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EU GREEN ALLIANCE:

a world of opportunities in its first year

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INTRODUCTION

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR OF THE UEx

Dear EU GREEN family:
We have been working together for a year now, more than 3 years as a consortium and some of us for decades, which gives our alliance a very solid foundation. Although one year is a very short time, it is amazing what small, big achievements we have made in these months. Perhaps this first stage of getting to know each other better and writing the strategies has been complex, but I am sure that we have drawn up roadmaps that will help us to set the pace of this transformational and historic change for our universities, for our regions and for our common goal of becoming a single campus, growing together and adding our strengths. The teams of the 9 partners have done an unparalleled job and I can say that we should be proud to have made so much progress in such a short time. Now, I encourage you to continue to do so, to learn from our mistakes and to begin to set new challenges such as joint studies and a digital platform that unites us and allows us to

share our human and technical resources, which will be GREENWORK. We should also be proud that universities on the periphery, far from the centres of power, are now the agents designated by Europe to seek solutions to such urgent challenges as climate change.

Pedro M. Fernández Salguero : Rector of the UEx and General Coordinator

Pedro M. Fernández Salguero, Rector of the UEx.



WELCOME FROM THE RECTOR OF GÄVLE

From my point of view, the first year of EU GREEN has been a success. Considering that many of the institutions were new to each other a couple of years ago, it is impressive that all tasks have been accomplished. In addition, we have seen fruitful collaborations develop that provide us with valuable opportunities for competence and quality development. So, thank you all for being in this with us - now let's move on and make the second year even more successful!

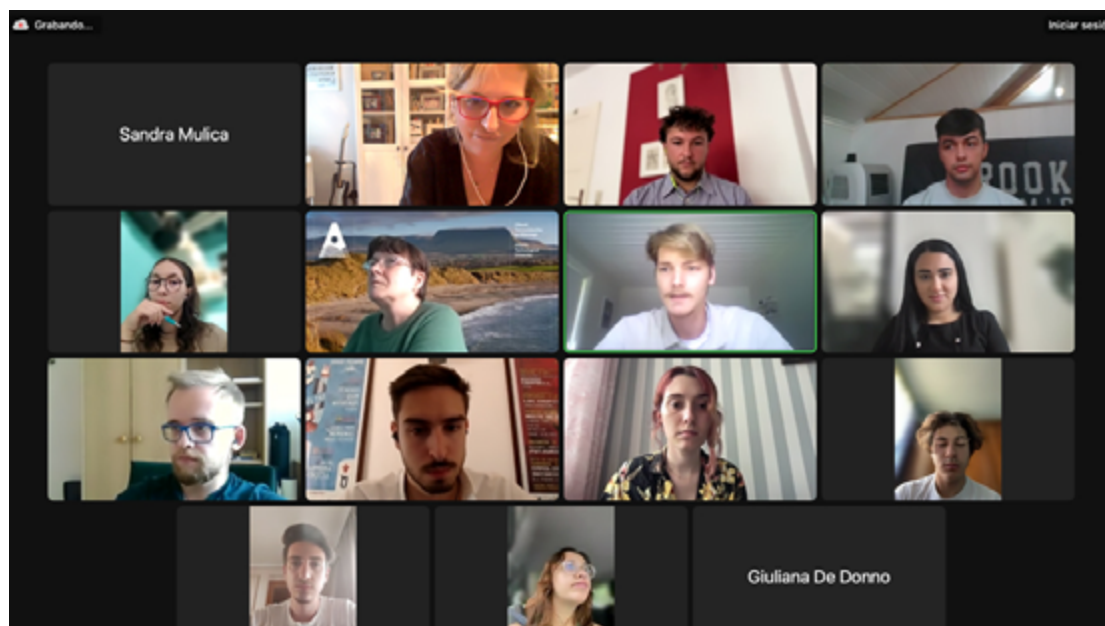
Ylva Fältholm, Vice-President of EU GREEN and Rector of the University of Gävle

Ylva Fältholm, Vice-President of EU GREEN and Rector of the University of Gävle



SECTION 1: OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR TESTIMONIALS

The main actors in EU GREEN are the students, as the alliance has been created by and for them. For this reason, they are represented in the Senate and also have their own body: the alliance's Student Council. The Student Council engages two undergraduate and two masters/doctorate students from each partner university to actively participate in the proposal of initiatives, as well as in the taking of common decisions for EU GREEN. However, developing student engagement is a challenge at the beginning of the alliance, and work is ongoing across the partners to increase their involvement.



Virtual meeting with student representatives from the 9 universities (July 2023)



First face-to-face meeting of the EU GREEN Student Council at the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland (October 2023)

REPRESENTATION

Since the start of the EU GREEN activity, there has been a series of virtual meetings among students. In fact, the Student Council was formed in July 2023. Later, in October 2023, a face-to-face meeting was held for the first time at the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Poland. This meeting served to strengthen ties between the Student Council and the other governing bodies and resulted in a number of planned initiatives that will flourish over the next four years.

It is important to note that the presence of students in the international project is not limited to the Student Council. They are also present in the Senate, the body created for strategic decision-making by the vice-rectorships of the partner universities. Three students from different universities represent the student body in the Senate and these were publicly elected by an online election held in July 2023. The students who currently hold the position of senators until July 2024 are: Diogo Solipa, University of Évora, Portugal, Ian Averkamp, Otto-Von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg, Germany, and Alejandro Valerio Suárez, University of Extremadura, Spain.

WORDS FROM OUR STUDENTS SENATORS

“Education is the basis of society and is key for the construction of a sustainable future. In the EU GREEN Alliance, our focus is on the future of Higher Education Institutions throughout Europe, and how they’ll be agents of change in shaping our society.

It’s never been more important to focus on the environmental sustainability of the planet than it is now, and that’s why SDGs are the foundation of EU GREEN. As a member of the Senate, I have the responsibility to ensure that students’ rights and interests are represented and upheld to my best capacity. The future of Europe is now, and together we can make the change, we just have to believe it.”

(Diogo Solipa, University of Évora, Portugal)

“For me, as a European student, EU GREEN is a key initiative to promote European values throughout higher education institutions, creating a new generation of citizens in touch with the 21st century reality: the urge to include sustainability and inclusivity in all aspects of our society. It’s truly an honour to be a part of this alliance, both as a member of the Student Council and Senate, and be able to work for cultural and linguistic diversity, sustainability, research and inclusiveness. Let’s stay united in diversity!”

(Alejandro V. Suárez, University of Extremadura)



Student members of the EU GREEN Senate (left to right). Diogo Solipa, University of Évora, Portugal, Ian Averkamp, Otto-Von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg, Germany, and Alejandro Valerio Suárez, University of Extremadura Spain.



1st face-to-face meeting of the EU GREEN Student Council at the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland (October 2023)

“As a senator and student council member actively engaged in the European Universities Alliance EU GREEN, I believe in the transformative power of inclusive collaboration. Together, we are weaving a narrative of progress within the very fabric of our nine academic institutions. In my role as a student representative dedicated to the realization of a truly sustainable and healthy campus, I am convinced that our joint efforts today will shape the educational landscape of tomorrow. Let us cultivate an environment where varied perspectives and backgrounds enrich the learning experience, and where our collective responsibility extends beyond academics to leave a lasting, positive impact on our planet.”

(Ian Averkamp, University of Magdeburg, Germany)

In addition to the Student Council and the Senate, student participation is present in all spheres of the partnership and in various work packages. As mentioned above, EU GREEN is conceived with students at its core, and they bring freshness, dynamism, modernity and a different and complementary perspective to that of the teaching, professional and administrative staff.

BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES: FROM LOCAL TO INTERNATIONAL

Students are a lever for change and transformation in our universities. At the same time, their participation in the alliance is a great opportunity for them to train, learn and become agents of change.

One of the objectives of the alliance, which is also a great opportunity for the student community, lies in the multiplication of mobility and exchange options within and outside the partner universities, thus promoting training using face-to-face - in other countries of the consortium -, virtual and even hybrid formats of mobility.

In addition to the opportunities for collaboration in its own governing bodies and work packages, the alliance offers students the opportunity to participate in a multitude of international forums

and networks. For example, in December 2023, the annual congress of the European Students Union took place in Coimbra (Portugal). This meeting is an example of the involvement and proactivity of our Student Council, that represented the alliance in this European initiative.



Attendees at the 1st Annual Congress of the European Students Union (December 2023)


The meeting was attended by Sandra Mulica (Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland) and Alejandro Valerio Suárez (University of Extremadura, Spain), who were selected by the Student Council as EU GREEN representatives. The third EU GREEN student participant was Diogo Solipa (University

of Évora, Portugal), who attended through his national student association. All the topics discussed at the conference aimed to show how European partnerships bring significant added value to students and their studies.

Throughout 2024, students from our universities will participate in the European Student Assembly, and will take part in the Ambassadors' Forum of the European Universities Community, among other forums and meetings,

At local level and together with associations such as the "Erasmus Student Network", they have contributed to the communication of the project and the organisation of university activities such as the "European Researchers' Night", educational fairs, summer courses, etc. Also, students have already participated in three Blended Intensive Programs (BiPs) studying virtually and undertaking short mobilities to other EU GREEN partners. In these BiPs, they worked with fellow students from other EU GREEN universities and were taught by staff from across the alliance.

Ultimately, in the long term, students in the alliance will be able to benefit from a unique transnational and innovative educational offer that will enable them to train in essential skills for the future, such as global competency. Moreover, by linking up with NGOs, businesses and local and regional authorities, the 50 European University Partnerships bring large-scale innovation and engagement to Europe's regions.

More information about the activities carried out by the students [here](#). 



Attendees of the first Blended Intensive Programme organised at UEx in coordination with several universities of the alliance (June 2023)

SECTION 2: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCHERS

While our fundamental starting point is that EU GREEN is made by and for students, to transform our campuses and improve our studies, we proceed with the vital pillar of research, the axis of human development and one of the greatest responsibilities of universities.

The pandemic has shown us that, if we want to improve, we must do so by cooperating, as has been done with research into the development of COVID vaccines. The international collaboration of our researchers is not new, but it is increasingly necessary. In this sense, and in its first year of life, the EU GREEN alliance has made several gains for researchers: their insertion into a broad network, a shared vision and a springboard of opportunities to work together and improve the world through science.

Over the course of this year, we have launched our 6 research clusters:

1. Emerging Paradigms for Health and Wellbeing
2. Agriculture, food and environmental sustainability
3. Engineering and technology for sustainable development
4. Sustainable tourism for cultural and national heritage
5. Educational sciences for sustainable development
6. Challenges to ecosystem diversity and function

The vice-rectors for research, researchers, professional services and European Project Offices of each EU GREEN university have worked hard to plant the seed of research through seed funding. These are joint research activities that have been selected through an internal competitive process within the alliance and are intended to connect researchers and launch future larger projects.

The Researcher Mobility Program, which finances inter EU GREEN mobilities up to €2,000 per person and per travel, will fund 9 mobilities of researchers over the course of the next 6 months for an estimated budget of €12,145.

The call for doctoral allowances, has allowed to fund 3 theses in codirection between the University of Angers and the University of Extremadura on the topics “Water footprint in the food supply chain: a stakeholder-based economic evaluation” and “Identifying non-coding miRNA from tumor stroma to improve NSCLC anticancer”, and with Parma on the topic “Invasive aquatic species & biodiversity management treatment” ; as well as a thesis in Cotutelle between the University of Angers and the University of Gävle on “Prescriptive maintenance: Concept, Modeling and applications within the energy-based decision optimization”. The global budget for the 4 theses is 482 634€.

EU GREEN SEED FUNDING CALL RESULTS

Within the framework of the EU GREEN alliance of universities, coordinated by the University of Extremadura, an internal procedure was set up to obtain seed funding to develop collaborative research and innovation actions with the aim of promoting inter-university collaboration in research among the members of the alliance and encouraging participation in international calls for projects, such as Horizon Europe.

The first call for EU GREEN seed projects was evaluated on 7 December 2023 by the EU GREEN Joint Research Committee (JRC), resulting in the approval of 10 seed projects. The total funding of the 10 approved seed projects from the EU GREEN budget amounts to €299,745.

All the projects have in common the focus on sustainability and their alignment with the UN SDGs, although from different perspectives; from sustainability in education, improvements in production chains, waste recovery, studies on mental health, the reduction of carbon emissions in tourism, the importance of physical activity for the prevention of diseases or solutions to protect biodiversity, among others.

SECTION 3: A WORLD ON THE MOVE

Each university, each region, each country to which these universities belong is unique and unparalleled. However, being taught internationally through mobility gives students the opportunity to develop valuable skills and broaden their horizons - by travelling abroad to study or do an internship. The benefits of mobility are widely recognised. One of the challenges now is to establish the type of mobilities and to create instruments for their recording and constant evaluation. In addition to student mobilities, this partnership will expand internationalisation opportunities for its faculty and administrative and service staff.



“EU GREEN STAFF WEEKS”

Many universities organise these international weeks where the main objective is to share experiences on internationalisation, facilitate networking and the establishment of new networks and working groups.

Up to now and in the first year, we have met in person on several occasions, dealing with the different areas of university life in our alliance. These meetings have taken the form of Staff Weeks, in which we have shared experiences and worked towards the same goal, with what unites us and what differentiates us, with sustainability as our horizon and driving force.

These face-to-face working days have been:

- January 2023, Cáceres (Spain): formal start of the project through an in-person Kickoff meeting hosted by the University of Extremadura.
- April 2023, Évora (Portugal): Staff Week was held at the University of Évora, in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- June 2023, Angers (France): How to develop an effective EU GREEN research network” More than 100 researchers from the 9 universities

proposed concrete solutions to develop a long-term research network.

- September 2023, Parma (Italy): on this occasion, the focus of the meeting was on Alliance management and governance.
- September 2023, Angers (France): First staff week for students involved in WP8. Student representatives meeting on how to build a sustainable and healthy campus by building a mentoring programme on sustainability. They also participated in a video creation to promote WP8 and get more students involved in the project.
- September 2023, Romania: at Staff Week at the University of Oradea (Romania), the focus was on inclusion, diversity and access in higher education.
- October 2023, Wrocław (Poland): The face-to-face meeting dealing with Education issues was held in Wrocław with representatives from the nine universities.
- October 2023, Germany: the face-to-face meeting was hosted by the University of Magdeburg, focusing on mobility and internationalisation.

- November 2023, Germany: The University of Magdeburg once again hosted the nine universities of the Alliance to discuss the communication, dissemination and impact of the EU GREEN Alliance.
- January 2024, Ireland: on this occasion, Staff Week was held at the Atlantic University of Technology (Ireland) to address issues in the field of sustainability and well-being on university campuses.



Attendees of the Staff Week at the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland (October 2023)



Attendees at Staff Week at Atlantic Technological University, Ireland (January 2024)

NEW ERASMUS PROJECTS

In the framework of the Alliance, we have had the opportunity to carry out joint Erasmus projects such as KA2 projects - two have already been achieved in our first year!

SLS4Teens: Thanks to the connections established in the research bodies of the alliance, it has the participation of three universities from the EU GREEN alliance together with Extremadura (the University of Angers, in France, the University of Magdeburg, in Germany and the University of Parma, in Italy), as well as the University of Nantes (France), which does not belong to the consortium. The project analyses the role of neurolinguistics in second foreign language learning. It has received 400,000 euros of funding from the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme's call for proposals for Cooperation.

TECSKILL: another Erasmus+ project coordinated by the UEx School of Industrial Engineering. The programme will offer specialised training in green and digital skills to PhD students in the engineering branches. This new international programme will be developed with three other EU GREEN universities: the University of Gävle in Sweden, the University of Parma in Italy and the University of Évora in Portugal. TECSKILL has also been funded with an amount of 400,000 euros.

In addition, Three Blended Intensive Programmes have been held this year, and we have moved students and teachers between several of the universities in the alliance. The topics have been diverse and the benefits have been wide-ranging. Therefore, we will continue to support these initiatives as enriching mobilities for all parties.

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) developed in the first year

Programme:	Organized by :
Food Sustainability (+info)	Università di Parma (Italy) - EU GREEN European Alliance
Towards a sustainable water management (+info)	Universidad de Extremadura (Spain) EU GREEN European Alliance
Soil protection and management of degraded and industrial lands (+info)	Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (Poland) EU GREEN European Alliance

SECTION 4: WE ARE A DIVERSE ALLIANCE

Diversity is at the heart of the EU GREEN Alliance. For this reason, we will ensure that accessibility, inclusion and equality are part of the DNA or the heart of all our activities and bodies.

One example is the parity that is prioritised in the governance structure. As our president is a rector, our vice-president is the rector of the University of Gävle, Sweden. In the Senate, the presidency is held by a female professor, and the vice-president is a male professor. Among the Student Council, this parity criterion has also been respected.



Attendees at Oradea University Staff Week, Romania (September 2023)

In December 2023, the Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion plan was approved, which will be a transformational axis of the alliance and , we are going to work along this path. This roadmap will be transversal for all our decision-making bodies and working groups. EU GREEN will aim to make equal access, diversity and inclusion a fundamental feature of university life, and the basis of our collaboration.

This diversity leads us to promote the languages of the alliance and our different cultures. Therefore, we will soon start with different activities such as the

“LANGUAGE CAFÉ”

A crucial moment was marked during the Staff Week for Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion in Oradea. Discussions moved forward with a detailed overview of the infrastructure and services in the partner universities, with the aim of fostering improvements in these areas. They also delved into the necessary upgrades to be implemented, developing an incipient database of existing resources, services and structures in these areas. The universities discussed the architecture of the future Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion Framework for the Alliance. Intense discussions also took place on lifelong learning programmes. Good practices were exchanged, and an emerging trend was also revealed: more and more people are seeking training at any age, motivated solely by the pleasure of learning.

SECTION 5: SOCIETY-BUSINESS CONNECTION

The alliance and its universities need to collaborate with society and business. We are therefore working together to create an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub to centralise all our activities in innovation, entrepreneurship and knowledge and technology transfer, as well as an Engagement Centre to act as a point of contact with local industries, external entities and civil society organisations. Both Centres will optimise our relationships with other stakeholders and inform our educational model by basing it on topical and relevant challenges and research.

In its first year, EU GREEN has participated in different meetings at European level on technology transfer and innovation. We have joined the “Coalition of the Willing”, a European initiative gathered around the four major groups the European Commission: European Unicorns, European Innovation Ecosystem Leaders, Women in Venture Capitals, and newly formed Women founders groups. These initial groups have since then been extended with innovative companies, innovative local authorities and innovative universities. That connects us with a broader innovation environment.

We have also participated in the design of different Hubs that were presented to the EU Commissioner in spring 2023.

Students and representatives of the Universities of Angers, Gävle and Extremadura during the workshop held in Angers, France (September 2023).



SECTION 6: SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY CAMPUSES

EU GREEN stands for SUSTAINABILITY. Our goal as an alliance is to create a network of healthy and environmentally friendly campuses that will go beyond physical space and promote sustainability, inclusion, diversity, active participation and personal growth. During the first year, we defined what a sustainable and healthy campus was, and conducted a survey to determine the degree of maturity of our campuses in these areas, in order to set priorities for action at alliance and local levels.

A group of student representatives from EU GREEN universities participated in a specialised workshop on empowering sustainable and healthy campuses at the University of Angers (France) in September 2023. During the successive sessions, student representatives and representatives from the Universities of Gävle (Sweden) and Angers (France) discussed issues such as the importance of sustainable development, the meaning of the Sustainable Development Goals, and how to implement a Mentor-Mentee programme.

It is a hard task to transform our campuses, but we are learning from each other. We have already carried out some actions such as the cataloguing of tree species organised by the Atlantic Technological University of Ireland.

Throughout the week of 9 October 2023, all nine EU GREEN universities held an amazing Tree Bioblitz. Groups of school children from each of our nine countries catalogued the trees on each EU GREEN campus with the help of our alliance's ecologists, family members and some primary school teachers. The trees on the campuses' grounds were recorded using the iNaturalist application. The experience was a success and all participants enjoyed this rich initiative.



Tree Bioblitz activity with school students in the city of Sligo, Ireland (October 2023).



"Tree Bioblitz" activity with students in Wrocław, Poland (October 2023).

SECTION 7: OUR GOALS ACHIEVED IN ONE YEAR

One year of EU GREEN. A year of face-to-face and virtual meetings. A year of hard work in the shade and in the sun that is beginning to bear fruit. Like a good and strong tree, the seed that is planted begins to take root in the soil, in the shade of everyone, to bloom and give oxygen in its flowering season. These have been the main objectives achieved in our first year of planting:

- Organisation of the kick-off meeting with the presence of 73 representatives from the 9 universities that make up the Alliance met in Cáceres for its launch, in January 2023.
- Launch of all partnership councils January-October, 2023.
- Participation in the 1st and 2nd European Partnership Forum (Brussels, January 2023 and Barcelona, September 2023).
- Participation in the various national events organised by the 9 national governments.
- Participation in events organised by the European Union.
- Participation in student fairs to promote the partnership.
- Participation in the European Research Night.
- Election of EU GREEN Day on 9 May, Europe Day.
- EU GREEN Governance and Management Guide.
- Data management plan and MOOC on ethics and international data protection.
- Launch of the EU GREEN Education strategy.
- Creation of the EU GREEN Research strategy: Structuring research-based learning through Clusters of Excellence.

- Implementation of the Joint Research Commission, the Cluster Commissions, the PhD Council and the European Task Force.
- Launch of a call for Joint Research Activities.
- Launch of a call for the mobility of researchers.
- Launch of a call for doctoral allowances in co-supervision.
- Launch of the Council of Education Rectors of the partnership.
- KA2: in the framework of the Alliance two KA2 projects have been won: SLS4Teens (Angers) and TECSKILL (UEX).

Organisation of 3 BIPs (Blended Intensive Programs)

- *Towards sustainable water management.* Organiser: University of Extremadura (Spain).
 - *Soil protection and management of degraded and industrial soils.* Organiser: Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (Poland).
 - *Food sustainability.* Organiser: University of Parma (Portugal).
- EU GREEN Inclusion and Diversity Table: EU GREEN Campus Commission.
 - Action plan for a sustainable and healthy campus based on priority community challenges.

EU GREEN Engagement Action Plan

- EU GREEN Commitment Action Plan.
- Training offered to the alliance through different webinars based on sustainability.
- Advances in e-infrastructure. The key pillar is the creation of a shared network, "THE GREENWORK", which allows the integration of existing elements into a newly created structure.
- Frequent meetings with students.

SECTION 8: NEXT STEPS

We are a living Alliance and we will change our habits to make our campuses healthier, more sustainable, inclusive, diverse, egalitarian and always respecting European values. For this we rely on the perspective of our students, who have a lot of freshness to contribute to the educational community. In the short and medium term there are still important milestones

to reach and firm steps that partner universities will have to take.

Among these would be:

- The advancement and development of joint European project proposals in Horizon and Erasmus+.
- The co-design, co-organisation and promotion of Blended Intensive Programmes in the partnership.
- The implementation and monitoring of the strategies and action plans developed so far.



Attendees at the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences in the framework of the INTERACT project, Poland (September 2023)

- The attendance at the 34th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the European Association for International Education to be held in Toulouse, France, in September 2024.
- The launch of the INTERACT project funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), whose primary objective is to involve Ukrainian partnering universities in meetings and other activities of the EU GREEN consortium.
- The appearance of the EU GREEN Alliance as an example of good practice in the Green Deal Action Plan for Universities report.



EU GREEN rectors attend the St. Thomas event as part of the launch meeting of the alliance at the University of Extremadura (January 2023).

AIMS FOR NEXT YEARS:

- Unprecedented scope of international cooperation.
- Internationalize all our offices and services (impact the services beyond the ones traditionally associated to internationalization).
- Reach excellence in teaching and research.
- Capacity to contribute to the change of national and international policies and possibility of cross-European policy synchronisation.
- Participate in the EU Degree Label.
- Job offers for EU GREEN alumni.

<https://eugreenalliance.eu/>



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