Sustainable Development Goals in Journalism Reporting – SDGsJR

March 2022

State of the Art

Work Package 1 / Task 1.3

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Introduction

The State of the Art Report (1.3), carried out by the USC in collaboration with the University of Shenzen, is focused on the conclusions of the surveys carried out on heads of European universities and professors from the Asian partners of the project, with the intention of offering an overview of ideas about the focus and content of the courses to be carried out within the SDGsJR project. This report is a complement to the conclusions of the surveys carried out on students and journalists, which served as the basis for the preparation of Deliverable 1.1, in which the global conclusions deduced from the surveys carried out on these groups were extensively commented on.

In addition, the State of the Art will also refer to the conclusions of deliverable 1.2 drawn from a questionnaire made to experts in journalism and communication from various European universities. The USC and LBUS teams collaborated in the information gathering process, sharing the agenda of experts from the European universities and the data related to the surveys, in order to facilitate the perspective when analyzing the European courses and programs.

In the surveys (Q2) carried out for the current report (1.3), information was identified among the members of the work teams (teachers/technicians) on their competencies (teaching/management) in Journalism, Sustainability and SDG, on the need to develop a preparation course for teachers and technicians in SDG, on the material and human resources necessary to carry out the Course, on similar training offers in the country and on content of interest to them in the Course object of this project.

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Practices Summary of results of interviews with students and journalist on the SDGs

Both target groups put quality education (SDG 4) as a priority (journalists: 48.53%; students: 59.33%), followed by health and welfare promotion (SDG 3) (journalists: 47.06%; students: 54.48%). Both groups disagree on the third place, which is the promotion of sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) for journalists (45.59%), and gender equality (SDG 5) for students (44.78%).

As far as journalists are concerned, in addition to the above-mentioned SDGs, they also valued decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), as well as peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). The least popular SDG among this group was the partnership with others for the achievement of the goals. In the case of the students, they agree with the journalists in giving secondary importance to peace, justice and strong institutions, and minimal importance to partnership with others in achieving the goals.

If we apply the advice of the CBHE programmess.5 with regard to the articulation of the SDGs in clusters for better understanding and application, both target groups agree on assigning greater importance, by far, to the climate change and environment cluster (SDGs 13, 6, 7, 14, 15). Below is the selection made by both groups

In the case of journalists, the climate change and environment cluster stands out clearly from the rest, followed by sustainability (SDGs 11, 12), innovation and economic growth (SDGs 8, 9), and equal rights (SDGs 5, 10). For students, the importance of the climate change and environment cluster is far greater than the rest, followed far behind by quality education and equal rights.

In the case of the total sample, both the journalists' and the students' preferences are for practical work and field work, followed by workshops and skills training in the case of the journalists

If we unify the responses of both groups, we find that the preferred learning method for both is field work, followed by skills learning workshops, and thirdly, case studies. In the case of evaluation, both groups agree in preferring that it be carried out on the basis of experience in real contexts (real-world), followed by field work, which is the third choice of students, after project-based evaluation.

Results of the interviews with teachers/lecturers about SDGs and the contents of the Pilot Course

In the interviews carried out with teachers/lecturers about their knowledge of the SDGs, 19.4% had never heard of them, a percentage much lower than that of students (43.4%) and slightly higher than that of journalists (19 ,4 %). 38.1% of teachers have heard about the SDGs and know some of them and 14.4% know them all. The interest of teachers in participating in a course on the SDGs stands at 7.57 points, above the interest expresse

d by journalists (7.40) and students (6.83).

In relation to the type of course preferred by professors for the study of the SDGs, 52.5% prefer Modules for Postgraduates, while 31.7 point to Modules for Non-Graduates and 15.8% opt for courses of Graduate/Master. Journalists show very similar preferences to professors, while students (55.7%) favor the Modules for Undergraduates.

Regarding the preferred topics to carry out the courses, 63% of the teachers favor Quality Education, while 51% favor Good Health and Well-Being, 39.5% favor Gender Equality, 38.8% by Sustainable Cities and Communities and 36.6% by Peace, Justice and Strong institutions. Students also have Quality Education as their preferred topic (60%) while journalists favor Sustainable Cities and Communities (48.8%).

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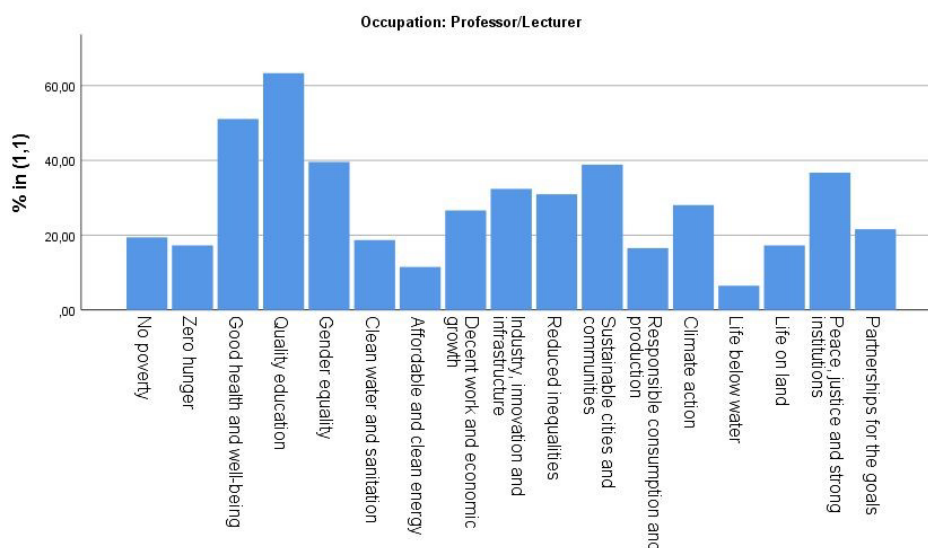
Regarding the physical resources that are most necessary to carry out the courses, the professors give priority, in this order, the Software, the Newsroom and the Studio. In this they also coincide with the priorities expressed by students and journalists. Regarding the needs of human resources for the courses, teachers indicate that the Qualification of Teachers is the priority, followed by the Number of Teachers and the Experience with the SDGs.
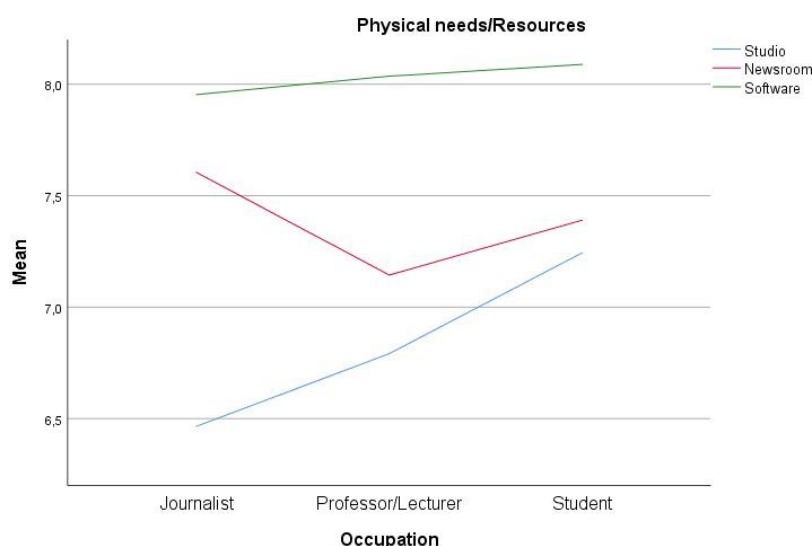
Regarding the Training Methodology to be used in the courses, the professors place the Case Study first (74.8%), followed by the Practical Field Work (65.1%) and the Projects (62.6%). In this section, students favor Practical Field Work (65.2%), as do journalists (75.6%).
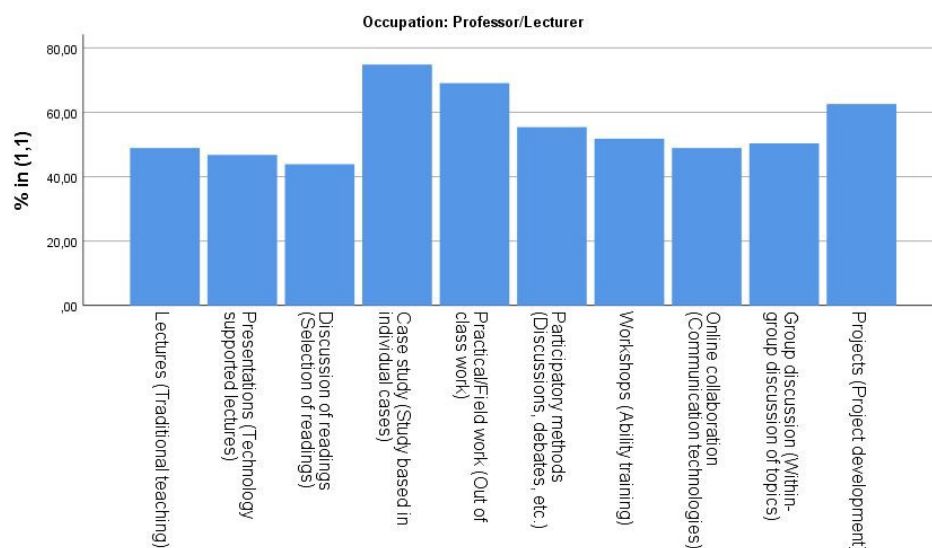
Regarding the Assessment, 69.8% of the teachers favor the Project-based Assessment, 54% for the Field Work and 42.4% for the Real World Assessment. For their part, students also favor the Project-based Assessment (57%) and journalists favor the Real World Assessment (72%).

Occupation: Professor/Lecturer

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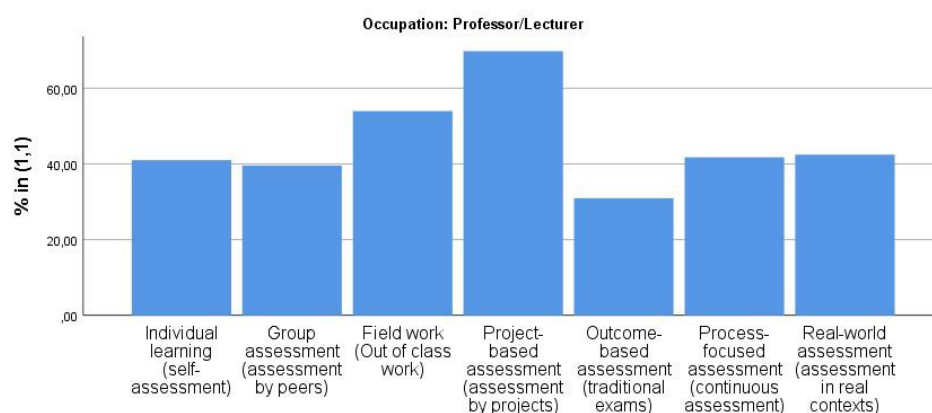
Recommendations on implementing SDGs Journalism in HEIs (Deliverable 1.2 Summary)

The scope of the study was to identify the best approach in designing a university course in SDGs Journalism reporting, based on best practices existing in EU HEIs Journalism Programs. Such a course will support the development of core competencies and skills necessary for journalism students in Asian countries. At the same time, the interdisciplinary nature of the SDGs will deep on journalism students' understanding of the global challenges so that they can respond with informed arguments and innovative engagement relevant to the real world. Moreover, it will develop critical thinking and will empower journalism students to confidently address sustainable development issues and global citizenship.

Journalism students nowadays are the new professionals in times where acknowledgment and awareness on issues such as resilience, gender equality, economic trends, inclusion, and sustainability need to be developed. As a result, they should be given the opportunity to engage in and approach sustainability issues, because, as most respondents from the EU-HEIs noticed, discussing SDGs would help journalism students put things into perspective and enable them to differentiate between important issues – at local, national and global levels.

The project team has collected examples of best practice from across the university sector, but the example list is far from exhaustive. Also, the results of the feedback questionnaire have shown us that:

• The interdisciplinary approach in the implementation of a Journalism course for SDGs is the one that gathered the consensus of all six Asian partner universities. Their representatives in the project consider that aspects related to digital journalism, such as data journalism (data mining, data analysis, and data visualizations) are important in such a course. Likewise, the ethical dimension in journalistic practice and the development of students' critical thinking are issues mentioned in the responses of Asian partners. The most relevant SDGs that appear in the feedback questionnaire are SDG3 - Good Health and Well-being, SDG4 - Quality of Education, SDG13 - Climate action, and SDG16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions + SDG5 - Gender Equality.

• Among the strategies for implementing the course there are mentions of meetings with scientists, a collaboration between academia, local media, and the community. Regarding the assessment methods, the University of Nottingham considers the recommendation of 'combining the evaluation of active participation throughout the course with the evaluation of a journalistic for a news site, infographic', while UUM "will incorporate real-world, fieldwork, project-based and case study assessment as well as group assessment ".

• The main obstacles in the implementation of the course refer to human resources: teachers insufficiently trained in SDGs or Journalism, difficulty in collaborating with scientists, NGOs or journalists from local newsrooms, and, especially, material resources: underfunding, lack of logistics, differences in digitization.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In line with the judgment mentioned above, the following actions are recommended in designing and implementing educational programs in SDGs journalism reporting:

⇨ In accordance with names of researched academic programs or modules focused or related to the SDG issues, we recommend that a future journalism course should have in its name terms with direct reference to the SDGs that are locally relevant for the future journalists, or with the SDGs that can offer a global deeper understanding of global issues.

⇨ Where universities have not yet established strategic initiatives to engage with the SDGs, the SDGs Journalism Reporting course local project team can and should be involved together with the management of the university in designing, communicating or implementing policies that can contribute to achieving the SDG Agenda, to create awareness, inform and educate the community about the challenges that our world is facing.

⇨ Universities should establish interdisciplinary research centers, partnerships and projects with other universities, NGOs, or local institutions for the community.

⇨ An interdisciplinary approach should be considered while designing a journalism course based on the SDGs. Interdisciplinary is the most common mark in the researched programs, modules or courses based on sustainability issues as it may bring about more theoretical and practical outcomes alongside new solutions and perspectives.

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⇨ There are many ways in which the SDGs can be linked to journalism syllabuses, courses or lectures, but in order to encourage achievements with a new SDG Journalism Course, the academic community needs to rethink and recreate its disciplinary basis. The course should include topics that will help students understand and find the connections between the social, the economic, and the environmental aspects in order to be able to engage with stories behind the SDGS, stories that increase awareness on issues such as: protecting the environment, reduce inequalities, secure decent work and "leave no-one behind".

⇨ The new SDG Journalism Reporting Course should increase awareness and create impact so that students grow to become responsible journalists able to bring forward stories that make people understand and take positive actions and regain their trust in mass media.

⇨ Journalism students should be able to take advantage of digital platforms and digital equipment while developing their projects, to add context and depth to their stories.

⇨ Each higher education institution, through the program coordinator and / or the course manager should consider the specific pressing problems of the communities in the respective country when designing the SDGs Journalism / Reporting course.

⇨ The content of a journalism course on and for SDGs should take into account three essential aspects: the ethics of professional journalism (deontological standards, principles, values of free journalism, public interest and good), the quality of the journalistic act and the practical skills of conception, writing, publishing dissemination.

⇨ If the higher education institution chooses to introduce a niche course that will link journalism to the SDGs, then it should take into consideration three essential aspects: the interest of the students, the needs of the area and the differentiation of other educational offerings.

⇨ A course or module of SDGs Journalism Reporting should include issues related to digitization and the evolution of communication technology. We strongly recommend focusing on Data Journalism which is an important part of the best professional journalism today.

⇨ Critical thinking should be a sine qua non practice in teaching journalism. Therefore, we recommend debates on controversial topics, presentation of case studies and activities and projects that require monitoring, analysis and interpretation skills.

⇨ As any journalism activity involves a lot of practice in the community, and SDGs reflect major local and global issues, teachers who will teach the SDGs Journalism Reporting course should encourage students to develop relationships with local NGOs (vulnerable people, environment, animals, etc.).

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⇨ To familiarize students with the topic of SDGs, we recommend meetings with scientists from areas of interest (ecology, education, health, economics, human rights, etc.) and, occasionally, organization of awareness events, with the participation of the local media.

⇨ With regard to the assessment methods for a journalism course about and for SDGs, we recommend combining the evaluation of active participation throughout the course with the evaluation of a journalistic project on a topic in the area of SDGs (video or photo report, article for a news site, info graphic, etc.) presented at the end of the course.

⇨ The focus on the lectures should be proportional to the importance of the SDG issues relevant on a social and environmental level and should increase the knowledge on these respective issues.

⇨ In order to study journalism in a higher education institution, two types of resources are needed:

1) human resources and 2) material resources. For human resources we recommend as responsible for the implementation of the course professors who have a theoretical and practical background in Journalism / Media / Mass-Communication; also, the teacher(s) should be trained and instructed in the SDGs and show readiness to keep up with the information in this area.

⇨ A digital laboratory that can provide the full range of multimedia content creation with programs and specific configurations for best performance in audio, video, graphics, publishing workflow (professional video cameras, mixing console, microphones, computers, studio lighting, cameras, tripods, etc.).

⇨ High performance journalism education in the SDG area is done where there is a close collaboration between academia, local media and the community and third-party stakeholders.

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Syllabus Proposal

In the detailed description of the project a first outline of the course is given, which has not yet been confirmed by the target groups and the work teams consulted. In essence, the scheme is maintained, but with the variants that have been introduced later by the partners, taking into account local needs and problems, and internationalization.

The scheme of the project obeyed to some watertight parameters where a series of topics were formulated that now we focus and reorganize to make a more flexible Course and able to achieve a greater attraction for the target groups, to promote the teachers of the partner universities in Asia (a priority objective according to the project) and to contribute so that it really is an international Course.

The scheme stated the following:

Course duration: 6-12 months: 40 ECTS

5 compulsory modules for journalism students and 2 minimums for practising journalists

1st scenario: Intensive course for students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate studies. 1 semester. The course will cover areas such as (all mandatory)

ODS and approaches 5 ECTS

2. ODS/Specific Topics 10 ECTS

3. Impact of the media, agenda setting and public discourse 5 ECTS

4. Tools for data analysis of ODS and skills required for investigative

journalism 10ECTS

5. Practical task 10 ECTS

A total of 40 ECTS have been considered in the proposal below. Content blocks 3 (journalism and media) and 4 (skills development) have been joined to facilitate a practical and applied methodology that favours the exposure of content from the initial block 3 based on examples and case studies and to feed into the previous application block 4.

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There is reciprocity between the contents of both modules that are not dissolvable if we want to implement a course really oriented to its applicability and to the orientation of results of general interest, beyond the training level.

This way of working will facilitate, in turn, the approach of the practical part (former block 5, current block 4), giving premises and analyzing real and applied cases. The extension of the time dedicated to this section facilitates the deepening of the contents and the involvement and immersion of the students in the problems they will tackle in their work.

With regard to the timing, each university will adjust the work sessions corresponding to each module to the timing of an academic year, although a time of dedication per block is also proposed. The time frame indicated is governed by the European university criteria for ECTS.

Conclusions about the Practicum

This module is articulated from the contents of the three previous ones ("The World Agenda and the SDG", "Sustainability" and "Journalism and narrative techniques of digital information"). Work will be done on the preferential SDGs for the project's partner universities: SDGs 13, 4 and 3. References and articulations with other SDGs will be included.

It is advisable to seek relationships with those who chose each target group and the team, i.e. SDGs 11, 5 and 1, taking into account the network managed with the university. If the practical project is carried out on SDG 13, it is important to take into account the rest of the SDGs of the CBHE cluster. In any case, all projects should be directly or indirectly related to SDG 13.

It is particularly relevant in this module:

- Planning, management and evaluation of projects.

- And, particularly, techniques of investigation, collection and analysis of data will be developed, such as

- Observation and participation in communities, media and institutions Recording and photography.

- Data check in the chosen reality. Surveys. Interviews.

- Management of panels of representatives of unique and vulnerable groups in the context analysed (social, environmental, scientific, etc.).

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Objectives:

- To generate practical projects that facilitate students' understanding of the subject matter and their involvement in journalism

- Make the Course visible to institutions, communities and organizations including international SDG agencies.

Timing:

This module is developed in parallel to block 3, trying to combine the workshops as soon as the practical project requires a laboratory.

The skills workshops in this module will be key for the continuity of the practical project.

Dedication: 15 ECTS equivalent to 375 hours of work for each student, of which approximately 120 hours are class time (20 hours of contextualization and presentation of the structure and guidelines of the project, 20 hours for the elaboration of proposals and 80 hours of follow-up) and 255 hours of autonomous work outside the classroom.

Methodology:

- This module has an eminently practical character, focused on the elaboration of the projects.

- For this reason, intense tutoring and follow-up work by the local teaching staff is envisaged, as well as a high level of involvement in the field.

- The first classes will be used to address the procedure and phases of the project

- After these preparation sessions, a proposal will be developed, from which the field work will be mastered. A weekly follow-up will be carried out, with continuous evaluation, following the methodological guidelines of "Real-World".

Resources:

- For this module, local teachers are required to tutor the practical projects, as well as international experts linked to the partner universities in Asia. Each university will manage the feasibility of the internship.

- Assisted classroom with technical means of projection; online materials.

Activities:

- Carrying out a practical project in groups involving students and journalists, if possible, to analyse the implications and dimensions of one or more of the SDGs in a limited and defined local reality.

- Carrying out field work and analysis of reality.

- Publication of stories in groups.

- Preparation of a report that should take into account the knowledge and skills reported in the course and the publications made.

- Planning of actions for presentation and dissemination of results.

Evaluation:

It continues, through the monitoring of the tasks performed by each group in each of the projects. The assessment will take into account the methodology and guidelines of Real-World. A final evaluation will be made based on the assessment of the final report of each project (report). In this area, the evaluation criteria will be oriented to the quality of the resulting publication.

Summary of conclusions on the implementation of the courses

The course is open to various groups of potential students who require experience in journalism and narrative skills aimed at facilitating the impact of the SDG agenda on the news agenda of partner countries in Asia. A large number of undergraduate and graduate students, local media journalists (online, print, radio, television), freelancers and university communicators were identified in the survey. Although the course could be extended even to communication professionals in administration and social organizations, as well as in companies. A strong local agenda will provide the training with the necessary agreements to develop activities and agreements or to access experts, and to invite to the Course experienced professionals or representatives of institutions and communities.

The survey shows a real lack of knowledge about SDGs among students. Media journalists and freelancers in these countries, on the other hand, do not use the SDGs as a guide to deal with the issues that are interesting to put on the global agenda, as confirmed by the results of the questionnaires.

Respondents require the Course to be a grade-level module. However, whether this framework for training journalists is of interest will depend on the achievement of agreements with professional organizations and media that are activated from the local agenda. To achieve a truly common experience between students and journalists in the course, such agreements would make the design and practice of the training more attractive to both groups.

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One of the demands of students and journalists is that the teaching staff of the Course have a serious commitment to training in SDGs and that experienced journalists are available. In other words, in addition to local teachers being well trained on the global agenda, it is advisable that the Course has teachers and experts not only from their university, but from partner universities in Asia. Specialized teachers who, according to the work teams, are part of the faculty of these universities and can enhance the key issues of the Course.

This internationalization strategy gives even greater relevance and merit to the teaching staff of the Course and good training and participation materials that can also be shared through platforms. It is also advisable that, when working on the syllabus and resources, teaching teams are formed for each block of the curriculum to set programmes, produce and share materials on the basis of a calendar, if possible, also for mobility.

Another basic strategy is that local teachers also commit themselves to organizing and tutoring the practical projects envisaged in the curriculum, better if they are supported and involved by professionals or heads of media, organizations and institutions with which an agreement is reached for the students' practice.

On the other hand, students and journalists give relevance to the fact that the Course has tools that facilitate its study. Both groups request a greater investment in databases and programs that support their searches for information on SDGs or editing to produce videos that value their practical work. In this sense, the partner universities have information and computing units and services, but none focused on SDGs yet. The Units of Study foreseen in the project play a relevant role here as a place where to create teaching and school material, for teachers and students, where to have documentation on SDGs or where the work team can program the teaching.

The target groups and work teams have outlined in the surveys a number of contents that the Course should satisfy. They have done so by comparing the global and local agenda, with knowledge of the territory, the agents involved and the profession. There are several purposes that cross the contents and activities of the Course: 1) the need to strengthen the global agenda of the SDGs in the informative agendas of these countries; 2) the need to implement the global consensus ethics of the SDGs in the ethics of the profession in these countries; 3) to enable critical thinking, accountability and dialogue from the dichotomy between uneven development and sustainable development to argue the need for equitable and future decisions.

This is related to the following skills: 4) to open a dialogue with local agents involved in the relevant issues marked by the global agenda and 5) to become skilled in specialized journalistic procedures, in factual narration and its dissemination through new media. In this sense, the practices are oriented to projects in accordance with these purposes, articulated from the SDGs selected by students, journalists and work teams.

The proposed study model has tried to structure all these demands on a scheme that strengthens the project, the universities involved in cooperation, the profession and the communities of those territories with the aim of adding greater presence to the global contribution of the SDGs. The plan has been organized in four blocks giving more weight to the practical project, as desired by the target groups, and reorganizing crucial issues while keeping a panoptic view of the world agenda, and not forgetting local needs.

Journalism runs through all the blocks as a transversal element that coincides, finally, with the creation of new narrative spaces and practical experience. This gives the plan a convenient flexibility and theoretical accompaniment and skills that intervene directly on the experience. And it allows a continuous evaluation, committed and involved, which affects the processes and procedures, reflection and reflexivity.