

Report on 'Sustainability at Participating University's- Students' Survey'.
 Baltic University Programme
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Summary

This report presents the results of a survey carried out by the BUP which investigated sustainable development and perceptions of sustainable development in the BUP region. This survey was carried out in five different languages; English, Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian and Russian. A total of 864 responses were received. Overall, the responses elucidate an engaged BUP audience regarding sustainable development and sustainability science. Large numbers knew about issues of sustainability and concerns regarding the future were demonstrated. The status of sustainability at universities was examined in detail by this survey. Overall, the results indicate that sustainability is covered at universities, various topics are taught and universities are taking actions regarding sustainable development. There are some notable points to comment on regarding the survey. One being the differences between the various translations and countries of the respondents. The Russian responses demonstrated marked differences. Russian responses were less concerned about effects, less willing to change their actions, were less interested in learning about sustainability and revealed less actions being taken by universities regarding sustainability. A further point to note is the relatively high proportion of 'don't know' responses to questions. In some cases, this was the most popular answer and was common across all countries.

Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows. An opening section will comment on the respondents of this survey; their country, university of origin and academic background. Then the results of the survey for each question are presented, followed by a short explanation. One note is most of the tables are sorted in a descending manner and this may not correspond to the original question form. If deemed necessary, any differences between the survey/particular points will also be documented. A final section will draw some conclusions and recommendations.

Conducting the Survey

As part of the BUP's commitment to sustainability, a new initiative was launched last year considering sustainability at BUP participating universities. To begin this initiative, a survey was launched to both staff and students asking them to consider various aspects relating to sustainability, with a particular focus on how sustainability is interpreted and experienced. The BUP coordinating secretariat together with the BUP centre directors and BUP student ambassadors assisted in spreading the survey to students to respond to.

Respondents

There were a total of 864 responses to the survey that were sent out by the BUP concerning sustainability at universities. The vast majority (549) were from those at Ukrainian universities. Russian responses were the second largest cohort (117). There were no responses from students at Czech, Latvian, Lithuanian or Swedish universities and only three responses from those studying in Germany. These respondents belonged to 29 universities across the BUP network (before Russia and Belarus were excluded). The largest number of respondents belonged to Ternopil State Medical University, followed by Bila Tserkva National Agrarian University and Pskov State University. The table below details how many universities from each country had someone respond to the survey and the proportion of universities responding.

Country	Universities in Network	Universities that had a respondent completing the survey.	Percentage (%)
Belarus	6	3	50.0
Czech Republic	2	0	0.0

Estonia	3	1	33.3
Finland	8	2	25.0
Germany	5	3	60.0
Latvia	5	0	0.0
Lithuania	3	0	0.0
Poland	29	8	27.6
Russia	6	4	66.7
Slovakia	1	1	100.0
Sweden	12	0	0.0
Ukraine	17	7	41.2

34.1% of universities within the BUP network had at least one response to the survey.

This table details the proportion of responses by country within the BUP network (note- 3 others were discounted for the purpose of this table as they came from countries that are outside of the Baltic Sea Region, note too that the total sum is less than 100 due to rounding of figures).

Country	Responses	Percentage of Responses (%)
Belarus	21	2.4
Czech Republic	0	0.0
Estonia	45	5.2
Finland	36	4.2
Germany	3	0.3
Latvia	0	0.0
Lithuania	0	0.0
Poland	52	6.0
Russia	117	13.5
Slovakia	38	4.4
Sweden	0	0.0
Ukraine	549	63.5

Q3:

The most common subject designation for students completing the survey was 'other'. The second most common was 'natural sciences', which was also the most common response from the Polish respondents. Technical sciences was the most responded to from the Russian respondents. The least common subject engagement was 'sustainability science', 39 responses were received.

Other	346
Natural Sciences	232
Social Sciences	149
Humanities	138
Technologies	120
Sustainability Science	39

Engagement with Sustainability

Q4:

Over half of responses declared that the place they have studied that has encouraged them to think and act to help the environment and other people the most was at university. There were few 'not learnt' responses (50) demonstrating an engaged audience with the environment. Secondary school was the next most common answer and also the top answer from the Slovak and Polish respondents.

University	481
Secondary	252
College	121
Primary	87
Not Learnt	50
I cannot answer	35

Q5:

645 out of the 864 responses showed some engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals. The majority of these (396) had both heard and knew about the goals. Bar the Russian respondents, 'heard and know' was the most common response. The Russian respondents had 'heard' as most common. Just over a quarter of responses had never heard of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Heard and Know about Goals	396
Heard about but don't know about Goals	249
Never Heard	233

Q6:

An overwhelming majority of responses were worried about the future and climate change. It was the most common response. The most relaxed responses came from the Russian students and the most worried responses were from the Slovak students.

Worried	629
Relaxed	140

I don't know	62
Indifferent	61

Q7:

The most common response believed governments should act to tackle climate change. Only 34 disagree responses were given. Just under 20% of responses had no opinion on the matter.

Agree	641
No Opinion	170
Disagree	34
Don't know	19

Q8:

There were very similar numbers for how concerned respondents were regarding the effects of climate change. Around 20% of respondents had no opinion on these issues.

Agree	638
No Opinion	157
Disagree	43
Don't know	26

Q9:

Just under 60% of students responded that they would vote for a government that increased action to tackle climate change. The Russian responded were the only one that did not 'agree' as the most common. There were very few explicit disagree comments on this question, although just over 40% had no opinion, disagreed or didn't know.

Agree	517
No Opinion	236
Don't know	56
Disagree	55

Q10:

46% of responses believed climate change would negatively impact themselves and their lifestyle. There were few disagree numbers but a sizeable proportion of 'no opinion' responses. The Russian respondents had the lowest negative impacts personally responses. The Ukrainian responses was split approximately 50/50 with 'agree' and 'no opinion'.

Agree	397
No Opinion	301

Disagree	91
Don't know	75

Learning about and promoting sustainability

Q11:

The most common method by which respondents gained information about issues affecting the world including climate change was online. Social media was the second most common and further accentuates the commonality of the online sphere. By far the least common method was family and friends. Around a quarter of responses demonstrated an engagement with education (teachers and literature).

Online	725
Social media	422
News or TV	346
Literature and papers	266
Teachers/educators/professors	217
Friends	140
Family	133
Others	41

Q12:

Over half of responses agreed that universities should promote sustainable development. A tiny fraction (3%) responded that universities should not do this. Slovak and English responses demonstrated very high beliefs that universities should be promoting sustainable development. The least engaged responses were the Russian one, 38% of responses commenting that universities should be promoting this, although this was the most selected response.

Agree	535
No Opinion	236
Don't know	60
Disagree	33

Q13:

There were similar figures for Q13 which asked about learning more about sustainability. The English respondents were most keen to learn more on this topic. 61% of responses wanted to learn more. The lowest response to learning more about sustainability was from the Russian students with a third of responses wanted to learn more and a plurality of responses had no opinion. Just over 27% of all responses had no opinion on learning more about sustainability.

Agree	529
No Opinion	235

Don't know	62
Disagree	38

Q14:

44% of responses wanted courses to actively incorporate and promote sustainable development. 39% had no opinion of this issue. 9% disagreed. The Ukrainian, Polish and Russian responses all had no opinion as the most common response. The highest disagree proportion was from the Polish responses (14%).

Agree	376
No Opinion	336
Don't know	77
Disagree	75

Q15:

A majority of responses revealed that their studies are contributing to having a positive impact on the world. It was the most common response, apart from the Russian ones. Just under a quarter had no opinion of this issue. The English, Slovak and Polish responses were the most receptive to this question regarding positivity.

Agree	531
No Opinion	203
Disagree	90
Don't know	40

Q16:

Just over half of responses commented that their studies were helping students to learn to make positive changes to their lifestyle to help the environment. The English and Ukrainian responses were explicit in their confirmation of these positive changes. The Slovak and Polish responses were more mixed. The Russian responses was the only one to elucidate a 'disagree' plurality with 41% of responses disagreeing that their studies were helping them make positive changes.

Agree	465
No Opinion	207
Disagree	149
Don't know	43

Q17:

Q17 asked about how extensively sustainable development had been covered in the students' studies. The Polish responses was the only one to have a plurality of 'extensively covered' responses, although there were still more 'don't know's. The median response of the survey was the middle answer, approximate to 'covered'. The vast majority of responses did show that sustainability was covered during their studies- 8% of responses, when excluding don't knows

answered that sustainability wasn't covered. Over a quarter of responses didn't know if sustainability had been covered. The Russian responses trended the least towards extensively covered.

Don't know	218
Somewhat covered	210
Covered	182
Extensively covered	111
Seldom covered	96
Not covered at all	49

Note- I have approximated some of these responses. As it was a scale, the middle responses were not named. Also, the Polish translation had a different question form and did not include the five point scale, only 'extensively covered' and 'not covered at all'.

Q18:

A majority of responses revealed that respondents didn't know if universities offered disciplinary courses on sustainable development. 29% of respondents answered that their university does offer courses on sustainable development. 15% of respondents answered 'no' to this question. There were a number of examples given; environmental management, sustainability in tourism, BUP courses, circular economy, waste management, environmental humanities, environmental anthropology and environmental protection. One respondent noted that these courses are coming soon. Others noted that these issues are covered in lectures within other courses.

Don't Know	505
Yes	252
No	126

Q19:

The offering of interdisciplinary courses was less. 24% of responses were a 'yes'. 13% were 'no'. Again the 'don't know' response was most common- 65% (note rounding of figures will add to a total over 100%). Out of the examples; environmental management systems was mentioned which included zoology, chemistry and botany. Others noted that these courses are coming with inter-industry workshops.

Don't Know	561
Yes	205
No	111

Q20:

In terms of universities offering specific programmes on sustainable development, the 'don't know' response was the most common. 64% of responses didn't know. The Master and Bachelor levels were pretty similar, PhD was the least common response. There were more 'none' responses than PhD. The Russian responses were the only one to have 'none' as the most common answer when excluding 'don't knows'.

Don't know	552
Master	177
Bachelor	164
None	74
PhD	56

Q21:

Q21 asked about which issues had been covered in studies so far. There was broad engagement with all issues. Human rights was the most common answer overall and the only answer that over 50% of responses had engaged with. Rural-urban development was the least common (25%). Waste, water and energy was the most common response on the English translation, health on the Ukrainian, accountability on the Slovak, waste, water and energy and climate change on the Polish and human rights on the Russian. 58 responses had engaged with none of these issues (7%).

Human rights	444
Accountability and ethics	420
Health and wellbeing	404
Biological diversity and nature	358
Ecosystems and ecological principles	340
Waste, water and energy	308
Climate change	270
Cultural diversity and equality	262
Social justice	255
Citizenship and democracy	253
Corporate social responsibility/business ethics	238
Consumerism, global and ethical trade	226
Rural and urban development	219
None	58

Sustainability and actions**Q22:**

Universities were either satisfactory, good or very good in allowing students to get involved to limit the negative impacts on the environment and society. The most common response being the 'good', although the Ukrainian responses had 'very good' as their most common answer. 15% didn't know how good their university was on these issues. 15% said their university was poor or very poor on this issue.

Good	217
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Very good	204
Satisfactory	181
Don't know	133
Poor	89
Very poor	40

Note- I have approximated some of these responses. As it was a scale, the middle responses were not named.

Q23:

This question posed how good universities were about taking action to limit the negative actions on the environment. Again a majority commented that their university was either very good, good or satisfactory. Only 20% responded that their university was very good. There were few poor or very poor results (16%). The Russian responses were the least praising of their universities. The Russian translation recorded the largest proportion of poor or very poor responses (26%).

Good	197
Very good	169
Satisfactory	168
Don't know	150
Poor	85
Very poor	46

Note- I have approximated some of these responses. As it was a scale, the middle responses were not named. This question was not asked on the Polish translation.

Q24:

In terms of sustainability efforts at universities, landscaping and recycling waste were the most common. Recycling waste was the most common response from the English, Slovak and Polish respondents. The Ukrainian and Russian translations had landscaping as the most common. Over a quarter of responses didn't know what their university was doing and over 40% of Russian responses didn't know. The least common answers overall were green purchasing (14%) and sustainable food (15%). Saving energy, reducing waste and saving water were also fairly common. Sustainable transport and buildings and construction based on green design were not.

There were a range of additional aspects discussed; beehives on university roofs, free herb gardens on campus, libraries offering reusable bags, coffee cup campings, sensors on lighting. Others noted bike stands, albeit too few and calls to print less, however only occasionally.

Sustainable landscaping	335
Recycling waste	312
Saving energy	270
Saving water	246
Don't know	227

Reducing waste	211
Sustainable transportation	168
Buildings and construction based on green design	133
Sustainable food	127
Green procurement/purchasing	121
Other	70

Q25:

In terms of empowerment, just under a majority of responses commented that their university empowers students and staff to act sustainably. Over 50% of the English and 50% of the Slovak responses had yes answers. There were many 'don't know' responses (44%). The Russian translation had the highest proportion of not empowering responses (14%). There were more 'don't know' and 'no' responses than 'yes'.

Yes	407
Don't Know	376
No	87

Q26:

Q26 revealed an almost 50/50 split between agree and disagree in terms of students knowing what is being done to make campuses more sustainable. The English, Ukrainian, Slovak and Polish responses all agreed, the Russian one disagreed. There were very few 'strongly agree' responses at 5%, over 12% strongly disagreed.

Agree	417
Disagree	320
Strongly disagree	106
Strongly agree	45

Q27:

A related question asked about other efforts (projects, activities, campaigns) at universities. Yes was the most common answer (51%). There was a sizeable proportion of 'don't know's'- 46%. This was the most common answer on the Polish and Russian respondents. Only 5% of responses explicitly answered 'no' (note rounding of figures will add to a total over 100%). The Slovak translation was the only one that revealed zero 'no' responses.

The other examples noted additional workshops, seminars, environmental competitions, student opportunities and city-wide events. One example was Meremme tähden which looks to raise awareness of the Baltic Sea and how sustainable business practices can preserve the ecosystem.

Yes	444
Don't Know	394

No	43
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Q28:

In terms of a team of sustainable change makers, 64% of responses said that this team existed. The Ukrainian translation was the only one however, which had over 50% of responses saying that this team existed. The other respondents were much more ambivalent. 47% of the Russian responses, 44% of the Slovak, 33% of the English and 22% of the Polish responded that this team existed. Just under 30% didn't know the answer to this. There were few explicit 'no' responses- 6%, the English responses had the highest proportion of 'no' at 17%.

Yes	555
Don't Know	257
No	58

Q29:

Q29 asked about the future. The alternative response was the most common overall- 39%. 35% responded yes to taking a lower paid, better environmental job. 25% said they would take a higher paid, lower environmental job (note rounding of figures meaning a total under 100%). There were many differences; the English responses had a plurality of lower salary responses, the Ukrainian, Slovak, Polish and Russian more alternative responses. The Polish and Russian responses preferred the higher salary option.

Alternative	340
A job with a starting salary of 15% lower than average in a role that does contribute to positive environmental and social change	303
A job with a starting salary of 15% higher than average in a role that doesn't contribute to positive environmental and social change	219

Further study/points to note/recommendations

- One interesting aspect of these results are those from the Russian respondents. These were markedly different and revealed much more climate sceptic results. This could lend itself to a number of further studies including analysis of students' perceptions and course curriculums.
- One key takeaway is the high number of don't know responses. There was consistency across all the different countries of a considerable don't know answer and in some cases this was the leading answer. Students may have heard about sustainability but high numbers are not aware of it at universities.
- A key thing to note from a BUP perspective is that don't know was the leading answer on many of the questions which asked about sustainability studies at university. Whilst these courses may exist, they are clearly not heard about. The students revealed that they are eager to learn more about sustainability issues and so this is disappointing that few know of courses existing.
- Linked to the point above, is a similar issue regarding programmes. Again, students selected don't know as the answer when asked if their university has programmes for sustainability. A link perhaps to courses covering sustainable development could be useful on the BUP website.
- A plurality of students didn't know how much sustainability had been covered in their studies. Is sustainability being taught differently across the region? Is it lacking in one region?

- Rural-urban development was the least covered aspect about what has been covered in sustainability studies. The BUP is working to fill this gap by contributing to the development of a course on the BUP Course Platform.
- Sustainable food and green purchasing were the least common answers in aspects being done at universities for a more sustainable campus. The BUP seminar series on best practices could help spread ideas on how to work with these issues, as well as the BUP Course on Sustainable Food Systems on the BUP Course Platform.
- Some of these results can tie into the Quality Assurance (QA) work the BUP is doing. Large numbers don't know whether their university is empowering students, what is being done to make a campus more sustainable and what other campaigns are being run. QA, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) have many links that the BUP intends to develop.