

Challenges for sustainability in the HEIs: An exploratory study in the EU

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The objective of this study is to classify Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the European Union (EU) based on the barriers they face in implementing sustainable practices. Specifically, the paper focuses on financial and knowledge challenges as two main barriers to HEIs. The data for this study was collected from European universities through the European Deans Council for Sustainable Development (DECODE) sustainability project. The hierarchical cluster analysis technique was used to classify the countries based on their sustainability barriers. After constructing homogeneous groups of countries, each cluster was analyzed based on the socio-economic structure of the countries and the management organization of the universities. The findings of this study indicate a certain recurrence, as countries with low scores on both the knowledge and financial side exhibit similarities. Moreover, countries facing higher financial barriers also tend to experience lower levels of knowledge barriers. The study provides valuable guidance for identifying the challenges and needs faced by HEIs in each country in terms of progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).