



## BUILDING COMPETENCIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES: STUDENTS' OPINION

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**Research purpose.** In its Strategy 2021-2025, Kaunas University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) outlines its goal in five years to become an advanced and sustainable European higher education institution nurturing Lithuanian national culture and traditions. One of the key principles of KUAS activities is sustainability, which is emphasized both in the strategic provisions and performance. The activities of KUAS include social, economic, environmental and socio-cultural issues. KUAS bases its relations with stakeholders on respect for human beings, society and the environment, academic and scientific ethics, and other values. The provisions of sustainable development are integrated into the content of study programmes. The research aims to determine how students perceive the concept of sustainable development, whether they are prepared to follow the principles of sustainable development and whether KUAS provides the conditions for developing these competencies.

**Keywords:** Key Competencies in Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals

**Research Methodology.** The object of the research is the opinion of KUAS students about the concept and importance of sustainable development and the opportunity to develop key competencies in sustainability at KUAS. An anonymous questionnaire was chosen for the research. Students from different KUAS faculties and academic years took part in the survey.

**Results.** During the research, the following results were obtained: 1) Respondents consider all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted by the United Nations to be important, but the most important for Lithuania and them personally are quality education, good health and well-being, decent work and economic growth, and no poverty; 2) 84 per cent of respondents agree that everyone is responsible for their contribution to the SDG. Respondents are most likely to achieve SDG in their environment by being environmentally friendly. They identify the amount of information (69 per cent) and income (59 per cent) as barriers to achieving the SDG; 3) 83 per cent of respondents agree that key competencies in sustainability need to be developed. While 56 per cent of respondents confirm that sustainability competencies are developed at KUAS through lectures, social and environmental actions and projects, only 53 per cent say that this has changed their consumption habits. As many as 44 per cent of respondents say they have either not heard anything about sustainable development at KUAS (32 per cent) or do not know about it (12 per cent) because they do not understand what sustainable development is.

**Practical implications.** The survey findings suggest that there is still insufficient focus on sustainable development at KUAS. Although it is included in the strategy, some students have not heard of the term and those who do know what it means do not apply its principles in their daily lives.