

## **Higher Education and the 2030 Agenda: Moving into the 'Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs'**

IAU 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Survey Report on  
Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development

Stefanie Mallow, Isabel Toman & Hilligje van't Land



**#2030 IS NOW**

International Association of Universities (IAU) / International Universities Bureau.

IAU provides a forum for building a worldwide higher education community, promotes exchange of information, experience and ideas, and contributes, through research, publication and advocacy to the debate on higher education policy debate.

**Higher Education and the 2030 Agenda: Moving into the ‘Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs’**

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- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)
- ARIUSA (Alianza de Redes Iberoamericanas de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Ambiente)
- Consell Interuniversitari de Catalunya (CIC)
- CRUE Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas
- Observatorio de la Sustentabilidad en la Educación Superior de América Latina y el Caribe (OSES-ALC)
- Red Ambiental de Universidades Sostenibles (RAUS)
- Red Colombiana de Formación Ambiental (RCFA)
- The ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities)

The partners of the IAU Global HESD Survey 2019 will publish reports about the findings specifically in Spain and Latin America.



This publication forms part of IAU's work on the priority theme:

**Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD)**

## The International Association of Universities

Founded in 1950, under the auspices of UNESCO, the International Association of Universities (IAU) is the leading global association of higher education institutions and organisations from around the world. IAU brings together its Members from more than 130 countries for reflection and action on common priorities. IAU is an independent, non-governmental organisation. IAU is an official partner of UNESCO (associate status). It acts as the voice of higher education to UNESCO and other international organisations, and provides a global forum for leaders of institutions and associations. Its services are available on the priority basis to Members but also to organisations, institutions and authorities concerned with higher education, as well as to individual policy and decision-makers, specialists, administrators, teachers, researchers and students.

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### VISION

*IAU aims to be the most representative and influential global association of diverse higher education institutions and their organizations, promoting and advancing a dynamic leadership role for higher education in society.*

### MISSION

*IAU promotes collaboration among its Members by articulating the fundamental values and principles that underpin the pursuit, dissemination and application of knowledge. The Association advocates for higher education policies and practices that respect diverse perspectives and promote social responsibility. With a particular emphasis on values and leadership, and acting as a forum for sharing and joint action, IAU encourages innovation, mutual learning and cooperation among institutions.*

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IAU works to enhance the higher education community's role and actions in advancing societies worldwide. As a global membership organization, IAU represents and serves the full spectrum of higher education institutions and their associations. The IAU focuses on four key priority themes in higher education, while improving support and services to Members as well as enhancing their visibility and engagement.



IAU Administrative Board, 2019

## Partners of the 2019 IAU HESD Survey

### ARIUSA

ARIUSA (Alianza de Redes Iberoamericanas de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Ambiente) is an academic network for the environment created in Bogota on 26 October 2007 by higher education environment and sustainable development stakeholders. Its objectives are to:

- promote, coordinate and support actions towards environmental education;
- promote academic and scientific cooperation between academic networks for the environment and sustainable development.

<https://ariusa.net/es/inicio>



### AUF

AUF (Agence universitaire de la Francophonie) brings together 944 higher education institutions, networks and scientific research centres that use French language in 116 countries. Founded almost 60 years ago, it is one of the largest associations of higher education and research institutions in the world. AUF is also the operator for higher education and research at the "Sommet de la Francophonie". As such, it implements, within its field of competence, the resolutions adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and the governments of the countries sharing French as a common language. AUF is a Member of IAU.

<https://www.auf.org/>



### CRUE

Crue Spanish Universities is the main interlocutor of Spanish universities with the central government and plays a key role in all the normative developments that affect higher education in Spain. It also promotes initiatives of different kinds in order to foster relations with the social fabric, institutional relations, both national and international, and works to value the Spanish University. CRUE is a Member of IAU.

<http://www.crue.org>



### The ACU

The ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities) is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education.

International collaboration is central to this ambition: by bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – the ACU helps to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives. ACU is a Member of IAU

<https://www.acu.ac.uk>





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## Foreword

Dear Members of the IAU,

Dear Members of the Higher Education Community,



Four years into Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are very pleased to present you with the outcomes of the IAU 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Survey on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD). The report shows that the higher education community is engaging on all dimensions with the 2030 Agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since the first IAU Global Survey on HESD, conducted in 2016, participation rates and commitments of universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) have visibly increased, with 536 respondents answering the 2019 iteration of the survey compared to 120 in 2016. This is good news, and makes the case for the International Association of Universities to continue its efforts to bring sustainable development higher on the agenda of the higher education sector. Without the strong contributions of higher education, the seventeen SDGs will not be reached.

Already in 1993, the IAU Kyoto Declaration urged universities to establish and disseminate sustainable development principles and values. This commitment was renewed in 2014 with the IAU Iquitos Statement, in which IAU called for better integration of traditional knowledge systems in overall knowledge creation and dissemination. The drafting process leading up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs had already started. Thanks to significant IAU advocacy for better recognition of the role of higher education, universities are mentioned in a UN development agenda, under SDG target 4.3, which calls for equal access to education for all.

In 2019, IAU was pleased to officially launch a new initiative: the IAU Global Cluster on HESD. Global in scope, it fosters further engagement of universities with the aims and goals of the 2030 Agenda, while increasing and accelerating connections between universities from around the world in an innovative way. The Cluster is led by 16 IAU Member higher education institutions; they each work with universities from the other continents.

Eight Member Universities, working on the SDGs under review this year, joined the IAU Delegation taking part in the UN High Level Political Forum at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, in July. In addition, IAU organised a workshop with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and took an active part in the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI). The Cluster Members have been involved in the drafting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAU Global Survey on HESD.

We hope that you will find the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAU Global Survey Report on HESD as promising as we do. Higher education as a whole is increasingly being involved not only in sustainability debates, but is also part of global discussions and development processes, locally, regionally and globally. Challenges remain, but we are confident that if higher education and policy-makers continue to support each other, there is a much better chance that we together will be able to reach the SDGs.

### Happy reading

**Pam Fredman**

IAU President,  
Former Rector,  
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

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IAU Vice-President/Chair, IAU Working Group on HESD,  
SDG 11 Lead in IAU global Cluster HESD  
President, Siam University, Thailand

## Executive Summary



*The Global Goals are our blueprint for a fair globalization. But we are far from where we need to be. We are off track. That's why, today, I'm calling for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. We must step up our efforts. Now.*



*(Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, Twitter remarks to HLPF 2019)*

The adoption of **Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the related **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 was the start of an increased interest in sustainable development beyond the initial circles. In 2019 we see the end of the first four-year cycle of the Global Goals. It is also the end of the awareness-raising period, the end of the 'trial' period for the SDGs. Starting in 2020, the world will have to do more to reach the ambitious Goals by 2030. This is why, in the United Nations' political declaration issued at the first UN SDG Summit, world leaders called for a **decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**.

Higher education's role in support of the 2030 Agenda is essential; without higher education, the SDGs cannot be reached. Higher education **educates** future generations, conducts **research** to find solutions to complex problems, supports and engages with the **local communities**, and creates initiatives to make **campuses** more sustainable. Furthermore, higher education provides for a **critical voice** to the issues presented in the SDGs, encourages systems thinking and critical engagement.

The United Nations acknowledges this important role of higher education by including access to tertiary education and universities in **SDG Target 4.3** and by creating special mechanisms for an increased **science-policy-interface** and therefore better recognition of research. Yet, more work needs to be done to integrate higher education fully into the mechanisms put in place for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The **International Association of Universities (IAU)** has advocated for the role universities and other higher education

institutions (HEIs) have played in support of sustainable development since the early 1990s. Already in 1993, the **IAU Kyoto Declaration** called for higher education leaders to better articulate HE's work to achieve a sustainable future. This was reaffirmed in 2014 with the **IAU Iquitos Statement**. IAU was one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of higher education as a target in the SDGs, something that was missing in the previous **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

In 2016, in the context of the **UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP ESD)**, IAU developed a **1<sup>st</sup> Global Survey on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD)** to showcase what HEIs around the world were doing for sustainable development. 120 universities, most of which were IAU Members, completed the survey. The first Survey Report was well received and suggested that the SDGs increased interest for sustainable development at HEIs. It also showed that many projects were in progress.

Three years later and in preparation of the IAU participation in the UN **High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** in New York, in 2019, a second edition of the Global Survey on HESD was developed. The second survey built on the first, but included more questions (in total 35, before 30) and focused more specifically on the SDGs. This report analyses the findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey and puts it into contexts of current developments worldwide.

The survey, which was open for only six weeks, received **536 valid responses** from **428 universities** in **101 distinct countries**. All world regions are represented, with 37% coming from Europe, 23% from Latin America



and the Caribbean, 18% from Africa, 15% from Asia and the Pacific, 4% from North America and 3% from the Middle East. Thanks to strong cooperation with CRUE, 19% (102) respondents are from Spain. 45% of respondents hold leadership positions within their university. Another 45% are academic or administrative staff. The remaining 10% of answers come from students.

The analysis of the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 is separated into four chapters:

- Higher Education and the SDGs
- Whole Institution Approaches
- Networking for Sustainable Development
- Obstacles for HEIs

Highlighting the engagement of higher education with the SDGs, the main findings of the first chapter are that, while **interest and attention for sustainable development has increased worldwide** thanks to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, **not all SDGs are equally addressed** by universities. Engagement with SDG 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality) and 13 (climate action) is high, while the SDGs 14 (life below water), 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) receive little attention, yet, at least SDG 12 has a strong potential for development. In addition, knowledge about the 2030 Agenda varies per region, as well as by position within a university and its understanding of the Goals proves to be subjective. The SDGs are embedded more strongly at teaching level, closely followed by research. Campus initiatives and community engagement are not as strongly developed yet as the other fields.

UNESCO and the IAU foster **Whole Institution Approaches for Education for Sustainable Development (WIA-ESD)** since the adoption of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, in 2005. Education for Sustainable Development was the focus of the first IAU Global Survey on HESD. In comparison to 2016, not many more HEIs have incorporated sustainable development fully into their institutions by 2019. Yet, more and

more HEIs are in the process of including sustainable development into their strategic plans, with a **decline of seven percent from 2016** in those institutions who do not have a strategic plan at all. The chapter also shows that there are many different ways of financing and embedding sustainable development in HEIs, with **over 50% having a budget allocated to sustainable development initiatives**, although mostly only ad-hoc and project based.

Universities around the world **follow internationalisation patterns** when it comes to networking for sustainable development. On continents where international networks are common, like in Europe for instance, sustainable development networks are more developed than in other regions. At the same time, regional networks are increasingly used by HEIs, which shows that **local communities of practice** are used to foster sustainable development.

Obstacles identified are different from one region to another and **highlight structural differences**. While funding is an issue for all continents, **lack of training opportunities and research cooperation** is particularly an issue in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. Europe and North America are struggling to find **staff and see lack of knowledge** as a major issue. In addition, respondents indicate that they struggle with **definitions** and ‘understanding’ of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda and that they still often work in **siloes**.

In **conclusion**, the survey findings show that the higher education sector worldwide is **increasing its commitment to sustainable development** thanks to the 2030 Agenda. Yet, obstacles remain to ensure full engagement and more work needs to be done. It is important to **continue to strengthen the science-policy interface** and to listen to what the higher education sector as a whole has to contribute to achieve the SDGs. Higher education is starting to **transform** itself to include sustainable development principles and visions; the question is, if the 2030 Agenda mechanisms are ready to include higher education as a confirmed stakeholder in the process.

# Introduction

Sustainable development has been part of the strategic commitment of the International Association of Universities (IAU), the most global university network, to improve higher education for over 25 years. In 1993, the Association adopted the *IAU Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development* (IAU, 1993), reaffirming its commitment to sustainable development in 2014 with the *IAU Iquitos Statement on Higher Education for Sustainable Development* (IAU, 2014). IAU is one of the strongest advocates promoting the role of higher education in sustainable development globally; it speaks out at many UN organisations including UNESCO and the United Nations.

The Association has been supporting United Nations programmes for sustainable development since its founding in 1950. For example, IAU was one of the Key Partners in UNESCO's Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP ESD), which ran from 2014 until the end of 2019. IAU will continue to be part of the UNESCO GAP ESD follow up programme adopted in 2019 and called *ESD for 2030*, which will merge Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) principles with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2019). In 2019, IAU started to take an active part in the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), organised at the United Nations Headquarters every year in July. This is one of the key mechanisms for following-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will be explained further in the following text.

In support of the UNESCO GAP ESD, IAU conducted the first Global Survey on

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF

# HE & SD

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was unanimously adopted in 2015. Higher Education has accompanied that way, and continues to do so.



Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) in 2016. The aim was to map what higher education institutions (HEIs) are doing in support of education for sustainable development and the Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development, one of the flagship projects of the GAP ESD. IAU advocates for a Whole Institution Approach at HEIs, which means including sustainable development in all dimensions of an institution: education and teaching, research, community engagement, and campus initiatives.

The first survey collected data from 120 universities worldwide. The corresponding report *Higher Education Paving the Way to Sustainable Development: A Global Perspective* (IAU, 2017) was well-received and gained global attention. In preparations for the HLPF 2019, it was decided to conduct a follow-up study, in order to see how the higher education sector has developed over the last three years and to better understand the impact the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have on HEIs. The initial survey focused mostly on education for sustainable development, the second questionnaire focused hence on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

This report analyses the results of the 2019 survey, which was open for six weeks from the

## Setting the Scene: the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

In 2015, the United Nations' General Assembly unanimously adopted *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015) also known as the 2030 Agenda. It includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the global community hopes to achieve by the year 2030. 169 targets and 232 indicators clarify what needs to be done to achieve the Global Goals. The SDGs are very ambitious and range from minimizing poverty to ensuring that the planet safeguards the world's beautiful biodiversity. Consequently, many of the Goals are interconnected and can only be achieved jointly. It can also mean that some Goals are competing with each other, requiring complex solutions.

end of May 2019 until mid-July 2019. In total 536 valid responses were collected. The report analyses the responses at both global and regional level, where the data offers new insights by this division. Where appropriate, the report also compares new data to the findings of the 2016 edition of the survey. Furthermore, it analyses data along available information about the SDGs from the United Nations, UNESCO and other sources, thus contextualising the findings.

This introduction includes an overview of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the survey sample, its methods and its limitations. Following the introduction, the report will analyse the survey in four chapters on a global and regional level. The different chapters are:

- Higher Education and the SDGs
- Whole Institution Approaches for Sustainable Development
- Networking for Sustainable Development
- Obstacles for HEIs

Following the results chapter, this report finishes with general conclusions and recommendations about how higher education can engage with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The categories referred to as 5Ps are guiding the way through the 2030 Agenda, making it easier to group the SDGs:

- People (SDGs 1-5)
- Prosperity (SDGs 6-12)
- Planet (SDG 13 – 15)
- Peace (SDG 16)
- Partnerships (SDG 17)

This also corresponds to the dimensions sustainable development is usually divided into: social, economic and environmental. IAU and others add a cultural dimension, although this is less known and less used, yet equally important.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**Figure 1: The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015, the colourful icons are increasingly visible on company websites, publications, and even in public spaces. The SDGs have already reached more attention after only five years than the previous *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, which started in 2000 and ended 2015.

Almost five years have passed since the adoption of the SDGs. The next ten years are called “*The Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development*” in the political declaration of the first SDG Summit, held as part of the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2019 (UNGA, 2019). In the next ten years, the world will have to show that the SDGs are not just a “marketing tool”, and that the initiatives to reach the goals will be transformative and will help to change our world for the better.

In 2020, 21 targets are already maturing, including some that are directly related to higher education. For example SDG 4.B, which calls for more scholarships for people from developing countries in order to accelerate scientific advancements in those areas (United Nations, 2015). Numerous sources indicate that

most of those early targets will not be reached, which makes actions for the next ten years even more pressing as has been indicated in the political declaration of the SDG Summit (UNGA, 2019).

While the future has to show what the SDGs are actually worth, the road to the 2030 Agenda was long, starting in 1972 with the *Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment* and ending with the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission coined the definition of sustainable development that is still commonly used today, also by the IAU:

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*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

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Neither this definition, nor the SDGs are uncontested, leaving lots of room for critique. For instance, the 2030 Agenda has been described as too broad, too expensive and too complex (The Economist, 2015). Others argued, that although the 2030 Agenda aims to be a

Global Agenda, equally important for all countries, it leaves many behind and is based on predominantly Western ideas of sustainability and development (Heleta and Tohiera, 2017). Such views are reflected in the comments of the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019. Yet, constructive criticism does not equate to complete dismissal of the SDGs in general. The SDGs are serving a purpose and are, despite valid criticism, often seen as a useful tool and very important by universities, as will be shown throughout this report.

Higher education has contributed to achieving sustainable development from the start of the discussions, although often as an observer or quiet supporter (Owens, 2017). Before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, university networks, academics and other stakeholders advocated for the official inclusion of higher education in the new development agenda (IAU, 2014b). These efforts were successful and higher education is now officially mentioned under SDG 4.3.

## Survey Sample

The 2019 edition of the IAU Global Survey on HESD received 536 valid replies from 428 different HEIs. This is an increase of 348% when compared to the 120 universities that participated in the 2016 IAU Global Survey. More than 7 894 Institutions were contacted to participate, which represents a return rate of 7%.

Although only a relatively small number of the 19,400 HEIs listed in IAU's World Higher Education Database (WHED) participated, the results provide a valuable overview of what is happening in higher education and research for sustainable development around the world. Thanks to IAU's partners in Latin America and in Francophone countries, the survey received a high number of respondents from those regions, increasing the diversity of answers compared to the 2016 survey.

The survey was designed to ensure easy participation. It did not call for gathering a large amount of details from specific universities. The



*by 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university*

This inclusion is important, as it increases the visibility of higher education and allows higher education to voice its concerns stronger than before. However, there is more to it, as higher education in all its functions is more than a goal, in the term of the SDGs, to be attained; it is a key stakeholder in the whole process to lead to a more sustainable world, as chapter *Higher Education and the SDGs* demonstrates. This report shows that higher education and the 2030 Agenda are interconnected and an enhanced inclusion of higher education in discussions about and processes leading to achieving the SDGs can be beneficial for all people.

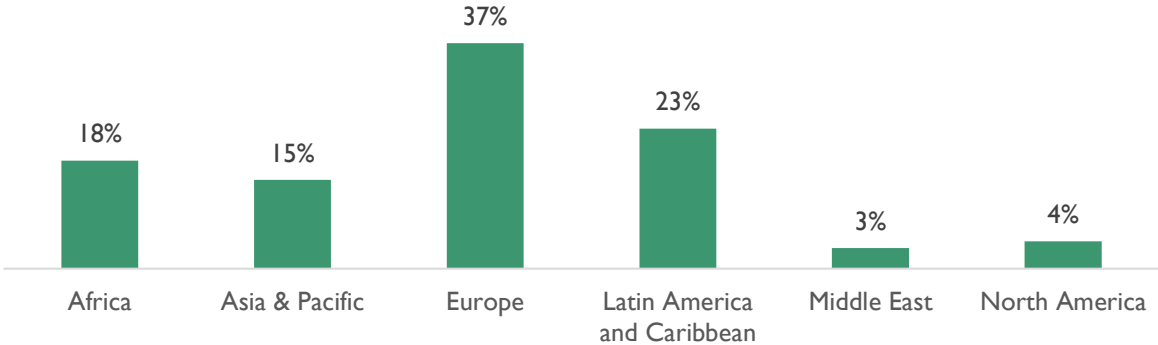
survey was accessible, asking for rather simple answers keeping the time effort to completion to a minimum and thus encouraged more people to take and complete the survey. The aim of the Survey was not to go into detail about what and how individual universities engage with the SDGs, but rather to understand what is happening in the higher education sector as a whole.

Furthermore, it was not meant to be an assessment tool: there is a growing number of time-intensive assessment tools available for HEIs. These tools aim at assessing the university rather than the developments within the higher education sector. A number of those tools are used by the respondents of the Global HESD Survey, and are listed in chapter Mapping and Monitoring, starting on page 40.

Many questions were not compulsory and hence not always answered by all respondents. Therefore, the (n) is indicated in each graphic, to make sure the response rate is more

transparent. In addition, some responses by students were excluded, when they were distorting the answers due to limited amount of information available to them about the functioning of their university. This became clear by an unusual amount of respondent answering “I don’t know” to some questions, which after further analysis turned out to be mostly students. When students were excluded from the analysis, this is mentioned in the text.

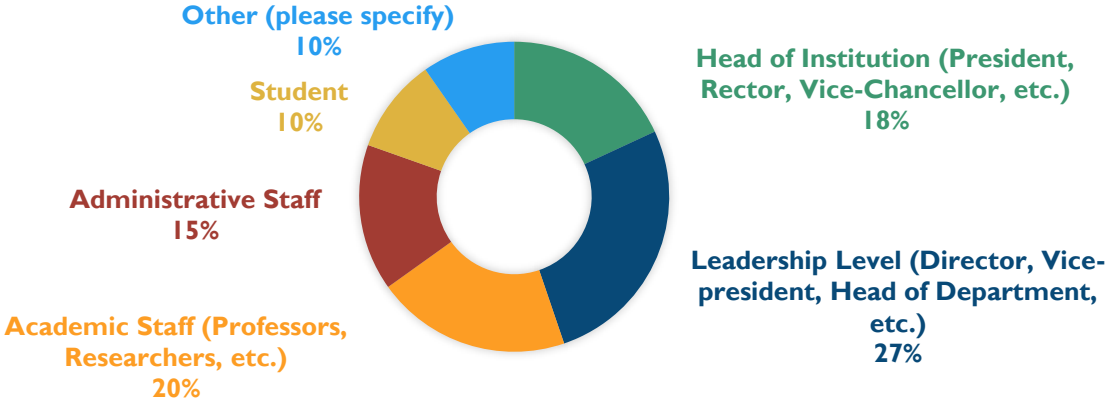
The survey was made available in four languages: English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. A majority of comments was received in Spanish, followed by French. It is envisaged that any future surveys should be available in other languages, such as Arabic, in order to enhance participation.



**Figure 2: Location of Respondents (n=536)**

All regions saw an increase in participating universities compared to 2016. The universities came from 101 distinct countries from all continents. Europe was with 198 respondents the largest regional group, followed by 123 respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean, which includes Mexico. 95 respondents came from HEIs in Africa and 78 from universities in Asia and the Pacific, including one university in Australia.

Results from the Middle East and North America need to be regarded with caution due to the small sample size, 8 and 24 respectively. This is a similar low turnout if we compare it to the IAU 5<sup>th</sup> Global Survey on Internationalisation (Marinoni, 2019), and therefore suggests that the low response rate is not due to lack of initiatives but rather a matter of reach. It is further important to know that due to the IAU partnership with CRUE, 102 universities that responded to the survey were from Spain.



**Figure 3: Positions of Respondents (n=536)**

To enhance the number of responses and to allow different perspectives from within the institutions, we opened the questionnaire to multiple members of the higher education community, including students. This was a change compared to the 2016 iteration of the survey. In total 54 respondents, or 10%, were students.

The largest number, 45% of responses, came from the leadership level including the heads of institutions. This shows that sustainable development has a high priority for many HEIs. Another 45% came from staff members of the universities, with 20% academic staff, 15% administrative staff and 10% “other”. The answers in “others” were from people with multiple responsibilities within the HEI, who fell somewhere between administrative and academic staff, such as department/faculty chairs, or university working groups.

## Methodology

The first Global Survey on HESD was developed and conducted in 2016, and the report published in 2017 (IAU, 2017). The first survey was the basis for the development of the second iteration, although a large number of questions were changed or amended following comments received on the initial survey to improve the overall quality of the questionnaire. For example, some questions were not clear enough and had to be rephrased, others were added to incorporate changes in the sector and to make a better connection to the SDGs.

Additionally, IAU conducted interviews with different universities who are part of the IAU Global Cluster on HESD (see Annex VII). Although the interviews focused mostly on the Whole Institution Approach and how the universities embed sustainable development into the whole institution, some questions were targeted at the development of the new survey. Based on those interviews, questions for the survey were further changed or added.

For the analysis of some questions, those different positions were used to compare answers; to be noted once again: if student responses threatened to distort the results when it was clear from their responses that their understanding of the overall institutional development was incomplete, their responses were excluded. Where this is the case, it is highlighted in the text.

If duplication of the same universities happened, it was mostly due to the fact that two people from the same institution responded independently from each other. If it was clear that it was the same person who responded twice on different devices, identifiable by answers in the about section, the incomplete questionnaire was excluded from analysis and not counted in the overall number of responses. Eight different people from one university in Cambodia answered the survey. Those answers were kept, to show how subjective the answers for one university can be.

The survey was finally sent to a group of experts, including the IAU HESD Cluster leads and Members of the IAU Working Group on HESD (see IAU HESD Working Group in the Annex) for revision. Partners for distribution were identified, who also informed the design of the survey further. Those partners also agreed to share the survey with their networks, which is why some questions were added to support the partner’s work:

- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)
- ARIUSA (Alianza de Redes Iberoamericanas de Universidades por la Sustentabilidad y el Ambiente)
- CRUE Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas
- The ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities)

Following the layout of the first survey, the 2019 edition counted 35 questions organised in five sections:

- 1) **Profiles of the HEIs and the respondents**
- 2) **Knowledge and awareness:** Section to evaluate how much the respondents know about sustainable development in general, and if they are familiar with the concept of Whole Institution Approach.
- 3) **Working areas:** Section to understand on which SDG-related research and education themes the HEIs are working, and how the work is organised.
- 4) **Governance and cooperation:** Section lead by the question if there is a governance on SD and a strategic plan in relation to SD, and if the HEIs are

collaborating with other networks around the world.

- 5) **IAU's role:** Section for feedback on how IAU can help enhance HESD initiatives.

In order to inform the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2019, the survey was open for six weeks, from the end of May until mid-July 2019. It was distributed through various channels: by IAU via the IAU WHED mailing list, which included at the time of distribution 7 894 different institutions, on social media, and by partner organisations and their networks. The survey was developed using the online tool "SurveyMonkey", which was also used for the analysis of this report.

## Survey Limitations

Universities and higher education institutions are very different in a variety of ways, including in size, location, disciplinary focus; it is therefore difficult for an individual person to grasp all the processes taking place within a university without conducting thorough research; as a result, the responses of this survey are subjective. This becomes especially apparent when sorting the answers by the position held by a respondent in a specific institution. This survey thus also provides for a snapshot of opinions about higher education and sustainable development and does not pretend to necessarily capture everything happening in detail in the sector. Yet, it gives a unique overview of what people think is happening, which can be more informative than a large number of detailed data. It also gives a good idea of developments during the last three years and will provide a basis for future studies.

Furthermore, some questions left room for interpretation, which adds a difference in understandings, culturally, individually and based on translations. This was especially the case for open-ended questions and questions that focused on the organisation of the institution. These are country and region specific as well.

Moreover, the universities answering this survey are not distributed evenly across the regions, percentage-wise. In the contacts of the WHED 16% are from North America, yet only 4% of

respondents in this survey indicated that they are from this continent. On the other hand are 16% of respondents from Africa, compared to a regional share 9% in the WHED. This leads to over- and under-representation of some region.

In addition, some countries contributed a much higher number of responses, which might add an additional bias for a region. This is the case of Spain, which represents 19% of total respondents, more than some world regions received. An added limitation that is also visible in the numbers of respondents is the languages available. Although the survey was translated into four languages, there is potentially still a large number of universities who were not reached due to language barriers.

Lastly, some concepts and ideas about sustainable development and how a university is organised are based on Western concepts and underlying structures. For example, the development of a strategic plan is not standard procedure across the higher education sector around the world. In addition, universities function differently in many parts of the world and surveys are not answered nor developed in the same manner everywhere. Although there were many efforts to minimise the "Western bias", for which many surveys, rankings, and assessment tools are criticised; biases may have remained but limited as much as possible.



# Results

The following chapters provide the analysis of the results of the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019. The full questionnaire is available in Annex I on page 57. All questions, except those asking about IAU's services (Q31 – Q35) are analysed in the subsequent chapters, although not in order and to a varying degree of depth, depending if the results provided new and additional insights or not. The order has been changed to highlight connections and to enhance the structure of the report.

Where it made sense, the responses were broken down to regional level, and in some cases also to the position within the institution of the individual respondents. In few cases, similar questions were analysed together, to

avoid redundant information. Each chapter will start with a brief rationale for the questions, how they fit with the purpose of the study, and how they can help understand HESD.

First, the relationship of higher education and the SDGs will be analysed. This is followed by an examination of the existence of Whole Institution Approaches for Sustainable Development and how they are connected to the 2030 Agenda. The third chapter shows how HEIs are connecting with other institutions and organisations for sustainable development. In the last chapter, obstacles that universities face when working with sustainable development are discussed and what needs to be done to promote sustainable development further.

## Higher Education and the SDGs

Higher education has been identified officially as target (4.3) within the 2030 Agenda, but it should be seen as much more, i.e. one of the enabling factors to achieve all SDGs. The impacts the SDGs have on higher education are twofold: on the one hand, the SDGs are transforming the way higher education institutions function. This includes for example teaching about them, specifically doing research or in general orienting the institution along the 2030 Agenda. Examples of changes brought about by the 2030 Agenda within the institution can be found in some of the institutional strategic plans listed in Institutional Strategic Plans and in the following chapter.

On the other hand, HEIs are actively contributing to the achievement of the Global Goals, again through teaching, research, community engagement and campus initiatives. What is more, the sector critically engages with

the goals set in the 2030 Agenda, questions them, revises them and in many cases translates them to the local level. Many academics and scientists are in dialogue with national governments, UN agencies and other policymakers, thus actively engaging themselves in the science-policy-interface.

Especially the science-policy-interface is mentioned many times in the text of the 2030 Agenda and is seen as one of the key methods to reach the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). Yet, according to a recent study done by UN DESA to assess the success of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) as mechanism to reach the 2030 Agenda, the science-policy-interface has been described as the least address and that it should be given more priority in the future by UN Agencies (UN DESA, 2019).

In short: higher education and the 2030 Agenda are closely connected and universities play a major role in achieving the SDGs (van't Land, 2017). However, the question about how universities around the world are translating those ideas into action remains, also since the 2030 Agenda was written for governments and it is hence not the task of higher education to implement the SDGs, but rather to engage with them.

## Understandings of Sustainable Development

IAU adopted the 1987 Brundtland definition (Brundtland Report, 1987), quoted earlier, when it comes to sustainable development. Yet, already in the Kyoto Declaration from 1993, IAU acknowledged the different needs and diverse understanding of HEIs by urging

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universities world-wide to seek, establish and disseminate a clearer understanding of Sustainable Development - "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations" - and encourage more appropriate sustainable development principles and practices at the local, national and global levels, in ways consistent with their missions (IAU, 1993).

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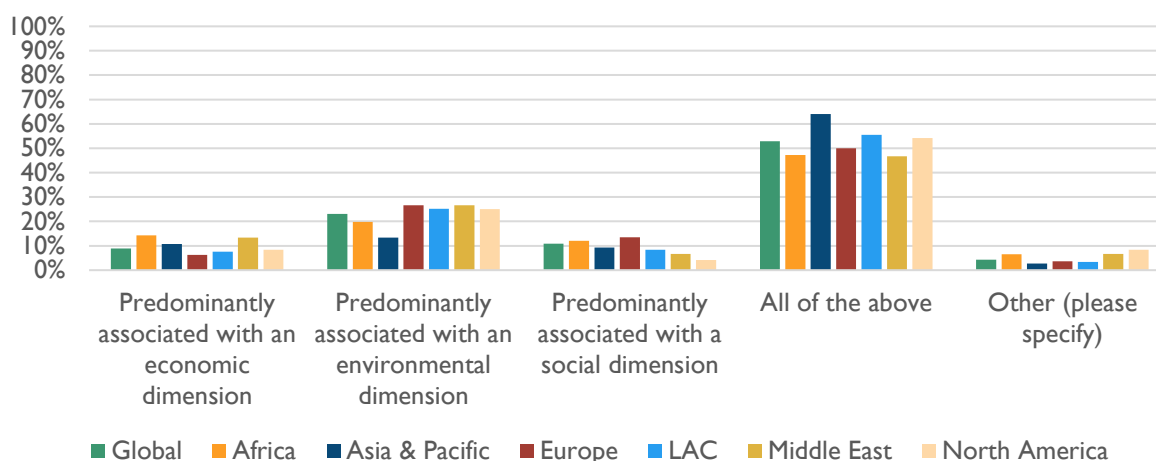
The Association further acknowledges the differences in development standards and lifestyles, highlighting that sustainable development can only be reached by working together, recognizing the importance of differences of approaches to sustainable development around the world.

Are all SDGs equally part of HEIs or are some more important than others? Is only a selection of people working with the 2030 Agenda or are multiple faculties and departments involved? What are universities doing for the SDGs? Those are some of the issues that the questions analysed in this chapter aim to answer.

This position was confirmed in 2014, with the adoption of the IAU Iquitos Statement, in which IAU calls for the importance of connecting different knowledge systems, in particular traditional knowledge systems and for the valorisation of cultural differences in the 2030 Agenda.

Therefore, sustainable development does not mean everywhere the same and is also an evolving concept, despite the most used definition being from 1987.

Although a varying understanding of the term exists at different institutions and in different contexts, latest with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development has become a holistic term that can be applied to all areas of human life. Given the short time since the adoption of the SDGs (2015), this definition is still evolving and spreading, which also becomes clear in the analysis of the survey. It was hence important for the survey to clarify what is understood by "Sustainable Development" at different HEIs around the world today.



**Figure 4: Main understandings of sustainable development at HEIs (n=516)**

“What is the predominant understanding of sustainable development at your institution?” was the corresponding question to the graph above. Respondents had to select one answer only; it was hence not possible to select two different options. This is visible in the “Other” section, as six respondents commented that there was no general understanding about sustainable development and five responded that it was social and environmental. For one respondent it was the combination of economic and environmental aspects.

In the 2016 version of the survey, respondents could also choose a cultural dimension. Yet, according to the results of 2016, this was seen as the same or similar like the social dimension and led to confusion, which is why this option was removed in 2019. Nevertheless, is the cultural dimension important for IAU and should not be forgotten, which is also why it is specially highlighted in the IAU Iquitos Statement from 2014.

In 2016, only one year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the environmental dimension was the most selected option with 84% responding that sustainable development was associated mostly with the environment. As can be seen in the above figure, if people chose only one answer it was still the environmental dimension (23%).

Yet, in 2019, almost 53% of all respondents see sustainable development as a holistic topic that is addressing all three dimensions. This view was

particularly high in Asia and the Pacific, where 64% agreed with this statement.

It is not surprising that people understand sustainable development differently, especially since the definition of sustainable development is not uncontested. Some people do not agree with the commonly used definition, as they see it as too Western focused and cannot agree with it (see also Morse, 2008).

For others, it is not clear enough what it entails. This is also one of the points of critique that the survey received in the comments: sustainable development within the institutions is not clearly defined, and either siloed within certain faculties or too broad for people to identify with. Especially for academics, defining sustainable development is problematic and can be an obstacle for the inclusion of sustainability topics in their work, as others have found as well (Wu and Shen, 2016).

This critical perspective is at the same time, what makes academics and universities so important to sustainable development, as it allows questioning and rethinking the actions taken. This is one of the reasons why part of the mechanisms introduced with the 2030 Agenda is the creation of a group of independent scientists, who produce Global Sustainable Development Reports every four years. The first one was published 2019 (Independent Group of Scientists, 2019). This group is mentioned in the original document of the 2030 Agenda and is one of the means of

implementation of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). This initiative's purpose is to enhance the science-policy interface and to increasingly include science and scientific data in decision making, for it to become more evidence based. That this needs to be further improved in the next ten years is evident in the UN DESA Report on the HLPF (2019), as has been mentioned before.

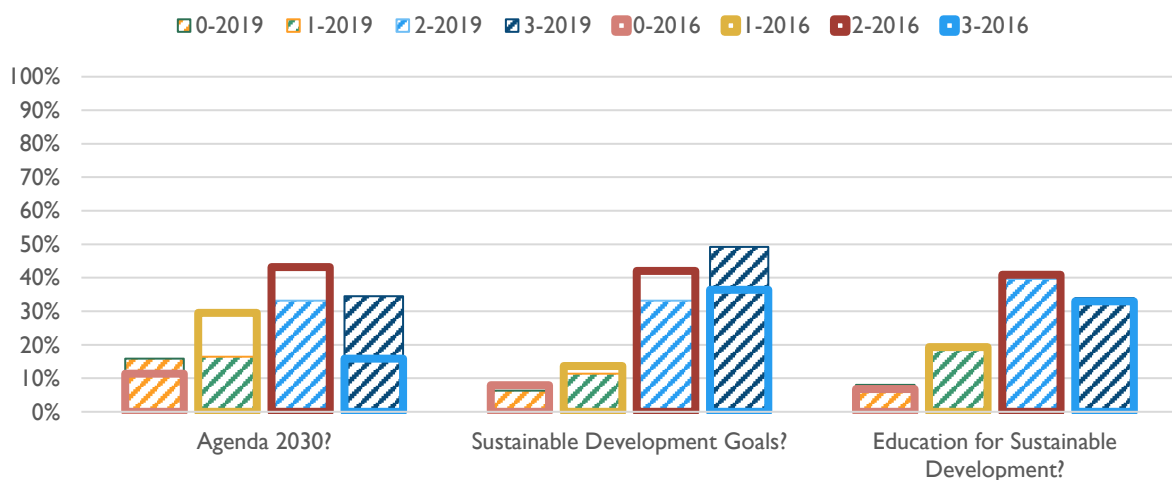
### Raising Awareness

Reaching the year 2020 means that the awareness-raising period ends and a majority of persons in society at large should be at least aware of the fact that the SDGs exist and that urgent action is required for future generations. This was the minimum that was aimed for and why the next ten years are called the *Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs*.

In summary, it is clear that sustainable development at HEIs is increasingly becoming a holistic topic that is looked at through different dimensions.

Compared to 2016, this has changed significantly and can be related to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, as will be shown next.

As has been seen in the previous graph, there is a visible change happening in the understanding of sustainable development in general. But how much knowledge do people actually think they have about the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and education for sustainable development?



**Figure 5: Knowledge about topics in sustainable development (0=nothing; 3=very knowledgeable), Comparison 2016:2019 (n=88/2016; n=516/2019)**

To assess the level of knowledge and hence awareness about sustainable development and related topics, respondents were asked to indicate how much they think they knew about different areas in relation to the 2030 Agenda, with zero meaning nothing and three being very knowledgeable. In the above figure, shaded columns indicate findings from 2019, whereas boxed columns show findings from 2016. Overall, perceived knowledge about the 2030

Agenda and the SDGs has increased, whereas knowledge about education for sustainable development remained the same.

In 2019, 35% of respondents indicated that they were very knowledgeable about the 2030 Agenda, compared to only 16% in 2016. A similar picture can be found for the SDGs, with almost 50% in the 2019 survey and 36% in 2016 indicating that they have a high understanding about the SDGs. This shows that awareness

raising campaigns for the 2030 Agenda are seemingly working. Future surveys will have to show if this will peak eventually, same like knowledge for education for sustainable development, or if knowledge and awareness will continue to grow.

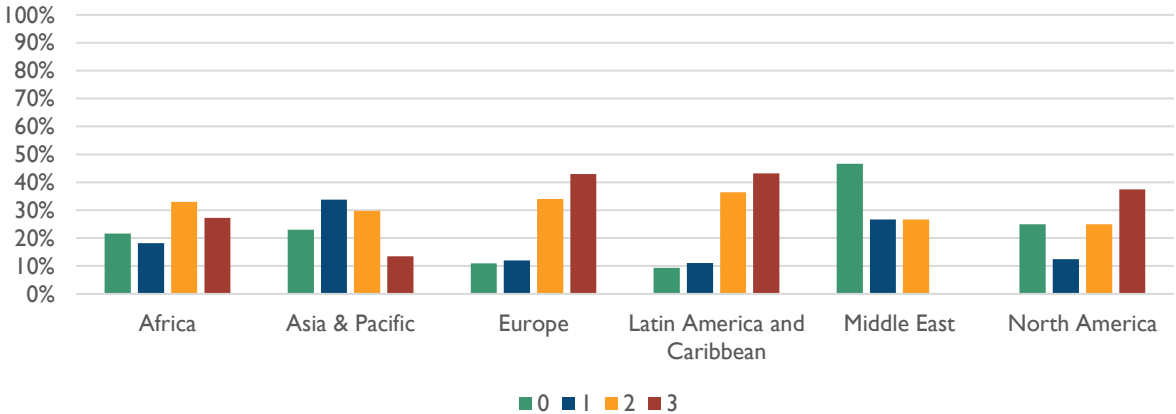
As in the initial IAU Global Survey on HESD, knowledge about the SDGs was indicated in 2019 as being significantly higher than the 2030 Agenda, with a difference of 14%. This is interesting since the SDGs are essentially a part of the 2030 Agenda and do not exist without it. This indicates that the SDGs are a useful tool for promoting sustainable development, but are not looked at in detail by many.

These results mean that in 2019, 84% of the respondents were at least aware (a knowledge of 1 and higher) that the 2030 Agenda exists, a number slightly lower than in 2016, which

probably is caused by the difference in sample size. This number is even higher for the SDGs, with 94% being at least aware of them.

In contrast, the 2017 version of the Eurobarometer, a representative public opinion survey by the European Parliament carried out on a regular basis in all European member states, found that only 43% of Europeans know what the SDGs are (Special Eurobarometer 445, 2017). Globally, according to Globescan Radar, another public survey conducted by a global consultancy firm, the number is lower, running at just 28% (2016).

From these finding, we can assume that IAU's survey respondents are much more sensitive to the topic of the SDGs than respondents in other surveys (Eurobarometer and Globescan), potentially due to their background in higher education.



**Figure 6: Knowledge about the 2030 Agenda; regional comparison (n=516)**

These differences in levels of knowledge can also be seen on a regional perspective. The SDGs received similar results across the continents, indicating that most respondents are aware of them no matter where they come from in a similar matter. However, knowledge about the 2030 Agenda varies greatly, as can be seen in the above graph.

In the Middle East, 47% of respondents indicated they did not know anything about the 2030 Agenda, compared to 53% who were aware of the SDGs in the region.

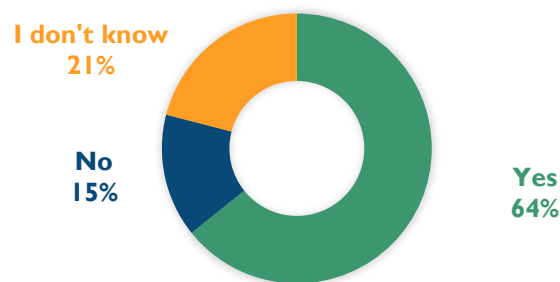
Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean on the other hand both had similarly high levels of knowledge, with only around 10% of respondents indicating that they did not know what the 2030 Agenda was. Especially in Asia and the Pacific, uncertainty about the 2030 Agenda is high, with 34% indicating that they had heard about the 2030 Agenda, but knew only little about it. Surprising are also the differences in North America, where knowledge was high, with 38% indicating very knowledgeable.

At the same time 25% indicated they knew nothing, which shows that there are big knowledge gaps.

The differences in levels of knowledge can also be partially explained by the respondents holding different positions within universities. Heads of institutions and academic staff predominantly indicated that they had a very high level of knowledge of the 2030 Agenda. The leadership level and administrative staff on the other hand indicated a medium level, indicating that self-assessed levels of knowledge are also subjective. Finally, students said, that they either know nothing or a lot. This may suggest that

students are not influenced by their position within the university but more likely by their personal interest or classes they were taking.

The Sulitest (Sustainability Literacy Test), launched in 2016 as a response to Rio+20, could be one of the ways to assess the levels of knowledge more objectively, once it includes the SDGs. Currently, the test shows a medium level of knowledge of sustainable development topics in general (Sulitest, 2019), yet knowledge is increasing, although with different rates for different SDGs. This is also a finding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAU Global Survey on HESD.



**Figure 7: Did the adoption of the SDGs increase interest in SD at HEIs? (n=453)**

The 2019 IAU Global Survey on HESD shows, that overall, the adoption of the SDGs increased interest in sustainable development at HEIs globally, with 64% indicating that interest has augmented since 2015. Interestingly, 80% of heads of institutions who responded to the survey saw an increase in interest in sustainable development thanks to the SDGs, indicating a high leadership support. Other members of the higher education community were more critical or were not aware of an increase.

Nevertheless, the opinions about how such an interest translates into actions and if the SDGs actually changed existing structures varies. Several survey comments indicated that some universities use the SDGs more as a marketing tool and to promote certain projects, rather than to engage with them critically and for systemic change. One respondent mentioned that the *Times Higher Education* (THE) Impact

Ranking, first published in 2019, increased interest for the 2030 Agenda at the leadership level. Others fear a rather superficial engagement and solely labelling existing actions as SDG orientated initiatives, this practice is also referred to as “SDG washing” (Nieuwenkamp, 2017).

Additional rather negative comments that see the SDGs predominantly as tools to obtain more funding include:

*“Interest in adopting [SDGs] in academic and research programs. They are the justification for obtaining financing.”*

*“The SDGs are unknown to the academic community. Management is interested in demonstrating what it does to respond to it and not*

*how to draw on its content to undertake a SD approach that is in line with the SDGs.”*

On the contrary, others highlighted the change they experienced thanks to enhanced government support and how this is helping with the mission and vision for sustainable development. Some respondents were very satisfied with the transformative impact thanks to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda:

*“The SDGs are an excellent roadmap for universities to focus and analyse their education-teaching processes, community engagement, initiatives carried out on campus, and research carried out to contribute to sustainable and inclusive development in the country.”*

*“[The 2030 Agenda] has been a boost to an institutional commitment and greater visibility to initiatives framed in sustainable development”*

*“The SDGs help to have a more comprehensive vision of sustainability”*

While a majority of comments were positive like the above, others highlighted the need for profound transformation across all levels. They lamented on the siloisation or compartmentalisation of work and how many HEIs are fragmented and are not working together:

*“Lack of dissemination and awareness of the importance of graduates as agents of change for a better world”*

### Working Areas of HEIs per SDG

No matter if the 2030 Agenda actually changed anything within the institutions or not, a large number of universities around the world are working on topics related to the SDGs. While the text of the 2030 Agenda mentions the

*“[Sustainable development] is treated as an isolated issue, when it should be involved in the strategic planning of the Institution”*

*“Increased interest but not for the whole institution. This topic competes with a number of other topics critical to higher education.”*

*“Although there are different initiatives, some of their entrepreneurs are not willing to align with the strategies that we carry from the Central Commission for Environmental Coordination; they are still working on “islands””*

In some cases, the nature of the SDGs was questioned, leaving room for doubts about how to work with them and also wondering about the role of universities:

*“We are clear that we want to work [with the SDGs]; now we do not know if the proposed scope within the educational activities will be adequate.”*

*“The SDGs have been developed for the states and have not been thought across the board for all organizations. It is curious for a material by nature transversal”*

The responses and comments above show, that it is difficult to generalise about the impact the 2030 Agenda had on institutions and also about what different types of opinions exist. They further demonstrate that while interest might have increased, this does not necessarily translate into the change needed to achieve the Global Goals. Yet, it is still good news that interest is growing and many people are engaging with the SDGs – although often with a critical view.

functions of HEIs in nine Goals (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 17), universities across the world are working to some extent on all of them.

Part of this report is therefore also a detailed analysis of how universities are working on SDG 1 to 16. SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, was not included in the survey due to the complexity of the Goal and since the targets are mainly for governments, making it more difficult to engage with the goal beyond its title. Nevertheless, some universities indicated in the comments section that they are working on SDG 17.

The potential ‘danger’ when asking people to sort their work according to SDGs is that they may “SDG wash” their work, meaning simply that they would add a new label to work they are already doing without critically questioning it. This is at times indeed happening at HEIs but also at large companies and governments (Nieuwenkamp, 2017). It also limits the possibility to look at the SDGs as interconnected. Nevertheless, the SDGs are a useful method to map the general level of activity in the sector and see which SDGs are the most addressed.

Due to the way the question to analyse the SDGs was asked (Please tell us how and on which SDGs your institution is working (leave blank when you are not addressing an SDG)), the following analysis will show if an institution is working on a specific SDG. The graphs are separated into “good established work”,

meaning that the HEI is already working on this goal effectively. “Emerging work” on the other hand indicates that the university aims to increase work in this area.

The overall number of respondents for this question was 317, although this varies by SDG. In order to limit false responses, student answers were excluded from the analyses for this question, which lowers the count to n=303. Yet, due to the complexity of the question, the results have to be taken with a pinch of salt, since an individual respondent might not know all the activities going on in an institution.

It is therefore important to note that answers are subjective because not many universities around the world map their work according to the SDGs. While a growing number is starting to do so, as for example the University of Costa Rica (Jensen and Angulo, 2019) and the University of Bologna (Paletta and Bonoli, 2019; UNIBO GEAR 2018, 2019), many are not.

Mapping the SDGs with hard data is in general a difficult task to carry out. At UN Level, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), is trying to solve this issue. For higher education, many organisations are trying (e.g. in the THE Impact ranking. For a summary of the methodology please see *Times Higher Education*, 2019), but with varying results.



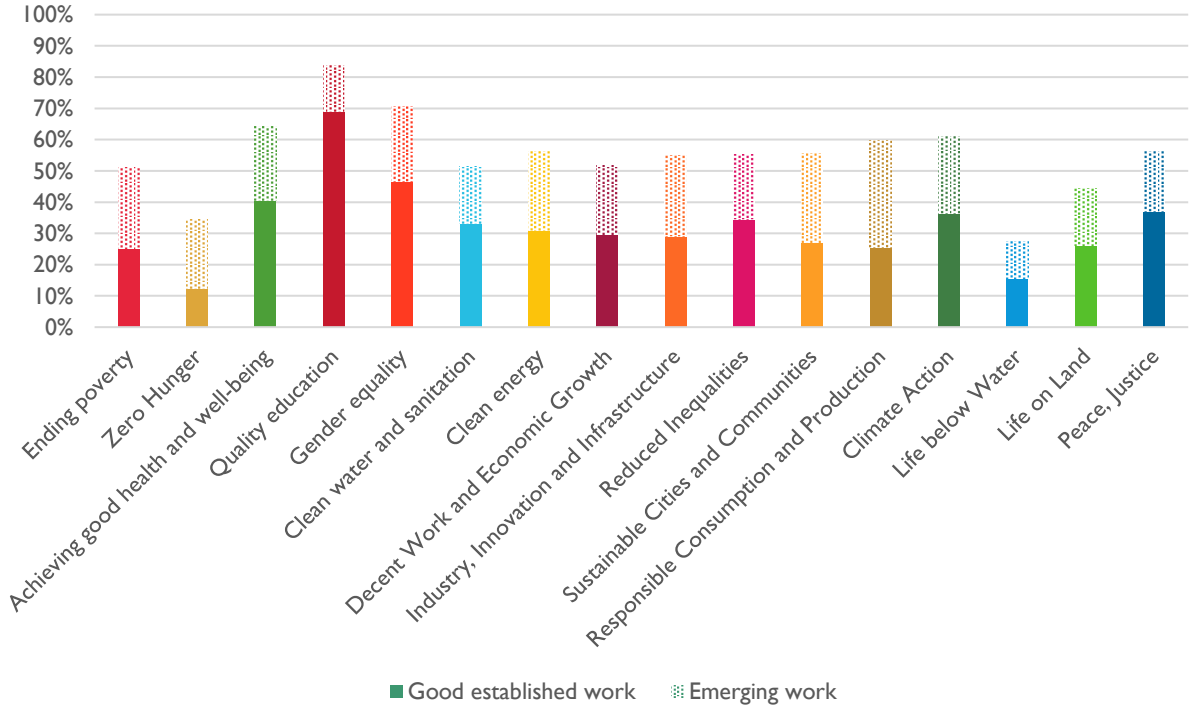


*Dutch Universities*, a university network of Dutch universities, for example developed together with the AURORA Network, another European university network, an approach to mapping the impact of Dutch universities for the SDGs. They used a bibliometric tool, which looked at publications and used specific keywords, to create an “SDG Dashboard” (Vereniging van universiteiten, 2019). The results of this research based on publications is very different from the results from the subjective IAU questionnaire. For example is SDG 2: Zero Hunger, considered to be a priority working area in the Netherlands. In the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 on the other hand, it is one of the least developed SDGs in all dimensions. This result could of course also

come from the difference in scope, yet it is more likely that it is due to the different methods.

In the IAU Global Survey in HESD 2019, the SDGs are each looked at according to the missions of universities: teaching and education, research, community engagement, and campus initiatives. These four dimensions are key to incorporating a whole institution approach, looked at in the next chapter, which is why they were separated in this question.

In order to put the results into context, the following analysis also includes references to data portals, publications etc. where more information on each of the SDGs is available. This is a non-exhaustive list and should be seen as a starting point for further analysis



**Figure 8: Working areas SDGs: Education and Teaching (n=303)**

Education and Teaching is the area of work which received the most replies, indicating that this is the dimension of higher education where people see the most potential for embedding sustainable development. It is no surprise to see that the survey confirms that SDG 4: Quality Education is a priority for HEIs, and is by far the most addressed Goal overall, with almost 85% indicating that they are working on achieving

SDG 4. This is closely followed by SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being.

Overall, respondents indicated a high willingness to increase work in different areas. In particular SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, is the SDG receiving most ‘new’ attention, as it counts the highest number (34%)

of “emerging work” responses. It is followed by SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (28%), SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (26%) and SDG 1: No Poverty (26%).

Clearly, the Goal that is least addressed when it comes to education and teaching is SDG 14: Life below Water. Only 27% of respondents indicated already established work or emerging work in total. SDG 2: Zero Hunger, although currently the least developed (12%), overtakes SDG 14 when it comes to work currently being established (22%). Only 12% indicated that work is emerging for SDG 14.

The high number of respondents indicating working on the 2030 Agenda through education and teaching is in particular relevant for SDG 4.7, which focuses primarily on education for sustainable development: This target is transversal and not only related to SDG 4, making it one of the most important, but also most difficult targets to measure. As can be seen in the diversity of topics addressed in SDG 4.7, it is very difficult to determine what exactly respondents of the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 understood under Quality Education.

UNESCO published a report in 2018 with findings to all targets and indicators for SDG 4 (UNESCO-UIS, 2018). This report shows the challenges met when it comes to collecting data and measuring higher education (compared to primary and secondary education) and especially SDG 4.7:



*by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*

Concerning one of the targets directly addressing higher education, SDG 4.B, which aims to “substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing

countries”, which should be achieved already by 2020, the number is difficult to assess. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, spending on scholarships decreased by 4% between 2010 and 2015. However, a large number of countries do not include scholarship spending in their aid programmes in the data collection (UNESCO, 2018). In this case, universities are tasked to develop means to exchange knowledge among each other also without the help of funding agencies. That there is still room for improvement in this regard will be shown in Figure 19.

The second SDG receiving most attention under Education and Teaching is SDG 5: Gender Equality. As can be seen in the description of SDG 4.7, gender and education are closely related in the context of the Global Goals. SDG 5 is, like SDG 4, seen as a transversal goal of importance to achieve the other Goals; measuring what exactly HEIs do in support of SDG 5 is problematic. Primarily, because the Goal focuses only on women and girls and excludes non-binary, gender fluid and LGBTQ+ subjects.

One example to measure Gender Equality in higher education is the approach of THE. THE tried in their impact ranking to measure it by research output done by women, papers on gender equality, number of first-generation female students, and the number of female faculty and graduates among others (THE, 2019b). This approach, however, gives a rather unclear picture of Gender Equality in relation to SDG 5; especially since if there are today more women than men graduating, this does not mean that they reach gender parity at leadership level (UNESCO, 2018; UNIBO GEAR 2018, 2019). Nevertheless, the large number of respondents indicating that they work on SDG 5 is a good sign that efforts to reach Gender Equality through higher education are increasing.

Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 3, is the third most developed goal in Education and Teaching. Higher education is often seen as a way to reduce the shortage of health workers, by training qualified doctors, nurses, and other health professionals (UNESCO, 2018).

Moreover, HEIs are contributing to open knowledge projects, facilitating access to information and exchange for people who want to learn and research about diseases.

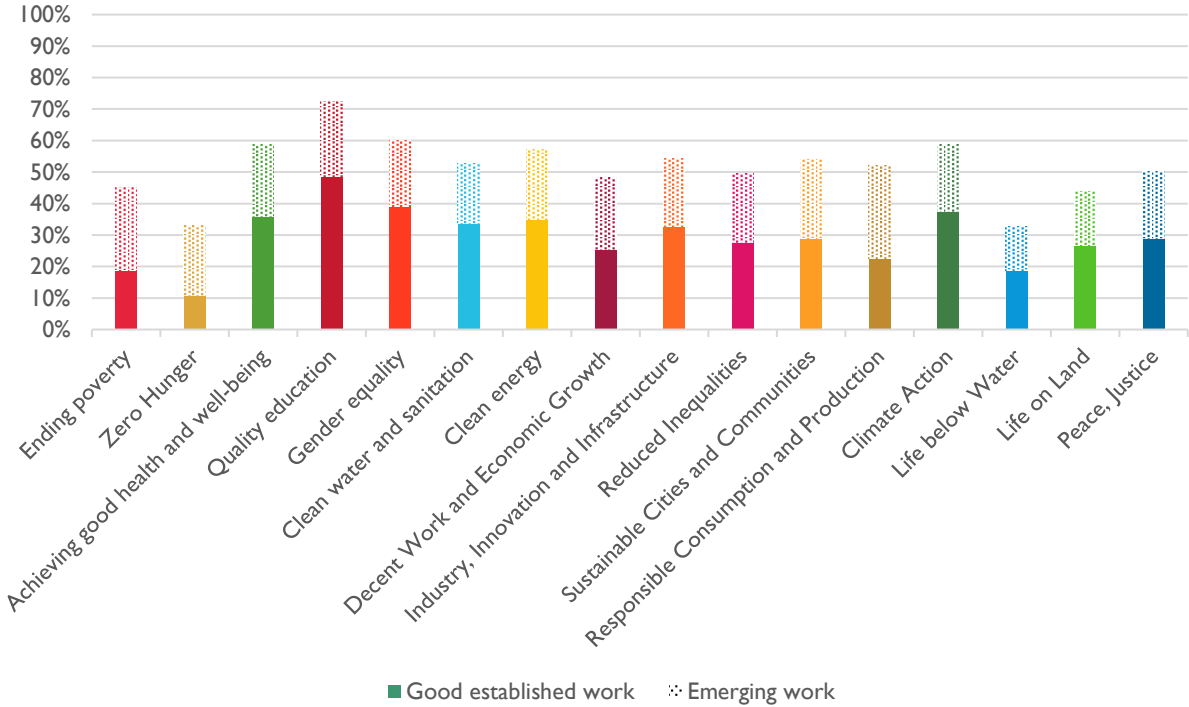
Under the leadership of the World Health Organisation (WHO), a “Global Action Plan for healthy lives and well-being for All” has been developed to increase the impact of SDG 3 (WHO, n.d.). Currently, higher education is not specifically mentioned in the plan, but will hopefully be included in the future.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is another goal mentioned in SDG 4.7 and is again considered transversal for all Goals. It is the fourth most developed goal in the Education and Teaching section (37%, good established work), just ahead of SDG 13: Climate Action, which will

be looked at in more detail in the research question, a section below.

With the *Doha Declaration*, the United Nations acknowledged the important role education plays for crime prevention and integrated crime prevention further into the United Nations agenda (UNODC, 2015). Although of key importance, according to the 2019 IAU HESD Survey SDG 16 is paradoxically one of the SDGs that is not as fast being developed by HEIs as the others are, with only about 19% indicating that it is emerging work.

Overall, it is very positive that many respondents are developing work on the SDGs, indicating that there is a high interest and willingness to transform, at least in the area of Education and Teaching.



**Figure 9: Working areas SDGs: Research (n=303)**

Research is often seen as the area where higher education can contribute the most to the achievement of the SDGs. Science, unlike higher education, is mentioned 16 times and research 9 times in the original text of the 2030 Agenda.

The special position of research and science within the 2030 Agenda has been briefly

described previously, with the 2030 Agenda calling for increased science-policy interfaces. This shows how important research and science are to help develop solutions to the complex problems of today’s world.

In the 2019 IAU Global Survey on HESD, research was the second most selected working

area for the SDGs at universities, receiving about 6% fewer responses than education and teaching. Although the work is more evenly distributed among all goals than Teaching and Education, the most developed Goal here is again SDG 4 (49% good established work), followed by SDG 13: Climate Action (38%) and SDG 5: Gender Equality (39%). In particular SDG 1: No Poverty (19%), 2: Zero Hunger (11%) and 14: Life Below Water (19%) are behind in terms of good established work. SDG 12, same like previously, is the goal most institutions are currently developing (30%, emerging work).

Climate change is becoming increasingly noticeable and awareness about the urgency for implementing actions to slow down the process is growing. This is also visible in research done at HEIs, indicating that the number of publications and projects on SDG 13 is continuously rising.

In 2019, the global university community started to sign the Global Climate Emergency letter, coordinated by UN Environment, EAUC and Second Nature. To date, over 243 institutions and 45 networks signed (EAUC, 2019). Universities are committing themselves in the letter to mobilize more resources for climate change research and education, to become carbon-neutral by 2030 or the latest 2050 and to include climate change education in the curriculum and community engagement. The full letter is available in Higher Education's Essential Contribution to the SDGs (IAU, ACU, AUF).

Initiatives for climate action are being developed almost on a daily basis. For example, a Global University Consortium for SDG 13 was launched by the University of the West Indies, which is part of the IAU Global Cluster on HESD and united universities on different continents to conduct climate research ([www.universities4climateaction.org](http://www.universities4climateaction.org)).

Governments, funding bodies and HEIs are equally stepping up their game to address issues relating to climate change, as the Progress Report for the SDGs by the UN Secretary-General shows (ECOSOC, 2019). Only the future can show if this will be enough.

Especially SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure has a strong connection to research in the text of the 2030 Agenda. SDG Target 9.5 aims to:



*Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending*

This call is a great chance for HEIs to increase their research and to contribute to the development of their countries. It is therefore astonishing that not more respondents express interest to invest in this goal (only 22% indicated emerging work).

One reason could be, as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics shows, that it is the same countries that are already dominating the global knowledge production that continue to invest the most in research (UNESCO-UIS, 2019). In this way, other countries still need to recognize the importance of research and development (R&D) for the development of their countries, so that resources and possibilities can be better distributed. Nevertheless 54% of respondents to the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 indicate that they work on SDG 9, which is higher than work on others.

Also the cooperation with companies, which is further discussed in Figure 22 on page 47, shows that there is still potential for SDG 9 at HEIs.

Currently, according to the 2019 Global HESD Survey, the least developed Goal in research is SDG 2: Zero Hunger, although it is likely to overtake SDG 14 soon, since respondents to the survey indicated that they wish to triple the amount of research done for SDG 2. Currently, only 11% indicated that work is already well established, but 22% said that it is considered emerging work at their university.

This is good news, especially since agricultural research is mentioned in the 2030 Agenda text

for SDG 2 as one of the means to tackle hunger. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), government spending has increased for SDG 2, which creates “improved food security, reduced inequalities, inclusive growth and the creation of decent jobs” (FAO, n.d.). This might be one of the reasons, why research for SDG 2 is growing fast.

SDG 14 seems to be the “forgotten SDG” in all dimensions of an HEI according to the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019. It is one of the least developed goals for research (19%) and there are few universities where it is emerging work (14%). The University of Bergen, lead institution for SDG14 in the IAU Global Cluster on HESD, being one of the universities that are intensively working with and for SDG 14.

This exclusion of SDG 14 is not only something that can be observed in the higher education community. For example, SDSNs SDG Index only measures a countries actions towards SDG 14 when it has a coast, effectively excluding 49 countries from the responsibility towards our world’s oceans (SDSN, 2019).

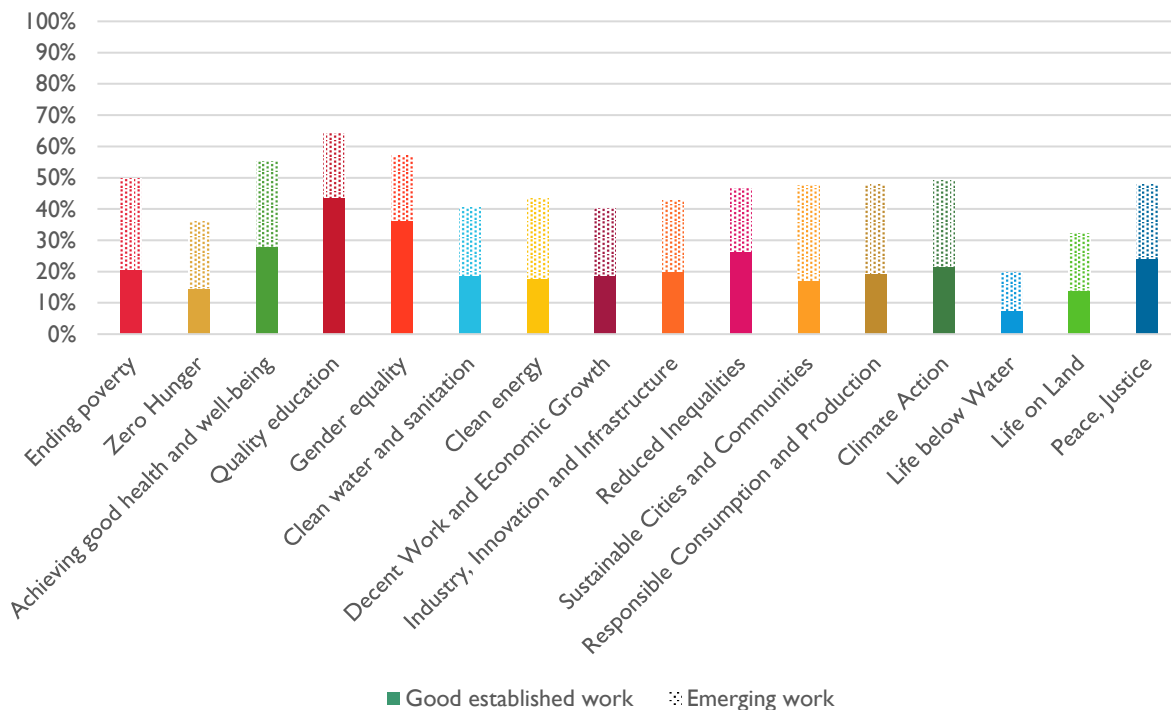
Nevertheless, SDG target 14.A shows that it will require more research and more cooperation from all to reach the Goal:



*Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular Small Island developing States and least developed countries.*

Another point that shows the importance of SDG 14 is that the silence procedure for the political declaration for the SDG Summit was broken once, meaning that a delegation was not in agreement with the original draft, in 2019. The delegation wanted to include specifically the danger of “discharge of plastic litter into the ocean” in paragraph 20 (President of General Assembly, 2019). Furthermore, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), will put special focus on Ocean Science and is led by Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC), which consists of a mix of scientists and policy makers.

In summary, it is possible to say that there is still potential for more research that engages with the SDGs in general. Research is key for most SDGs, which is why it is important to enhance work there and increase funding possibilities.



**Figure 10: Working areas SDGs: Community Engagement (n=303)**

The so-called third mission of universities received 18% fewer responses than education and 12% fewer than research in the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019. The reason for this is probably that community engagement was not traditionally part of the work of universities, and was added to the agendas of many HEIs only recently (Zomer and Benneworth, 2011). Too often still, are universities perceived as “ivory towers” and seen as not engaging with the local community. This is changing, as many examples especially in the Global South, also in relation to the SDGs, show (Jacob et al., 2015).

Particularly for the 2030 Agenda, the local mission of universities is important as HEIs can translate the Global Goals to the local level and vice versa. It has been argued that, without putting the SDGs also into local perspective, they will fail like most of the MDGs previously (Liverman, 2018). Some universities, like Siam University in Thailand, the IAU Global Cluster on HESD lead institution for SDG 11, are already opening up to include all members of their local community and university staff alike in their quest for a more sustainable society (Siam University, n.d.). For others, there is still a long way to go before establishing these ties.

The SDG most explicitly linked to community engagement is SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities. As the 2019 IAU HESD Survey shows, not even one fifth of responding universities have established structures in that area of work (17% good established work). Nevertheless, the willingness to initiate work in this area is high, with over 30% indicating that work is emerging on that topic. One direct solution could be the opening of green campus areas, responding to SDG Target 11.7, which calls for more green and public spaces.

Since the first World Development Report in 1978, reducing poverty has been on global development agendas. Within the 2030 Agenda, Goal 1 aims to “eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere”, and although we are not on track to achieve this goal, the number of people living in extreme poverty is at its lowest today (ECOSOC, 2019). Nevertheless, a lot of work remains to be done. In 2019, only about 21% of respondents of the IAU Global Survey on HESD indicated to have well-established work ongoing for SDG 1 at the community engagement initiatives at their HEIs. However, almost 30% are establishing new initiatives for work in this area.

Poverty and its effects have direct implications for higher education. UNESCO identified poverty as one of the main reasons for education drop out (UNESCO-UIS, 2018). Although the enrolment rate in HEIs is rising globally, research suggests that it is mostly still those better off financially that can attend higher education (OECD, 2018). At the same time, more students from diverse backgrounds, especially in countries of the Global South, are entering higher education, making universities more diverse, while confronting the sector with new challenges (Ferreyra, et al., 2017).

Poverty is also directly related to SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth. Universities are increasingly called to “produce” graduates suitable for the changing labour markets. For example, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) organised at the 2019 HLPF a special event with the title: *Green Jobs, Green Minds: Rewiring Higher Education for the Future*, with a strong focus on the link between higher education and the labour market. This notion, however, is controversially discussed by universities, who claim to teach more than solely skills needed for a specific job (e.g. Brett, 2016).

According to the 2019 IAU Global Survey on HESD, SDG 8 received a middle position in all dimensions under review (19% good established work, 21% emerging work for community engagement); indicating that interest in this SDG amongst respondents is about average. This shows that HEIs perceive themselves as more than just places that “substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” (SDG Target 8.6).

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities received little attention for the questions on education and research, but became much more important for community engagement. Almost 28% of respondents, the third highest number for community engagement, indicated that they had “good established work” for reducing

inequalities. Indeed, higher education has long been considered to reduce inequality, since it gives access to more knowledge and hence more possibilities.

However, it is also possible that higher education increases inequality by favouring those who already have access to it. An example might come from internationalization of higher education. According to the definition adopted by IAU:

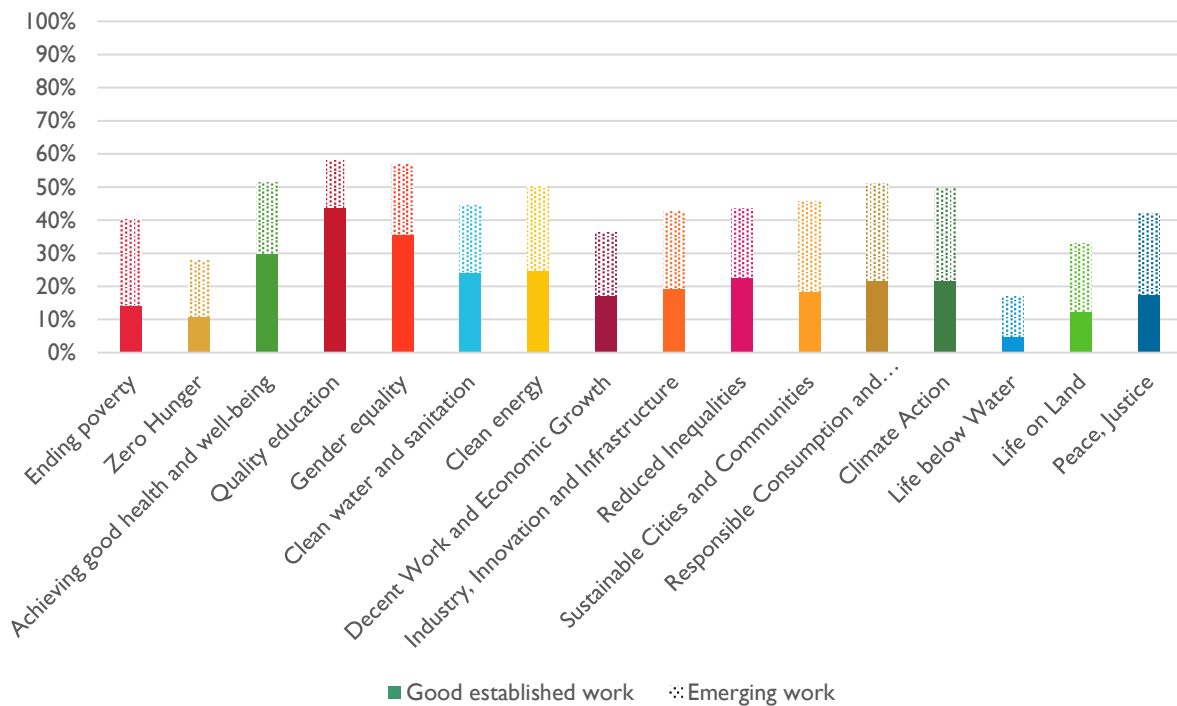
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[Internationalization of higher education is] the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society (De Wit, H., Hunter F., Howard L., Egron-Polak E. (Eds.), 2015).

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Internationalisation of higher education should be inclusive and therefore supposed to reduce inequalities. However, according to the 5th *Global Survey on the internationalization of higher education* (Marinoni, 2019), in practice internationalisation can actually increase inequalities, if it is pursued only by HEIs that are already highly engaged in it and not by the others. (Marinoni and de Wit, 2019). Nonetheless, the fact that reducing inequality seems to be a priority topic for community engagement suggests this topic goes beyond access to higher education.

In conclusion, HEIs work on the different SDGs show, that it possible to connect the 2030 Agenda with community engagement more inclusively. Yet, more work is needed to connect the work being done at universities with the local community and also to make people aware that they what they are already doing for the 2030 Agenda.



**Figure 11: Working areas SDGs: Campus Initiatives (n=303)**

The smallest number of respondents saw a connection between the work they are doing on campus and the various SDGs. 21% fewer responses than for education and teaching were received for this dimension. This is probably due to the more ‘technical’ nature of campus initiatives, as in many universities it is considered part of facility management rather than a topic concerning everyone, and is sometimes not part of the direct management of an HEI. Nevertheless, Figure 14, on page 37 in the next section, will show that differences between regions vary when it comes to campus initiatives, meaning that some are very active and engaged, whereas others are not.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is considered as the SDG that should trigger a change of mind-sets in people about their own behaviour. It is again closely linked to SDG 4.7. While this particular Goal is mostly targeted at developed countries and the overconsumption there, target 12.8 highlights that it is important for all:



*By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.*

Universities and HEIs around the globe have started campus initiatives that are promoting and creating more responsible consumption and production patterns among the higher education community. The University of Regina, lead university for SDG 12 in the IAU Global Cluster in HESD, for example, has stopped using trays in their cafeterias in order to limit food waste. Other universities are also working on green concepts for a circular use of resources, for instance second hand market for books, clothes, bikes etc. That there is a large number of responses interested in this Goal is also visible in the responses. According to the 2019 Survey, 29% of respondents are currently developing new programmes to incorporate SDG 12 into their campuses, making it the SDG with the most development potential for campus initiatives.



Altogether, 50% of respondents indicated that they are working on integrating affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) into their campuses. This is also visible in the increasing number of HEIs that are acquiring sustainability certifications for their buildings such as ISO Sustainability Standards (Setyorini, et al., 2016). Other initiatives have combined SDG 12 and 7, encouraging students and staff to switch off lights and other appliances not in use, for example the *Saves2* initiative by UNICA and the National Union of Students in the UK.

The last SDG that can be clearly described as “campus oriented” is SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. In terms of development, it is a bit behind the related SDG 7, with 24% indicating that work on this SDG is already well established in campus operations and 20% indicating that it is an emerging work.

In 2019, the United Nations launched the *SDG 6 Data Portal*, aiming to increase the visibility and work on that particular Goal. The issue with SDG 6, also visible at universities, is that it is often overlooked. The 2030 Agenda identifies 11 indicators to measure this goal, but for five indicators not enough data is available on a global level according to the *SDG 6 Data Portal*. This makes it potentially more difficult to work on that Goal. Nevertheless we have the example of the University of Tehran, lead institution in the IAU HESD Cluster for SDG 6, and its Water Institute that works together with the national government on the challenges posed in SDG 6.

Last but not least SDG 15: Life on Land. Only about 10% of respondents indicated that campus initiatives are targeted at conserving

## Whole Institution Approach

A Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development is an institutional strategy that incorporates sustainable development principles into all areas of an institution. There are different ways to develop a Whole Institution Approach, and they need to be adopted to the local conditions of an HEI. Additionally is a growing number of HEIs incorporating the

biodiversity. This of course is also due to the fact that the majority of universities are in urban settings, not leaving much space for biodiversity on campus. Nevertheless, some initiatives such as the “University in a Garden” (USM, 2003) a concept developed at Universiti Sains Malaysia on the Island of Penang in Malaysia show ways on how to integrate conservation of biodiversity on campus. A growing number of universities have botanic gardens and open their collections to the public to use. Yet, this is of course highly dependent on location and some respondents might not have thought about this approach towards SDG 15.

An interesting finding going through the survey data and regarding the SDGs separately is that it was mainly the same SDGs that universities were working on or developing, leaving some SDGs out. Times Higher Education did a similar assessment, and decided, based on their findings, only to analyse the most frequently mentioned SDGs in their first Impact Ranking, excluding SDGs 1, 2, 6, 7, 14 and 15 (Times Higher Education, 2019). While indeed 1, 2 and 14 seem to be less developed at universities, it does not mean that they are not relevant or not being worked on, rather the inverse. The next THE Impact Ranking, to be released in 2020, will include all SDGs.

In summary, the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 found that universities are working on all of the SDGs, although to different extents. Particularly promising are the high number of universities indicating that they are developing more work on the SDGs, which shows that the *Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs* can count on higher education’s contribution.

SDGs in their Whole Institution Approaches (Mallow & van't Land, Forthcoming).

In the 2016 version of the HESD Survey, two questions focused on the Whole Institution Approach. One question asked the respondents if they were familiar with the concept “Whole Institution Approach”, which 69% agreed to. In addition, 45% of the respondents in 2016

indicated that they had adopted a Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development at their institution.

In the 2019 version, instead of asking the same questions as in 2016, it was important for IAU to understand how a Whole Institution Approach is implemented at individual institutions and what the differences to other HEIs are. Therefore, instead of asking respondents directly if they thought they adopted a Whole Institution Approach, IAU asked questions allowing to assess to what extent they fulfilled the criteria for a Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development. The indicators IAU used to identify a Whole Institution Approach are:

1. Sustainable development included in Mission and Vision (for example through a strategic plan)
2. Budget allocation for sustainable development
3. Inclusion of sustainable development in all dimensions of an HEI (Teaching, Research, Community Engagement, Campus Initiatives)
4. Engagement of the entire higher education community and leadership

## General Strategy

To assess if a Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development exists, it was first important to see if there was a strategy for the inclusion of sustainable development at HEIs, if there was a specific budget and in which dimensions sustainable development was embedded.

Having sustainable development included either in the general strategic plan of an institution or

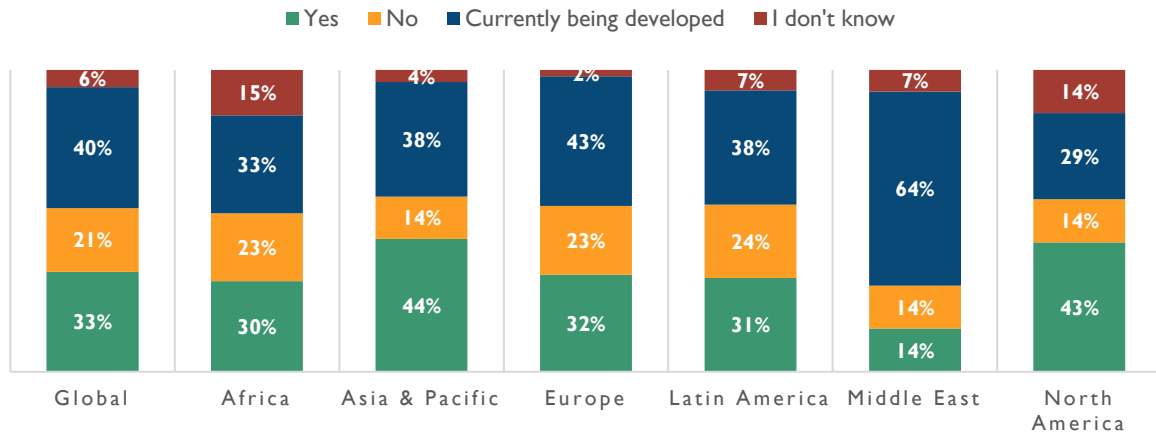
## 5. Creation or use of assessment tools

While it can be difficult to fulfil all five criteria, especially for universities who developed their strategic plan before 2015, it was decided that universities fulfilling three of the five criteria could be counted as having adopted a Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development. In some cases, universities indicated that they are actively working on a better inclusion of sustainable development into the whole institution. In those cases, the answers were valued in favour of the universities. This also means that there are different versions of how sustainable development is embedded in an institution.

The following chapter gives an overview on the differences in Whole Institution Approaches around the world. It will show that the adoption of a Whole Institution Approach is subjective, and not every member of an HEI will agree that it exists, although there is an institutional plan to embed sustainable development. This is one way of showing what is required to further integrate the 2030 Agenda fully into (higher) education, which is one of the aims of the UNESCO *ESD for 2030* plan, the follow-up of the Global Action Programme on ESD (UNESCO, 2019).

to develop a separate sustainability plan can be considered key indicators for a Whole Institution Approach.

A sustainability budget further indicates the importance sustainable development is given at an HEI and what financial means an institution has to incorporate sustainability principles.



**Figure 12: Strategic Plans for Sustainable Development (n=332)**

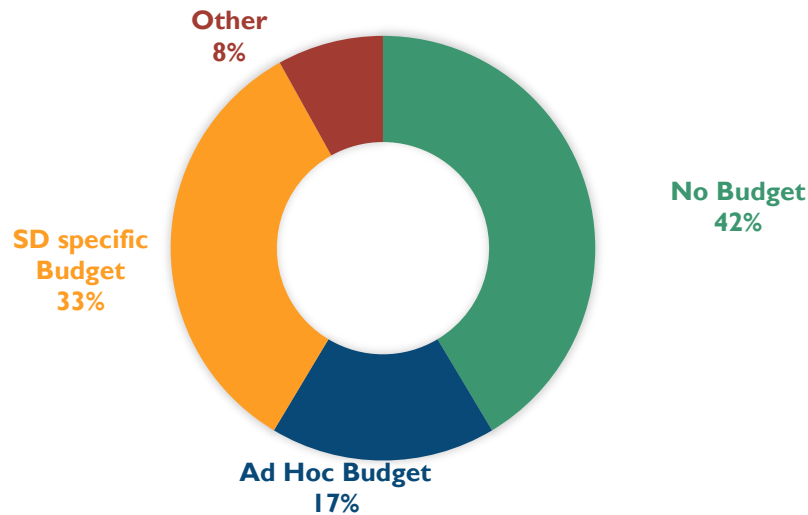
In 2016, 34% of respondents reported to have adopted a strategic plan for sustainable development, almost the same number as in 2019 (33%). Globally, in 2019 only 21% of respondents neither had a plan nor were developing one, which is a decrease of seven percent compared to 2016, although the 2016 version did not give the option “I don’t know” which could explain the difference. The fact that the numbers on a global level stayed almost the same indicates that the development of a strategic plan is time consuming and not always deemed essential.

Especially in Asia and the Pacific a large number of strategic plans exists, with 44% indicating that their institution has adopted a plan for sustainable development. This is closely followed by universities in North America, where 43% have a sustainability plan. Only 14% of respondents from the Middle East indicated that they have a strategic plan, yet 63% indicated that they are working on one. Africa, Europe and Latin America yielded similar results, with around 30% indicated that they had a strategic plan and 23% not having one.

111 respondents described their strategic plans in the comment section, with many providing links for detailed information on their HEI’s strategy. A list with the links, sorted by language, can be found in Institutional Strategic Plans.

When looking into the comments, it becomes clear that strategic plans and their understanding vary greatly. Some respondents shared specific strategic plans aiming to embed sustainable development throughout the whole institution. Others highlighted that sustainability is addressed in the overarching strategy. In some institutions, as was discussed in Figure, the focus lies almost exclusively on environmental initiatives, while others focus on all dimensions. There were few strategic plans that include the 2030 Agenda, some focusing only on some Goals, others on all of them. In some cases, existing strategic plans were amended to include the 2030 Agenda.

What is further interesting to see is the varying degree of knowledge about strategic plans when it comes to the positions within institutions. Unsurprisingly, heads of institutions and the leadership level in general were aware of the existence of a strategic plan in relation to sustainable development, with a majority responding that there was a plan at their institution. In total, 45% of heads of institutions responded that there was a strategic plan. 24% of academic and administrative staff on the other hand responded that there was a strategic plan, and 31% indicating that one was in development. Most students in the survey did not know about a strategic plan, which is why they were excluded from Figure 12 above.



**Figure 13: Financial support for sustainable development (n=219)**

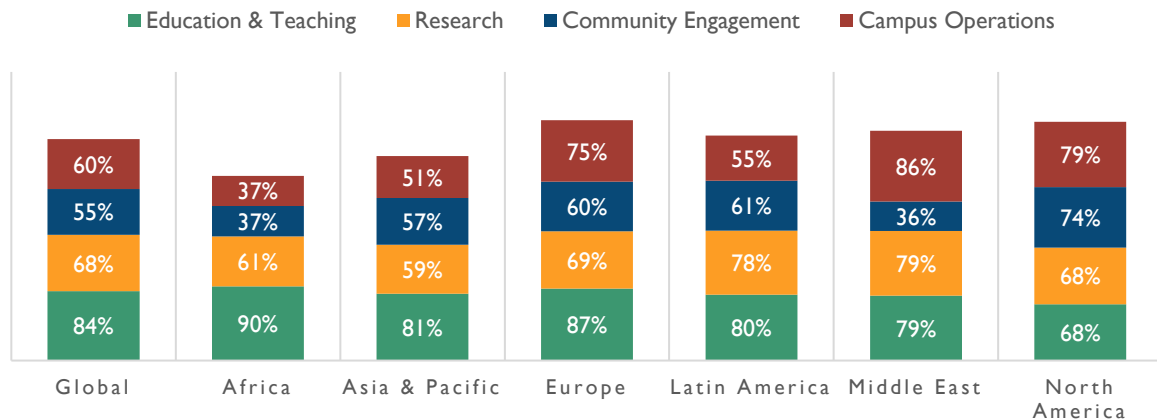
219 respondents answered the question of whether there was a specific budget for sustainable development at their institution. The question was an open-ended question, and sorting into categories was done manually afterwards. This also ensured that the different types of budget allocation are displayed.

A majority of 42% indicated that there was no specific budget. Another 17% suggested that funding was available, but either not sufficient, only for certain projects and on an ad hoc basis. 33% responded that there was a specific budget allocated in the overall annual budget, ranging from 0.7% to 10%, with some universities spending over 5 million € annually on sustainability. 8% indicated that they were currently discussing about the issue, or that they did not know about the budget.

A question concerning changes in the budget allocation during the last 5 years received a broad range of responses. Out of the 50% of institutions that have some kind of funding, 9% indicated that funding had decreased during the last 5 years. 42% of the institutions had seen an increase, with five institutions seeing a 100% increase. The remaining responses indicated that the budget had stayed the same.

The amount of staff officially working with sustainable development varies greatly. Most institutions had under 10 people working for sustainable development, if any at all. In contrast, few HEIs had more than 1000 people working for sustainable development. This sub question is difficult to analyse, since each response depends on the individual definition of sustainable development and of who works for sustainable development (e.g. only administrative staff who have it in the title, or also researchers and professors?). Nevertheless, most agreed that there were not enough people involved in sustainable development overall.

How to finance sustainable development is not only an issue for HEIs but also for the United Nations and for individual countries. Financing forums have been held in previous years and will continue to be part of the agenda of next meetings. The 2019 – 2021 United Nations Secretary-General’s *Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* suggests a number of initiatives to finance the SDGs, yet none of them includes universities (United Nations Secretary General, 2019-2021).



**Figure 14: Areas of Engagement for Sustainable Development (n=453)**

The above graph shows that many universities have still not adopted a Whole Institution Approach that focuses on all dimensions of higher education, otherwise the working areas would be equal. This result is similar to the working areas for the SDGs analyses in chapter Working Areas of HEIs per SDG, showing that some areas are more developed than others.

What is interesting in the above graph is that more respondents are working on Campus Operations compared to Community Engagement, a different result than in the working areas for the SDGs. One reason for this could be the higher number of respondents and the difference in understanding (campus operations vs. campus initiatives). Another reason could also be that in the figure above sustainable development is addressed as a whole and not separated into the SDGs.

Figure 14 also shows that the dimensions of higher education address sustainable development to a different extent across the world regions. According to the survey, Europe and North America are closest to having adopted whole institution approaches, with 60% addressing all dimensions in Europe and 68% in North America. Africa, on the other hand, is very strong in teaching, but not as much in community engagement and campus operations, suggesting that only 37% of HEIs have adopted Whole Institution Approaches.

In the more traditional working areas of HEIs, education and research, universities around the world are already integrating sustainable development at a high level. 8 out of 10 respondents indicated that their universities were embedding sustainable development in education and teaching. For research, 68% replied that their research focuses on sustainable development, with universities in the Middle East reaching almost 80%, the highest number.

In contrast, community engagement still requires more work, with only 55% of respondents globally including sustainable development in their community engagement. One reason for this might be, however, that many universities have not developed the third mission as strong as the other areas of work yet, as has been discussed previously (Jacob, et al. 2015). In particular low community engagement can be found in Africa and the Middle East, with only 37% and 36% respectively integrating sustainable development into their community engagement.

The most diverse set of responses relates to campus operations. Many universities are located in big, complex buildings, often spread out over different locations. These campuses have a large environmental footprint. Some universities started getting their buildings certified with climate neutral labels. Others are changing their light system, their sanitation, and other areas of the campus. The variety of

possibilities is large, ranging from sustainable food options to green roofs. Nevertheless, as can be seen in the graphic above, some regions focus more on these aspects than others, also due to different climatic needs of the region. The Middle East, North America and Europe are especially strong for campus operations.

In the comments, some universities stressed that sustainable development was part of the whole institution and all departments, including internationalization. They therefore did not as much separate sustainable development into the different dimensions, but rather saw it as a whole which made this question difficult to answer. Few also replied that it was only in certain departments and for specific projects,

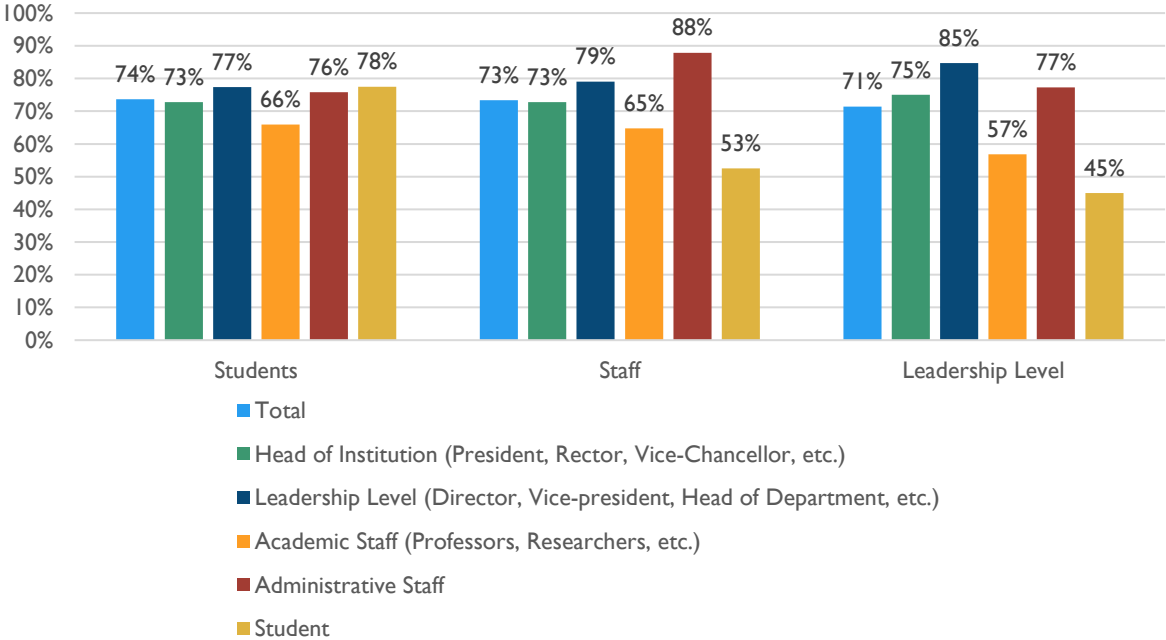
meaning that while a whole institution approach might not exist, there are smaller “whole department” approaches.

Overall, 61% of respondents either adopted a strategic plan for sustainable development or are in the process of developing one. 50% indicated having some form of budget and around 55% incorporate sustainable development in all dimensions, yet to varying degrees across the continents. This leads to the assumption, that there are more Whole Institution Approaches in 2019 than in 2016, yet the balance between HEIs that adopted a Whole Institution Approach and those who have not is almost the same, showing that more work needs to be done.

**Organisation of Sustainable Development**

As has been shown in the previous chapters, embedding sustainable development into the whole institution is a complex process that requires the commitment of many. It is important to know who is leading sustainability initiatives to be able to address and connect the

right people and therefore provide effective support. Further, understanding the different organising structures that exist for sustainable development helps to analyse how Whole Institution Approaches function at HEIs around the world.



**Figure 15: Who engages with Sustainable Development? (n=453)**

To determine who was in charge of sustainable development at HEIs, IAU asked, “Who is

involved in engaging with sustainable development throughout the Institution”. In

general, it can be said that all answer options (Leadership Level, Staff, and Students) were chosen almost equally, ranging from 71% for the Leadership level to 74% for students. This is a good sign, as it shows that all members of an HEI can be involved in sustainable development. Respondents were asked to choose as many options as they deemed adequate. In an “other” question, which received 13% of responses, respondents added Alumni, the municipality, politicians and the corporate sector. In some cases, they pointed out that only certain faculties or groups are involved in sustainable development, but not the whole institution.

On a regional level, most suggested that staff and students are almost equally involved, with the exception of Africa, where it is mostly students. In all regions, except the Middle East, the leadership level is seen as the least involved. In the Middle East, however, the leadership is seen as the main force for engaging in sustainable development, with 100% of respondents answering with Leadership Level.

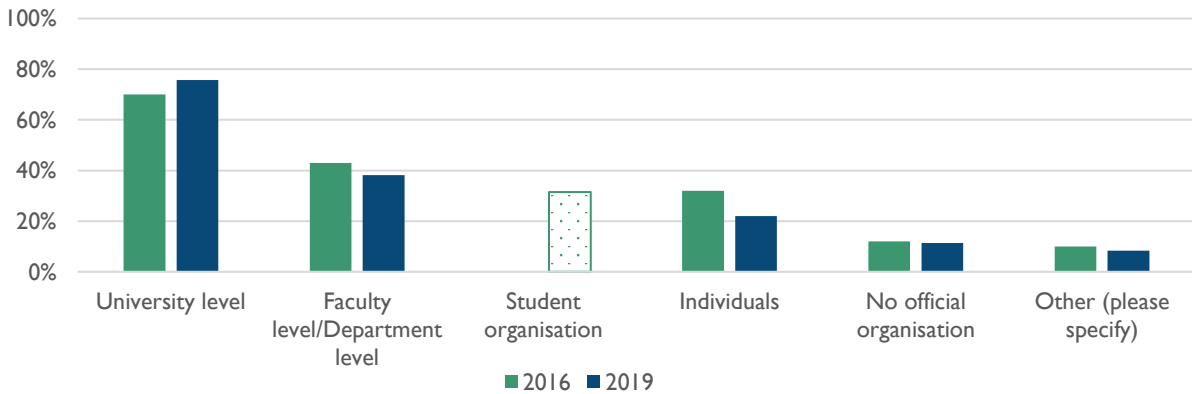
Furthermore, an interesting result can be seen when sorting the answers by position within the university, which corresponds to Figure 15 above, and could be a possible explanation for the surprisingly high rate of responses for leadership in charge of SD in the Middle East. Unsurprisingly, all categories (Head of Institutions, Leadership Level Academic Staff, Administrative Staff and Students) saw themselves as contributing the most to sustainable development, except Heads of

Institutions, who saw all positions as almost equally involved. Especially students did not see much engagement from the leadership level and were very critical towards their university in the comments.

Student engagement can be seen indeed differently from the one from leadership and staff. A study from AIESEC, a youth-run organisation fostering international exchange suggests that younger generations are more aware about sustainable development than older ones (AIESEC, 2016). In addition, a rise in youth activism, for instance the Fridays for Futures Initiative initiated by the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, speaks for a higher level of interest by young people in society, politics and the planet.

It is indeed difficult to pinpoint who starts sustainability initiatives at a university. While in some cases, the sustainability movement is led by the leadership level, there are also many examples where it was students who started something, such as the Green Office at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. In other cases, sustainable development initiatives come from individual faculty members and staff. Ideally, such grass-root initiatives receive support and can grow into a Whole Institution Approach.

Although tracing back the starting point of sustainability initiatives can be difficult, the governance structure of existing initiatives is rather clear, as the next graph shows.



**Figure 16: Governance for Sustainable Development (n=81/2016; n=359/2019)**

The above figure corresponds to the question “On what level is sustainable development governed at your institution”. As can be seen in the chart, sustainable development is most often governed at the university level, with 76% choosing that answer in 2019. This speaks for a (beginning) Whole Institution Approach at most universities who took part in this survey. Compared to 2016, the number of sustainability initiatives governed at university level increased slightly, by 6%.

What is further interesting to notice is that the number of individuals taking leadership in SD shrank by 10%, suggesting that sustainable development initiatives are becoming a collective approach. At the same time the organising structure at departments and faculty shrank by 5%. Both results suggest that previous isolated initiatives are more and more being integrated into the whole institution.

### Mapping and Monitoring

Mapping and monitoring of sustainable development initiatives is very important to ensure effectiveness and success of initiatives. Both are further important to show to external stakeholders what is happening within an HEI.

For the understanding of Whole Institution Approaches, it was first important to understand what exactly is happening on a

The percentage of HEIs that do not have an official organisation stayed the same between 2016 and 2019. It is important to note that the option for student organisation was not available in the 2016 survey, which is why it is not possible to compare it to 2019.

There is not much regional difference in the way sustainable development is governed. All regions indicated that the majority of initiatives are led on a university level, which is a further indicator for a growing number of Whole Institution Approaches.

In a follow-up question, 225 respondents were further able to name the overarching structure at their university, which suggests the existence of sustainability units (like centres and offices) that are in charge of the whole university. The existence of such centres and units is a key feature for the monitoring of sustainability initiatives, something that is looked at next.

macro level. The 2019 IAU Global Survey on HESD therefore asked more detailed questions on the level of inclusion of sustainable development in the curriculum, research, and community engagement.

It was further asked to explain how and if sustainability initiatives are monitored at HEIs worldwide.

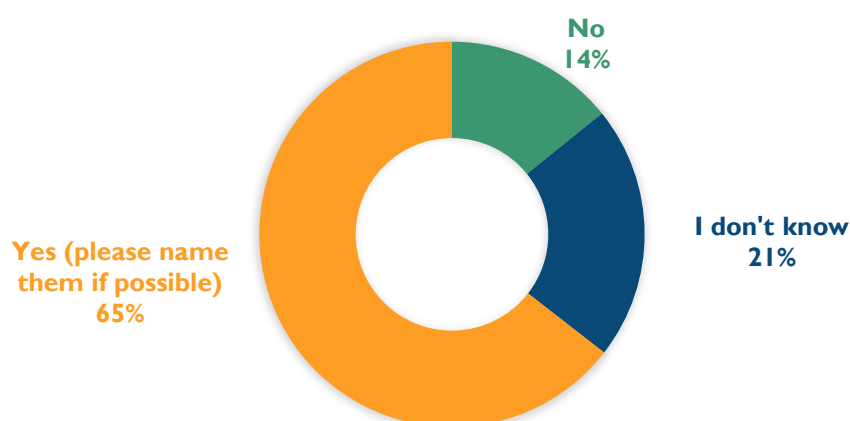


Figure 17: Courses for Sustainable Development (n=352)



To understand more about sustainability teaching, two questions in the survey focused on courses for sustainable development offered at institutions. While question 24 asked about specific courses (e.g. Master's degrees in sustainable development), question 25 focused on courses which integrate sustainable development (e.g. a social science methods course that uses sustainable development as an example). Both questions received the same results in terms of responses as can be seen in Figure 17 above.

The results indicate that 65% of universities offer courses that either are specifically for sustainable development or integrate them. About one fifth of respondents did not know about such courses. Only 14% responded that courses like this do not exist. Conversely, that means that 14% do not integrate sustainable development into their education and teaching and are hence away from having a Whole Institution Approach for sustainable development. This also corresponds more or less to previous results in the report, showcasing that a majority incorporates sustainability principles in education and teaching.

A majority of courses that were listed in the comment section belong to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. Humanities and Social Sciences were rarely listed, demonstrating that there is still a disciplinary difference. Many comments across the questions criticised this and asked for more trans- and interdisciplinary approaches.

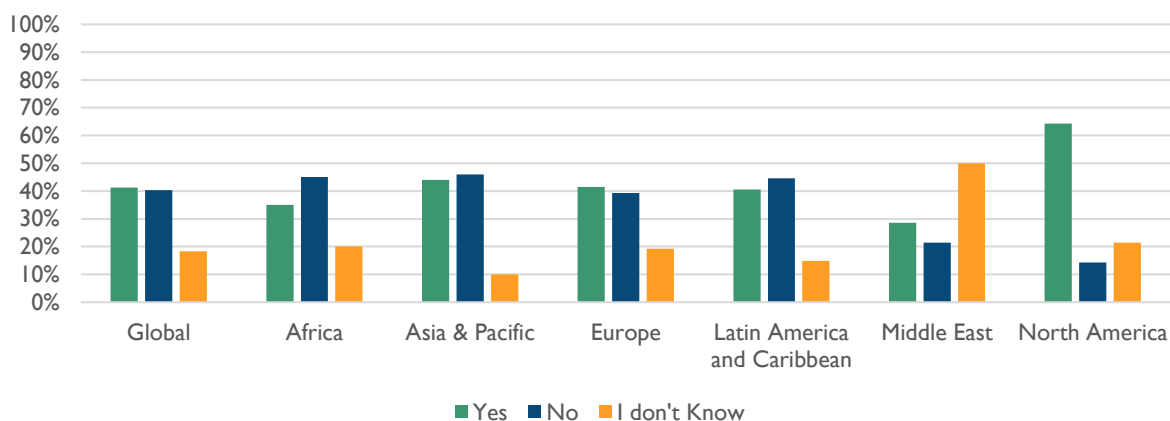
Similar results can be found for the area of research focusing on sustainable development, which was asked in question 26 – with a few exceptions, most respondents named research related to engineering, natural sciences and management. The only difference was that many indicated that gender was a dominant field of study including sustainable development.

Although in Figure 15, more than 80% indicated that they had embedded sustainable

development in their teaching, only 65% said that it was part of a specific course or programme. This is a curious result, since it could mean that sustainable development is part of education and teaching, but not necessarily part of the official curriculum. Another reason for the difference in answers could be as well, that people understood the questions differently and asked initially more in a subjective manner, meaning that 80% want to have sustainable development to be part of education and teaching, while only 65% actually have specific courses for it.

Particularly interesting in this question is that also 21% of respondents did not know about sustainability focused courses. Especially, students and administrative staff were not aware of such courses and contents. Not knowing does not automatically mean that they do not exist. Some universities introduced labels to make it easier to find courses related to sustainable development. The University of Gothenburg for example has developed such labels to highlight courses that include sustainable development; yet, the many used to have an environmental focus and including a more holistic perspective was a challenge (University of Gothenburg, 2012).

The number of courses in relation to sustainable development is continuously growing. In 2003, the IAU World Higher Education Database (WHED) listed 16,649 higher education institutions with only 2,090 study programmes relating to environmental studies. On 1 September 2018, the WHED listed 18,259 HEIs with 5,350 such programmes. This represents an increase of 17%, more than 1% per year. Since this list includes only programmes related to environmental studies, it does not take into account programmes from other disciplines that embed sustainable development today. However, it is possible to assume that the number of such programmes is growing, since interest in sustainability programmes among students is growing as well (NUS, 2019).



**Figure 18: Assessment Tools at HEIs (n=332)**

Question 21 asked about available assessment tools at the university. Due to the large number of students not knowing about assessment tools, visible through a high number of “I don’t know”, they were excluded from this question in order to not distort the results. 41% of the remaining respondents indicated that their university uses assessment tools for sustainable development. Almost the same amount, 40%, do not use assessment tools. Interestingly, even without the student responses, the number of respondents answering with “I don’t know” is very high, with almost one out of five respondents unaware of assessment tools on a global scale.

In particular the amount of assessment is high in North America, with 64% indicating that they use assessment tools to measure sustainable development. This is a very big difference compared to the other world regions, with only Europe having slightly more respondents indicating that they have an assessment tool (41%) rather than not (39%). In the Middle East, knowledge about assessment tools is relatively low, with 50% indicating that they are not aware of an assessment tool.

The subsequent question in the survey asked what kind of assessment tools there already are. 131 people gave more information on what kind of assessment tools their university uses. The questions was separated into the timeframe for measurement, what kind of tool and which method was used.

85 respondents reported that assessment was done annually. Moreover, 7 replied that assessment was done when needed on an ad hoc basis; how this need was decided was not specified. Four universities reported carrying out an audit every two years. In addition, three respondents report every 3 years. The rest met either monthly or on a semester basis.

Only 15 universities reported that they use external assessment mechanisms and named them, such as:

- [AASHE’s STARS \(Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System\);](#)
- [NUS Responsible Futures,](#)
- [Un Global Compact’s PRME \(Principles for Responsible Management Education\),](#)
- [Green Metrics](#)
- [RESIES de Red Campus Sustentable,](#)
- [DD&RS\(Développement Durable et Responsabilité Sociétale\) from CGE/CPU,](#)
- [Global Reporting Initiative \(GRI\).](#)

The majority of universities use mixed methods to assess sustainability; a large number conducted internal surveys among the higher education community and organised meetings additionally to using external auditing tools.

The responsibility for the assessment lies in most cases with the entities assigned with sustainable development (sustainability office, vice rectorate, sustainability committee, etc.). 80 Universities indicating that they produce sustainability reports. This comparatively low

number of reports shows, that sustainable development assessment is still rather an internal mechanism. In 2011, Rodrigo Lozano wrote a report on the state of sustainability reporting at universities (Lozano, 2011). According to him, reporting on sustainability is done voluntarily with two purposes:

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*1. To assess the current state of an organisation's economic, environmental and social dimensions;*

*and*

*2. To communicate a company's efforts and sustainability progress to their stakeholders (Lozano, 2011)*

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At the time of his study in 2011, Lozano saw a limited amount of sustainability reporting at universities. The IAU 2019 HESD Survey

suggests that more and more universities are writing reports, yet there is still a large number of different assessment tools and reporting styles, which can make it difficult to get a general picture of the higher education sector. The SDG Accord, developed by the Global Alliance, a network of higher education networks working with sustainable development, and the EAUC (Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges), aims to be a global reporting mechanism specifically to the SDGs, but its limited reach with three quarters being British Universities, suggests that it does not work on a global level (SDG Accord, 2019).

In the 2016 version of the IAU Global Survey on HESD, 50% of universities indicated that they do not use assessment tools and only 27% indicated that they do. Compared to 2016, this is an increase of 14% for the 2019 survey. This shows that the sector is changing, and integrating sustainable development more on a systemic level.

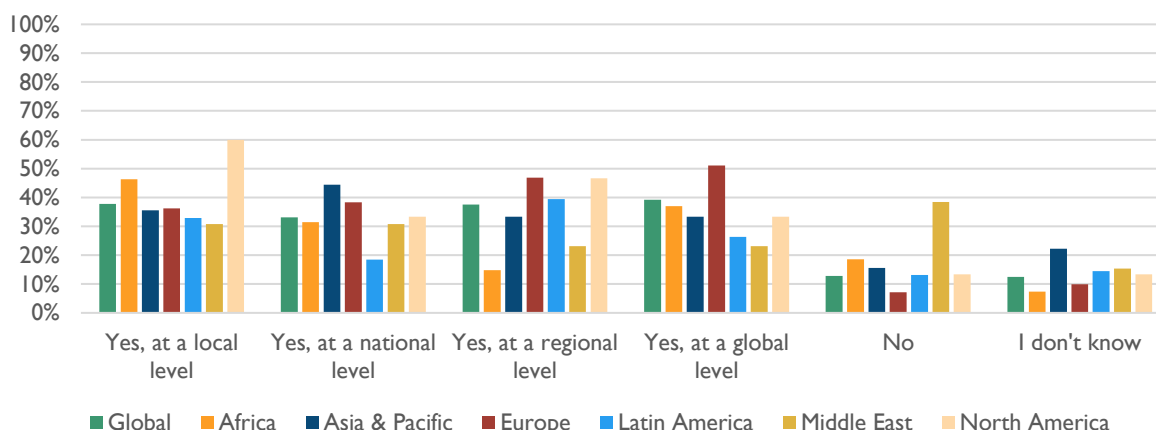
## Networking for Sustainable Development

Exchange with other universities and organisations can enhance sustainable development at HEIs. It allows them to learn from each other, develop joint initiatives and to create partnerships. In the survey, a number of questions focused on the connection the respondents have to others, with mixed results. The goal of this set of questions was to understand how universities are collaborating with others and how they are learning from each other for sustainable development, a task SDG 17: Partnership for the Goal has.

In many cases, this is where internationalisation, as studied in the *IAU 5<sup>th</sup> Global Survey Report on Internationalization* (Marinoni, 2019) and this

study on sustainable development, address similar issues and work together.

First, it was asked whether the responding universities work with other higher education institutions on different regional levels. Second, as IAU is a university network, it was asked if the HEIs were part of other networks. Following those questions, the connection to local organisations, such as schools and businesses was explored. Since community outreach it still not fully developed at many universities, as has been indicated in previous questions, IAU wanted to know how and with whom universities are working on in the field of sustainable development, and if it is a global, regional or local engagement.



**Figure 19: Cooperation with other HEIs (n=344)**

As can be seen in the graphic above, universities are cooperating for sustainable development differently across the continents. Overall, cooperation is high, with only 13% indicating that there is no engagement with other HEIs for sustainable development. Compared to 2016, that is a decrease of 17% in only three years, indicating that cooperation is growing.

Especially Europe has a strong international outlook, with more than 50% indicating that they work on a global scale. This is followed by Africa, with 37% indicating work on a global level. Latin America and the Middle East, on the other hand, indicated that they work less on a global level.

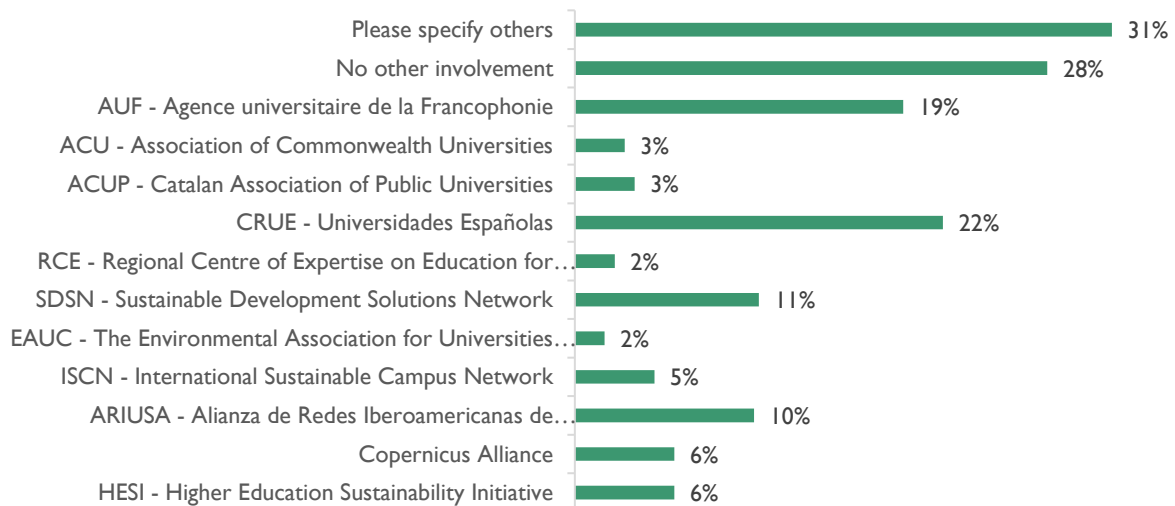
Universities in North America are working the most with local universities (60%), followed by African HEIs with 46%. Around one third of universities in other regions have a local focus.

On a national level, Asian HEIs especially have strong connections, with 44% of respondents reporting national cooperation. Universities in Latin America, while strong regionally, are working the least with their national counterparts.

The Middle East seems to have the fewest connections to other universities when it comes to sustainable development, with more than 38% indicating that there is no other involvement. Respondents in Europe on the other hand indicated that they have the most connections in a global comparison, with only 7% indicating no cooperation.

The above findings can be related to the 5<sup>th</sup> IAU Global Survey on Internationalization (Marinoni, 2019). In this survey, one question asked about geographic priorities for the universities. All regions, except for North America and the Middle East, indicated that internationalisation strategies are foremost targeted at their own region. When it comes to sustainable development, it becomes apparent that for Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, and Latin America the result is similar.

North America, on the other hand, unlike in the Internationalization Survey, does not look as much for connections outside the region compared to others. This marks a contrast from this survey's findings on sustainable development and the reverse results in the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Survey on Internationalization.



**Figure 20: Cooperation with other Networks (n=344)**

Question 28 asked about membership in university networks for sustainable development. Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a continuously growing number of university networks that work with sustainable development. Many countries created national networks, facilitating national exchange. In some cases, regional networks were created, for example ARIUSA in Latin America, an umbrella network that unites national networks on a regional scale. IAU is one of the few networks operating globally that made sustainable development a key priority.

In the comments of this question, respondents indicated further membership, besides national networks, with UNICA-Green, Asian Sustainable Campus Network, Association of African Universities, Coimbra Group, GUNi, AASHE, REEDES, and UN Academic Impact among others.

Although many of the respondents were aware of such networks, 28% indicated that they are not involved in other networks; partly because they were not aware they existed. In 2016, this number was 44%.

Some of the Associations are cooperating for their members' benefits. To bring all of those different networks together, the Global Alliance was set up in March 2015 by EAUC in the UK (EAUC, 2015). If we look even further back, the IAU's Global Meeting of Associations was set

up, taking place every two years, yet not with a sustainability focus.

Nevertheless, similar to the growing number of assessment tools, it can be difficult for a HEIs to find the right network and support group. This challenge is also reflected by more universities in the 2019 survey indicating being part of multiple university networks, 31% compared to only 12% in 2016.

The growing number of networks for sustainable development can be seen as being in support of SDG 17: Partnerships. This Goal is different compared to the other sixteen, mainly because it is specifically targeted at actions that governments have to do to implement the SDGs. At the same time SDG 17 has nineteen targets, ranging from financing, to technology and capacity building to trade and systemic issues, compared to 5-9 for the other SDGs.

Particularly relevant for higher education is SDG Target 17.6:

**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

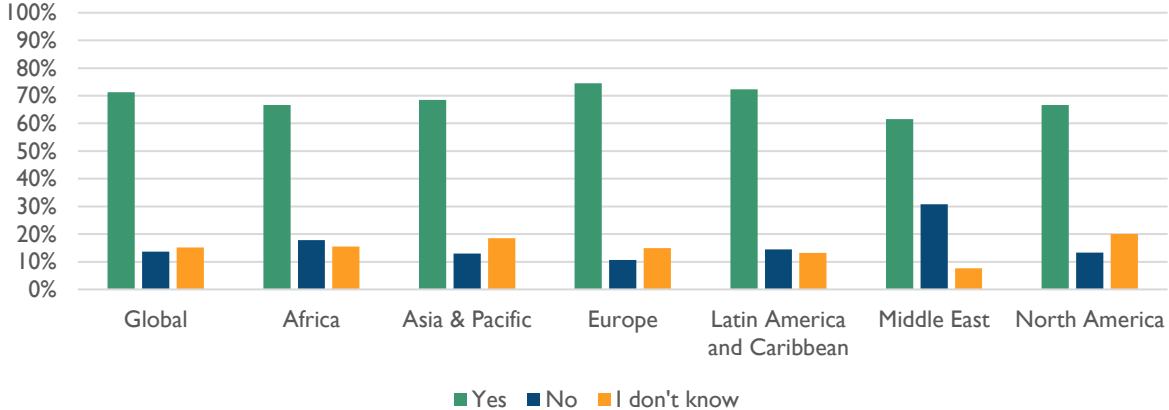


*Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge*

*sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism*

Such international cooperation as described in SDG 17.6 are increasing also among networks. In 2019, IAU partnered together with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) to bring global attention to the work of higher education and the High Level

Political Forum at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Together, they prepared and presented a statement on the *Essential Contribution of Higher Education to the SDGs* (see Higher education’s essential contribution to the SDGs (IAU, ACU, AUF) on page 67).



**Figure 21: Engagement with community organisations, like schools, NGOs, etc. (n=344)**

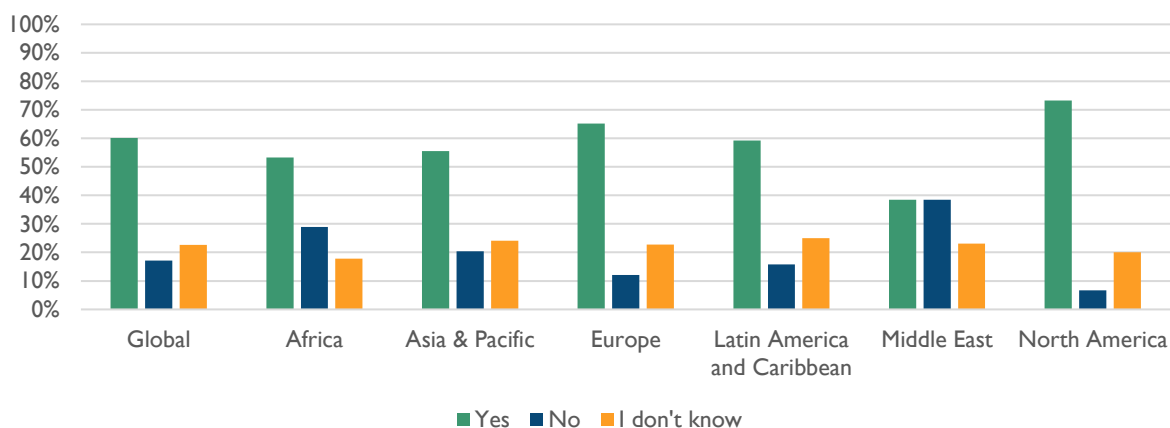
Not only is the amount of networks working with and for sustainable development at HEIs large. The majority of respondents reported that they are also working with community organisations.

Over 70% of respondents indicated that their university was engaged with community organisations, such as schools and NGOs, in the promotion of sustainable development. Although the number varies slightly across the world regions, it is possible to say that community engagement, at least with a view to organisations, is rather high.

It is interesting that when asked directly, respondents seemed to have a different idea about connections to the community than when asked more broadly, as Figure 14 on page 41 suggests that only 55% of universities are

working with the community, and not 71% as the above figure suggests.

Connections of HEIs with schools and other community organisations has also been part of the discussion in the Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs) organised by the United Nations University in Japan and launched in 2003. An impact study from 2014 found, that the creation of “communities of practice”, the basis of RCEs which consists of formal and informal education institutions and are mostly hosted by HEIs, fosters creative solutions and excitement for the partners involved which ultimately promotes and supports sustainable development (UNU-IAS, 2014). The RCE network is continuously growing, indicating that such structures are not only beneficial, but also attractive to stakeholders.



**Figure 22: Engagement with companies (n=344)**

As drivers of innovations and change, HEIs around the world are increasingly working with companies; sustainable development is no exception to this. About 60% of respondents in the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019 indicated that their HEIs are cooperating with companies for sustainable development. At the same time, indicated 23% that they do not know about such engagement.

The highest levels of cooperation can be found in North America, where 73% indicated cooperation with companies. This is followed by Europe, with 65%. The lowest number can be found in the Middle East, where 38% indicated that they are working with companies, the same amount that does not.

Similar to HEIs around the world, more and more companies are starting to work with the SDGs. One example of companies working with sustainable development is UN Global Compact, a “voluntary initiative based on CEO

commitments to implement universal sustainability principles and to take steps to support UN goals.” (UN Global Compact, n.d.). Part of UN Global Compact are over 12,000 signatories from around 160 countries. The signatories pledge themselves to follow ten guiding principles. The organisation is also increasingly working with universities – primarily with business schools through their PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) programme.

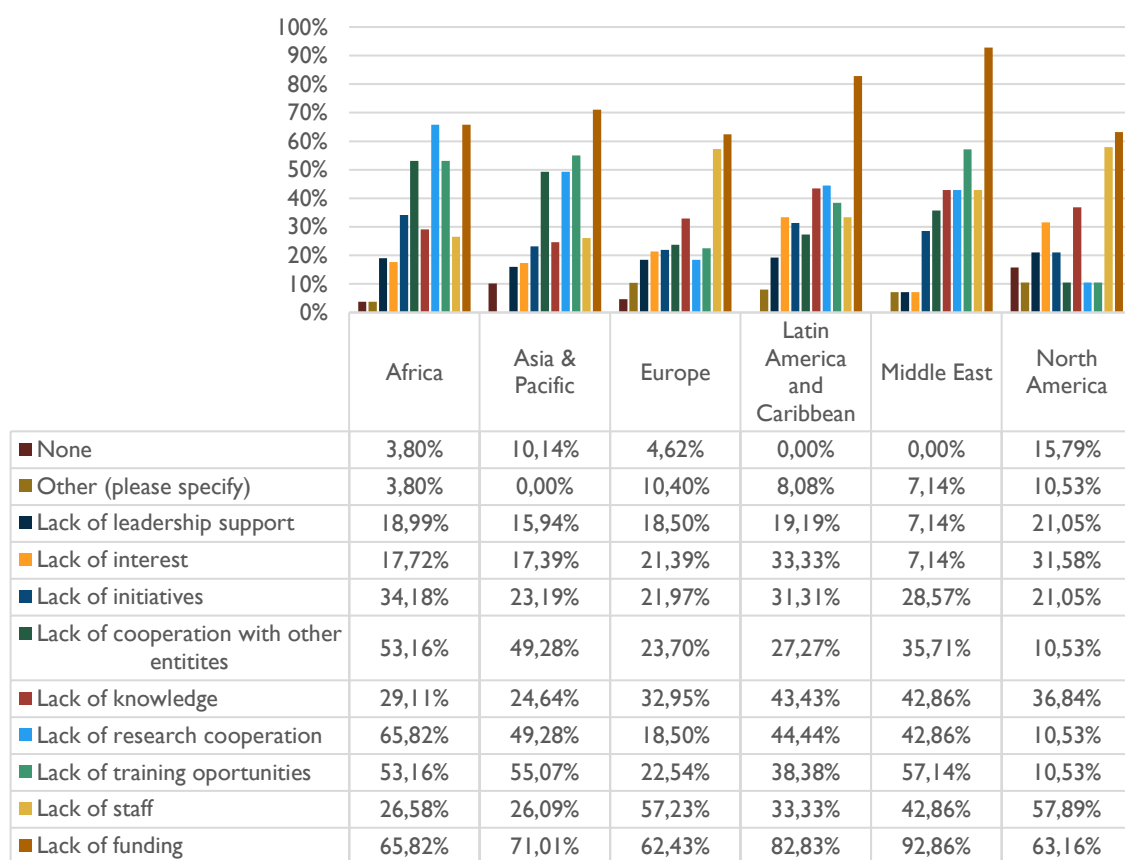
Partnership of universities with NGOs, schools, other HEIs, companies and others are important drivers for the 2030 Agenda, as especially the RCE example shows. According to the IAU Global Survey on HESD 2019, most universities are cooperating with some partners. Yet, what also becomes clear from the findings when comparing to the results on community engagement, more strategic engagement could be useful to maximise efforts.

## Obstacles for Higher Education Institutions

Although there are strong indicators that the 2030 Agenda made it easier for many HEIs to work with and for sustainable development, as has been shown in the previous chapters of the report, there is still room for improvement. Not all HEIs want or are able to adopt a Whole Institution Approach, which should be the ideal. Additionally, work is fragmented and based within certain entities or individuals at many

institutions triggering the critique of working in siloes.

While it is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all-approach to embedding sustainable development, in order to make sustainable development at universities a stronger priority, it is also important to understand what the obstacles are and what else is needed to strengthen sustainability initiatives at HEIs.



**Figure 23: Difficulties for Sustainable Development implementation (n=453)**

To figure out obstacles, the question was asked “What difficulties has your institution encountered that constrain the work on sustainable development”. Unsurprisingly, the respondents from the majority of all regions (70%) listed funding as the main obstacle for sustainable development at their university. This is followed by 41% indicating that lack of staff is a major issue, also related to the third most common issue: training opportunities. However, 21 out of 453 responses indicated that there were no obstacles at all, coming from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America.

The regions show a great difference overall, highlighting the need to provide local support for the introduction of sustainable development initiatives and not to assume all HEIs are functioning the same. So is lack of research cooperation a big issue in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, while Europe and North America are not as concerned about this. This can be traced back to the different histories

and relations between universities in the Global North and the Global South and is considered not only an issue sustainable development is concerned with (Collyer, et al. 2018).

Lack of knowledge is an issue across the continents, although Europe and North America indicate a higher concern compared to other issues.

A large number of respondents from Africa, Asia and the Middle East indicated that training opportunities are missing in their regions. This is interesting in relation to the networking possibilities discussed in the previous chapter. Africa in particular seems to be lacking cooperation opportunities, mainly in research, but also with companies, HEIs and others. This is a similar result as in Figure 19 on page 44. The same issues are apparent in Asia.

Europe, on the other hand, is missing mostly staff that works on sustainability issues.



Combined with the lack of knowledge, it is possible to assume that there are not enough qualified staff to cover the sustainability demands at the HEIs in Europe. This figure is similar in North America, with a high lack of staff and need for more knowledge. Those regions are also the ones that are the most satisfied with the funding available, with only about 60% indicating this as the biggest obstacle.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is a combination of all the mentioned issues, except leadership support, which does not seem to be the issue in any of the regions. Latin America and the Caribbean is also strongly missing research cooperation and funding, followed by lack of knowledge.

Almost all respondents from the Middle East indicated funding issues, directly followed by a lack of training opportunities. Neither of those issues seems to be caused by failures in leadership, since they are seen as very supportive.

In particular interesting are also the comments respondents gave in the option “other”. A large number of respondents indicated that one of the issues was the definition and terminology of sustainable development and the lack of an institutional framework. This is an interesting finding, as it indicates conceptual and structural issues in sustainable development rather than practical ones.

Other commenters saw different issues with the 2030 Agenda or the lack of prioritising sustainable development:

*“Criticism of sustainable development and preference for anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal visions and pro-native groups.”*

*“Lack of an institutional framework for how the SDGs align to the work, research and teaching being done at the University”*

*“The difficulties cannot be specified in the proposed items, progress has been made in all, but we are*

*talking about a process that is linked to many spaces. The difficulties are in the way of developing the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda”*

*“Raise awareness among the university community that the SDGs become nuclear in all actions of the University and not an accessory”*

For others, the lack of reward or gratification mechanisms for courses that are transdisciplinary and focus on sustainable development was an issue. Communication issues were also mentioned multiple times. Others highlighted the issue of working in silos and not having a central organisation that coordinates the work, especially now with the SDGs. Some open questions respondents are trying to find answers to are:

*“How to compile, track progress and communicate to stakeholders the vast work being undertaken linked to the 2030 development agenda”*

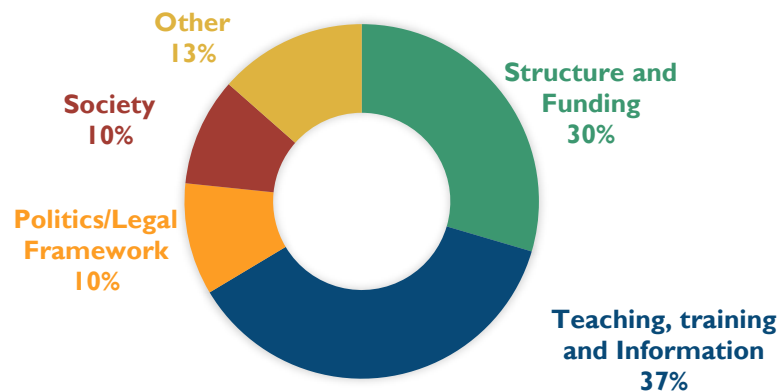
*“Existing systems do not support monitoring of activities related to SDGs.”*

*“Low number of trans, multi and interdisciplinary work”*

*“National Accreditation system rules may constitute a barrier to innovation in SDGs education.”*

Two issues many of the respondents face, whatever their nationality, are working in isolation to other departments and HEIs, and communicating to solve problems. Including funding, those were the biggest obstacles identified by the global community towards achieving the SDGs in general.

This also was a result in a question asking about what is specifically needed to advance sustainable development at their institutions.



**Figure 24 Needs to promote Sustainable Development further (n=277)**

The results were very diverse and many had an opinion on the question on what needs to be done to further promote sustainable development at HEIs. Some of the replies were similar to the obstacles faced, as discussed in the previous graph, asking for more cooperation, more communication and more transversal work. In some cases, it would require smaller changes that can be easily implemented, such as providing concrete training examples for universities.

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for example provides such courses. Other options are offered by online training courses and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), for example provided by UVET (Université Virtuelle Environnement et

Développement durable) or the SDG Academy from SDSN.

However, there is also a large number of people who hope for a fundamental structural change, reforming their universities and ideally society at large. This means that sustainable development is an issue that cannot be addressed only through and at HEIs, but requires a profound change at political and societal levels. The 2030 Agenda is already a step in the right direction, but considering that sustainable development has been a concern since the early 1970s, it comes in late and action needs to be stepped up, in all regions.

## Conclusions

The IAU Global Survey on HESD and this Report allowed us to explore the changes and new developments in higher education institutions (HEIs) and their work for sustainable development, at the institutional level and beyond. It focused on the United Nations' *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Transforming our World* Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and compared outcomes with those registered for the 1<sup>st</sup> IAU Global Survey on HESD, in 2016, and other recent publications on the topic.

Higher education institutions are increasingly working on and for sustainable development, as is shown by the main findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAU Global Survey on HESD. The rise in the number of respondents in 2019 (536) compared to 2016 (120) attests to the growing interest and engagement with SD. In addition, the growing number of academic initiatives incorporating sustainable development shows that new approaches are emerging and, at the same time, are being gradually embedded in the institutional structures.

Adopted in 2015, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda seems to have been picked up by universities in many parts of the world today. 64% of respondents indicated that the adoption of the SDGs increased the interest in sustainable development at their institution. Similarly, knowledge about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs has visibly improved at HEIs, compared to the first iteration of the IAU Global Survey on HESD.

A large majority of respondents indicated that they or their institutions are working on at least one of the 17 SDGs. This work, however, takes many different forms and varies greatly

depending on the academic focus adopted by an institution. Certainly, the priority areas of work are not only different at each higher education institution (HEI), they are also dealt with in many different ways in teaching, research, community engagement and campus initiatives. The work with and on issues identified by the SDGs also reflect the difference in translation of the resonance of the goals locally.

Universities engage with the SDGs in many different ways, with some goals receiving lots of attention from universities, and other not at all. Unsurprisingly, the survey results stress that *SDG 4: Quality Education* is the SDG with which most universities engage. This is closely followed by *SDG 5: Gender Equality*, and *SDG 13: Climate Action*. The least addressed SDGs are *SDG 14: Life below Water*, *SDG 2: Zero Hunger* and *SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and production*. However, the latter is the SDG that is getting increased attention; work on and to achieve the targets set for this particular SDG is likely to increase significantly in the coming years. Finally, engagement with any of the SDGs is also subjective in nature, as other studies have shown a very different order of the SDGs using different methodology such as the Dutch Universities bibliographic approach, as described earlier.

Research is higher education's function that receives most attention in the original document of the 2030 Agenda, yet the results of the 2019 IAU Global Survey on HESD show that the other three missions of universities (teaching and education, community engagement and campus initiatives) are addressing the SDGs as well, although not in a same way. Education is addressing the SDGs more often than research according to the

respondents. Community engagement and campus initiatives on the other hand are not as developed when it comes to the SDGs.

When it comes to the Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development, calling for embedding sustainable development at all levels in an institution, data collected indicates that not much has changed since 2016. The number of strategic plans for sustainable development for instance has remained steady. Yet, the survey found a 7% decline in universities that have neither a plan, nor are currently developing one. Still, and according to IAU criteria, about 50% of responding universities have adopted a whole institution approach for sustainable development or are in the process of doing so. The IAU criteria to determine a Whole Institution Approach are to have fulfilled, or are in the process of fulfilling, at least three of the following points:

1. Sustainable development included in Mission and Vision (for example through a strategic plan)
2. Budget allocation for sustainable development
3. Inclusion of sustainable development in all dimensions of an HEI (Teaching, Research, Community Engagement, Campus Initiatives)
4. Engagement of the entire higher education community and leadership
5. Creation or use of assessment tools

Regarding existing networks for sustainable development, this report and the survey data have supported the claim that they often run along the lines of established structures of the internationalisation of higher education. There is a difference between Global North and Global South universities in terms of partnerships and networks that universities have. Working together with a diverse set of partners can enhance the work for sustainable development.

In terms of obstacles for the inclusion of sustainable development at HEIs, funding was mentioned as the main issue by survey respondents. Otherwise, challenges vary greatly depending on the region. Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America indicated having

difficulties finding adequate training opportunities and to access research cooperation. Survey respondents from North America and Europe reported fewer obstacles of this kind, but indicated issues with hiring adequate staff with appropriate sustainable development knowledge.

Overall, the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAU Global Survey on HESD provide important insights into how sustainability and the SDGs are understood and involved in the different working areas of HEIs across the globe. Collecting survey data directly from individuals working in the sector and in different positions within their institution contributed to the diversity of perspectives and initiatives reflected in the survey responses. Nevertheless, further work needs to be done to establish whether the 2030 Agenda actually initiated structural changes at HEIs or merely sparked a new interest in these topics.

Five years into the 2030 Agenda, it is possible to say that the higher education community in most regions is at least aware of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, although with varying degrees of understanding and engagement. Now the “Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs” starting 2020 should foster changes at universities that go beyond short-term interest in the topic and temporary projects on SDGs. What is needed more specifically are more connections between universities from all regions and more ways to learn and interact with people who have already established sustainability in many working areas and have introduced mechanisms to improve as sustainable institutions. Continued efforts are needed to make sustainability more accessible to implement in different working areas, information and teaching about SDGs just being the first step of many on this path. IAU is supporting its Members along the journey and will continue to monitor and report on further developments of HESD.

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## Annex I. Questionnaire Overview

Q1. Name of Higher Education Institution

Q2. Your position

Q3. Location of Higher Education Institution (if you have multiple branches, please choose the location where you are based)

Q4. Country:

Q5. If you are from Spain, in which region (Autonomous community) is the university located?

Q6. How much do you know about (0 = nothing; 3 = very knowledgeable)

Q7. What is the predominant understanding of sustainable development at your institution?

Q8. Who is involved in engaging with sustainable development throughout the Institution? Fill in as many as applicable

Q9. In what areas has your institution embedded sustainable development? Fill in as many as applicable

Q10. Please give us some examples of your work

Q11. Would your institution like to know more about how to embed sustainable development in any of the above areas? Please specify and tell us what area would interest you the most (e.g. teacher training, research, campus).

Q12. What difficulties has your institution encountered that constrain the work on sustainable development?

Q13. Do you think that the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 increased the interest in sustainable development at your institution?

Q14. Please tell us how and on what SDGs your institution is working on (leave blank when you are not addressing a SDG)

Q15. Please give us up to 3 examples of how your institution works on the above topics

Q16. What do you think is most needed to promote sustainable development at Higher Education Institutions?

Q17. Is there a strategic plan of your institution in relation to sustainable development?

Q18. On what level is sustainable development governed at your institution? Fill in as many as applicable

Q19. Could you indicate contact points / focal points of individuals in charge of fostering sustainable development principles and practices in your university?

Q20. Can you give examples of policies and practices adopted in relation to sustainable development?

Q21. Are there any assessment tools for sustainable development at your institution?

Q22. If you answered yes in question 21, please specify

Q23. Financial support for sustainable development at your institution

Q24. Does your institution offer courses with a main focus on sustainable development?

- Q25. Does your institution offer courses in which sustainable development is integrated?
- Q26. Does your institution conduct research on sustainable development?
- Q27. Is your institution engaged with other Higher Education Institutions on sustainable development?
- Q28. Is your institution involved in other HESD networks?
- Q29. Is your institution engaged with community organisations, like schools, NGOs, etc. on sustainable development?
- Q30. Is your institution engaged with (local) companies on sustainable development?
- Q31. Please indicate the level of interest 3 being highly interested, 0 being not interested of the following working areas.
- Q32. Do you know about the IAU-HESD portal?
- Q33. Please help us identify how we can assist you in you work on higher education and research for sustainable development:
- Q34. If you have any feedback on the survey or other comments, please let us know.
- Q35. Please enter your email address if you are interested in the survey results and agree to be contacted by IAU in the future.

## Annex II. Institutional Strategic Plans

The following is a non-comprehensive list of links to strategic plans received through the survey. There are many more plans available on the IAU Global Portal on HESD: [www.iau-hesd.net](http://www.iau-hesd.net). Some respondents gave detailed descriptions of how sustainable development is embedded in their institution, without providing a link to a public website. This is not shared because it is not publicly available. All links worked in October 2019.

### Plans in English

University	Country	Link
<i>UArctic - Network</i>	Arctic Circle	<a href="http://www.uarctic.org/media/1597626/strategic-implementation-plan-2017-140817.pdf">www.uarctic.org/media/1597626/strategic-implementation-plan-2017-140817.pdf</a>
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	<a href="http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/strategicplan/2016/en/">www.cuhk.edu.hk/strategicplan/2016/en/</a> <a href="http://www.cpsu.cuhk.edu.hk/en-gb/about-us/our-approach-to-sustainability">www.cpsu.cuhk.edu.hk/en-gb/about-us/our-approach-to-sustainability</a>
University of Bologna	Italy	<a href="https://www.unibo.it/en/university/who-we-are/alma-mater-adoption-of-the-un-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development">https://www.unibo.it/en/university/who-we-are/alma-mater-adoption-of-the-un-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development</a>
University of Malaya	Malaysia	<a href="http://www.um.edu.my/about-um/umique/sustainability@um/eco-campus-initiatives">www.um.edu.my/about-um/umique/sustainability@um/eco-campus-initiatives</a>
University of Kelania	Sri Lanka	<a href="http://www.units.kln.ac.lk/css/">www.units.kln.ac.lk/css/</a>
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi	Thailand	<a href="http://www.sustainable.kmutt.ac.th">www.sustainable.kmutt.ac.th</a>
Winchester University	UK	<a href="http://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability-and-ethics/green-campus/">www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability-and-ethics/green-campus/</a>
University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	<a href="http://www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=2815&amp;tl=international-publication-2017">www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=2815&amp;tl=international-publication-2017</a>

### Plans in Castellano

University	Country	Link
University Corporation of Meta	Colombia	<a href="http://www.unimeta.edu.co/modules/documents/default.aspx?id=16">www.unimeta.edu.co/modules/documents/default.aspx?id=16</a>
Universidad Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas	Colombia	<a href="https://comunidad.udistrital.edu.co/piga/">https://comunidad.udistrital.edu.co/piga/</a>
<i>Colombian Government plan</i>	Colombia	<a href="http://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/ordenamiento-ambiental-territorial-y-coordinacion-del-sina/educacion-y-participacion">www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/ordenamiento-ambiental-territorial-y-coordinacion-del-sina/educacion-y-participacion</a> <a href="http://cmap.upb.edu.co/rid=1195259861703_152904399_919/politica_educacion_amb.pdf">http://cmap.upb.edu.co/rid=1195259861703_152904399_919/politica_educacion_amb.pdf</a>

Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra	Dominican Republic	<a href="http://www.pucmm.edu.do/somos/opec/Documents/pedi.pdf">www.pucmm.edu.do/somos/opec/Documents/pedi.pdf</a>
National Autonomous University of Mexico	Mexico	<a href="http://www.cous.sdi.unam.mx/">www.cous.sdi.unam.mx/</a> Facebook COUS UNAM / Twitter @cousunam
Universidad Veracruzana	Mexico	<a href="http://www.uv.mx/cosustenta">www.uv.mx/cosustenta</a>
Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazón	Peru	<a href="http://www.unife.edu.pe">www.unife.edu.pe</a>
Pablo de Olavide University	Spain	<a href="http://www.upo.es/rectorado/vicerrectorado/estrategia/plan-estrategico/">www.upo.es/rectorado/vicerrectorado/estrategia/plan-estrategico/</a>
Valladolid University	Spain	<a href="http://www.uva.es/export/sites/uva/7.comunidaduniversitaria/7.09.oficinacalidadambiental/_documentos/Plan-calidad-ambiental.pdf">www.uva.es/export/sites/uva/7.comunidaduniversitaria/7.09.oficinacalidadambiental/_documentos/Plan-calidad-ambiental.pdf</a>
Open University of Catalonia	Spain	<a href="http://www.uoc.edu/portal/es/universitat/pla-estrategic/plans-accio/index.html">www.uoc.edu/portal/es/universitat/pla-estrategic/plans-accio/index.html</a>
University of Almería	Spain	<a href="http://www2.ual.es/sostenibilidad/politica/Politica/doc/PSA2019_UAL.pdf">www2.ual.es/sostenibilidad/politica/Politica/doc/PSA2019_UAL.pdf</a>
Polytechnic University of Madrid	Spain	<a href="http://www.upm.es/sfs/Rectorado/Vicerrectorado%20de%20Ordenacion%20Academica%20y%20Planificacion%20Estrategica/Compromiso%20con%20la%20Calidad/Documentos/Plan%20de%20Sostenibilidad%20Ambiental%20UPM.pdf">www.upm.es/sfs/Rectorado/Vicerrectorado%20de%20Ordenacion%20Academica%20y%20Planificacion%20Estrategica/Compromiso%20con%20la%20Calidad/Documentos/Plan%20de%20Sostenibilidad%20Ambiental%20UPM.pdf</a>
Polytechnic University of Valencia	Spain	<a href="http://www.upv.es">www.upv.es</a> <a href="http://www.accd.upv.es">www.accd.upv.es</a>
Universitat Internacional de Catalunya	Spain	<a href="http://uic.es/sites/default/files/enllacar_pla_estrategic_de_sostenibilitat.pdf">http://uic.es/sites/default/files/enllacar_pla_estrategic_de_sostenibilitat.pdf</a>
Autonomous University Barcelona	Spain	<a href="https://www.uab.cat/web/conoce-la-uab/itinerarios/plan-estrategico-2018-2030-1345738210919.html">https://www.uab.cat/web/conoce-la-uab/itinerarios/plan-estrategico-2018-2030-1345738210919.html</a> <a href="http://www.uab.cat/doc/PlaCampusSaludableSostenible2018-2022">www.uab.cat/doc/PlaCampusSaludableSostenible2018-2022</a>
Universidad del País Vasco	Spain	<a href="http://www.ehu.es/es/web/iraunkortasuna/ehuagenda-2030">www.ehu.es/es/web/iraunkortasuna/ehuagenda-2030</a>
University of Murcia	Spain	<a href="http://www.um.es/web/17odsesiones/">www.um.es/web/17odsesiones/</a>
Complutense University of Madrid	Spain	<a href="http://www.ucm.es/medio-ambiente-y-sostenibilidad">www.ucm.es/medio-ambiente-y-sostenibilidad</a>
National Distance Education University	Spain	<a href="http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?_pageid=93,58005239&amp;_dad=portal&amp;_schema=PORTAL">http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?_pageid=93,58005239&amp;_dad=portal&amp;_schema=PORTAL</a>
Autonomous University of Madrid	Spain	<a href="http://www.estrategiauam2025.uam.es/">www.estrategiauam2025.uam.es/</a>
University of Oviedo	Spain	<a href="http://www.uniovi.es/comunicacion/rsumemoria">www.uniovi.es/comunicacion/rsumemoria</a>
University of Deusto	Spain	<a href="http://www.deusto.es/cs/Satellite/deusto/es/universidad-deusto/sobre-deusto-0/la-institucion/plan-estrategico">www.deusto.es/cs/Satellite/deusto/es/universidad-deusto/sobre-deusto-0/la-institucion/plan-estrategico</a>

## Plans in French

University	Country	Link
University of Sherbrooke	Canada	<a href="http://www.usherbrooke.ca/developpement-durable/plan-dd/">www.usherbrooke.ca/developpement-durable/plan-dd/</a>
Université Catholique de Lille	France	<a href="http://www.livetree.fr">www.livetree.fr</a>
Université de Nantes	France	<a href="http://www.univ-nantes.fr/qualite-developpement-durable">www.univ-nantes.fr/qualite-developpement-durable</a>
		<a href="http://www.univ-nantes.fr/qualite-et-developpement-durable/la-strategie-qualite-et-developpement-durable-549762.kjsp">www.univ-nantes.fr/qualite-et-developpement-durable/la-strategie-qualite-et-developpement-durable-549762.kjsp</a>
Aix-Marseille Université	France	<a href="http://www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/politique-developpement-durable-responsabilite-societale-ddrs">www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/politique-developpement-durable-responsabilite-societale-ddrs</a>
Université de Montpellier III	France	<a href="http://www.univ-montp3.fr/fr/universit%C3%A9-citoyenne-et-durable/d%C3%A9veloppement-durable-et-responsabilit%C3%A9-soci%C3%A9tale/notre">www.univ-montp3.fr/fr/universit%C3%A9-citoyenne-et-durable/d%C3%A9veloppement-durable-et-responsabilit%C3%A9-soci%C3%A9tale/notre</a>
Ecole de médecine de Befelatanana	Madagascar	<a href="http://www.sante.gov.mg/inspc">www.sante.gov.mg/inspc</a>
Ibn Tofail Université	Morocco	<a href="http://www.uit.ac.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pr%C3%A9sentation-UIT-final-Projet-de-d%C3%A9veloppement.pdf">www.uit.ac.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pr%C3%A9sentation-UIT-final-Projet-de-d%C3%A9veloppement.pdf</a>
Université de Lausanne	Switzerland	<a href="http://www.unil.ch/central/files/live/sites/central/files/docs/plan_intentions_unil_17_21.pdf">www.unil.ch/central/files/live/sites/central/files/docs/plan_intentions_unil_17_21.pdf</a>
		<a href="http://www.unil.ch/durable/home.html">www.unil.ch/durable/home.html</a>

## Plans in other Languages

University	Country	Link	Language
Charles University	Czech Republic	<a href="https://csr.czu.cz/cs/r-13686-oficialni-dokumenty">https://csr.czu.cz/cs/r-13686-oficialni-dokumenty</a>	Czech
Università di Parma	Italy	<a href="http://www.unipr.it/node/23187">www.unipr.it/node/23187</a>	Italian
Visoka šola	Slovenia	<a href="http://www.vsvo.si/predstavitev/kakovost-na-vsvo/">www.vsvo.si/predstavitev/kakovost-na-vsvo/</a>	Slovenian
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya	Spain	<a href="http://www.upc.edu/gestiosostenible/ca/plans-upc">www.upc.edu/gestiosostenible/ca/plans-upc</a>	Catalan
		<a href="http://www.inclusio.upc.edu/ca/comprimis-upc/pla-i-normativa">www.inclusio.upc.edu/ca/comprimis-upc/pla-i-normativa</a> <a href="http://www.igualtat.upc.edu/ca/pla">www.igualtat.upc.edu/ca/pla</a>	

University of Girona	Spain	<a href="http://www.udg.edu/ca/Portals/63/Escenaris/PE_2030_DesenvSost_20190209.pdf">www.udg.edu/ca/Portals/63/Escenaris/PE_2030_DesenvSost_20190209.pdf</a>	Catalan
University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	<a href="http://www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=1962&amp;tl=su-kien-cong-bo-chien-luoc-phat-trien-va-nang-luc-hop-tac-cua-ueh">www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=1962&amp;tl=su-kien-cong-bo-chien-luoc-phat-trien-va-nang-luc-hop-tac-cua-ueh</a> <a href="http://www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=3257&amp;tl=hoi-thao-khoa-hoc-quoc-gia-nhu-cau-nhan-luc-cho-phat-trien-trong-boi-can-h-cach-mang-cong-nghiep-lan-thu-4-va-nhung-dap-ung-cua-giao-duc-dai-hoc-viet-nam-tai-ueh">www.ueh.edu.vn/news.aspx?id=3257&amp;tl=hoi-thao-khoa-hoc-quoc-gia-nhu-cau-nhan-luc-cho-phat-trien-trong-boi-can-h-cach-mang-cong-nghiep-lan-thu-4-va-nhung-dap-ung-cua-giao-duc-dai-hoc-viet-nam-tai-ueh</a>	Vietnamese (also version in English)
University of Danang	Vietnam	<a href="http://www.UTE.udn.vn">www.UTE.udn.vn</a>	Vietnamese

## Annex III.

### The IAU Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development

Following the Ninth IAU Round Table in Tokyo, Japan, participants adopted, on 19 November 1993, the following **Declaration**:

1. To urge universities world-wide to seek, establish and disseminate a clearer understanding of Sustainable Development - "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations" - and encourage more appropriate sustainable development principles and practices at the local, national and global levels, in ways consistent with their missions;
2. To utilize resources of the university to encourage a better understanding on the part of Governments and the public at large of the inter-related physical, biological and social dangers facing the planet Earth, and to recognise the significant interdependence and international dimensions of sustainable development;
3. To emphasize the ethical obligation of the present generation to overcome those practices of resource utilisation and those widespread disparities which lie at the root of environmental unsustainability;
4. To enhance the capacity of the university to teach and undertake research and action in society in sustainable development principles, to increase environmental literacy, and to enhance the understanding of environmental ethics within the university and with the public at large;
5. To cooperate with one another and with all segments of society in the pursuit of practical and policy measures to achieve sustainable development and thereby safeguard the interests of future generations;
6. To encourage universities to review their own operations to reflect best sustainable development practices;
7. To request the IAU Administrative Board to consider and implement the ways and means to give life to this Declaration in the mission of each of its members and through the common enterprise of the IAU.

*It is recommended that each university, in its own action plan, strive to:*

1. Make an institutional commitment to the principle and practice of sustainable development within the academic milieu and to communicate that commitment to its students, its employees and to the public at large;
2. Promote sustainable consumption practices in its own operations;
3. Develop the capacities of its academic staff to teach environmental literacy;
4. Encourage among both staff and students an environmental perspective, whatever the field of study;

5. Utilise the intellectual resources of the university to build strong environmental education programs;
6. Encourage interdisciplinary and collaborative research programs related to sustainable development as part of the institution's central mission and to overcome traditional barriers between disciplines and departments;
7. Emphasize the ethical obligations of the immediate university community - current students, faculty and staff - to understand and defeat the forces that lead to environmental degradation, North-South disparities, and the inter-generational inequities; to work at ways that will help its academic community, and the graduates, friends and governments that support it, to accept these ethical obligations;
8. Promote interdisciplinary networks of environmental experts at the local, national and international level in order to disseminate knowledge and to collaborate on common environmental projects in both research and education;
9. Promote the mobility of staff and students as essential to the free trade of knowledge;
10. Forge partnerships with other sectors of society in transferring innovative and appropriate technologies that can benefit and enhance sustainable development practices.

*In adopting this Declaration, delegates underlined specifically the following points:*

1. That sustainable development must not be interpreted in a manner that would lead to "sustained undevelopment" for certain systems, thus blocking their legitimate aspiration to raise their standard of living;
2. That sustainable development must take into consideration existing disparities in consumption and distribution patterns, with unsustainable over-consumption in some parts of the world contrasting with dramatic states of deprivation in others;
3. That global sustainable development implies changes of existing value systems, a task UN which universities have an essential mission, in order to create the necessary international consciousness and global sense of responsibility and solidarity;
4. That university cooperation for sustainable development must also assure that universities from countries with insufficient proper resources may play an active role in the process;
5. That IAU, through the intellectual and organisational potential of the Association, its clearinghouse, catalyst and network function, has a major role to play in the implementation of this Declaration.



## Annex IV. IAU Iquitos Statement on Higher Education for Sustainable Development

**Following the IAU 2014 International Conference on Blending Higher Education and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development**, held in Iquitos, Peru,

1. We, Members of the International Association of Universities (IAU) as well as representatives of the broader higher education community, **reaffirm our commitment to pursuing sustainable development** within and through our respective institutions and to reassessing higher education and its role in the transition to more sustainable societies.

2. As the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development comes to an end, and the Millennium Development Goals near their scheduled completion, the post-2015 Agenda is being shaped. The higher education community is ready to contribute to the development and implementation of the post-2015 Agenda.

**3. It is our shared belief that only with the full engagement of higher education in the post-2015 Agenda will it be possible to create the intellectual, economic, environmental and cultural conditions required for a sustainable future for all.**

4. We applaud the commitments and promises made at the world events held in Stockholm, 1972, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, Johannesburg, 2002 and "Rio + 20", 2012, to make our world better for all, for present and future generations.

5. In line with the IAU longstanding engagement in the elaboration of the following declarations:

- IAU Kyoto Declaration, 1993
- Bonn Declaration, issued at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development to mark the mid-Decade, 2009
- Rio + 20 People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education, June 2012;
- Commitment to Sustainable Practices of Higher Education Institutions on the Occasion of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012

We renew our commitment to Higher Education for Sustainable Development and **we agree to develop new actions and strengthen current initiatives** to respond proactively to the resolutions and recommendations adopted in the above-mentioned texts.

6. To build synergies and promote collaboration in the search for **effective and innovative approaches to solving today's as well as future sustainable development challenges**, IAU commits to offering an open, interactive and collaborative forum for discussion and action, to raise awareness and advocate for change. Using the interactive Portal on Higher Education for Sustainable Development, inter alia, IAU will showcase activities of and within higher education institutions from around the world and offer networking opportunities.

7. These and other efforts, when undertaken **collectively**, can bring about the needed changes in higher education to best serve the goals of sustainable development. Working together can create greater impact in the following areas, among others:

- Whole institution approaches in translating SD into institutional agendas,
- Mainstreaming sustainable development concepts and principles in all fields of study,
- Research on sustainable development issues,

- Community engagement to anchor sustainable development in local tradition, language and culture, and to better blend traditional knowledge in higher education,
- Sustainable leadership development and practices,
- Transdisciplinary approaches in seeking sustainable solutions,
- Campus greening and sustainability,
- Networking for SD to consolidate knowledge, experiences and impact.

8. Far more resources – human, organizational and financial – must be mobilized to achieve sustainable development locally and globally. Only collective and collaborative efforts will bring about the desired results of advancing knowledge and experiences for successful sustainable development measures and bring about lasting change.

9. IAU expertise, the conclusions of the IAU 2014 International Conference and the input of the wider higher education community led to this Statement. It will be presented at the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, and to those involved in setting the goals and implementation strategies for the post-2015 Agenda.

10. The IAU Iquitos Statement should be used to advocate for the recognition of the important role higher education can play in the post-2015 Agenda.



**IAU at UNESCO World Conference Education for Sustainable Development 2014, presenting the IAU Iquitos Statement**

## **Annex V. Higher education's essential contribution to the SDGs (IAU, ACU, AUF)**

None of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved without the contribution of higher education and research.

Through research, universities play a unique role in producing new knowledge and innovation to address global challenges and providing evidence for informed public policy.

Through teaching, universities develop generations of new leaders and skilled professionals who will drive social and economic development.

Through community engagement, universities work with a rich variety of stakeholders including governments, the private sector and civil society, to contribute towards local, national and global impact.

Higher education has a direct impact on the development of every country. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will not be achieved without partnerships that include universities.

Considering SDG 4 (Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all) specifically:

Higher education is an essential component of a strong and sustainable education system.

Universities strengthen education policy and practice at all levels, by training teachers and through educational research.

Access to quality higher education continues to be an issue for women and girls, people with disabilities, those living in rural areas, people on lower incomes, indigenous people, and those affected by conflict (targets 4.3 and 4.5).

Higher education develops the critical thinking and skills required by engaged citizens (target 4.7).

Scholarships designed for development impact can also be used to promote equity and inclusion, reward merit, and deliver widespread access – especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds – at the same time as addressing global challenges (target 4.B).

As three global university networks together representing over 2,000 institutions, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), and the International Association of Universities (IAU) call on

### **the higher education sector to:**

- Take steps to provide equitable access to quality higher education for all, raising levels of attainment as well as access
- Adopt policies and practices which maximise their contribution to the 2030 Agenda across teaching, research, and community engagement, as well as through their own operations
- Incorporate education about and for sustainable development into undergraduate curricula, in support of SDG Target 4.7.
- The United Nations and its agencies to:
- Respond to the need for strong higher education systems globally to achieve SDG 4
- Recognise the contribution of higher education to the 2030 Agenda and all SDGs beyond SDG 4

- Provide platforms to engage the higher education sector as partners for development, building on the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative and UN Academic Impact Initiative.

### National governments to:

- Take concerted action on and deliver well-planned long-term financial investment in SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.B
- Adopt a whole sector approach to the development of strong, equitable, quality education systems, recognising the contribution of higher education to SDG 4
- Engage universities as partners for national development across all 17 SDGs.



Higher Education's Essential Contribution to the SDGs – IAU at UN HLPF 2019, in New York

© Photo: Natasha Lokhun

## Annex VI. University Climate Emergency Letter

### Introduction

In advance of the COP 25 meeting in Chile in December, networks and institutions working in Further and Higher Education are coming together to add their support to this letter that would be shared with key government officials and the media in advance of this event.

The aim is to get as many networks and institutions as possible on board in order to showcase the commitments towards the attainment of SDG 4 (Education) and 13 (Climate Change).

Networks from around the world have already agreed to support this letter, including the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), Global Alliance, EAUC - The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education and Second Nature.

**Who can sign:** Ideally, the president or chancellor of respective institutions will sign on to this letter on behalf of the institution. However, if an institution has already committed to the actions outlined below via previous agreements, any faculty or staff member of the institution can sign on to reiterate its pre-existing commitment. If you have any questions regarding who can sign on to this letter, please contact us. Networks that represent higher and further education institutions can also sign on to the letter.

**Deadline:** The current deadline for signing on to this letter is December 1st 2019. If you are ready to add your network or institution to this letter, then please sign on to this letter via this form which will take no more than 2 minutes to complete.

### Sign the Global Climate Letter

#### Climate Emergency Letter

As institutions and networks of higher and further education from across the world, we collectively declare a Climate Emergency in recognition of the need for a drastic societal shift to combat the growing threat of climate change.

The young minds that are shaped by our institutions must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and capability to respond to the ever-growing challenges of climate change. We all need to work together to nurture a habitable planet for future generations and to play our part in building a greener and cleaner future for all.

We are today committing to collectively step up to the challenge by supporting a three-point plan which includes:

- Mobilizing more resources for action-oriented climate change research and skills creation;
- Committing to going carbon neutral by 2030 or 2050 at the very latest;
- Increasing the delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curriculum, campus and community outreach programmes.

We call on governments and other education institutions to join us in declaring a Climate Emergency and back this up with actions that will help create a better future for both people and our planet.

<https://www.sdgaccord.org/climateletter>

## Annex VII. Lead Institutions IAU Global Cluster on HESD (as of 2019)

Without the valuable support of the lead institutions in the IAU Global Cluster on HESD the survey and subsequent report would not have been possible.

- SDG1: University of Ghana, Ghana
- SDG2: Antonio Narino University, Colombia
- SDG3: Open University of Catalonia, Catalonia/Spain
- SDG4: York University, Canada
- SDG5: University of Bologna, Italy
- SDG6: University of Tehran, Iran
- SDG7: Assam Don Bosco University, India
- SDG8: Gothenburg University, Sweden
- SDG9: Beirut Arab University, Lebanon
- SDG10: University of Tsukuba, Japan
- SDG11: Siam University, Thailand
- SDG12: University of Regina and Luther College, Canada
- SDG13: University of the West Indies
- SDG14: University of Bergen, Norway
- SDG15: University of Costa Rica
- SDG16: University of Nairobi, Kenya
- SDG17: International Association of Universities



**More information on the IAU HESD Cluster can be found online:**

<http://iau-hesd.net/en/contenu/4648-iau-hesd-cluster.html>

## Annex VIII. IAU HESD Working Group

The authors of this Report are grateful for the very valuable support provided for the development of this survey and other projects developed in the context of the IAU Strategic Priority *Higher Education for Sustainable Development* (HESD) by the IAU HESD Working Group.

### The IAU HESD Working Group 2016-2020:

#### Chair

- Pornchai Mongkhonvanit, President, Siam University, Thailand

#### IAU President

- Pam Fredman, Former Rector, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

#### Members

- Ranbir Singh, National Law University, India
- Mahmoud Nili Ahmadabdi, President, University of Tehran, Iran
- Mohammad Reza Pourmohammadi, Chancellor, The University of Tabriz, Iran
- Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, Vice Chancellor, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and Former Vice-Chancellor Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
- Roberto Escalante Semerena, Secretary-General, UDUAL, Mexico
- Remus Pricopie, Rector, National University of Political and Administrative Studies, Romania

#### IAU Secretariat

- Hilligje van't Land, Secretary General, International Association of Universities
- Stefanie Mallow, Programme Officer, International Association of Universities

## Higher Education and the 2030 Agenda:

### Moving into the ‘Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs’

Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) has been a key priority for the International Association of Universities since 1993. Over the last years, sustainable development has become more and more important, not only for the Association and Higher Education, but for societies globally. In 2015, the United Nations adopted *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This report is the result of the analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Survey on HESD conducted by IAU in June and July 2019 in preparation for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held every year at the United Nations’ Headquarters in New York. It shows the important role that Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play in the achievement of the SDGs and where issues still exist. It is also proof of the commitment and responsibilities of many HEIs globally towards the 2030 Agenda.

538 valid responses, from all world regions, were received by IAU during the six weeks the survey was open. The report analyses how universities engage with the SDGs in particular and how they promote sustainable more broadly speaking. It is the only survey that maps the contributions of the higher education sector towards the 2030 Agenda at a global level.

Founded in 1950, under the auspices of UNESCO, the International Association of Universities (IAU) is the leading global Association of higher education institutions and organisations from around the world. IAU brings together its Members from more than 130 countries for reflection and action on common concerns. IAU is an independent, bilingual (English and French), non-governmental organization. IAU is an official partner of UNESCO (Associate status). It acts as The Voice of Higher Education and provides a global forum for leaders of institutions and associations to debate and learn from each other and to cooperate. Its services are available on the priority basis to Members but also to organisations, institutions and authorities concerned with higher education, as well as to individual policy and decision-makers, specialists, administrators, teachers, researchers and students.



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