

**Title:** **Biodiversity on campus: engaging students and local communities**

**Topic:** **Future Universities / Smart and Sustainable Regions**

**Author/s:** **FERREIRA, Sílvia; OLIVEIRA, Diogo; SIMÕES, Helena; SOUSA, José (all from Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal)**

The Sustainable Development Goals concerning biosphere, including life on land (goal nr. 15), are at the base of sustainable development. The campus of Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal is built in a humanized ecosystem resulting from the transformation of the Mediterranean forest. The native species and the ecosystem of which they are part provide important services, such as regulation of the water cycle, carbon fixation, high biodiversity as well as support of the local identity. However, the existence of such valuable natural patrimony is not always known and of interest to those who study and work at the campus. Campus biodiversity can and should be explored as a learning platform for students and teachers and for local communities (namely primary and secondary students and elderly people).

### **Biodiversity survey and enhancing**

To identify and characterize the campus species and habitats is fundamental both through academic work and citizen science. On-site information boards to provide information and visual interpretation or other forms of information display should be organized on campus. Biodiversity can be enhanced through multiple actions: planting native species; putting up bird or bat boxes and birds' feeders; building bug hotels; creating and maintaining ponds; among others. Biodiversity initiatives are a crucial way to engage our students and staff in sustainable development.

### **Exploring and communicating biodiversity**

Considering the knowledge and the competencies that we are acquiring about the biodiversity on campus and the important role of higher education in conserving and enhancing biodiversity, we intend to promote some biodiversity initiatives engaging different local communities.

Working with the local government, Setúbal Municipal Chamber and the São Sebastião Parish Board, one of the project goals is to organize and develop biodiversity activities for local communities to explore the variety of life on the IPS campus, for instance field trips, organize an Ebook and development of interactive exhibition, website and mobile application. Those activities should be planned and dynamized by our students and teachers.

We also want to reach local communities through regional newspaper. Another project goal is to keep up regular publications about different species that occur in the campus and, in addition, supplement this information with some reading suggestions or another type of learning guide. Furthermore, we aim to involve Setúbal Municipal Library and dynamize reading sessions for school children or local people, related with the information provided in that newspaper publications.

Biodiversity on Campus is an idea of a project that can be implemented in the six higher education institutions involved in E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup>. It is possible to create a common platform to share the biodiversity of the six Campus, anchored in their surrounding biodiverse environments but internationally connected within the European Higher Education Area.