

12th european VIRTUAL seminar



on Sustainable Development

*“An international, multidisciplinary dialogue
between geographically distributed students”*

The **aim** of the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (**EVS**) is to foster an international, multidisciplinary dialogue on sustainable development among students from all over Europe. The EVS confronts students directly with divergent peer views on sustainable development issues, and their implications for a societal shift towards a more sustainable Europe.

After participating in EVS, the student should be able (**learning objectives**) to:

- describe and operationalise the concept of sustainable development
- analyse sustainable development issues from a European perspective
- link local, national and European policy-related issues to sustainable development
- cooperate with students of different nationalities and different disciplinary backgrounds
- use the computer-conferencing system effectively for collaborative learning

The **didactic concept** of EVS is that of collaborative learning. During the seminar the students work in a small heterogeneous group on a case study, doing research and writing a group report and policy summary. Each group is coached by a tutor and can get advice from an expert.

Tentative topics of case studies (students should indicate their 1st and 2nd case study preference):

- **COM**: Communicating Strategies for Sustainable Development
- **CAC**: Climate Adaptation in Coastal Regions
- **DEC**: Decoupling of Environmental Pressure from Quality of Life
- **EEB**: Energy efficiency in buildings: indicators
- **GEO**: Geoconservation in Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark
- **RED**: EU position and action on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
- **STR**: Sustainable Tourism and the Region

At the EVS website there is more information about the case studies (<http://www.ou.nl/evs>)

To **participate** in EVS we expect that students will:

- be interested in sustainable development issues
- be keen to perform group work
- be able to read and write English
- be able to spend 8-10 hours a week on the course
- have access to a computer with internet connection

EVS starts 21 October 2013 and ends mid March 2014. The study load is 120 hours (5 ECTS). Register before **15 October 2013** by sending your details to the EVS coordinator at your university.

More information and **EVS contact person** at your institution:

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<http://www.ou.nl/evs>
<http://www.vcse.eu>



EVS case studies 2013-2014: *short descriptions*

COM - Communication Strategies for Sustainable Development

More than 20 years after Rio, the concept of sustainable development is met by wide agreement in Europe – if you ask for agreement about the inherent topics. At the same time, surveys tell us that 95% of the world population does not know the term “Sustainable Development” and that they have never heard anything about the principle of sustainability. Thus, communication strategies seem to be important. The goal of this case study is to evaluate existing strategies and assess the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies.

CAC - Climate Adaptation in Coastal Regions

Since the publication of the latest report of the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007, climate change and its likely impacts are widely discussed. All over the world and in many regions societies debate on how to adapt to climate change in a sustainable way. Especially in low lying coastal regions, adaptation to the likely consequences of climate change is crucial. These regions are expected to be threatened by higher storm surges, higher precipitation or drought, and a changing wind climate.

The goal of this case study is to identify generic or site specific criteria to assess the ability of coastal communities to adapt to climate change.

DEC - Decoupling of Environmental Pressure from Quality of Life

The overall goal of sustainable economies is to reach a state where the general quality of life goes up while the environmental pressures go down, i.e., to reach so called decoupling. There is a large array of indicators representing environmental pressures which are suitable for decoupling analysis. The level of decoupling differs across European countries and across environmental pressure indicators due to factors such as country size, population density, economic structure, etc.

The goal of this case study is to compare decoupling of several selected environmental pressure indicators from quality of life across various European countries.

GEO - Geoconservation in Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark

A European Geopark is defined as a territory with a particular geological heritage and which has a sustainable development plan to help promote economic development. The Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark is located in Southern Transylvania (Romania) near the main routes to Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria. The geopark must become a catalyst for local development in the fields of environment (nature conservation), cultural heritage, traditional economic activities, (agriculture, handicraft), ecotourism, social issues, education and training, raising awareness on European integration and promotion.

The goal of this case study is to come up with creative ideas for the sustainable development of the Hateg Country Dinosaurs Geopark, for example based on a comparison with other geoparks or regional development projects.

RED - REDD and Climate Change: The European Union's position

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) has been recognized as a great opportunity to prevent climate change. The parties of the 13th UNFCCC Conference in Bali, Indonesia in 2007 agreed to develop a mechanism to compensate reduced emissions from avoided deforestation and degradation. The European Union, like with most environmental issues, is seen as one of the crucial actors to promote concrete action on REDD. In international negotiations the European Union has pushed binding solutions to support a REDD agreement. The goal of this case study is to examine the European negotiating position on the international level and the concrete action undertaken so far.

STR - Sustainable Tourism and the Region

“Sustainable tourism in its purest sense is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism that is both ecologically and culturally sensitive” (Global Development Research Center, 2009).

The goal of this case study is to analyze the current situation in one or more selected regions (including tourism policies, developments, products, tourist behaviour and activities in a tourism region), and to make concrete recommendations on how to implement and develop sustainable tourism.

URB – Urban Waste Prevention

Waste is an environmental, social and economic challenge for many people in Europe. For some, it conjures up negative images: rubbish bags, litter and toxic waste dumps. For others, waste is an opportunity: Europe's drive to deal with waste in environmentally sound ways has generated jobs and business opportunities. Waste is complex – difficult to grasp, difficult to gather good statistics on, and difficult to regulate and manage. The EU Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC) intends to simplify all these processes. It aims at protecting the environment and human health through the prevention of the harmful effects of waste generation and waste management.

The goal of this case study is to determine whether the long-term goal of the Directive is being achieved for Europe and, if relevant, to propose new solutions, based on a comparison of the application of the Directive in different European countries.