

## Workshop

**How can Portuguese Higher Education Institutions contribute to overcoming the challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**

**Project: OpenEU Alliance (ERASMUS)**

### Report Version 1



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# 1. Context

This workshop was aligned with the OpenEu – The Open European University Alliance (Figure 1). The Alliance brings together leading European open and distance universities, in partnership with two campus-based universities engaged in digital transformation. Its mission is to establish a learner-centered, inclusive, digital and green European open university.<sup>1</sup>

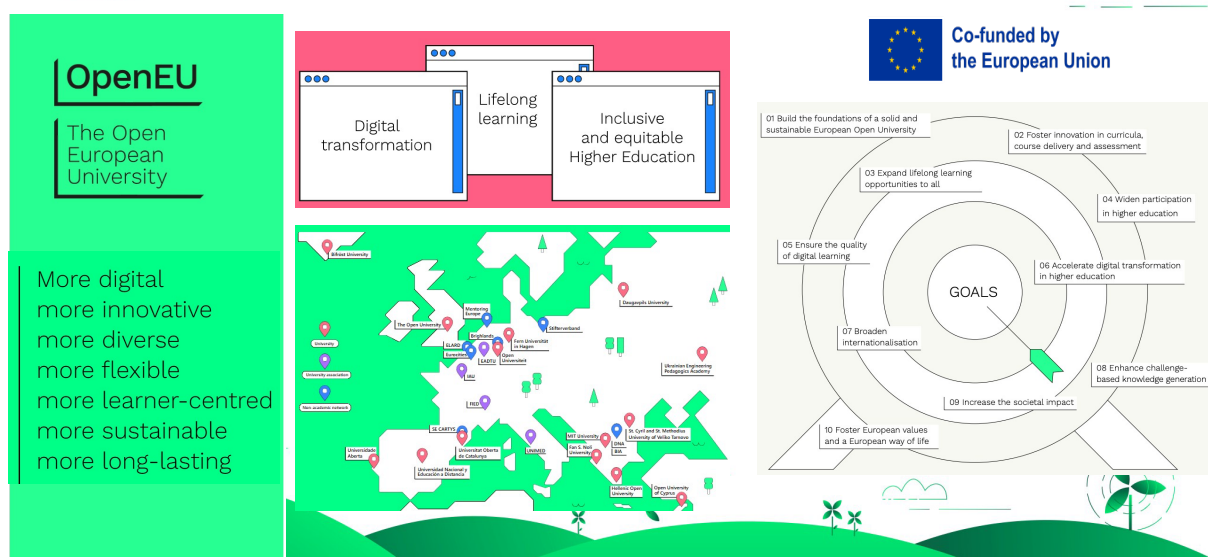


Figure 1. Partners of the OpenEu Alliance and its main goals.

The theme of *OpenEU* is aligned with the European Commission priorities 2024-2029, with a specific focus on the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

**SDG4** - Quality education (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

**SDG 9** - Digital transformation (Industry, innovation and infrastructure - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation).

**SDG 13** - Climate action (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).

**SDG 16** - Democracy and European Values (Peace, justice and strong institutions - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels)

**SDG 17** – Partnership for the Goals (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

<sup>1</sup> More information about the Alliance at: <https://openeu.eu>.

Within Work Package number 4 (WP4), the Alliance is committed to developing joint flagship research initiatives and using OpenEU as an Inclusive and Collaborative Living Lab to consolidate multi-disciplinary, transnational research teams. This living lab will focus on topics that support the development of innovative educational prototypes, addressing some of the modern societal challenges captured in the 4 SDGs listed above. The objective is to design 5 learner-centred and AI-powered educational innovative prototypes learner-centred and powered by AI to be funded and scaled up.

Within Sub-Task 4.1.1 each partner started to define the Complex SDG-related challenges in their region by organizing a half-day thematic open blended research workshop. In Portugal, the Universidade Aberta, in a partnership with the Sustainable Development Network Solutions Portugal (SDSN-Portugal)<sup>2</sup>, prioritized the most pressing SDG-related challenges relevant at different governance levels (national, regional, and local). The target audience included Portuguese Higher Education Institutions, representatives from the public and private sectors, and other societal stakeholders, with a minimum of 50 participants.

## **2. Workshop Description**

The workshop aimed to engage with different stakeholders from the Portuguese country context (national, regional and local) to discuss SDGs and the way in which higher education could be instrumental in achieving these goals, to later inform the development of innovative educational prototypes. The total duration of the workshop was **3 hours and 45 minutes**. Table 1 presents the methodological approach, timing, and main content of the workshop.

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<sup>2</sup> UAb is a member of SDSN Portugal.

Table 1. Methodological Approach of the workshop

No	Session	Time	Duration	Approach	Content
1	Welcome	11:00	10	Welcome and icebreaking activity  Mentimeter Questions	First round for presentation of participants in each table  Mentimeter, asking the 3 questions: -Relevance of SDG in Portugal (in a scale of 1 to 5) -Why do I participate in the workshop? (Open keywords) -What do I expect to take with me? (2 keywords)
2	Presentation	11:10	35	Presentation of the OpenEU and the microcredentials balance	- Presentation of the overall aim of the OpenEU highlighting the societal engagement, key role in deciding how education can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and of the aim of the workshop  -Balance of micro credentials training in SDG within the Project Impulso 2025 PRR, and challenges at global, local and sectoral levels.
3	SDG in general and those focused on by the OpenEU	11:45	45	<b>World Cafe</b>  Question: -Which are the main challenges in the implementation of the SDG in Portugal?  Break out in groups that rotate every 15 minutes	- Each table with max. 8 participants - Each table has a designated moderator (predefined and invited by the organizers) -Each moderator had flipchart sheets and introduced the question to the group. (The moderators had a pre-meeting together). - The moderator registered the different points made by the participants (note which SDG for each point) - The focus was on the discussion on the selected SDG but other suggestions were accepted. - After the rotation the moderators summarised the results of the discussions with the previous group and went on with the new group adding new points.
	Light snack break	12h30	60	Preparation of SDG Challenge Sheets by moderators	During the lunch break moderators and workshop coordinators elaborate one SHEET /SDG with all the challenges identified.  These sheets were the bases of the Deep Dive organised by each SDG. Each table had an SDG and a moderator and the discussion is to list initiatives/projects/actions to overcome the identified challenges by SDG. Those challenges were to be framed within the main activities of Higher Education Institutions (teaching and learning; research, knowledge transfer and governance and management - Galán-Muros, 2025)

No	Session	Time	Duration	Approach	Content
4	Deep Dive	13h30	45	<p>Question for discussion in-depth in each SDG:</p> <p><b>How can universities collaborate with the government, industry, and civil society to contribute to overcoming the challenges?</b></p> <p>The moderator of the group prepares a presentation of the main results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The moderator of the group prepares a presentation of the main results.</li> <li>- Organisation of tables</li> <li>Moderators by each of the 5 SDG position themselves in 5 corners of the room and participants are asked to go to the SDG they are more interested at.</li> <li>- An extra sheet was added with transversal challenges addressed earlier by the participants, while considering several interlinked SDGs.</li> </ul>
5	Groups feedback	14h15	60	Feed-back and short groups presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each group presented the summary of their group discussion on the suggestions achieved by the group</li> <li>- All suggestions are numerated in sequence along with the SDG in discussion.</li> </ul>
6	Prioritization of SDG	15h15	20	<b>Voting of priorities of presented ideas by:</b> Impact/feasibility and usability	<p>One graphic with the two dimensions were created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact</li> <li>- Feasibility and usability</li> </ul> <p>and divided in 4 quadrants in which the participants will distribute the suggestions/initiatives. Each participant could choose 3 suggestions.</p>
7	Wrap-up	15h45	10	<p><b>Mentimeter questions</b></p> <p>Was it worthy to come to the workshop?</p> <p>What do I Take with me?</p> <p>Wrap-up and next steps</p>	<p>Mentimeter</p> <p>At the end of the workshop, participants revisited the initial mentimeter question and reflected on what they took after the workshop.</p> <p>Each participant contributed two keywords summarizing their key takeaways.</p>

### 3. Workshop results

The workshop was held on the 10th of November of 2025 at UAb facilities in Lisbon and it was attended by 46 participants and 5 organizers from a wide diversity of stakeholders, as follows:

- Public administration
- Private sector
- Higher Education Institutions
- Civil Society organizations

Around 160 invitations were sent to a diverse group of participants representing a wide range of sectors, including public administration and strategic planning bodies, local municipalities and intermunicipal communities, higher education and research institutions, the business and industrial sectors, civil society organizations, as well as youth, volunteer groups, and other representative associations. Among them, 59 participants confirmed their registrations, but on the day, there was a train strike that forced several participants to excuse themselves (see list of participants in annex 1). Finally, 46 participants joined the workshop.

The *first world café* generated an extensive list of challenges, some of the general character and others more specifically linked to certain SDGs. However, throughout the discussion, participants consistently highlighted that the SDGs are all interconnected and it is not possible to find solutions without cross-cutting and integrated initiatives. Also the present international context, the lack of systemic vision and approaches, and the lack of funding have been the main obstacle to the implementation of the SDG. The main areas of challenge identified were as follows:

- **Education and capacity building:** In Education curricula, sustainable development is insufficiently incorporated as a cross-cutting issue. On the other side there is a lack of general capacity building for policymakers and decision makers as well as the general public. The lack of equity in opportunities (access) and the inadequacy of the system to promote critical thinking and innovation were also noted.
- **Metrics and measurement:** There is a lack of appropriate metrics to highlight the urgency of climate change and its consequences.
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** Reinforcement of the partnerships approach is essential to address the complexity of the SDGs effectively.
- **Co-creation and participation:** Lack of co-creation and participation in policy making is preventing the system from being adequate and fitting the challenges.

- **Multi-stakeholder perspectives:** The integration of diverse competencies, resources, and perspectives from multiple stakeholders is necessary for a meaningful progress.

The **Deep Dive** has discussed the potential solutions/contributions to overcome the identified challenges. The list of suggestions is in annex 2 and some pictures of the different moments of discussion are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Workshop development: a) *first word café* discussion, b) *deep dive*, c) group presentations, and d) final voting.

**Prioritization** of the different suggestions was distributed on the graphic according to the respective impact and feasibility/usability from the perspective of each participant (Figure 3). The suggestions can be classified as follows:

### SDG 13 – Climate Action

- **Education and capacity building:** Education for sustainability across all curricula in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and capacity building for policy makers and company top managers, and to promote research on SDG 13 (8 votes challenge 12/SDG13 – Annex 2). (**Note:** This suggestion had the most votes).

- **Communication:** Adequate communication system among the different stakeholders (4 votes challenge 15/SDG 13 – Annex 2).

### SDG 4 – Quality Education

- **Inclusive opportunities:** Inclusive opportunities for students (4 votes challenge 1/SDG4 – Annex 2).
- **Quality assurance:** creation of an educational Quality stamps (4 votes challenge 3/SDG4 – Annex 2).

### SDG 17- Partnerships

- **Digital collaboration platforms:** creation of a digital platform to facilitate the establishment of partnerships (4 votes challenge 23/SDG17 – Annex 2).

These results highlight the importance of SDGs 4 and 13 in terms of the main core activities of HEI, but in partnership and integration with the different stakeholders. Further thoughts are needed to define future initiatives that need to be feasible and conducted in a structured way.

As future developments, each OpenEu partner will present the most addressed and voted challenges and jointly and in partnership discuss proposals of educational innovative prototypes, learner-centred and powered by AI, to be funded and scaled up.

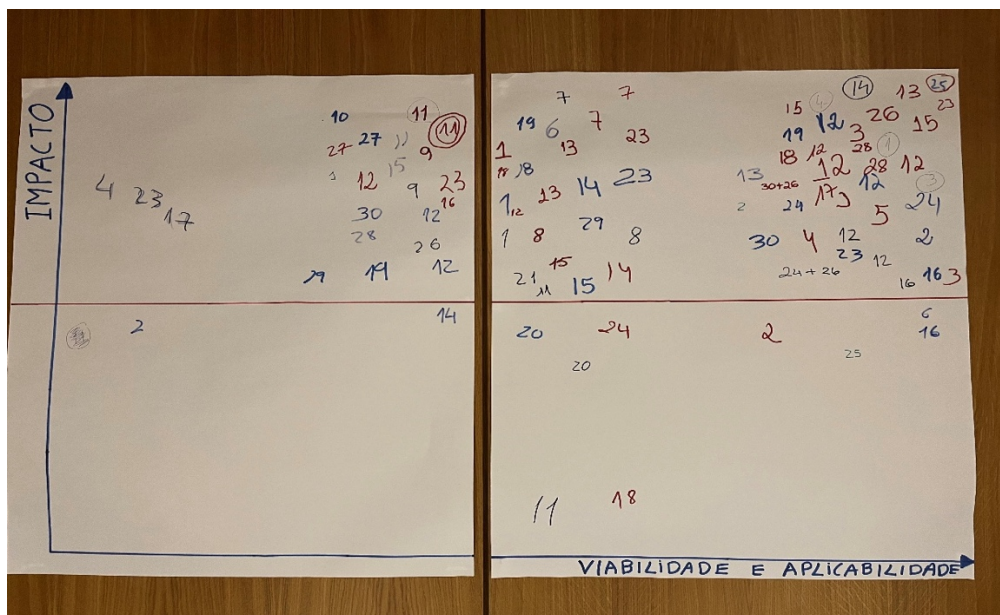


Figure 3. Final voting results.

#### 4. Workshop effectiveness by the participants

Regarding the effectiveness of the workshop, and based on the Mentimeter questions in the beginning and the end of the workshop, 97% of participants considered that it was extremely or very useful to participate in the workshop.

By comparing the two keywords provided by participants regarding their expectations at the beginning of the workshop and what they actually took away at the end (as captured via Mentimeter), it is possible to observe that the expectations were largely fulfilled (Figures 4 and 5). Mostly, they shared knowledge, felt compromised, and emphasized the importance of collaboration.

In a deep analysis (See Annex 3 and Annex 4), at the beginning, the most frequently mentioned keyword was **conhecimento / knowledge** (16 responses, 20%), followed by **ação / action** (9 responses, 11%) and **inspiração / inspiration** (5 responses, 6%). Participants also emphasized other keywords like **partilha / sharing** (5 responses, 6%), **compromisso / commitment** (3 responses, 4%), and **esperança / hope** (2 responses, 3%), reflecting expectations around learning, motivation, and personal engagement. Other responses (39) were diverse, covering different ideas like **novas ideias / new ideas**, **networking**, and **transformação / transformation**.

By the end of the workshop, the top keywords shifted slightly: **partilha / sharing** (12 responses, 24%) and **conhecimento / knowledge** (10 responses, 20%) were the most prominent, followed by **colaboração / collaboration** (3 responses, 6%), **compromisso / commitment** (3 responses, 6%), and **contactos / contacts** (2 responses, 4%). Keywords such as **cooperação / cooperation**, **parcerias / partnerships**, and **ação / action** also appeared, highlighting a stronger emphasis on collective engagement, collaboration, and networking.

As a conclusion, participants' initial focus on **knowledge** (conhecimento) remained strong, confirming that learning objectives were largely met, and the rise of **partilha / sharing** and **colaboração / collaboration** in the keywords at the end of the workshop shows that the workshop effectively promoted interaction, cooperation, and mainly the joint reflection for SDGs collaboration solutions between the participants.

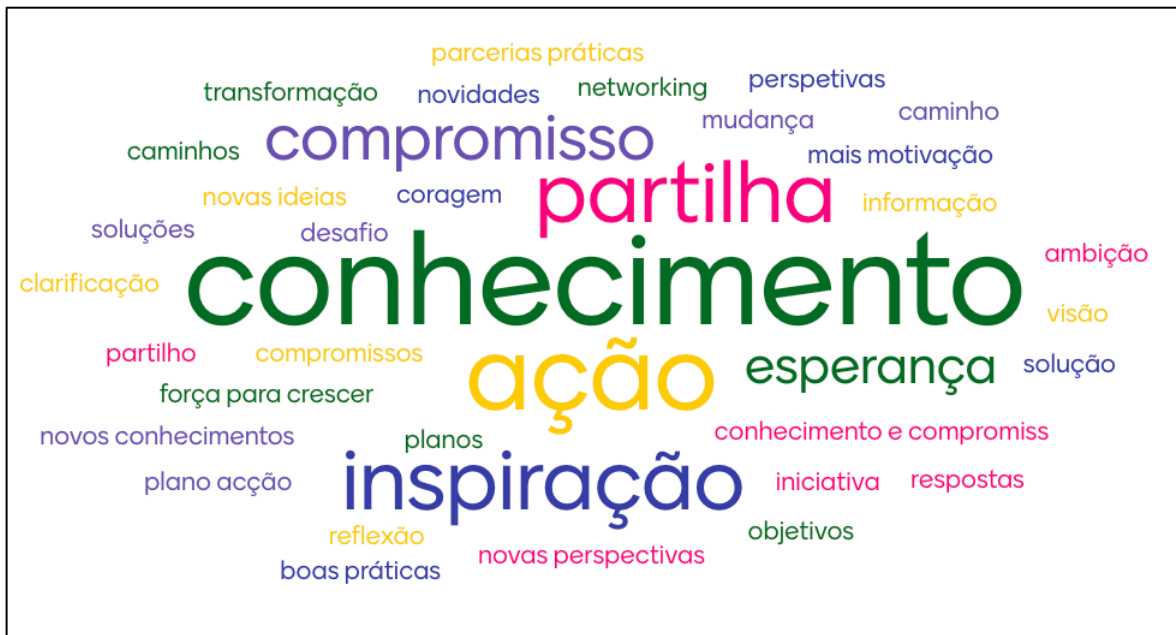


Figure 4. Words in Portuguese of what the participants expected to bring after the workshop.

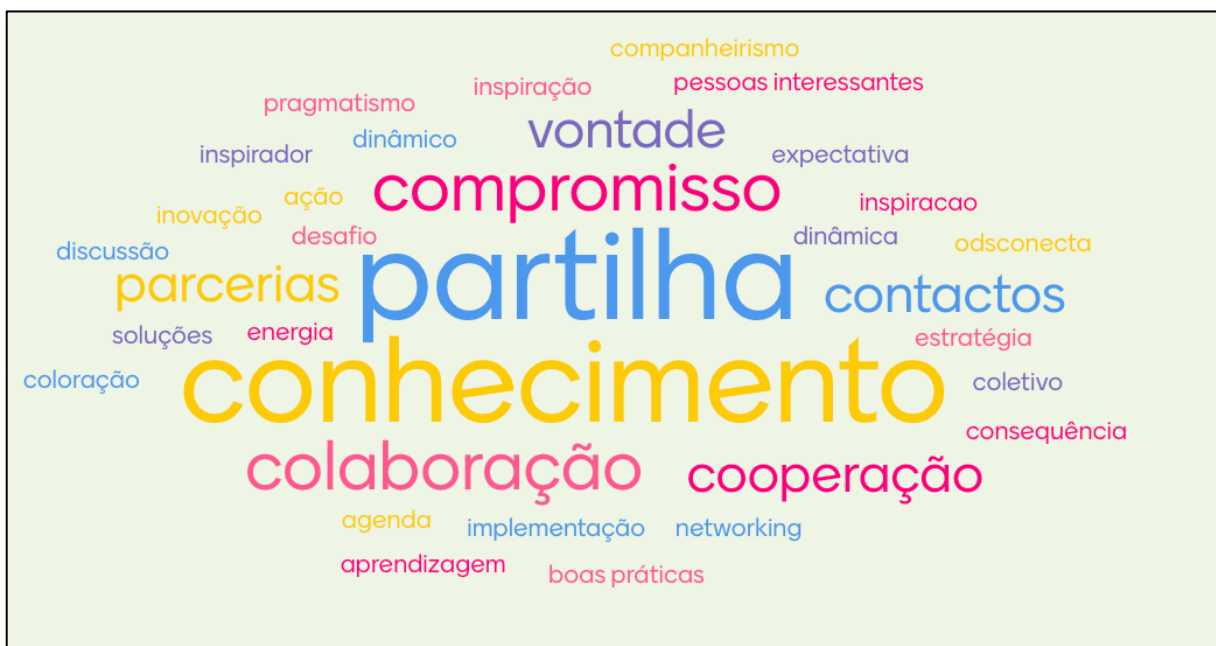


Figure 5. Words in Portuguese of how participants summarized what they took after the workshop.

The workshop was shared on social media at <https://portal.uab.pt/noticias/workshop-cumprimento-dos-ods-no-ensino-superior/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U39ftK3iNJw>

## **Acknowledgments**

We want to thank all the moderators and participants for all their help and participation that turn possible the realization of this workshop. We also thank the Universidade Aberta Office of Communication and Marketing for all their logistical and technical support.

## **Key references**

Galán-Muros, V. (2025). SET4HEI. General Guidelines for the Implementation of Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions. UNESCO IESALC; United Nations Academic Impact

## **Useful links**

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>

<https://openeu.eu>



## Annex 1 - List of participants (including the organizers)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Gabriel Barros	PLANAPP
Margarida Couto	IGAP
Alexandra Ribeiro	INA
Maria Albuquerque	ADENE
Maria João Pessoa	CCDRN
Lurdes Carvalho	CCDR Algarve
Ângela Cunha	Município Aveiro
Valter Ferreira	Município Lisboa
Susana Costa	Laboratório da Paisagem
Júlia Seixas	Universidade NOVA
Márcia Vila Valério	Universidade de Lisboa
Leonor Prata	ICS
Alexandra Rodrigues	Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa
Jorge Humberto Dias	Universidade Atlântica
Carla Farelo	ISCTE
Roque Brandão	ISEP
Margarida Oliveira	InovProtectPlant Co-Lab Elvas
Luis Roberto	Rede do Empresário
Beatriz Costa	NBI
Paula Guimarães	NAVIGATOR
Elsa Severino	ANMP
Lia Vasconcelos	ODS Local
Susana Fonseca	Associação ZERO
António Gomes Martins	Rede Campus Sustentável
Ricardo Garcia	Centro PT de Fundações
Rita Leote	Plataforma PT das ONGD
Dra. Célia Lavado	ANIMAR
Miguel J Martins	Banco Mundial
Ana Veloso	Instituto Politécnico Coimbra
Sofia Silva	Instituto Politécnico Coimbra
Juliana Macedo	Município Famalicão
Cristina Antunes	Fundação EDP
Maria João Matos	Programa URBACT
Maria do Mar Mateus	ENSP UNL
Tiago Brandão Rodrigues	Universidade de Aveiro
Elsa Cristina Cabrita Vieira	Centro Local Aprendizagem da UAb (CLA) Silves
Dúnia Palricas	CLA Ansião
Séfora Silva	CLA Porto de Mós
Lara Caeiro	CLA Montijo
Sónia Valente	CLA Cantanhede
M <sup>a</sup> Francisca B. Matias	Banco Santander
Rui Florentino	Ordem dos Arquitectos
Paula Oda	Universidade Aberta

Oscarina Martins	Universidade Aberta
Mahsa Mapar	Universidade Aberta
João Simão	Universidade Aberta
Sandra Caeiro	Universidade Aberta
Atli Por F. Guolaugson	Bifrost University
José Cunha Costa	Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo
Maria João Rauch	SDNS Portugal
Ana Sofia Nunes	Universidade Aberta

Annex 2 – Summary of the Results of the first world café and deep dive.

ODS 4	ODS 9	ODS 13	ODS 16	ODS 17	Transversals
1. Increase and consolidation of places with social benefits in HEIs for disadvantaged students	6. Creation of structured multistakeholder partnerships that “force” participation and enable retention, attraction and raining of critical mass	12. Education for sustainability across all curricula in HEI and capacity building for policy makers and company top managers. To promote research on SDG	16. Promotion of multistakeholders partnerships with HEI	23. Creation of a digital platform to facilitate the establishment of partnerships (profiles, bilingual and eclectic)	26. HEIs shall be the integrative platform of all social sectors (public policies, companies, others) to harmonise methods and share good practices
2. Creation of horizontal SDG curricular units/courses with improved theory/practice relationship and to monitor the respective implementation	7. Creation of experimentation laboratories to minimise the risks inherent to innovation	13. To promote partnership work between HEIs and Municipalities to support the overcome of problems with implementation of SDG	18. creation of a SDG Observatory	24. More research about sustainable development in the private sector using a more human and accessible language)	27. To be an example as Institution
3. Creation of a Quality stamp with differentiation of levels	8. Creation of Hybrid learning models to promote territorial cohesion	14. Creation of a roadmap for the implementation of SDG with resources	19. Creation of a specific awareness raising scheme for elected politicians	25. Better monitoring by harmonisation of indicators/metrics	28. Capacity building of professors (including the own ones) to

		and a monitoring scheme			adjust/change the SDG narrative
4.Importance of a SDG Forum/Report of SDG in HEI	9. Digital cohesion to avoid misinformation and promote credible information.	15.Improvement of involvement of the community, companies and politicians through an adequate communication system	20.Creation of a wide training scheme for all decision makers (already in work and new)		29.Creation of knowledge transfer mechanisms and pedagogical methods using real examples
5.To create a budget for SDG literacy and respective implementation	10.To incorporate the buying of open sources software in public procurement as a factor of replicability and transferability		21. To create a set of sustainability criteria for evaluation of funding proposals- ex-ante and ex-post (ESUP)		30.Development of SDG impact methodologies and governance models for public policies
	11.Portugal Ligado Program Free wi-fi with complete coverage of the country		22.Promotion of LLL with mentoring scheme with credits		

Annex 3- Keywords emphasized at the beginning of the workshop (Mentimeter, Total responses = 79)

<b>Keyword (PT / EN)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
conhecimento / knowledge	16	20%
ação / action	9	11%
inspiração / inspiration	5	6%
partilha / sharing	5	6%
compromisso / commitment	3	4%
esperança / hope	2	3%
Other responses	39	49%

Annex 4- Keywords emphasized at the end of the workshop (Mentimeter, Total responses = 49)

<b>Keyword (PT / EN)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
partilha / sharing	12	24%
conhecimento / knowledge	10	20%
colaboração / collaboration	3	6%
compromisso / commitment	3	6%
contactos / contacts	2	4%
cooperação / cooperation	2	4%
parcerias / partnerships	2	4%
ação / action	1	2%
Outras respostas / Other responses	14	28%