

## UNESCO Chairs of Italian Universities and SDGs 2030: a strategic international relationship

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This book highlights the importance of the relationship between the scientific work and the international, inter-institutional and inter-associative cooperation between four SDGs of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through the research contributions enabled by the four SDGs of United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this book reflects on the useful strategies to overcome the current unsustainable development, in order to promote – at different levels – fundamental and feasible alternatives, as reported by the 17 SDGs.

The contributions of research and university education are also included in Goal 17 – Partnership for the Goals – as follows:

*A successful and sustainable development agenda – as reported by the web page [un.org](http://un.org) – requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the center, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level.*

In the universities of 116 countries of the 193 Member States of the United Nations, there are 756 UNESCO Chairs, including 28 in Italy (updated to April 30, 2019): these are International Research and Higher Education Units of professors, researchers and students coming from different scientific disciplines, engaged directly in the SDGs through a daily work in cooperation with actors coming from different continents.

Together with their universities, the UNESCO Chairs of the world are engaged in the “Partnership for the Goals”. They are called to play a role, as other government partners of the private sector and civil society, but

with a specific task belonging to research and university actors: offer the most advanced scientific contributions able to analyse and effectively respond to the complex historical challenges of our planet, its sustainability – as reported by the SDGs – taking into account the current progress of societies and the affirmation of universal rights and duties of people and cultures, all over the world.

The challenge of sustainable development also requires researchers to respond to the renewed challenge entailed in scientific research: the historical crisis of self-referentiality, of separation and of the “logic of opposites” that we have inherited in different sectors of public and private life, which underlies the crisis of unsustainable development. It also involves scientific theories and practices, as well as the governance of strategies and human resources called to generate research and education, excellent and expendable for the fate of the Earth in this century and beyond.

The commitment of the Italian UNESCO Chairs to the SDGs can be considered above all as a choice of researchers, expressed also through the ratification of the UNITWIN agreement. In fact, the principles and strategic lines of UNESCO are shared among members and require the commitment towards the pursuit of an advanced and peaceful society inspired by full scientific autonomy.

*Launched in 1992 – as reported by the web page [unesco.org](http://unesco.org) – the UNITWIN/ UNESCO Chairs Programme, which involves over 700 institutions in 116 countries, promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work. The programme supports the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence – i.e. in education, the natural and social sciences, culture and communication. Through this network, higher education and research institutions all over the globe pool their resources, both human and material, to address pressing challenges and contribute to the development of their societies. In many instances, the networks and chairs serve as thinktanks and bridgebuilders between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making. They have proven useful in informing policy decisions, establishing new teaching initiatives, generating innovation through research and contributing to the enrichment of existing university programmes while promoting cultural diversity. In areas lacking expertise, chairs and networks have evolved into poles of excellence and innovation at regional or sub-regional levels. They also contribute to strengthening North-South-South cooperation.*

The contributions of this book gather the results of the first network effort of the first Group of the Italian UNESCO Chairs, more focused on the disciplines of human development, having an intangible nature if compared to the material and technological development on which the work of the other two Groups focuses. This publication can be considered as the

beginning of the cooperative work among the Italian UNESCO Chairs after its establishment by the UNESCO National Commission, with the aim to respond to an application request coming from the same Chairs.

Although it is not easy to get rid of paradigms of disciplinary investigations detached by the urgencies of a fully interconnected world, the contributions of the volume, enriched also by the presence of colleagues coming from foreign universities, report an emblematic pathway of disciplinary plots aimed to underline potential solutions to the problems of sustainable development.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the UNESCO family, which supported the realization of the *International Symposium of the Italian UNESCO Chairs* (Group 1) “Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals 2030” (November 16<sup>th</sup> 2018, University of Florence). In particular, we would like to thank the Director–General of UNESCO Miss Audrey Azoulay; the Assistant Director–General for Education Mrs Stefania Giannini for the official recognition granted; the Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office Brussels, Dr. Paolo Fontani for the official participation; the Italian President for the Unesco National Commission Dr. Franco Bernabé; the General Secretary of CNUl Dr. Enrico Vicenti; the Italian and International Chairs UNESCO for their relevant scientific contribution.

We would like to thank the Rector of the University of Florence, Prof. Luigi Dei, for his continuous support and for his attention to the UNESCO Transdisciplinary Chairs of the University of Florence (UTC) organizing the Symposium.

We would like to thank also Prof. Maria Rita Mancaniello, CP UTC, the researchers, the experts and students of the UTC Team for their collaboration in the preparation and realization of the Symposium.

Lastly, we would like to thank the research group of the University of Siena<sup>1</sup> – member of the UTC Team – for its precious collaboration and for taking charge of the costs and the curatorship of this publication.

<sup>1</sup> The Authors of the book would like to thank the research fellows Dr. Nicolina Bosco and Dr. Marco Betti of the University of Siena for their editing and translation work.