

# Impact Roadmaps design during the DECODE Empowerment Program

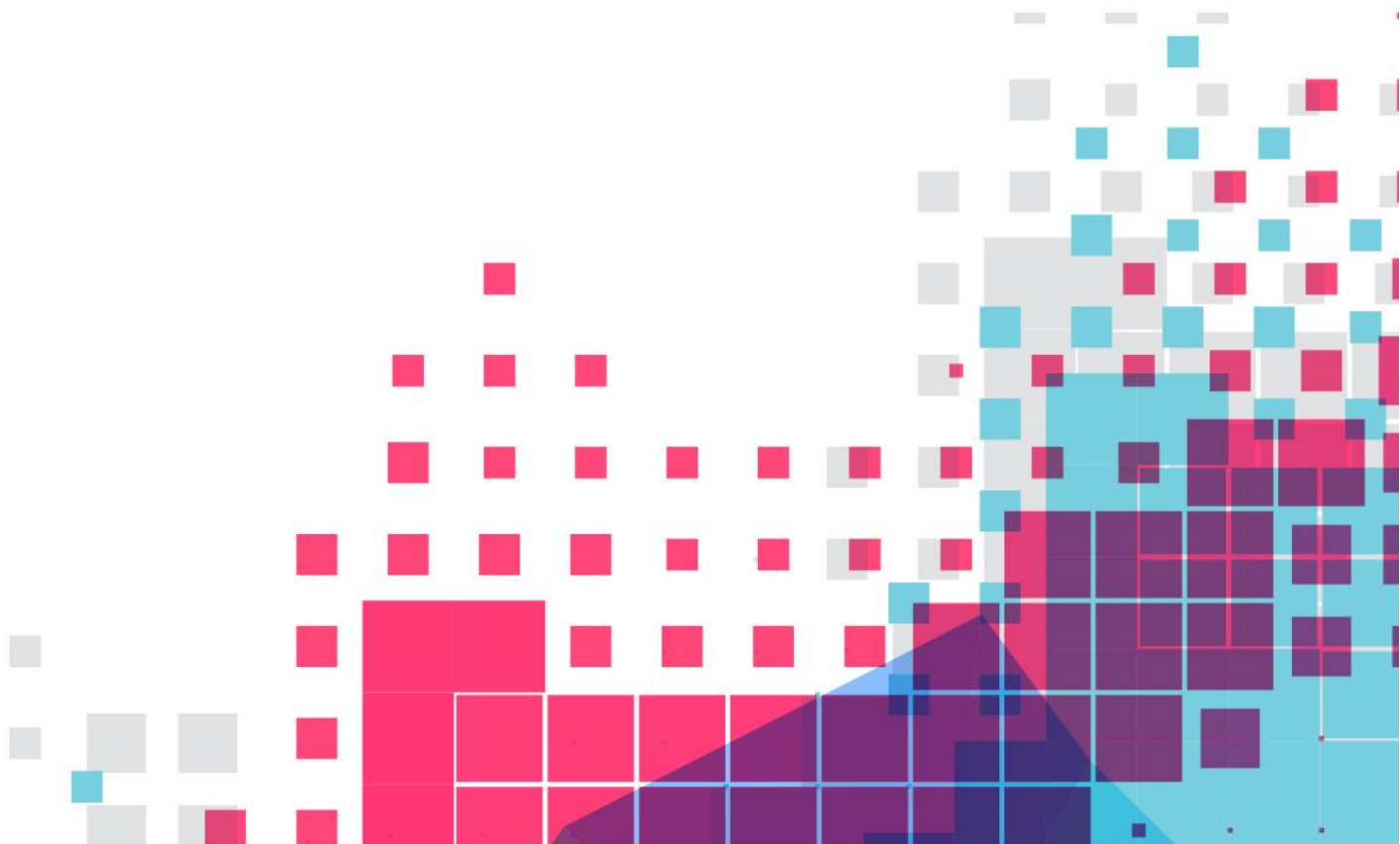
## Impact Report

Carina Garcia Mesegué & Núria Jové

Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) /

Global University Network for innovation (GUNi)

Barcelona, July 2023



# 1. The Empowerment Program

The DECODE Empowerment Program is a Learning, Teaching, and Training Activity directed to deans, heads of departments, and their representatives for sustainability from universities across Europe. The program is an online course aimed to equip the participants for sustainability with the right knowledge, skills, and tools to design a department-specific Impact Roadmap.

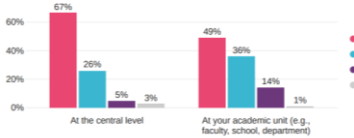
In order to test and improve the contents of the course, the DECODE team organized a three-day event in Barcelona, from the 22nd until the 24th of March 2023. This pilot event was attended by 25 representatives from 12 different universities across the European continent, and it was hosted by the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) / Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya – BarcelonaTech (UPC).

The course was built in a combination of theory, shared knowledge, and group work. This allowed the participants to get to know each other and to share doubts and experiences. The course started with a theoretical session on sustainability in higher education, which was based on the analysis carried out along the DECODE project with the Literature Review and the Deans and Academics Survey Report (both documents available online).



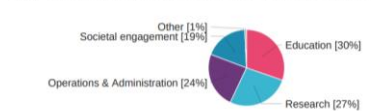
**Sustainability strategies or policies are more common at the central level (67%) than at the academic unit level (49%). Many central (26%) and academic units (36%) have their strategies under development.**

Q3 - Is sustainability addressed in your institution's strategy or policies?



**Dimensions most commonly addressed in the academic unit's sustainability strategy include 'education' (30%) and 'research' (27%), followed by 'operations and administration' (24%) and 'societal engagement strategy' (19%).**

Q7 - In your academic unit, where is sustainability addressed exactly? §



**Deans (22%), academic teaching (19%) and research staff (14%) are the employees more often responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives.**

Q8 - Who at your academic unit is responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives? Select all applicable.



The second day of the program was dedicated to present the DECODE Toolkit. This included namely the Impact Tree (a visual representation and structure of the main areas that a HEI needs to focus on, in order to contribute towards a more sustainable future), the Toolkit Instruments (a collection of instruments and best practices to drive contribution to sustainability through an entrepreneurial and engaged perspective) and the Self-assessment survey (evaluation of each of the aspects HEIs should focus on, to guide on how improvements should be prioritized).

**Decode Toolkit:**



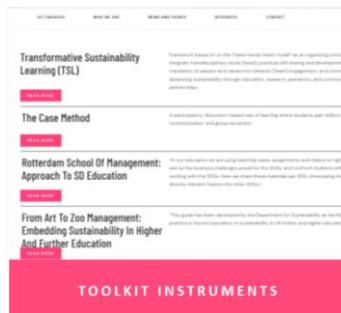
**IMPACT TREE**

A visual representation and structure of the main areas that an HEI needs to focus on, in order to contribute towards a more Sustainable future.



**TOOLKIT INSTRUMENTS**

"Something which helps to get a job done" - a collection of instruments and best practices to drive contribution to sustainability through an entrepreneurial and engaged perspective.



**SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

A short survey to show how your institution is doing with respect to each of the 5 pathways (education, research, 3<sup>rd</sup> mission, operations & governance). Your scores will point you to potential improvement ideas.



This presentation was combined with group work, where the participants explored the main challenges to institutionalize sustainable development in their academic units and, later, shared tools and ideas to tackle them.

With this base in mind, the final day of the event was dedicated to exploring the DECODE Connect platform ([connect.decode-council.org](https://connect.decode-council.org)) and the above mentioned Self-assessment survey, which gave the participants a general picture of which were the strengths and weaknesses of their academic unit in terms of institutionalization of sustainable development. The Empowerment Program concluded with individual work –in some cases, partnering with other representatives from the same university– were the deans started building their own Impact Roadmaps. That is, the specific actions that one’s academic unit would need to take to advance in their implementation of sustainability measures.



## 2. Building Impact Roadmaps

The exercise of designing Impact Roadmaps was facilitated through a canvas/matrix that marked the steps to be taken in relation to confronted building blocks and university missions, as well as key challenges and instruments presented along the Empowerment Program.

	Strategy & Awareness	Mapping & Monitoring	Capacity Building	Incentives	Structures & Regulations
Education	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments
Research	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments
Engagement	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments
Operations	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments
Governance	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments	Challenges Instruments

The idea behind the DECODE canvas/matrix is to provide the departments with a tool to start prioritizing the areas in which they need to work to develop their sustainability strategy. The areas defined by the project and included in the canvas are, on the one hand,

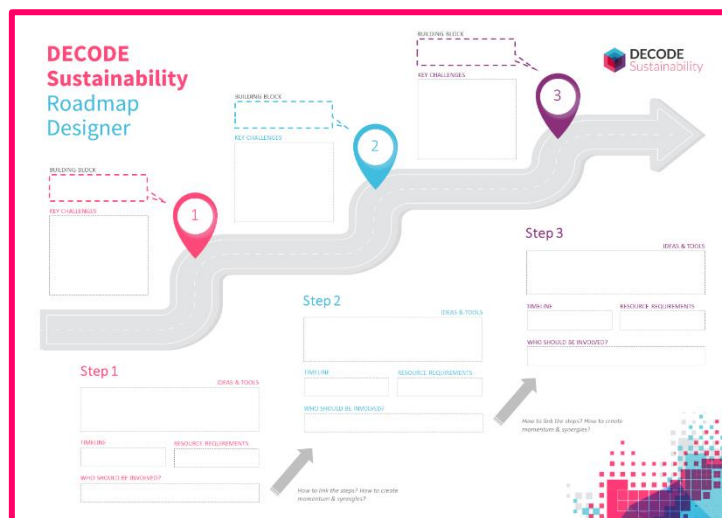
the “building blocks”(manageable elements) –(1) Strategy & Awareness, (2) Mapping & Monitoring, (3) Capacity Building, (4) Incentives, and (5) Structures & Regulations-, and on the other hand, the “university missions & support actions” (aspects established by deans) –(1) Education, (2) Research, (3) Engagement, (4) Campus operations, and (5) Governance.



Within this process, we worked with the premise that the academic unit could have different levels of experience when it comes to sustainability management. The idea was to allow each participant to define which were their priorities and main challenges.

The DECODE Impact Pathways and Impact Roadmaps Framework specify two major outputs: First is general ways or “Pathways” that university department/academic units can take when aiming to advance their contributions to sustainability. Second is a framework which outlines how department-specific Impact Roadmaps (based on the generic Pathways) can be created, delineating the specific steps that will be taken by departments to promote positive change.

Having established their own context and needs, they went on to define the steps that they could take in order to improve their current situation, each step including the tools, time frame, resources and people needed to execute it. In this definition, the participants used the knowledge gained with their self-assessment, as well as all the challenges and instruments collected along the Empowerment Program.



All in all, ten Impact Roadmaps were developed that the participants would later be able to use to kick off future meetings and conversations with their colleagues in their institutions with the aim of building a department-level strategy specific for their challenges and needs.



## 3. Participants' feedback

The following are some of the participants' reflections and opinions at the end of the Empowerment Program:

“I've been trying to look at the education pathway, because that's a bit of a weakness, I think, at the University of Twente. We are looking at working on a training programme, some capacity building, to begin with, maybe using the course on the DECODE platform. I'm interested in the potential of the self-assessment survey in training deans into what the SDGs entail and how they interconnect with lots of different topics.”

**Dr. Alex Baker-Friesen**  
**Strategic Sustainability Coordinator at University of Twente**

“The methodology you provided helped us to systematically address all the challenges that we face at our institutions. Our next step will be to define the strategy and the awareness, as it's set in the first building block of the impact roadmap, to help us define where we are going, our directions, and how to better address our colleagues to make them understand that this is important for all.”

**Ariadna Moreno**  
**Project manager at the Centre for Studies on Planetary Wellbeing at Universitat Pompeu Fabra**

“I believe that our university, and maybe some other education institutions in Latvia, will find the tool interesting, useful, and valuable. There are a lot of tools, practices, activities which will help in getting more sustainable. We will have to sit together with our faculty colleagues, figure out our strengths and weaknesses, and then, using the tools and practices provided by the DECODE platform, improve and develop our strategy.”

**Modris Ozoliņš**  
**Director of MBA Program Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Riga Technical University**



**Project Partners**



[www.decode-council.org](http://www.decode-council.org)

Project Number: 2020-1-IT02-KA203-079952

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.