators and students will have their separate course pages on the platform.

## 2.9 Evaluation and assessment of the VE programme

Students will be asked to complete pre- and post-questionnaires with practical and motivational questions, as well as feedback questions. The feedback collected using e-forms will be used to fine-tune the following iterations, and the virtual exchange framework in general.

In addition to developing the following iterations, the survey results will be utilized for a published paper and Julia Karhumaa's (UH) PhD research.



## APPENDIX 1: DETAILED WEEK PROGRAM version 31.Jan.2025

UnaVEx Detailed Schedule 24.2.2025 - 28.3.2025

24.February.2025 Introduction to UnaVEx & the MOOCs

12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)

Host: Lee-Ann Modley, University of Johannesburg (JU), South Africa (ZA)

12:00 Welcoming words, overview of the UnaVEX Virtual Exchange (Hanna Lappalainen, University of Helsinki)

o Short introduction of Unavex Partner Universities:

- University of Helsinki, Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (UH-INAR), Hanna Lappalainen & Helsinki team
- Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (UNIBO), Italy (IT), Francesco Maria Spampinato and Bologna Team
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Belgium (BE), Anneleen Cosemans and KUL team,
- University of Johannesburg (JU), South Africa (ZA)  
Lee-Ann Modley & JUL team
- University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenya (KE)  
Solomon Derese & KE team
- Université de Kinshasa (UNIKIN), Democratic Republic of the Congo (CD)  
Gode Bola & UNIKIN team

12:15 UnaVEx Global sustainability advocate (Solomon Derese, University of Nairobi)

12:30 Sustainability action task (Julia Karhumaa, University of Helsinki)

12:45 Reports and getting credits (Aleksi Vauhkonen, University of Helsinki)

13:00 How communicate and work on-line during the virtual exchange (Anneleen Cosemans, Laure van Hoecke, KU Leuven)

13:15 Zoom break-out rooms (Mikko Kulmala University of Helsinki)

13:30 Small group activity in Zoom break-out rooms (students & moderators)

E.g testing Miro tool together

15:00 End of the day



7.March.2025 Sustainable development as a concept and in politics

12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)

Host: Laura University of Helsinki, Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research

12:00 Welcoming words, program of the day (Laura Riuttanen, University of Helsinki)

12:15 Guest speech: Tarja Halonen, the former president of Finland

13:00 Instructions for the group activity & Zoom break-room (Julia Karjumaa, Mikko Kulmala)

13.15 Small group activity (students & moderators)

15:00 End of the day

14.March.2025 Ecological sustainability

12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)

Host: Solomon Derese, University of Nairobi

12:00 Welcoming words, program of the day (Solomon Derese, University of Nairobi)

12:15 Guest speech: Daniel Olago, Professor, ICCA University of Nairobi

13:00 Instructions for the group activity & Zoom break-room (Julia Karjumaa, Mikko Kulmala)

13.15 Small group activity (students & moderators)

15:00 End of the day

2 h Small group activity

21.March.2025 Social and economic sustainability

12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)

Host: Anneleen Cosemans, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Belgium (BE)

12:00 Welcoming words, program of the day

12:15 Guest speech: Evans Njewa, Least Developed Countries' lead climate negotiator on climate finance

13:00 Instructions for the group activity & Zoom break-room (Julia Karjumaa, Mikko Kulmala)

13.15 Small group activity (students & moderators)

15:00 End of the day

28.March.2025 Cultural sustainability

12–15 (Bologna, Kinshasa, Leuven) 13–16 (Helsinki, Johannesburg) 14–17 (Nairobi)



Host: Francesco Spampinato, Ana Beaven, University of Bologna

- 12:00 Welcoming words, program of the day
- 12:15 Guest speech: Ezio Manzini, author and design academic in social innovation and sustainability design
- 13:00 Instructions for the group activity & Zoom break-room (Julia Karjumaa, Mikko Kulmala)
- 13.15 Small group activity (students & moderators)
- 14:00 Final get-together in the shared session
  - Sharing the sustainability action
  - Filling in the feedback questionnaire
- 14:45 Closing words (All partners)

## APPENDIX 2: CREDITS SUMMARY

- 3 ECTS, Micro Credentials, in “Introduction to Sustainability” MOOCs, free of charge for all
- 3-5 ETCS for Moderators granted by Open University – University of Helsinki
- 1 ETCS point for Students granted by University of Helsinki description here below:

## UNAVEX COURSE: 1 CREDIT POINT & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course title:	Una Europa Virtual Exchanges for Sustainability
Course code:	ATM code number TBC
Course level:	The course is interdisciplinary and suitable for students from different fields, from bachelor's studies to doctoral students.
Scope of the course in credits:	1 ECTS
Teacher coordinating the course:	Laura Riuttanen, Julia Karhumaa, Hanna K. Lappalainen

### Course learning outcomes:

- ❖ Familiarise with the basic concepts of sustainable development, and reflect on ecological, economic, social and cultural aspects of it.
- ❖ Critically reflect own views on sustainability and create new visions.
- ❖ Reflect different international and intercultural perspectives on

sustainability.

- ❖ Reflect on global versus local challenges in finding sustainable solutions.
- ❖ Work together in different online working environments.
- ❖ Work together and be part of an international team and manage small joint projects.
- ❖ Communicate and present their work in English.
- ❖ Learning basic study skills such as use of open data, literature search, critical reading and thinking.

## Content

- ❖ The course consists of plenary talks, group exercise, group discussions and individual tasks.
- ❖ Plenary talks are related to "Introduction to Sustainability" topics such as: Sustainable Development as a Concept and in Politics / Sustainability as Normative Concepts, Sustainability Science as a Discipline, Climate Change as an Example of a sustainability Problem, Ecological Sustainability e.g Planetary Boundaries and Ethical Obligations
- ❖ Introduction to Una Europa MOOCs in sustainability

## Additional information

The course is part of the EU-funded ERASMUS+ project “Una Europa for Virtual Exchanges” (UNAVEX), active in 2024-2027. During the project we develop interactive online learning concept attached to MOOC education. This supports the students to learn Una Europa MOOCs, which often takes place as independent studies without connection to other students. This course will also provide basic knowledge and skills to participate in Una Europa / Climate University interactive online courses.

## Completion methods

The interactive and intensive part of the course is offered during five days and attendance to the plenaries and group exercise are obligatory. As a part of the course students will be provided with “Introduction to Sustainability” MOOC to study independently. During the intensive days it is mandatory to be present in zoom 3h per day. At the end of the course, it is also mandatory to present the group work and outcomes of



the course in a joint session. Some tasks are to be completed after the intensive period.

#### Assessment practices and criteria

To pass the course, active participation, completion of online tasks and submitting an individual study report is required.

Graded: pass / failed

#### Activities and teaching methods in support of learning

Course material and guidelines are provided in a Digicampus.fi platform. All groups will have the same exercise, independent reading material, and a guide for the web tools. Guided by a trained moderator, students will collaboratively plan and reflect on a sustainability-themed group assignment on a joint interactive *Miro* e-canvas.

Target groups Bachelor, Master, PhD, post doc students, from all degree programs.

#### Teaching period when the course will be offered:

The course will be offered between 2025-2027 five times in total, the first course (Virtual Exchange) takes place in Spring 2025. following the courses taking place in Spring and Autumn 2025, and in Spring and Autumn 2026 and 2027.

#### Recommended time or stage of studies for completion:

#### Study module

Prerequisites: Basic English language

#### Description of prerequisites:

Materials: consists of lecture videos, literature and MOOCs related to sustainability and sustainability related sciences

Field of study: Sustainability sciences / multidisciplinary