Report: EECERA Sustainability in Early Childhood Education SIG 2023-2024

The aim of the EECERA Sustainability in Early Childhood Education SIG

The aim of this SIG group is to develop a space for networking and to encourage cross-national research and perspectives in the field of early childhood education for sustainability. The research agenda focuses on ways of understanding how young children are recognized as, and learn to be, active citizens for sustainability. A key aspect of consolidating this research field is to broaden the theoretical and methodological perspectives shared and incorporate multiple international socio-cultural lenses. Sustainability refers here to the interlinked social, economic, natural, and political dimensions defined by UNESCO (2010), and these must underpin all decision-making for equitable global futures. Aligned international policies with import for early childhood education and education for sustainability are *The UN Global Action Programme* (GAP) and the 2030 *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* (UNESCO, 2017). These policies are integrated with the dimensions of sustainability and offer a global action plan for developing a sustainable world. The SDGs, in particular, are far reaching and highlight that global sustainability is not to be achieved by an environmental or human poverty focus alone. The GAP and SDGs are integral to a globally transformative agenda, and the SIG collaborative research and publication initiatives will strongly support this agenda. The aims of the SIG are to:

- create a space for collaborative research about sustainability in Early Childhood Education,
- develop synergies between participants from a wide range of professional and scientific contexts,
- provide an academic and rigorous forum at European and international levels to develop and disseminate high quality research on sustainability in Early Childhood Education.

Names and emails of convenors
Prof. Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér, Mälardalens University, Sweden
[eva.arlemalm-hagser@mdu.se]

Dr. Sue Elliott, University of New England, Australia
[sue.elliott@une.edu.au]

Assoc. Prof. Sule Alici, Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Türkiye
[alicisule@gmail.com]

Prof. Fabio Dovigo, Northumbria University, United Kingdom
[fabiodovigo@gmail.com]

Current members' names and emails (updated July 2024)

	NAME	E-MAIL
1	Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér	eva.arlemalm-hagser@mdu.se
2	Sule Alici	alicisule@gmail.com
3	Sue Elliott	sue.elliott@une.edu.au
4	Julie Davis	j.davis@qut.edu.au
5	Ann-Christin Furu	christin.furu@abo.fi
6	Noleen Rowntree	adslleen@tpg.com.au
7	Fran Hughes	franhughes041.gmail.com
8	Jonna Larsson	jonna.larsson@ped.gu.se
9	Tuula Skarstein	tuula.skarstein@uis.no
10	Anne Myklebust Lynngård	aml@hul.no
11	Marianne Presthus Heggen	mph@hul.no
12	Lili-Ann Wolff	lili-ann.wolff@helsinki.fi
13	Barbara Maria Sageidet	barbara.sageidet@uis.no
14	Cherie Lamb	cherie.lamb@bigpond.com
15	Trish Heeley	trishheeley@me.com
16	Jubilee Smith	jubilee.smith@scu.edu.au
17	Wendy Boyd	wendy.boyd@scu.edu.au
18	Satu Valkonen	satu.m.valkonen@helsinki.fi
19	Mandy Andrews	mandy.andrews@plymouth.ac.uk
20	Kari Anne Jargensen-Vitterse	kaj@oslomet.no
21	Alexandros Georgopoulus	ageorgop@nured.xuth.gr
22	Veronica Raspa	raspaveronica@gmail.com
23	Franke Gerstenberg	gerstenb@uni-hildes-heim.de
24	Chonagh Boylde	boylec1@hope.ac.uk
25	Alexandra Nordström	alexandra.nordstrom@helsinki.fi
26	Matthew Stepleton	matt@centresupport.com.au
27	Havva Aycan Alan	haycaalan@gmail.com
28	Debra Harwood	dharwood@brocku.ca
29	Tim Rohrmann	tim.rohrmann@hawk.de
30	Rosanne Pugh	rosanne45pugh@gmail.com
31	Kassahun Weldemariam	kassahun.weldemariam@gu.se
32	Diane Boyd	D.J.Boyd@ljum.ac.uk
33	Siska van Daele	siska.vandaele@KdG.be
34	Leen Dom	leen.dom@KdG.be
35	Bernhard Koch	Bernhard.Koch@phst.at
36	Robert Anthony Lecusay	robert.lecusay@sh.se
37	Angela Rekers-Power	rekerspower@yahoo.co.uk
38	Eleni Mousena	emousena@uniwa.gr
39	Maria Assuncao Folque	mafm@uevora.pt
40	Muireann Ranta	muireann.ranta@itcarlow.ie
41	Fabio Dovigo	fabiodovigo@gmail.com
42	Elisabetta Biffi	elisabetta.biffi@unimib.it
43	Mariette Koen	Mariette.Koen@nwu.ac.za
44	Nicola Kemp	nicola.kemp@canterbury.ac.uk
45	Jayne Kinley	jaynekinley@gmail.com
46	Ana Rasteiro	ana.rasteiro2021@gmail.com
47	Harriet Broadfoot	harriet.f.broadfoot@durham.ac.uk
48	Amir Schneider	schneider@hsloblenz.de
49	Hannah Hogarth	heh23@bath.ac.uk

50	Stef Esterhuizen	stef.esterhuizen@nwu.ac.za
51	Gabor Eröss	egabor1973@gmail.com
52	Christa Kieferle	chirsta.kieferle@ifp.bayern.de
53	Lesly Wood	lesly.wood@nwu.ac.za
54	Ingrid Engdahl	ingridengdahl@gmail.com
55	Ingrid Pramling Samuellson	ingrid.pramling@ped.gu.se
56	Jude Brown	j.brown23@wlv.ac.uk
57	Louise Hannan	louise hannan@live.co.uk
58	Maria Ploog	maria.ploog@uis.no
59	Cheryl Hadland	Cheryl Hadland@hadlandcavegroup.co.uk
60	Kari Anne Vergensen-Vittersa	kajenslonet.no
61	Kristin Grovsik	kristin.grovsik@uis.no
62	June O'Sullivan	June@leyf.org.uk
63	Sole Scuderi	sole.scuderi@metropolitanschool.com
64	Charlotte Jones	charlotte.e.jones@warwick.ac.uk
65	Chienhuei Hsu	ch1101.hsu@gmail.com
66	Deniz Pamuk	denizkahriman@gmail.com
67	Emma Ransome	emma.ransome@bcu.ac.uk
68	Francesca Rota	francesca.rota@unimib.it
69	Kathrin Paal	kathrin.paal@plymouth.ac.uk
70	Kimberley Kong	kimberley.kong@usm.my
71	Monica Guerra	monica.guerra@unimib.it
72	Seçil Cengizoğlu	secil.cengizoglu@gmail.com
73	Tiago Almeida	tiagoa@eselx.ipl.pt
74	Yi Zhang	chouyi11@hotmail.com

Activities undertaken by the SIG in the past year, 2023-2024

- The SIG now has 74 members, 9 of EECERA (marked green), and 65 associated members.
- Ongoing communication with EECERA about membership, the EECERA conference, and publications.
- The SIG-group Facebook page is ongoing and active, with regular postings about events, research, and publications (136 members).
- The EECERA Board of Trustees ratified the SIG position statement with their strong support, and we announced the formal launch of the statement. (It can be reached via https://www.eecera.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Sustainability-SIG-Position-statement-FINAL-19-09-2023.pdf)
- The SIG-group members shared their views about the sustainability focus of EECERA 2024 with the conference organizing committee.
- January 2024, *Catalysing change in teacher education for sustainable development: A European Commission study*, a webinar was presented by Professor Daniella Tilbury and Dr Ingrid Mulà
- *Young Children and the Environment*, 3rd edition edited by Julie Davis and Sue Elliott was published January 2024 with contributions by SIG members.
- EECERA SIG Symposia, EECERA 2024 (eeceraconference.org)
  Chairs and titles, all accepted:
  1. Ann-Christin Furu: Children's wellbeing/resilience
  2. Fabio Dovigo: Mainstreaming sustainability in ECE
  3. Sule Alici: Sustainability and the environment in ECE
  4. Sue Elliott: Sustainability in ECE – nature and the local outdoor environment

5. Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér: Sustainable Preschool, a large-scale research project
6. Vicki Carr: Exploring Social and Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability

- An EECERA book on praxis is underway, and the chapters are nearly complete. SIG Convenors Sule Alici and Fabio Dovigo are the lead co-editors, and the aim is to publish this book in late 2024.

Planned SIG activity for the coming year, 2024

- Continuing to progress publications noted above and develop other collaborative research projects and bids; and,
- A proposal for a Handbook of Sustainability in Early Childhood Education is under development by Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér and Sue Elliott.

The links and networks established with other institutions and organisations

Each member of the SIG has a network within their own country and area of work. The collaboration within the SIG between members means that the SIG is informally associated with a wide variety of local, regional, national, and international networks and organisations. For example, the Transnational Dialogues Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Research Network (TND) held a face-to-face meeting as TND 8 on August 24th - 25th, 2023, at Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden, with attendees from eleven countries. A new journal issue *Childhood in the Anthropocene*, 1(1) edited by Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér and Sue Elliott, was published and comprised TND 8 participant papers.

TND 9 will be conducted from 29th - 30th August 2024 at the University of East London, Stratford Campus, London, UK and hosted by June O'Sullivan, London Early Years Foundation. Plus, a Mini TND 9 is organized for Friday, 25 October 2024, at Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia as part of a national ECEfS conference (https://ecsustainabilityalliance.org.au/). Significant synergies across the SIG and TND need to continue to be explored.

How the SIG Sustainability in Early Childhood Education activities fit with the aims and ethos of EECERA

The activities in the SIG encourage and support cross-national collaborations with multi-disciplinary research and critically reflective approaches to early childhood education and early childhood education for sustainability. The collaboration between the researchers in the SIG group also aligns with outdoor education/nature play and applications to policy and practice as related to global sustainability.

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Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér, Sule Alici, Sue Elliott and Fabio Dovigo