Analyze & understand societal impact research with Scopus
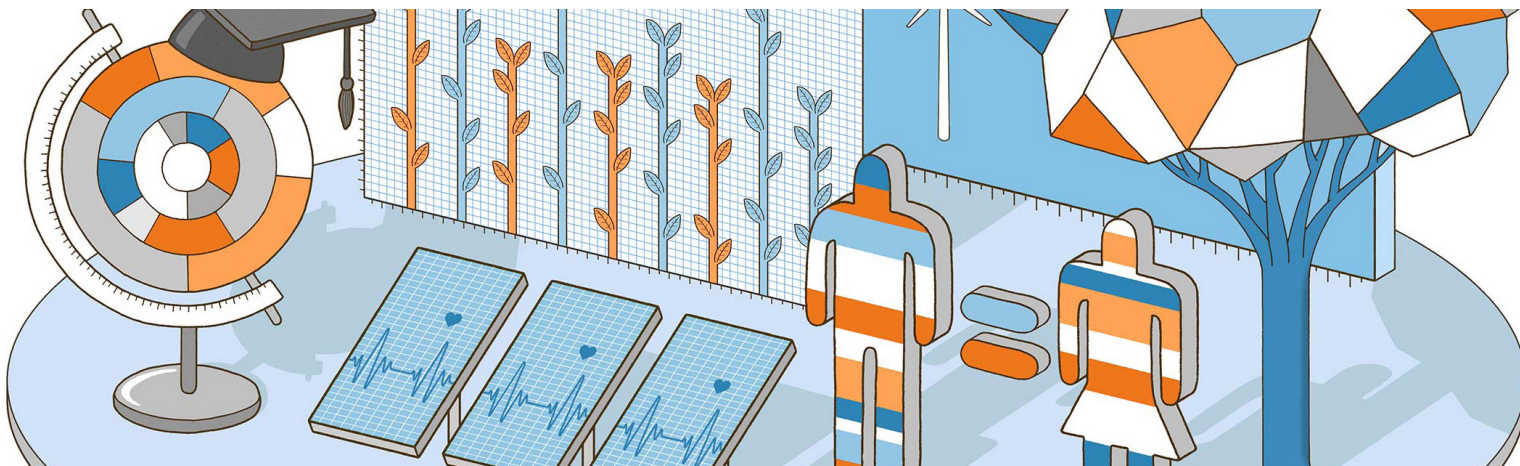
What is your university's role in Societal Impact?

Increasingly, university leadership, governments, funders, the community, and more are demanding to understand the value of a university's research. They want to know that the significant investment into research is going to help society.

According to Chankseliani and McCowan T. (2021),

"University as an institution has a long history, starting as an educational establishment, later assuming the knowledge creating (research) function and more recently the so-called third mission (engagement). In most contexts, universities were for the elites, educating them for religious, professional or administrative occupations. With the expansion of higher education participation, university has acquired a larger potential for contributing to societal development."

A university can contribute to societal impact in multiple ways. For example:

• Targets to admit lower-income students

• Programs to encourage women to participate in traditionally male disciplines

• Work with local and national governments to plan for climate disasters

Another major area where Universities demonstrate societal impact is with the research they do. When a university participates in research that brings solutions to society, they act as part of the community working together to solve the world's problems.

Understanding your research through a United Nations Sustainability Goals (UN SDGs) lens

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) announced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which was subsequently adopted by all UN member states.

Seeing your institution's research in each of these SDGs provides you a map to understand this vital way you contribute to societal impact.

The UN defined 17 individual SDGs:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnership for the Goals

Seeing your institution's research in each of these SDGs helps you understand this vital way you contribute to societal impact.

To understand more about a university's role in societal impact and the United Nations Sustainable development goals, visit our research leaders' guide.

Find Societal Impact related research in Scopus

Times Higher Education (THE), Vertigo Ventures, Elsevier and others collaborated on developing search queries to represent the research in the first 16 SDGs. These are periodically reviewed and refined. Full details of the methodology for each SDG search query are available on Mendeley.

You can use the information you gather by analyzing the search results in Scopus for several important purposes. These include:

• Telling your story of societal impact
• Determining which funders are active in the SDGs
• Searching for potential collaborators

Each of these search queries are pre-generated queries in Scopus

Pre-generated queries ⑦

UN Sustainable Development Goals ⌃

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and produc…
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions

*Pre-defined search queries in Scopus to help you locate SDG-related research*

These pre-defined Scopus queries provide a starting point for every university to understand the research related to a given societal impact research area.

Analyze the SDG search results in Scopus

NOTE: The period used in all charts is 2015 – 2020.

You can use the Scopus feature, "Analyze search results" to see overview information about the each sustainable development goal. In this example, we are analyzing the search research for SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.
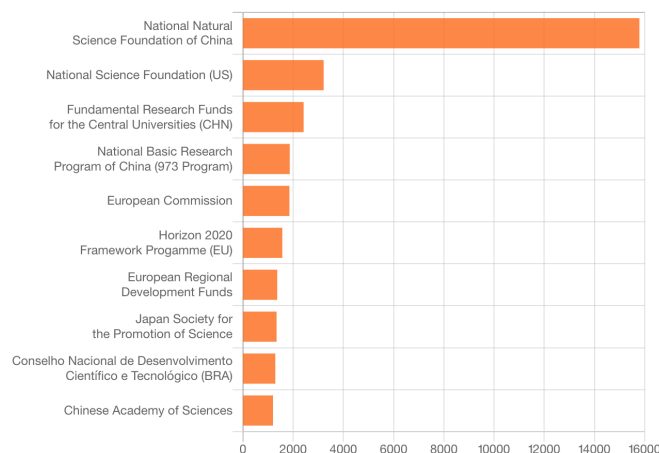
Documents by year for SDG 11
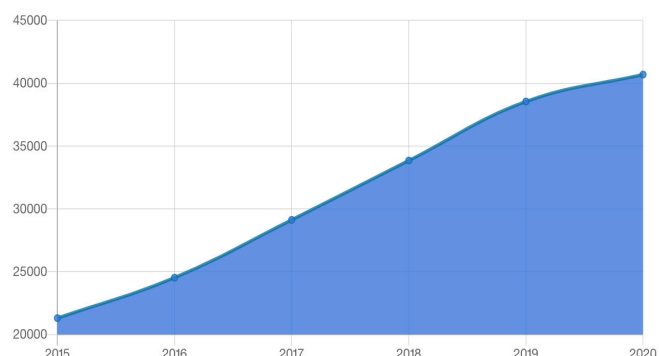
Caption: Number of documents about SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities is climbing every year (per Scopus)

The chart above shows globally which funding bodies have funded the most published research on SDG 11. The funding information is valuable for you to help determine potential funding sources for SDG-related research.

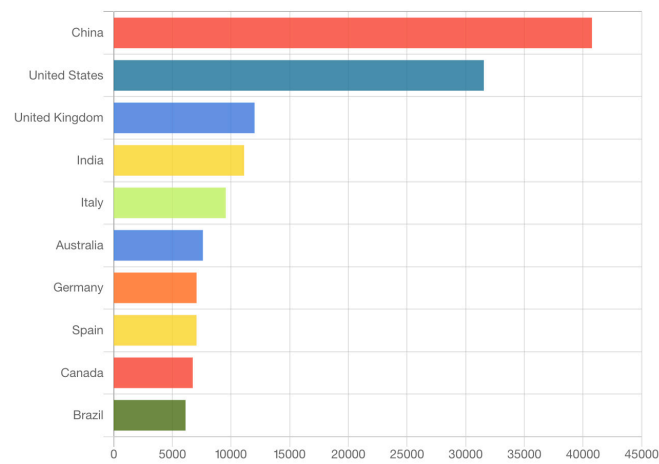Documents by funding sponsor for SDG 11

Caption: The top 10 organizations funding research into SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (per Scopus)

Now let's looking at the funding sponsors table. The chart above shows globally which funding bodies have funded the most published research on SDG 11. The funding information is valuable information for you to help determine funding opportunities for SDG-related research.

Let's narrow our focus and look at specific countries and researchers for SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Read the latest version of this article online: https://www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence/societal-impact-research-with-scopus

Documents by country for SDG 11

Caption: Number of documents per country with research about SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (per Scopus)

Even though Italy is a smaller country than most of the other nations on the list, Italy is in the top 5 countries in the world researching sustainable cities and communities. Does this indicate that Italy might be a good country to find a collaborator to ensure your research is international?

You can use the refinement options in Scopus to see the most recent research coming out of Italy.
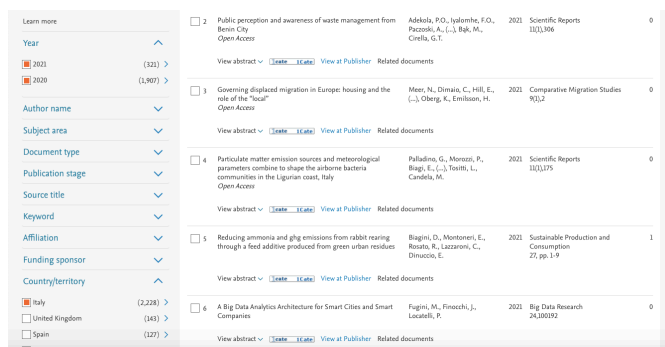
Caption: Italian authors from 2020 and 2021 about SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (per Scopus)

By analyzing these results, you can see the institutions and authors who have published the most research about SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities from Italy.

Documents by Italian institutions for SDG 11
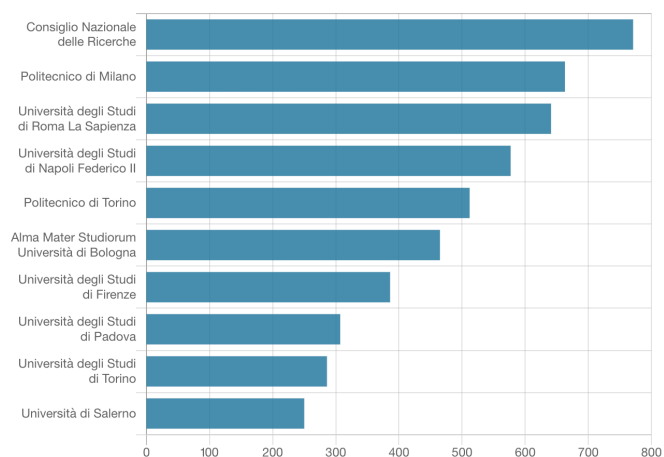
Caption: The top 10 Italian institutions doing recent research about SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (per Scopus)

Documents by Italian authors for SDG 11
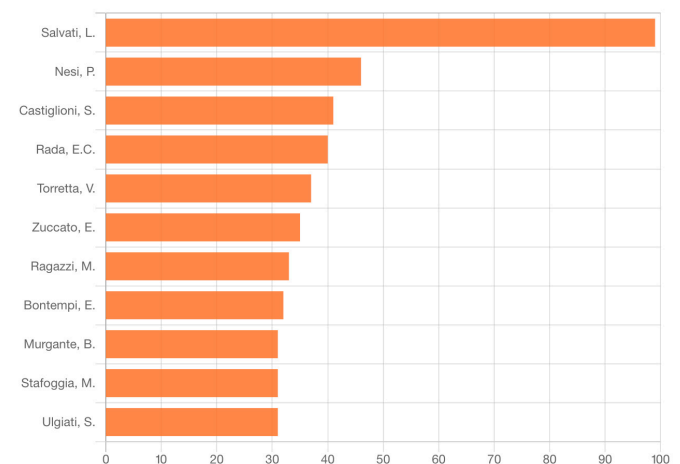
Caption: The top 10 Italian authors publishing recent research about SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (per Scopus)
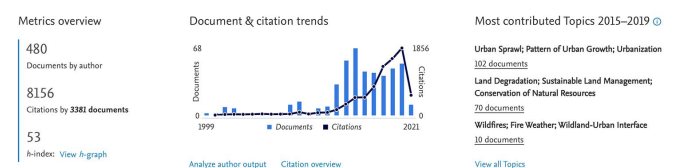
While seeing the top 10 institutions publishing about SDG 11 is intriguing, you want to dig a little deeper to see the top authors as well. These authors could be your best lead towards finding a collaborator.

Dr. Luca Salvati is the most prolific Italian author in this research area.


Caption: Dr. Luca Salvati's Scopus author profile

With this Scopus author profile, you can see that Dr. Salvati works with Università degli Studi di Macerata and their citations have been growing yearly. Their most often research topics are:

- Urban Sprawl; Pattern of Urban Growth; Urbanization
- Land Degradation; Sustainable Land Management; Conservation of Natural Resources
- Wildfires; Fire Weather; Wildland-Urban Interface

Looking at these topics, you can confirm that Dr. Salvati would be a good collaborator as your team is also studying urbanization.

Documents by funding sponsor

Compare the document counts for up to 15 funding sponsors.
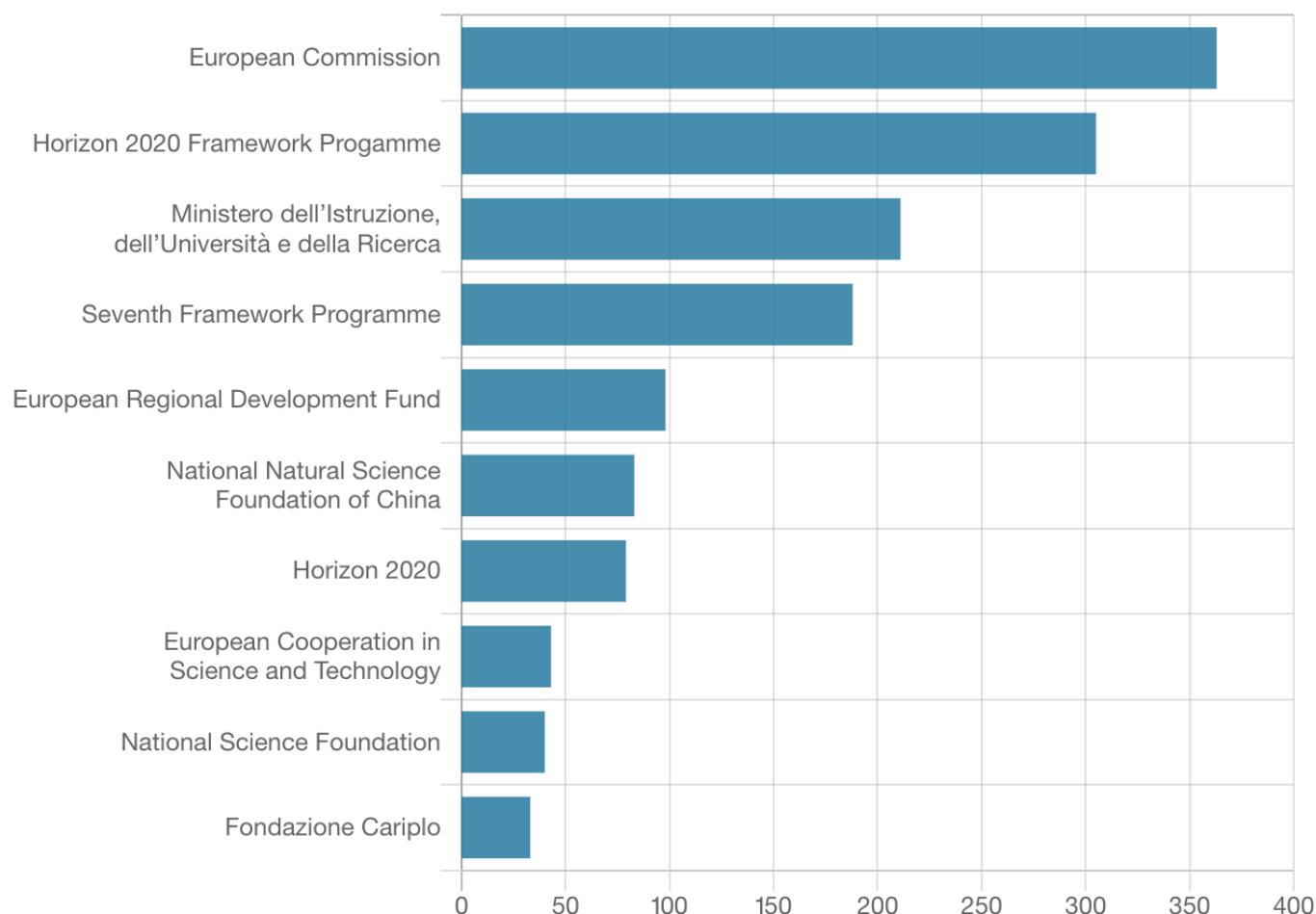
Caption: Top funders of Italian SDG 11 research

When you narrow your view of funders to just the ones funding research in Italy, the information changes and could allow you to be more targeted in approaching funders.

This page demonstrates a few of the refinement and analysis you can do in Scopus.

References

Chankseliani, M., & McCowan, T. (2021). Higher education and the sustainable development goals. Higher Education, 81(1) doi:10.1007/s10734-020-00652-w