

Article

Healthy Campus: A Contribution to the Environment, Sustainability, and Social Responsibility Practices at the IPBeja in Portugal

Anabela Durão ^{1,2,3,*} , Teresa Borralho ^{2,4,5}  and Albertina Raposo ^{2,3,6} 

- ¹ Department of Engineering, Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Campus do IPBeja, Rua Pedro Soares, 7800-295 Beja, Portugal
- ² CREATE—Center for Sci-Tech Research in EArth sysTem and Energy, Polo IPBeja, Campus do Instituto Politécnico de Beja, Rua Pedro Soares, Apartado 6155, 7800-295 Beja, Portugal; mtcarvalhos@ipbeja.pt (T.B.); albertina@ipbeja.pt (A.R.)
- ³ MARE—Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre, ARNET—Aquatic Research Network Associate Laboratory, NOVA School of Science and Technology, NOVA University Lisbon, 2829-516 Caparica, Portugal
- ⁴ Department of Technology and Applied Sciences, Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Campus do IPBeja, Rua Pedro Soares, 7800-295 Beja, Portugal
- ⁵ FinEnTech-Fibrous Materials and Environmental Technologies, Rua Marquês de Ávila e Bolama-620, Universidade Da Beira Interior, 6200-506 Covilhã, Portugal
- ⁶ Department of Biosciences, Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Campus do IPBeja, Rua Pedro Soares, 7800-295 Beja, Portugal; araposo@ipbeja.pt
- * Correspondence: adurao@ipbeja.pt

Abstract: The existing environmental imbalances and the need to promote actions that minimize the impact and promote awareness and behavioral change are now primary needs. As a reflection of this situation, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are faced with the need for more sustainable development practices in their environmental, social, and economic aspects both in curricular and non-curricular spaces. This paper aims to show how the activities developed under the International University Sports Federation (FISU)'s Healthy Campus (HC) program can be an asset in promoting the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility in an HEI in Portugal. The methodology reflects a case study at the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (IPBeja) and includes (1) diagnosis, (2) drawing up the action plan, and (3) preparation, development, and monitoring of activities. The methodology approach adopted to analyze the activities uses the following: (1) the Mentimeter tool; (2) a mind map; and (3) a SWOT analysis. The results show that when activities are designed in a collaborative and participatory way, they end up geared towards the aspirations of the participants, allowing for greater involvement of people and growth of the institution in the aspects of the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility. The HC program is an asset program to align HC requirements, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrated and transdisciplinary approaches, and people's environmental awareness and sustainable mindset. In political terms, this case study contributes to what is recommended in the institutional strategic plan.

Keywords: well-being; education for sustainability; mind map; good practices



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1. Introduction

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [1] is a unique and necessary opportunity to support sustainable, regenerative, and inclusive growth; without it, it will be impossible to tackle the climate emergency, the rampant loss of biodiversity, and social inequalities and asymmetries [2,3].

Sustainable development is understood as socio-economic development that considers the rights of nature and dignified life for future generations [4]. In line with this, sustainability considers a holistic integration of economic, environmental, and social components to promote development, including life quality, health, and well-being.

Sustainability can be conceptualized as “the proposal of a life model that guarantees the survival of ecosystems, where the human being is included and grounded in the web of life, where we can all live harmoniously within the interconnected systems of economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental relationships” [5].

Human action has a major influence on environmental problems. For this reason, educational processes have been working on environmental and sustainability issues for a long time. However, environmental concerns in Portugal, particularly in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), are very recent and with weak adherence [6].

How can HEI deal with environmental problems in a structural way?

In Portugal, the Sustainable Campus Network [7] brings together HEIs around the theme of sustainability, allowing them to share good practices or work concomitantly. Although each HEI develops its sustainability program and adopts targets, indicators, or criteria that best reflect the work developed in each context, the first steps are being taken to monitor and evaluate the actions developed, while in other countries, the evaluation of environmentally friendly practices is already a common reality. It is an important path for systemic change towards sustainability in HEI. In Portugal, there is still no legislation to defend the importance of these networks [8]. However, there is a consensus on how the promotion of environmental education and the adoption of sustainability-oriented practices are important, and also, the minimization of the environmental impacts, promoted by human activities, is a priority and essential, and various programs can help with this. There is a need for action and a lack of collaboration, as pointed out by Schmidt [9]. The HEI plays a key role in the promotion of advanced sustainable implementation within the Portuguese higher education community.

Regarding the implementation of sustainability in higher education in Portugal, reference [8] reports that although the majority of HEIs have a strategic plan related to sustainability, only a small number make explicit reference(s) to sustainable development in the mission of the HEI Plan, in statutory terms.

The enrollment of the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (IPBeja) in Eco-Schools and Healthy Campus programs has made it possible to develop initiatives and activities with the community in a systematic, integrated, and inclusive way, with long-term benefits for the environment, social responsibility, and well-being.

This work presents an overview of the two programs implemented in IPBeja, Portugal, namely Eco-Schools and the HC program, focusing on their methodology and how the HC program can be an asset in promoting the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility (ESSR). So, the aim is to show the contribution of the HC program to IPBeja academic community ESSR practices.

The manuscript is organized as follows: After an introduction to the research subject, the second section presents the theoretical framework that supported the work carried out. The third section explains the ongoing programs at IPBeja that promote environmentally friendly practices. The fourth section explains the aim of the paper. The fifth section describes the study area and the methodology used. The results achieved and the discussion is shown in the sixth section. Finally, the conclusion and main contributions of the work are summarized, and future work is pointed out in the seventh section.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions

Looking for meaningful words to define sustainability, dos Santos et al. [5] obtained, using the most common answers from a questionnaire applied to a sample of 49 interviewed citizens, “change, knowledge, reuse, reduction, family, and health”. These authors have also conceptualized sustainability as “the proposal of a life model that guarantees the survival of ecosystems, where the human being is included and grounded in the web of life, where we can all live harmoniously within the interconnected systems of economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental relationships”.

According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development [10], only 16% of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, with the remaining 84% showing limited progress or its reversal. Of the 167 countries evaluated, Portugal is in 16th place with a score of 80.28% [11]. Most of the SDGs worked on in Portugal achieved a performance of over 50%. As pointed out by Medeiros [12], local governments have been called upon to participate and to transform the global SDG agenda into a local reality. In Portugal, the SDG Local Platform, a municipal platform for the Sustainable Development Goals [13], already shows several good practices developed by municipalities. The way forward is now to join forces so that other levels of government and other players in society, together with the academy, can help transform our current social, economic, environmental, and political reality.

Adapting targets and indicators to each context is an opportunity to rethink local development. Alternatives to the new challenges can be found collectively in each community, responding to the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which highlighted that the third mission of higher education is social responsibility, as pointed out by [14].

The way human beings relate to nature, the environment, and consumption promotes imbalances; it is therefore important, on the one hand, to develop actions that minimize the impacts of human activity and, on the other hand, to promote greater awareness to change behavior. According to Hudson [15], young people have an increased sense of environmental consciousness and are interested in ways to protect and save the planet. This could be explained by the existence of different programs and projects covering different levels of learning and/or the information/awareness conveyed in the media. For example, the study carried out by Barreiros et al. [16] regarding HEI Students' Literacy in Sustainable Use of Potable Water showed that the main sources of information identified by the students are social communication, internet/social networks, and family background. Although some environmental awareness has increased, there is still a long way to go, and this should also be promoted at the HEI level. Educational processes have long included environmental and sustainability concerns. However, in Portugal, in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), practical actions focused on improving environmental parameters have little adherence [6].

The survey carried out by the Sustainable Campus Network in 2022 [17] on the implementation of sustainability in higher education in Portugal reports that although the majority of HEIs have a strategic plan related to sustainability, only a small number make explicit reference(s) to sustainable development in the mission of the HEI Plan, in statutory terms.

For Graedel [18], the environmental performance of sustainability in Higher Education Institutions can be assessed in five specific areas: energy use, water use, land use, and the purchase and disposal of products and emissions. For each one of these areas, quantitative targets are defined that allow access to sustainable status. There are several SDG frameworks. In the questionnaire developed by the Sustainable Campus Network in

Portugal, 2022 [17], of the 28 HEIs that responded, 20 said that they carry out some kind of reporting on their sustainability performance. The frameworks listed are NP EN ISO 9000, NP EN ISO 14001, EMAS, NP EN ISO 26000 [19–22], rankings, Key Performance Indicator Monitoring, and the Eco-Schools program. It should be noted that, from the responding HEIs, the Healthy Campus program is not mentioned. Each framework has its specific methodology and promotes the adoption of environmentally friendly practices and helps methodologically in recording, monitoring, and validating these practices, which can be adopted by any HEI since it signs up for and follows their methodologies.

2.2. Education as a Tool for Environmental, Sustainable, and Citizenship Issues

The terms environmental education, education for sustainability, or education for global citizenship give rise to specific concepts for working on these issues.

Environmental education is a lifelong learning process that aims to promote informed and active citizenship, ensuring the involvement and commitment of each citizen and organization to a sustainable future [23].

The Portuguese Strategy for Environmental Education [24] provides 16 measures framed by strategic objectives, which serve three (3) central pillars of environmental policy, namely (1) decarbonizing society; (2) making the economy circular; and (3) enhancing the territory. However, as pointed out by Coelho et al. [25], to achieve global social transformation, it is essential that citizens have access to an education that puts real-world experiences at the center of learning, encourages reflection and critical thinking, and prepares people for diversity. The developing participation and a sense of belonging to a shared humanity enables individuals to move towards education for global citizenship as advocated in the national strategy for Development Education in Portugal 2018–2022 [26]. Development Education is understood as “a lifelong learning process committed to the integral formation of people, the development of critical and ethically informed thinking, and citizen participation” [27] (p. 3197). Development Education’s aim is “the formation of responsible citizens, committed to a process of social transformation to build more just, supportive, inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies” [26] (p. 16).

Education for sustainability emphasizes the need to respect human dignity and diversity and protect our planet’s environment and resources [1], which, to a certain extent, systematizes the objectives of environmental education and education for global citizenship.

Klein [28] states that transdisciplinary collaboration involving stakeholders to solve complex societal problems enables the development of new knowledge, theories, and frameworks that transcend the contributions of single or integrated disciplinary expertise. However, Guimarães et al. [29] concluded that the transdisciplinary method is not a conventional approach to problem-solving; it depends on the context and encompasses different disciplines that work with actors outside the academy, and when there is interaction, knowledge is created. This corroborates what Udovychenko et al. [30] say about transdisciplinary education, stating that it is an education that harmoniously combines various disciplines to build new knowledge and form cognitive abilities, stable knowledge, and skills in an individual.

Rigolot [31] states that being transdisciplinary, in a way, is a matter of applying transdisciplinary principles at a very personal level and for most global questions.

Schmidt L. [9] argues that it is essential to activate the necessary factors for an ethic of practical action, which requires (1) public awareness—obtained through educational processes; (2) civic environmental culture—requires the mobilization of civil society with more and better information; and (3) political leadership and decision-making—requires new forms of governance with processes of openness and learning, involving different actors and testing multi-scale models. These are also essential dimensions in education for

global citizenship, where the political sense of action is promoted, and the ethics of care, where processes are seen as learning possibilities, and where collaborative work forms a matrix that weaves the network. Once there is a need for action and a lack of collaboration as Schmidt [9] points out, HEIs have a key role in the promotion of advanced sustainability implementation among the Portuguese higher education community.

The engagement of stakeholders is a practice assumed to be necessary, and the use of participatory techniques is increasingly incorporated throughout meetings, workshops, or other sorts of dialog sessions allowing learning, sharing knowledge, and the introduction of new behavior into the daily lives of individuals, communities, organizations, or even in research. This form of emancipatory and empowering research leads to practical results and to the production of knowledge that gives meaning to the participants' actions, i.e., it values individuals and their communities and can therefore play an important role and act as a mechanism that also leads to greater participation.

Nowadays, HEIs, and Portuguese HEIs in particular [8], face the enormous challenge of dealing with environmental problems structurally. As Barros et al. [8] point out, the Portuguese Sustainable Campus Network is an important way of bringing about systemic change towards sustainability in HEIs. The importance of promoting environmental education and the adoption of sustainability-oriented practices, as well as minimizing the environmental impacts of human activities, is therefore a priority.

3. Programs That Promote Environmentally Friendly Practices in IPBeja

Eco-Schools is a program operated and coordinated at international, national, regional, and school levels. It encourages young people to engage in their environment by allowing them the opportunity to actively protect the environment [32]. This program is considered the largest environmental education program of different levels in the world (99 countries) [33], and it has grown with the constant and ambitious mission to improve literacy and change environmental behaviors. Students, teachers, and staff experience a sense of achievement in being able to have a say in their school's environmental management policies, ultimately leading to certification and the prestige that comes with being awarded the Green Flag. This program was developed in Portugal, in 1996, by the European Blue Flag, which aims to encourage action and recognize the quality work carried out by the school in the field of environmental education for sustainability. Despite this, HEIs in Portugal only joined the program in 2006 [34], although, in recent years, there has been an exponential increase in HEIs joining the program. However, in the post-pandemic period, the number of HEIs dropped significantly, but it is to be expected that the program's uptake will continue to increase [35].

Healthy Campus (HC) is a very recent program proposed and developed by the International University Sports Federation (FISU) aimed to enhance all aspects of well-being for students and the campus community (students, teachers, and staff). One of the goals of the HC program is to help students prioritize their health and well-being while pursuing their academic goals. Looking to reverse the well-established trend of young adults compromising their health during their academic careers, the initiative is already having a positive impact on the lives and lifestyles of HEI students around the world [36]. The management of the HC approach includes different fields, with several activities, resources, and services integrated, namely, (1) HC management; (2) physical activity and sport; (3) nutrition; (4) disease prevention; (5) mental and social health; (6) risk behavior; and (7) environment, sustainability, and social responsibility [37]. This approach is designed to support teachers, staff, and mainly students in making healthy lifestyle choices, and it includes physical activities, access to nutritious food options, mental health

support services, sensitization, and awareness-raising workshops or inclusive campus environmental activities.

HC adopted a sustainability focus area to preserve the values of HEI sport worldwide for future generations in 2021, using the United Nations 2030 Agenda and SDGs [38]. The program presents different categories of certification, namely, certificate, bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. According to the FISU [39], 73 HEIs from 26 countries are certified. It started in 2021/2022 with a linear increase for categories of silver, gold, and platinum from 2020/21 to 2022/23 [40]. This situation may be due to the demand to reach the next level. Out of 73 HEIs certified in the HC program, 10 are Portuguese, 8 are platinum, 1 is silver, and 1 is gold [41].

The FISU uses a 100-point checklist of best practices to monitor compliance with the program's performance in HEIs, in the concerned areas covered by the program [40].

Both programs, Eco-Schools [42] and HC [38], work towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an organized manner and are in the lead in HEI rankings.

But why does the HEI adopt two programs? What do those programs have in common or how are they different? How do they complement and benefit each other? Since each program adopts a set of items to be fulfilled in specific areas, there is complementarity in the way of looking at each of those areas. While the Eco-Schools program presents a topic to be addressed (for example, for the water resource) by examining (1) information on the importance of the topic/resource; (2) a set of problem questions; (3) key concepts; and (4) ideas for activities [43], in the HC program, there are no such recommendations and it moves on to monitor the following: (1) the existence of partnerships that facilitate the implementation of actions; (2) the adoption of environmentally friendly practices; and (3) the adoption of the "cycle of continuous improvement" environmental policy, and promoting well-being. This presents, in fact, the possibility of complementing teams and environmental work which, as a result, creates synergies which means more sustainable HEIs.

4. Aim

This work aims to show the contribution of the HC program as an asset in promoting the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility in the academic communities of HEIs.

For this purpose, the specific goals are to (1) present the collaborative action plans carried out by the environmental, sustainability, and social responsibility (ESSR) group at IPBeja; (2) show the activities carried out from May 2022 to March 2024 that raise awareness, collective reflection, and commitment to active citizenship; and (3) exemplify how the HC program can promote the environment sustainability and social responsibility of the academic community.

5. Materials and Methods

5.1. Study Area Characterization

IPBeja is an HEI located in the city of Beja, in the south of Portugal, an inland region (Baixo Alentejo) with a low population density (13.5 inhabitants/km² in 2022) [44]. IPBeja integrates four schools (School of Agriculture (ESA), School of Education (ESE), School of Health (ESS), and School of Technology and Management (ESTIG)), and its fundamental aim is to promote solid scientific and cultural training, as well as the development of technical and professional skills, with a view to lifelong learning.

The courses taught at IPBeja cover short courses (21), bachelor's degrees (17), master's degrees (15), and postgraduate degrees (7) in various areas of knowledge, namely, Arts, Humanities, and Sport, Biosciences, Business Sciences, Education and Social and Behavioral

Sciences, Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences, Technologies and Applied Sciences, and Health [45].

The IPBeja academic community comprised a total population of 3588 people (3136 students, 138 staff, and 314 teachers) in 2022/23 [46].

Currently, the four schools that belong to IPBeja are Eco-Schools, although they joined the program at different times. To date, all the work carried out allowed the win of the Green Flag award for ESA nine, ESTIG, ESS eight, and ESE seven [35].

IPBeja's joining of the two programs (Eco-School and HC) allowed the development of initiatives/activities with the community, in a systematic, integrated, and inclusive way. In this sense, some previous results from the Eco-School program were used as evidence for the subsequent registration in the HC program on the FISU platform.

Applications to obtain the FISU certificate, at IPBeja, began in March 2022, and in June 2022, November 2022, and August 2023, the bronze, silver, gold, and platinum certificates were obtained, respectively.

The methodology applied is described below.

5.2. Methodology

A case study is a qualitative research method as it provides an in-depth analysis of modern real-life phenomena [47] within their context. It can involve concrete entities, such as individuals, groups, or organizations [48].

In this manuscript, the methodology is configured as a case study, because as stated by [49], it is the most real, most open, and least controlled form of research and it is used when little is known about the phenomenon [50,51]. It also allows for a research process in which the researcher is involved and conducts an in-depth study of a particular case, in an introspective manner, gathering as much detailed information as possible [49]. It is based on multiple sources of evidence, and it does not start with theoretical preconceptions [52] nor does it claim any specific data collection method. Case studies are also considered learning elements [53]. Recognition in the academic environment as a reliable and valid qualitative research approach [52] is even more important given the limitations of quantitative methods in providing a comprehensive and profound explanation of social and human behavioral issues [48].

From the 100-point checklist of the FISU, the items considered are from 95 to 100, namely, (95) accessibility; (96) social inclusion and cohesion; (97) environmentally friendly displacement; (98) attractive green spaces and blue spaces, (99) sustainability and the use of infrastructure and resources; and (100) energy consumption of facilities and waste.

At IPBeja, the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility (ESSR) core group is formed by a leadership team of 3 people. The members of the academic community can join the group voluntarily to build the action plan and initiatives in a collaborative way.

The methodological work must seek to combine different aspects, considering the different knowledge and experiences in the community's institution and the students' learning needs, and aligning these aspects with the global development priorities and aspirations that the 2030 Agenda tries to address. Finally, the group also wants to meet the requirements defined by the FISU program. In the year of implementation of the HC program (2022) at IPBeja, the ESSR core group began by carrying out a diagnosis to know and understand perceptions of the Healthy Campus concept, which helped to design activities that would respond to the needs of all communities. The diagnosis was performed using Jamboard, a free tool from Google that allows each participant to record their ideas.

One of the tools used for data analysis was a mind map. A mind map is a tool of image-based thinking [54], achieved through a visual representation of concepts and their interrelations, enhancing information processing and understanding. It is a diagram for

representing tasks, words, concepts, or items linked to and arranged around a central concept or subject using a non-linear graphical layout [55]. It can help to solve problems and brainstorm creative ideas [56]. In this study, a mind map was used to organize and correlate the activities with the SDGs.

SWOT analysis is an ideal analytical technique that allows us to reflect on a specific problem/issue presented in detail. It defines strengths and weaknesses then seeks opportunities for development and identifies threats that may arise [57].

5.2.1. Action Plan Design

The action plan is defined in a face-to-face meeting with all the community members who wish to take part. Throughout the year, and whenever possible, the leadership team continues to listen to other ideas and voices. The proposed activities are then developed and can be performed in smaller/specific groups when this makes sense for the activity itself.

The session plan for face-to-face meetings is defined by the leadership team in accordance with the contributions required for the work to be carried out. The structure of these meetings in the 1st and 2nd years of the program is as follows:

- Session plan for the 1st (year) meeting

In the first year of the program (2022–2023), after presenting the HC program to the participants and the diagnosis made previously, the activities were prioritized to define which ones would be carried out and who was committed to developing each one.

- Session plan for the 2nd (year) meeting

In the second year of the HC program (2023–2024), the meeting started with an ice-breaker activity. After that, the HC program and its objectives were explained, as well as the work already carried out and the results achieved. Groups of 4–5 members were then organized to list and propose a set of activities for the academic year. In addition to this meeting and during the welcome session of Erasmus students, where the HC program is presented, the leadership team also gathered more ideas.

The ice-breaker activity was performed with the Mentimeter (Free Version 3.7, 2024-11-25, Reg. No. 556892-5506, SE-113 86 Stockholm, Sweden) tool, where participants were asked to describe in 3 words the meaning of an HC.

During the Erasmus welcome session, after presenting the HC program, assessment was carried out using the Mentimeter tool with two questions: (1) describe in 3 words the meaning of a Healthy Campus (closed question) and (2) write your idea about the activities that an HC can carry out (open question).

5.2.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed with a table of activities, the Mentimeter tool, a mind map, and a SWOT analysis.

- Table of activities

Analysis of the activity was performed using tables to align the activity with the SDGs, and measures were applied.

- Mentimeter tool

The results of the Mentimeter tool allowed the construction of a word cloud regarding the question about what the participants understand to be an HC.

For the open question, the results were categorized according to the responses given by the participants, and the “point checklist aspects” of an HC should meet in the concerned area (environmental, sustainability, and social responsibility).

The sample number was 15 and 60 participants for the 2nd action plan meeting and Erasmus welcome session, respectively.

- Mind Map

The activities carried out (from 2022 to 2024) were organized in a mind map in which (1) curricular and non-curricular activities were included, (2) the SDGs worked on were identified, and (3) the contributions to the aspects of the HC checklist were required, specifically concerning the last five items, namely, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, and 100.

- SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was carried out to help the leadership team of the ESSR group identify the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that may exist with the implementation of the HC program at the IPBeja, with a view to improving it.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1. Results of Action Plan Design

The way human beings relate to nature, the environment, and consumption promotes imbalances; it is therefore important, on the one hand, to develop actions that minimize the impacts of human activity and, on the other hand, to promote greater awareness to change behavior. Adapting targets and indicators to each context is an opportunity to rethink local development. Alternatives to the new challenges can be found collectively in each community. In this sense, the action plan was always developed collaboratively.

The academic community, invited by email, participates voluntarily in the meeting. As a result of the action plan, each idea and its objectives are defined by the group members. Then, the action is scheduled, and its monitoring and assessment are planned to be able to monitor the progress of collaborative work and systematize learning (Figure 1).

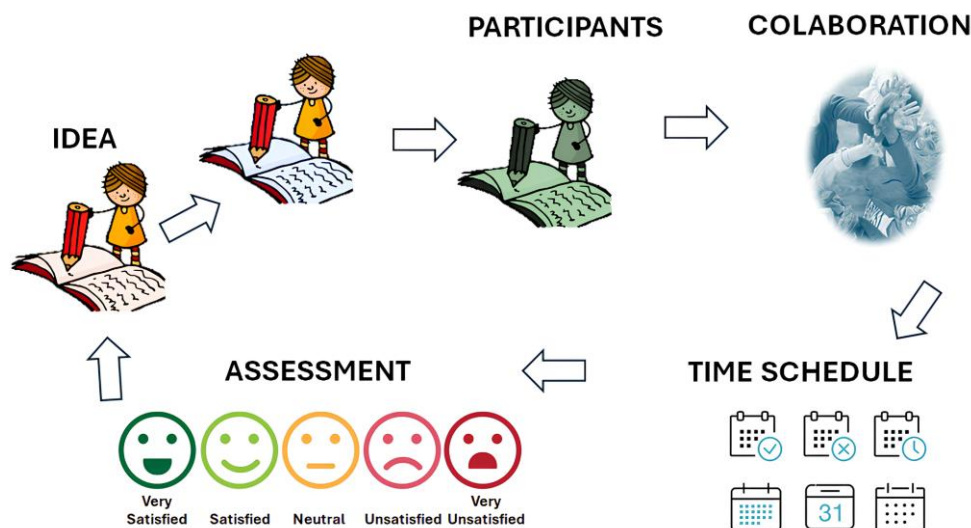


Figure 1. Steps of the action plan carried out during the academic year.

The results of the evaluation period (2 years) show the capacity of collective thinking to define and develop concrete actions that promote sustainability and more informed citizens, as shown in the following items. As mentioned by Schmidt [9], it is essential to activate the necessary factors for an ethic of practical action such as public awareness; civic environmental culture; and political leadership and decision-making. These are also essential dimensions in education for global citizenship, where the political sense of action is promoted, along with the ethics of care, where processes are seen as learning possibilities, and where collaborative work forms a matrix that weaves the network.

6.1.1. Session Plan for the 1st Year (Meeting)

In March 2022, bachelor's degree students in environmental engineering and bioanalytics were recruited, and to help develop the campus, their ideas were collected and listed through Jamboard (Free Version, 2024, <https://jamboard.google.com/>). In addition to the consultation on Jamboard, there was also a session where (a) the participants (students, teachers, and staff) were presented with the proposals for activities previously obtained; (b) they were allowed to add new proposals; and (c) the activities to be carried out were prioritized. The proposed activities, the topics, the SDGs addressed, and the measures already applied are summarized in Table 1. Of the 15 activities proposed, 60% were implemented.

Table 1. Activities proposed for 2022/23, including topics, SDGs, and measures applied.

Topic	Proposed Activities	SDGs	Measures Applied
Waste	Reduce the use of paper	12, 13	The informatics platform for internal communication (EDOC) was a reinforcement
	Zero water waste		Not yet implemented
	Use biowaste for composting		Acquisition contacts were made
	Collect organic waste from the canteen		Implemented (2960 kg)
Energy	Reduce electrical consumption	7, 11	Preparation of awareness campaign strategy
	Reduce lighting		Consumption monitorization Gradual replacement of the lamp type (LED)
Water	Promote water efficiency	6, 11	Consumption monitorization
	Collect rainwater		Implemented 5%
Green space	Therapeutic vegetable garden	11, 15	Not yet implemented
	More native plants	11, 15	Implemented
Mobility/reduction in emissions	Promote carpooling	11, 13	Not yet implemented
	Sustainable mobility on campus	11, 13	Not yet implemented
Biodiversity	Biodiversity conservation on campus	14, 15	Monitoring the auxiliary fauna of the PBeja Fruit and vegetable venter's crops Building and installing shelter boxes for insects and bats
Well-being/inclusion	Improve the solidarity space	10, 16	Implemented
	Sensitize students to a healthy lifestyle	3, 10	Not yet implemented
	Promote outdoor activities	3, 4, 10	Implemented
	Exercises for posture	3, 10	Implemented
Education/inclusion	Promote integration of foreign students	3, 10, 16	Not yet implemented
	Create a platform to share knowledge Implement an information system for what already exists	4, 10	Not yet implemented Not yet implemented

6.1.2. Session Plan for the 2nd Year (Meeting)

The meeting took place in November 2023, and after presenting the previous results and the context of the program, with an emphasis on the 2030 Agenda, the participants began working in groups, as shown in Figure 2. After that, each group explained their idea of activities to develop, indicated the SDGs to achieve, the schedule according to which the activity will run, and the resources needed to reach the proposed activity. As a result, 15 activities were proposed. However, many activities were carried out that were not foreseen in the action plan.



Figure 2. Steps of action plan carried out in the academic year 2023/24 to collect, list, and prioritize activities.

6.2. Developed Activities

The results of some of the activities developed are presented and discussed below.

6.2.1. Ice-Breaker Activity (Mentimeter Tools)

The results of ice-breaker activities, regarding the action plan for 2023/24 (number of responses: 31) and Erasmus students for 2023/24 (number of responses: 78), reveal a variety of words associated with the concept of an HC, highlighting the term healthy as physical, mental, social, and environmental, in both situations (Figure 3).

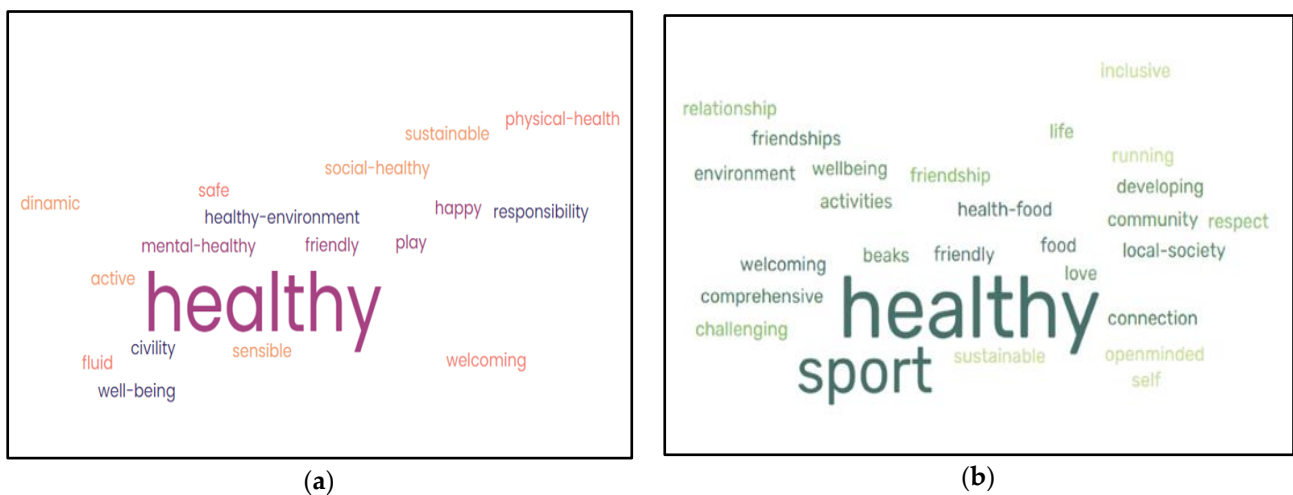


Figure 3. Healthy Campus meanings regarding the participant's view of (a) the action plan meeting and (b) Erasmus students' welcome session.

The categories obtained through the results of Erasmus student responses, regarding the open question concerning their ideas about the activities that an HC can carry out, performed by the Mentimeter tool, are (1) green spaces and leisure (SDG14—quality education; SDG15—life on land); (2) sustainable mobility (SDG11—sustainable cities and communities); (3) energy consumption and waste solids (SDG11—sustainable cities and communities; SDG12—responsible consumption and production); (4) healthy food (SDG2—zero hunger); and (5) well-being and working with the community (SDG3—good health and well-being;

SDG17—partnership for the goals). These five categories correspond to the key aspects of an HC.

6.2.2. Mind Map

The evaluation of the activities performed during the period under review (Figure 4) reveals the engagement of stakeholders. This practice is assumed to be necessary, and the use of participatory techniques is increasingly incorporated throughout meetings, workshops, or other sorts of dialog sessions. As noted by [58], this allows learning, sharing knowledge, and the introduction of new behavior into the daily lives of individuals, communities, organizations, or even in research. According to [59], the dialog also boosts learning.

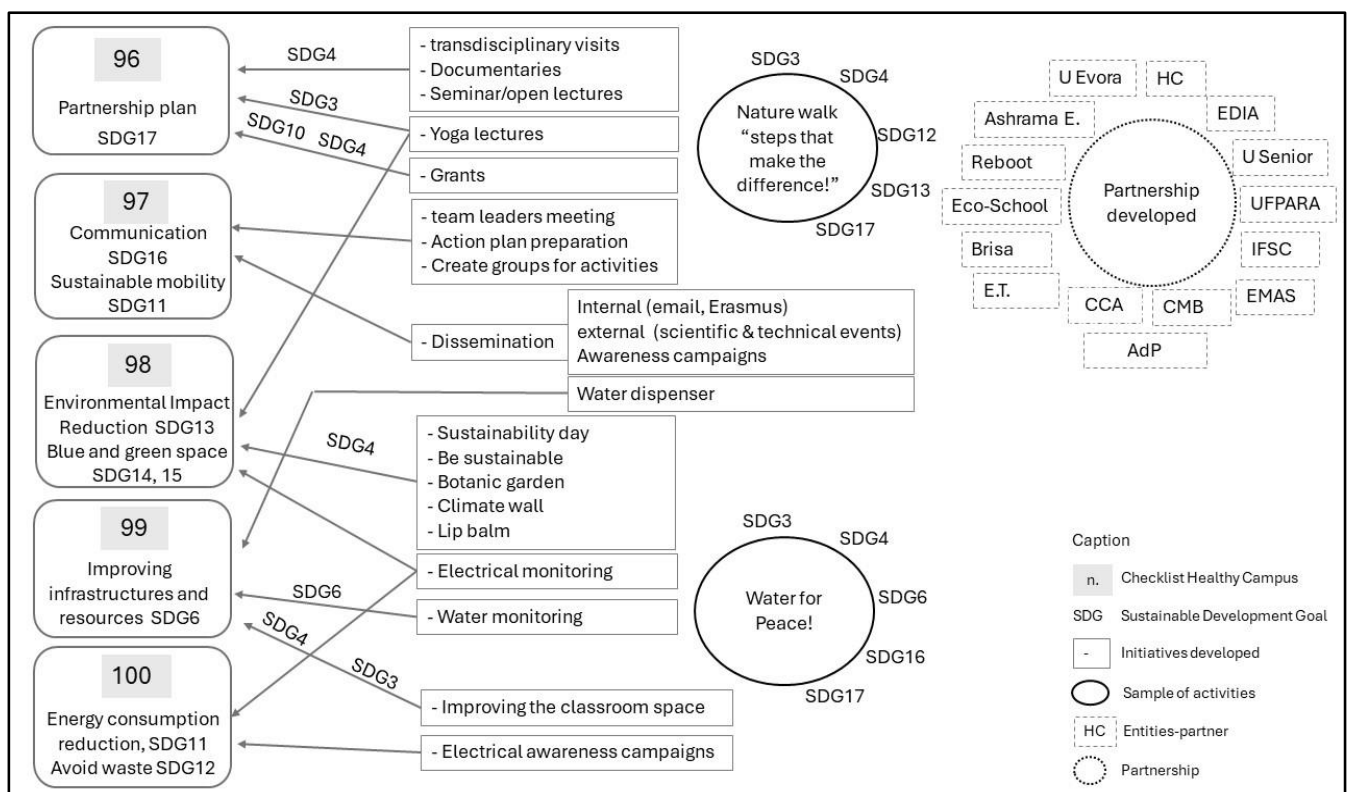


Figure 4. Mind map to systematize the work carried out in 2022/24.

It can be observed that item 95 (accessibilities) is not included in the mind map because the activities concerning this item are dependent on the management governance of the IPBeja and were highlighted and improved since the first year (2022/23) of adherence to the HC program.

The mind map shows that (1) all the activities/initiatives carried out address SDG4 as expected; (2) even though the key aspects of the HC are associated with one or two SDGs, the activities carried out also contribute to other SDGs; (3) curricular activities, such as transdisciplinary visits, seminars, documentaries, etc., although organized within a particular course/discipline, were open to the whole community, and boosted partnerships (SDG17); (4) 15 partnerships were established which 2 of them are international partnerships; and (5) information is disseminated internally and externally, through the IPBeja official channels, social networks, and scientific and technical events.

As SDG17 is a cross-cutting SDG, the results obtained with the implementation of the HC program show a significant increase (around 75%) in partnerships, which means that this program constitutes a great asset in promoting the environment, sustainability,

and social responsibility. This also contributes to making the SDG agenda into a local reality [12,13].

Four initiatives are presented and discussed as examples.

- Open lectures

Environmental education is a lifelong learning process that aims to promote informed and active citizenship, ensuring the involvement and commitment of each citizen and the organizations to (1) a sustainable future [23,27] and (2) a process of social transformation to build more just, supportive, inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies [26].

To encourage critical thinking and discussions about environmental topics or other topics that promote well-being, open lectures/seminars were organized. Guest speakers (local, national, and international) were invited to address various topics such as environmental impact assessment or methodologies for measuring quality in analytical processes in laboratories or industries.

Although open classes can be lectures, many are also hands-on activities, such as yoga classes or lip balm production, using natural and local resources. These kinds of activities uphold knowledge in a transdisciplinary way, promoting cognitive abilities and individual skills, as mentioned by [25,28,29,31], and encouraging the interaction and creation of knowledge [30]. For this, it is essential that citizens have access to an education that puts real-world experiences at the center of learning, encourages reflection and critical thinking, and prepares people for diversity [25]. Emancipatory and empowering research leads to practical results and to the production of knowledge that gives meaning to the participants' actions, i.e., it values individuals and their communities and can therefore play an important role and act as a mechanism that also leads to greater participation [60].

- Nature walks

One way of promoting physical and mental well-being can be through group physical activities. These activities can also take place to protect nature and prevent damage to natural habitats and species, as well as restore and regenerate nature. In addition, it helps to understand and reduce risks to nature, educate people, and inspire positive action for nature, fulfilling the objectives of the HC program [26]. Every year, the ESSR group organizes a nature walk—steps that make the difference: more sport, less waste, and more nature—with the collaboration of various stakeholders in the surrounding community. During the walk, participants experience plogging, a combination of jogging and picking litter up [61].

In 2022/23, a 7 km rural route was selected, starting from IPBeja facilities to the 5 Reis beach. In addition, nature was observed, and the waste collected while plogging was circa 20 kg.

According to the Carbon Footprint tool available in [62], this activity allowed us to estimate the CO₂ emissions of 252.5 kg CO₂/year, regarding the mode of transport and considering that the same route was taken by a private light vehicle (maximum displacement of 1.4). This result was disseminated to the community to inform and promote awareness of good environmental practices.

In 2023/24, the route chosen was urban pedestrian, around 4 km (cycle path), with the CO₂ emissions estimated based on the waste collected during the plogging activity. As a result, emissions were reduced by 40 kg of CO₂eq. Considering the same condition as before, the CO₂ emission [62] estimated was 158.2 kg CO₂/year. As the route walk is urban, despite the shorter distance and the lower number of participants in the academic year 2023/24 (50 participants) compared to 2022/23 (150 participants), the amount of waste collected (mostly plastic) was 2 times higher than in the previous walk. This result is not

surprising since the route with the highest amount of waste collected, although smaller than the previous one, is an urban route used for frequent walks by the city’s residents.

- Electrical Consumption Monitoring

Since the IPBeja joined the Eco-Schools program, energy, water, and gas consumption has been monitored by schools to implement measures to reduce consumption. The evaluation of these types of consumption is also required in the HC program. The results of monitoring electrical energy consumption by the four schools of IPBeja are shown in Figure 5.

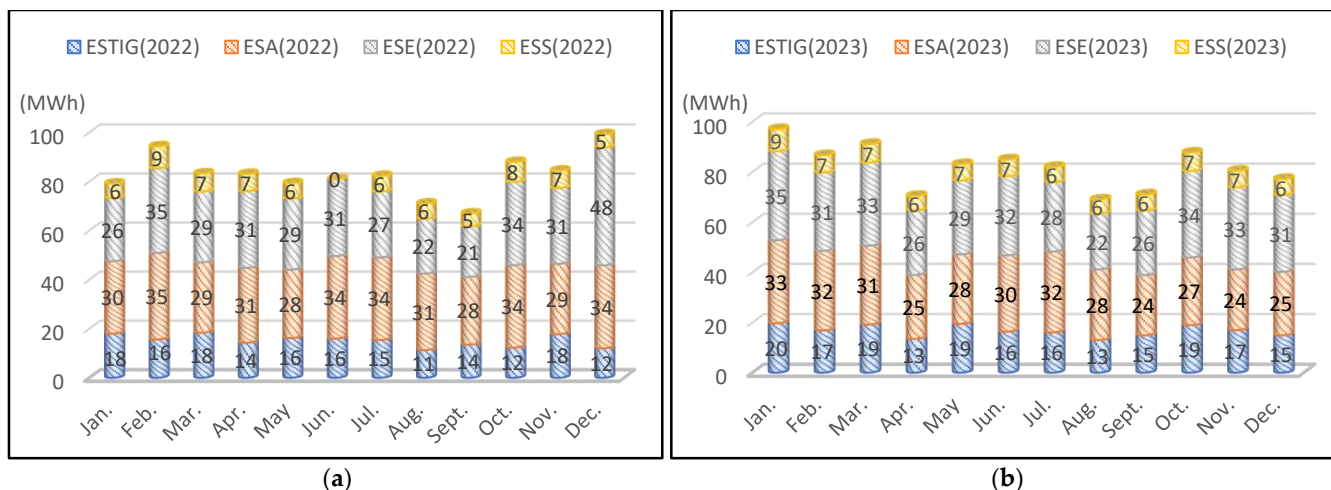


Figure 5. Electrical energy consumption by schools per month: (a) in 2022; (b) in 2023.

The results of electricity consumed per month in the two years under analysis (2022 and 2023) show that these have remained constant, demonstrating that there are no significant variations in each school. The ESE and ESA schools have the highest consumption; this can be explained by the energy spent on heating water (related to the sports activity that is only practiced in the ESE school) and the high consumption of research activity (associated laboratories), respectively. It is important to maintain electrical consumption monitoring and control but also promote awareness-raising activities. The awareness campaigns were launched to reduce electrical consumption.

- Water consumption monitoring

Water is an essential resource for human beings and ecosystems and a strategic economic resource since its quantitative and qualitative availability is fundamental to the human health and management of this resource. Portugal is considered one of the countries with high water stress (20–80%), occupying the 43rd-ranking place [63].

Young people show an interest in protecting and saving the planet [15], supported by programs/projects covering different levels of learning and/or by information/awareness in the media. Despite this, the results about water are still far from what is desired [16].

It is therefore important to monitor water consumption and promote awareness campaigns for efficient water use. Figure 6 shows that the ESA is the biggest user of water in both years. This may be because it is the institution with the largest green area that needs to be irrigated or even a possible water loss. This situation was evident in the summer of 2023 when the south of Portugal was in severe drought [64]. In any case, it is important to continue with the awareness campaigns, which need to be objective and continuous since new students join every year and appropriate behavior is not immediate.

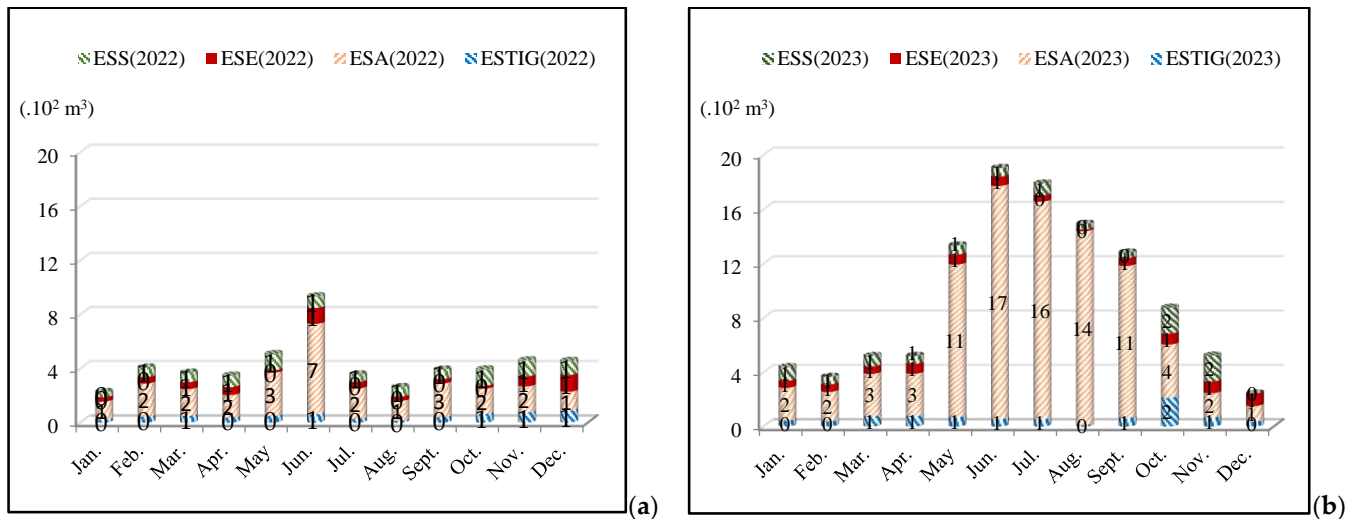


Figure 6. Water consumption by schools per month in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

Water dispensers have been installed in each school to reduce the consumption of plastic water bottles and, also, to promote tap water consumption because it is safe, economical, and healthy. An awareness campaign was launched.

The activities presented as an example in this manuscript are in line with what was mentioned in [65], which states that academic work is not enough to achieve competencies relating to the environment, social responsibility, and sustainability.

6.2.3. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis applied (Table 2) allows the identification of key factors that influence future works. This helps to draw up future strategic action plans.

Table 2. Results of SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Development of activities with a strong focus on the SDGs. (2) Work on the subject in a cross-cutting way for/with different target audiences (students, staff, and teachers) with different interests, motivations, and skills. (3) Construction of knowledge, the acquisition of new skills, and the promotion of well-being, using participatory methodologies. (4) Expansion of partnerships and greater collaboration with other colleagues in the academic community. (5) Results obtained beyond those foreseen in the action plan. (6) Well-being promotion. (7) Creation of a cost center for HC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Shortage of time allocated for the development and performance of tasks. (2) Low student motivation. (3) Lack of incentives to recognize and validate student participation. (4) Lack of recognition of the importance of community service (valuing knowledge, skills, and attitudes). (5) Some other activities/initiatives realized but not reported to the core group.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Interdisciplinary work. (2) Strengthening relationships between staff, teachers, and students. (3) Validating the extent to which the institution works towards the 2030 Agenda. (4) Innovating activities that have never been carried out before. (5) Becoming aware of environment, sustainability, and social responsibility aspects and valuing others that were otherwise unknown. (6) Create a platform for recording the activities. (7) Recognize the importance of service learning and strengthen its practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Time constraints to carry out certain activities. (2) Activities whose development depends on other entities. (3) Some resistance of academics to incorporating the need to work outside the conventional teaching space as a vehicle for learning and acquiring skills. (4) There is no platform for recording the activities carried out.

Even though the work carried out presents some constraints and weaknesses, it provides many opportunities for improvement to the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility in the academic community at the IPBeja.

7. Final Considerations

This paper exemplifies how the HC program can be an asset in promoting the environment, sustainability, social responsibility, and well-being.

The HC is a program that focuses on monitoring and prioritizing partnerships, which can facilitate the implementation of actions, as well as the adoption of environmentally friendly practices to enhance continuous human and planet well-being.

While planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are essential components, participant feedback and/or ideas help the ESSR group continuously improve the practical actions developed in the HC program. The work carried out already gave a positive response to meet the six (6) items that the HC program requires, (1) accessibility; (2) social inclusion; (3) sustainable mobility; (4) green spaces; (5) use of infrastructures and resources; and (6) energy consumption, by significantly improving institutional processes and practices.

The mind map cross-referencing the items on the HC program's checklist with the activities carried out shows that each activity can work on several SDGs. Those play an important role in citizenship as they include an action plan for the future, aligned with the five principles (5P) of the 2030 Agenda: people (SDG1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6); planet (SDG6, -11, -12, -13, -14); prosperity (development and quality of life dimension—SDG7, -8, -9, -10, -11); and strengthening peace (SDG16) and partnerships (SDG17) [66]. The work carried out integrating most of the SDGs highlights SDG4, specifically target 4.7 related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, to promote sustainable development, adoption of sustainable lifestyles, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity, improving awareness but also transforming citizens through actions.

The SWOT analysis indicates that the continuity of the HC program is essential for the implementation of good practices in HEIs. Youth who are more involved and engaged in the community have higher levels of well-being [67]. The continuity of this program is important in boosting values of social responsibility and can thus have an impact on students' behavior.

7.1. Conclusions

The HC program is an asset for work and alignment between pre-defined requirements and the SDGs because the activities developed contributed to improving the environmental performance of the IPBeja. The activities were designed and organized collaboratively with all members of the academic community, promoting inclusion and enhancing well-being. So, when the academic community is called upon to participate/contribute, the activities to be developed are more targeted to their aspirations, allowing for greater involvement of people and growth of the institution in aspects of the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility. In addition to the curricular space, HEIs can contribute to education for sustainability, promoting the ability to transform ourselves and prosper, while respecting the planet's limits. Furthermore, the participatory methodologies used involve academic community members inclusively and equitably. In any case, some constraints weaken the effectiveness and impact of the HC program, namely a lack of time allocated for the development and performance of tasks and low student motivation.

Knowing that the implementation of sustainability in higher education in Portugal is still lacking, this case study is extremely important for institutional affirmation of envi-

ronmental and sustainability issues. This happens both in curricular and extra-curricular terms, which allows the HC action plan to be aligned with the institutional strategic plan.

Practices to promote sustainability and a better environment and quality in HEIs are relatively new in Portugal. For the team in the sustainability and social responsibility environment group, the HC program represents a way of reflecting models that allow the HEIs to be seen as agents for promoting the environment and well-being.

The HC program has become an important vector for increasing and consolidating levels of knowledge about the issues addressed in formal learning spaces, and it allows us to invest in training the academic community for action. In addition, the national and international contexts require HEIs to rethink their role in building critical citizenship focused on good environmental practices.

The methodology used can be replicated by other HEIs to promote a more sustainable academic community and society, including social responsibility and well-being, through the work towards the SDGs.

7.2. Future Research

For future work, it is intended to continue with the proposed methodology and, above all, the integration and involvement of stakeholders to contribute to the realization of activities that respond to the SDGs at a local, national, and international level and to promote a sustainable mindset and environmentally conscious citizens.

This study should be continued by systematically collecting evidence of the institution's behavioral evolution regarding environmental issues, sustainability, and social responsibility, for example, by using questionnaires to know the community's perception of the HC program.

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