

## United Nations Academic Impact

1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the UNAI Sustainable Development Goals Hubs

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### Best practices

Out of a number of initiatives and activities that were undertaken by UNAI SDG7 HUB, the following are characterized as best practices due to their outcomes, their impact and duration:

1. **International academic initiative “75 UN – 75 Trees UNAI SDG7”:** It focuses to promote and encourage tree planting in urban and peri-urban areas. More than 110 municipalities in total are interested and involved, more than 5000 trees were planted corresponding to more than 105tn sequestrated CO<sub>2</sub> per year. It also encourages the uptake of measures for climate adaptation with emphasis on fire forest protection and serves as a vehicle to promote the whole 2030-Agenda. The initiative will continue for one more year with funding of the Hellenic Green Fund.
2. **International activities for cooperation:** These include: 17 International Conferences for “Energy and Climate Change”; 11 Green Energy Investments Fora, 7 Official Dinners for the Ambassadors of the BSEC member States; 8 Annual Brokerage events; 4 Meetings “International Tree Planting Initiative” in Burazani; participation in the meetings of the Working Group on Energy of the Organization Black Sea Economic Cooperation; an international dissemination mechanism for reaching out more than 26.000 people in all the world and communicate information about activities and initiatives; cooperation with othe UNAI SDGs HUBS (from Japan, India, Canada, Kenya and Argentina). Finally, we expect this 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of UNAI SDGs Hubs to be added as well as a best practice. The contribution of UNAI SDG7 HUB in international cooperation is included in the latest two Hellenic National Communications towards UNFCCC.

### Lessons learned

The gained experience through the efforts devoted for all the undertaken by UNAI SDG7 Hub initiatives, whether they proved of becoming best practices are not, is enriched by the following lessons learned:

1. **Behavioral issues:** Consumers, although they understand the need of reducing energy consumption or planting a tree, are reluctant to change habits and act accordingly. The International initiative “75 UN - 75 Trees UNAI SDG7” sets as a prerequisite the engagement and the involvement of young people and local societies in the planting

of trees. This is also a key element for the reduction of “energy poverty”, the use of electric ferries or the introduction of production and use of H<sub>2</sub> by municipality vehicles.

2. *Incomplete information:* Theoretically, information is available, accessible and adequate, but in reality, a person knows much less than expected about an under-question subject in this field. Tele-meetings with municipalities allowed the identification of this lesson. Everybody knows that tree planting has positive outcomes but when asked only one or two are said. The term “UNAI SDG Hub” is another example. People may have heard about it but do not actually know what these Hubs do.
3. *Gap between universities and societies:* Language and approaches used by each side towards commonly faced problems such as mitigation/adaptation of climate change, reduction of energy consumption, protection of the environment, sustainable development goals etc feed this gap. Extrovert activities from universities have a catalytic role in creating bridges among the two sides.
4. *Inspiring feasible vision:* Any undertaken initiative by UNAI SDG 7 HUB, had embodied a vision for which efforts aimed to communicate it to society. The “75 UN - 75 Trees UNAI SDG7” gained attention due to its simplicity, the step-by-step guidance offered by UNAI SDG7 HUB towards the municipalities, the dissemination of information about it with one page press releases, tele-meetings with the participation of people from any part of the country encouraged people to support it as a simple action with concrete results.
5. *Simple messages – Simple language:* Academics tend to use a more elaborated language and more complicated way of thinking while simple citizens are more practical and tend to seek common ways of doing things. Any document or press released that was circulated for the “75 UN – 75 Trees UNAI SDG7” was prepared under the condition “keep it simple” and this justified the efforts by the results.
6. *Direct approach:* This is the most hard, painful and time-consuming lesson learned. All the undertaken initiatives and activities that become best practices are based on direct communication. Municipalities were offered: i) tele-meetings every fifteen days with topics about tree planting, new initiatives, fire fighting and protection, energy poverty etc ii) tailor-made information about selecting trees etc; 3) phone call communication.
7. *Title:* The use of the title “UNAI SDG7 HUB” plus with the work and the long term history of KEPA allowed people to pay more attention once they were informed of what KEPA is and does.