

Sustainability and greening in European higher education

EUA survey report

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Sustainability and greening in European higher education

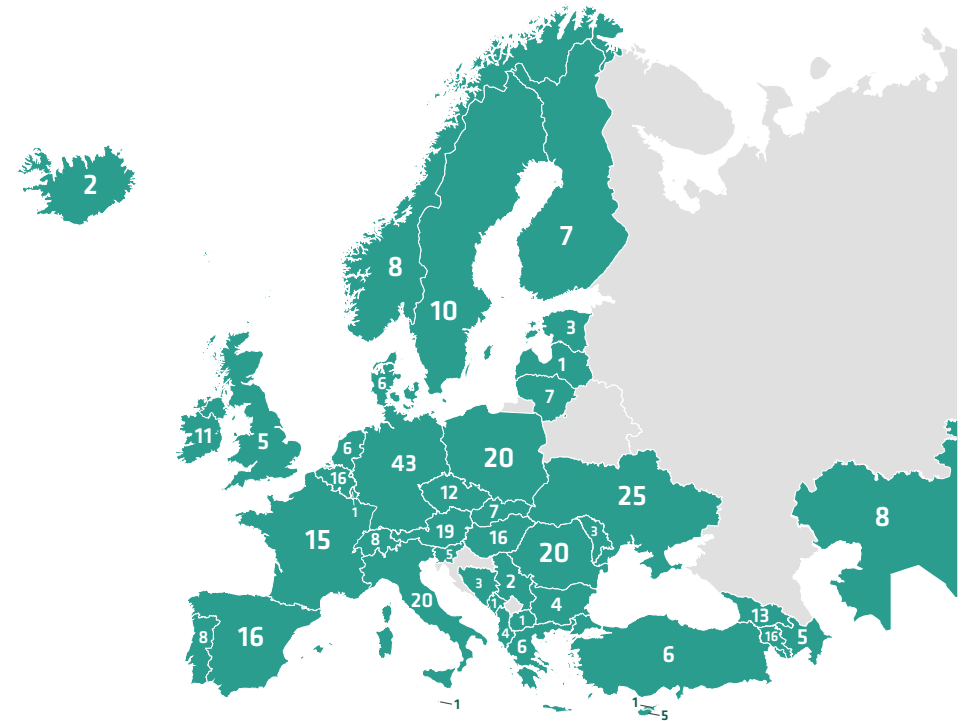
EUA's 2025 survey on sustainability and greening captured a wide range of perceptions and approaches among European universities¹. This ranges from strategies and actions to education, research and innovation, as well as the third mission and institutional organisation. As a similar survey was conducted in 2021², some longitudinal data is presented in this report.

The main takeaways:

- Since 2021, university engagement for sustainability and greening has increased, both regarding the number of active institutions and also the intensity of their actions.
- European universities have become increasingly strategic about sustainability and greening. There has been a shift towards institutional policies, and more strategic and mainstreamed approaches.
- Sustainability and greening brings multifaceted benefits for universities, from campus life, R&I opportunities and 'real life' learning and teaching to staff and student recruitment and partnerships with wider society, not to mention the economic benefits and cost savings.
- Most initiatives are based on voluntary commitment and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Compulsory measures are relatively uncommon.
- When asked what is needed to overcome the barriers they face in implementing sustainability and greening measures, enhanced national and European funding is universities' biggest ask.
- Regarding the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, many universities take a comprehensive approach that goes beyond climate and environmental issues. Moreover, most universities have increased their commitment towards the SDGs over the past five years and expect to do the same in the next five.

This report is based on 400 responses from institutions in 44 higher education systems in 43 countries of the European Higher Education Area. The largest number of responses came from Germany (43), followed by Ukraine (25), Italy (20), Poland (20), Romania (20) and Austria (19)³.

Q2: Please select your country / higher education system. N=400



Type of institution

The survey was open from the end of March to mid-June 2025. Only one response per institution, from its institutional leadership, was collected. At least some institutional experience and ongoing activities on sustainability greening were a condition for survey participation.

The survey gathered responses from different types of higher education institutions, underlining the relevance of the topic across the sector:

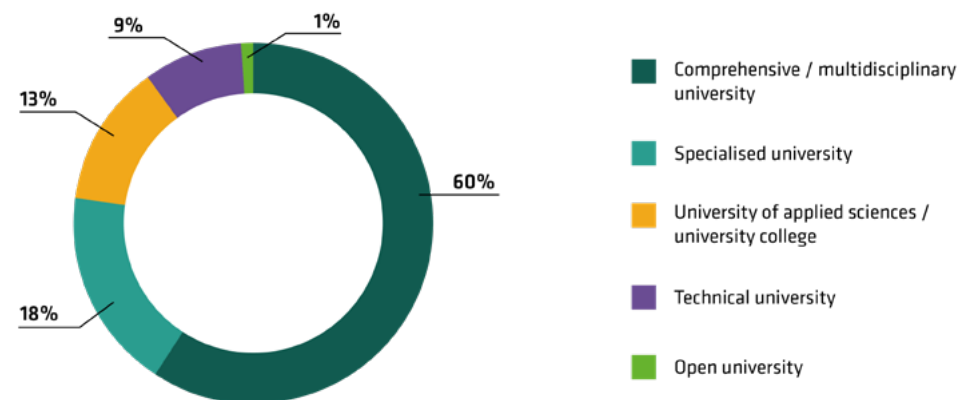
- Sixty percent of participating institutions are comprehensive, multidisciplinary universities.
- Specialised institutions, universities of applied sciences and technical universities took up 18%, 13% and 9% of the sample respectively.
- In addition, 3 open universities participated (1% of the sample).

Increased engagement

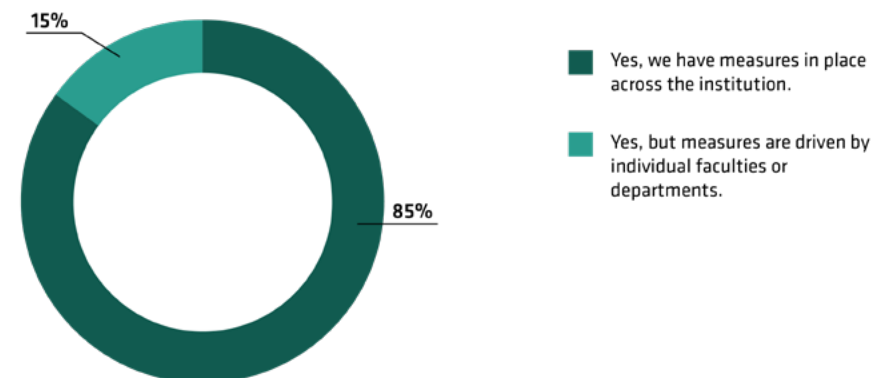
Since 2021, university engagement for sustainability and greening has increased, both regarding the number of active institutions and the intensity of their actions.

The vast majority of survey respondents indicate that measures are in place across their institution (85%), with only 15% stating that sustainability and greening measures are driven by individual faculties or departments.

Q3: Please select your type of institution. N=400



Q5: Does your institution have any measures in place that address sustainability or greening? N=400



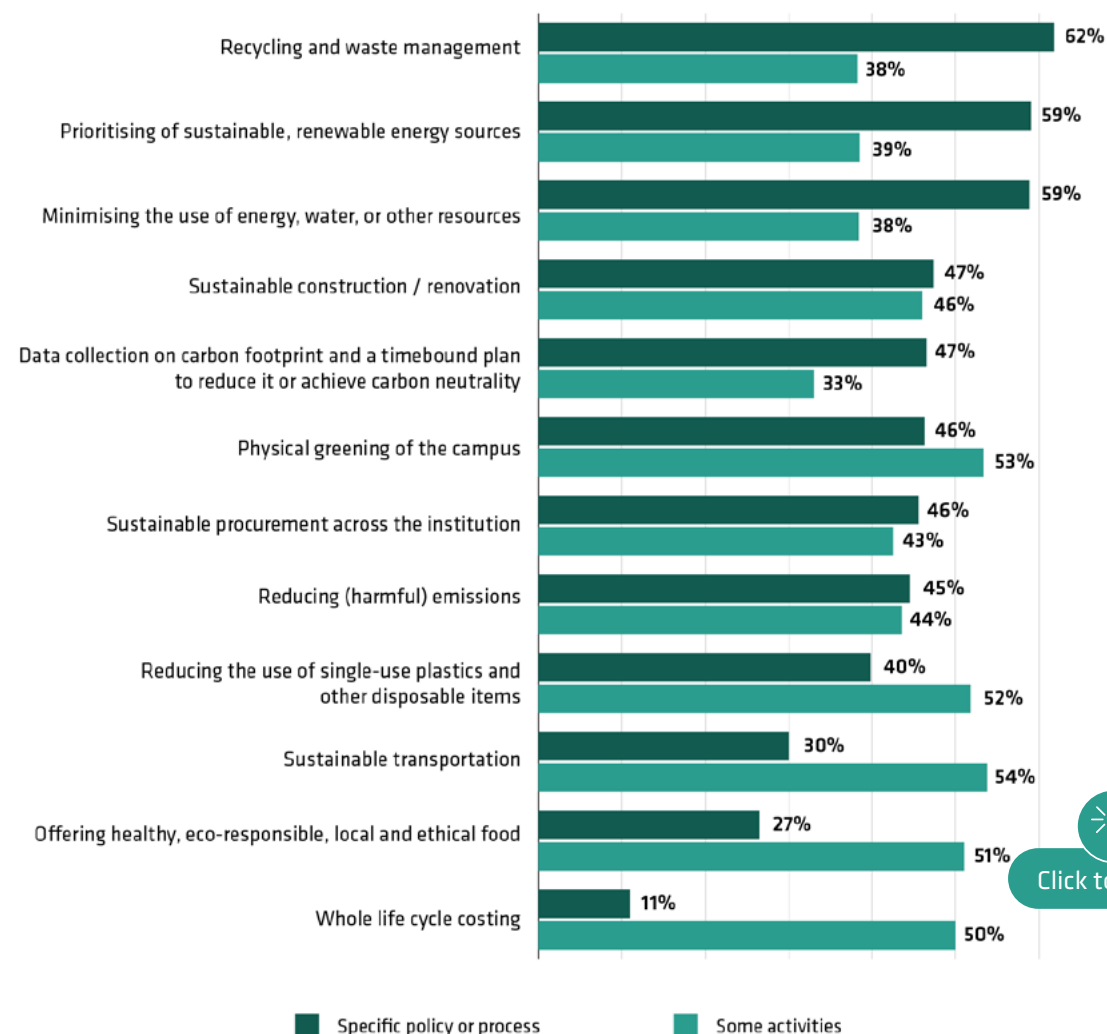
A sustainable and green campus

Reducing the carbon footprint of their campuses is an important goal for European universities. Apart from the climate and environmental impact, sustainability and greening efforts help to raise awareness and tangibly improve the quality of campus life. They also sometimes help to cut costs.

- Already in 2021, 93% of institutions had recycling and waste management measures in place, and 92% engaged in greening their campuses. By 2025, this has become a standard: all institutions do it, and around half also underpin such measures with specific policies (recycling 62%, greening 46%).
- Other fairly common measures – implemented by 90% or more of institutions – are prioritising sustainable, renewable energy sources (59% have specific policies / 39% conduct some activities), minimising the use of energy, water or other resources (59% specific policies / 38% some activities), choosing sustainable construction / renovation measures⁴ (47% specific policies / 46% some activities) and reducing the use of single-use plastics and other disposable items (40% specific policies / 52% some activities).
- Slightly less common, but still applied by more than 60% of institutions, are sustainable transportation⁵ (30% have specific policies / 54% conduct some activities), healthy, responsible, local and ethical food (27% specific policies / 51% some activities) and whole life-cycle costing⁶ (11% specific policies / 50% some activities).

In sum, much progress has been made, but there are clear areas for further improvement.

Q6.1: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Green / sustainable campus. N=400



Click to enlarge

Internal communication and engagement

European universities value the engagement of different actors across the entire institution as a key driver of sustainability and greening. For example, 96%-97% of survey respondents rate student and staff engagement as (very) important (cf. Q16). To build a dynamic culture of engagement, all institutions consider communication as important, and all have a range of measures in place. But there are clear differences in how thoroughly these are supported through policies and processes.

- All participating institutions are running awareness-raising and communication initiatives on sustainability and greening (49% backed up by specific policies or processes / 51% with at least some activities).
- 95% offer sustainability training and capacity-building for staff (31% specific policies or processes / 65% some activities). This is a major increase since 2021, when 78% provided staff training (18% specific policies or processes / 60% some activities).
- Institution-wide sustainability targets are integrated into faculty and departmental objectives at 83% of institutions (cf. Q11).
- 79% recognise student engagement through ECTS credits, awards, badges etc., though only 28% have enshrined this in policy. Recognition of staff engagement is less established: only 60% of institutions consider it for career progression, promotion or remuneration, and few have a specific policy or process (14%).
- Gamification strategies⁷ and tools to encourage participation and engagement are a relatively novel approach – only 12% have specific policies in place, with another 46% offering some activities.

Q6.2: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Green / sustainable campus. N=400

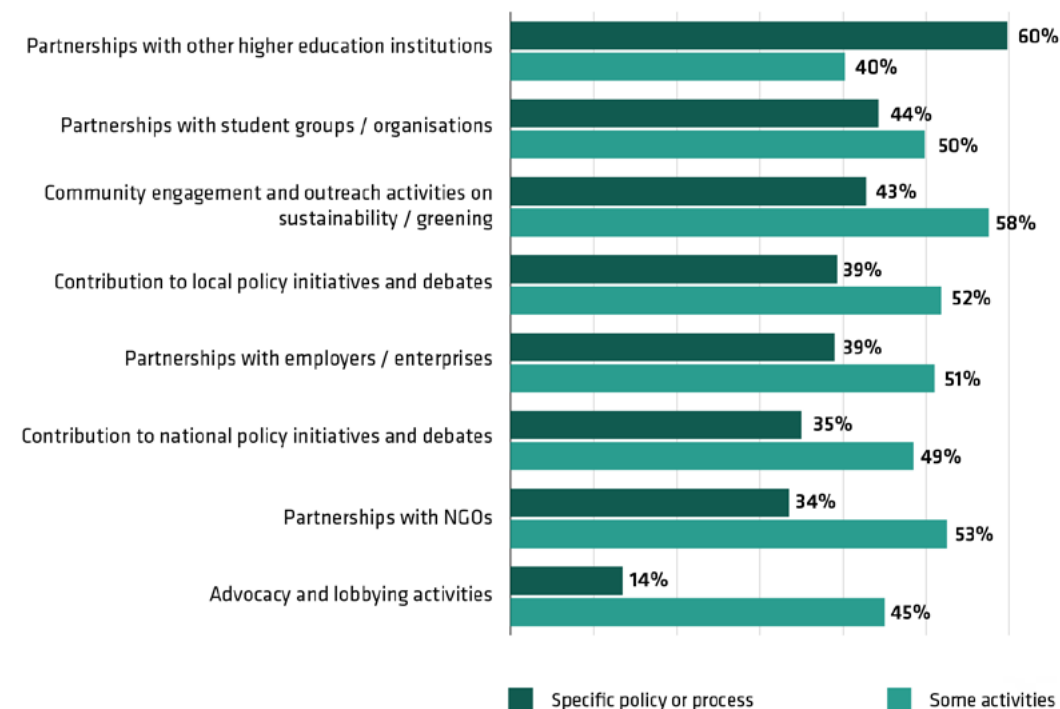


Community engagement and outreach

Sustainability and greening stimulate partnerships and collaboration on campus, but also beyond, from local to international levels (cf. Q6.7). Indeed, this trend has risen since 2021:

- All survey respondents are actively engaging with other higher education institutions on this matter (60% specific policies and processes / 40% some activities) – a significant increase from 88% in 2021.
- Most also establish partnerships with student groups or organisations (94%), which confirms student engagement as one of the main drivers to sustainability initiatives in higher education (cf. Q16).
- All engage with their local community on sustainability and greening – a 16% increase since 2021. But only 43% back this up with a specific policy, which is much lower than for their engagement with other higher education institutions, for example.
- Both partnerships with employers and enterprises (39% specific policies and processes / 51% some activities) and with NGOs (34% specific policies and processes / 53% some activities) have increased since 2021. Here, growth is not so much due to the number of institutions that engage (from 83% to 90%; and 80% to 86% respectively) but an increase in dedicated institutional policies and processes, i.e. more systematic and strategic engagement.
- More than 90% also contribute to local policy initiatives and debates on sustainability and greening (39% specific policies and processes / 52% some activities), and more than half proactively lobbies for it (14% specific policies and processes / 45% some activities).

Q6.3: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Outreach. N=400



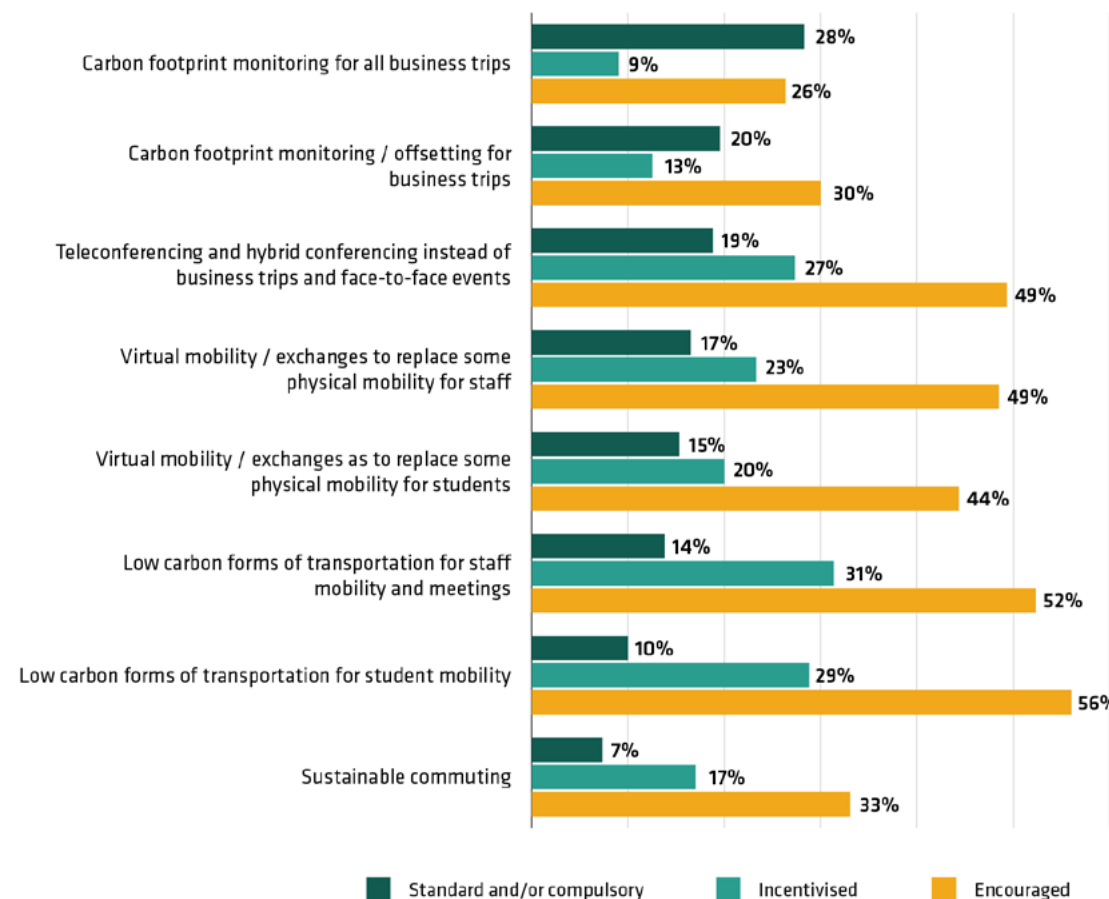
International mobility and travel

Travel and transport, and air travel in particular, are a major source of carbon emissions, which makes academic mobility a frequently discussed issue. Greener travel is also encouraged by the Erasmus+ programme, where climate and environmental sustainability is an overarching priority⁸, reflected both in mobility and collaboration actions.

Nonetheless, sustainable mobility measures tend to be encouraged rather than incentivised or prescribed.

- Compared to other forms of travel, mandatory sustainability measures are more common for business trips (standardized carbon footprint monitoring 28%; standardized carbon footprint monitoring & offsetting 20%).
- Virtual exchanges of staff and students as an alternative to physical mobility are encouraged at 49% and 44% of institutions respectively, with 20% or more also incentivising this. Only 17% of institutions make it mandatory for staff and 15% for students. Interestingly, in 2021, these figures were around ten percentage points higher, like due to measures required by the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent reports, however, suggest that physical student mobility has recovered to pre-pandemic levels (EUA 2024⁹, Eurydice 2024¹⁰).

Q6.4: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Mobility. N=400



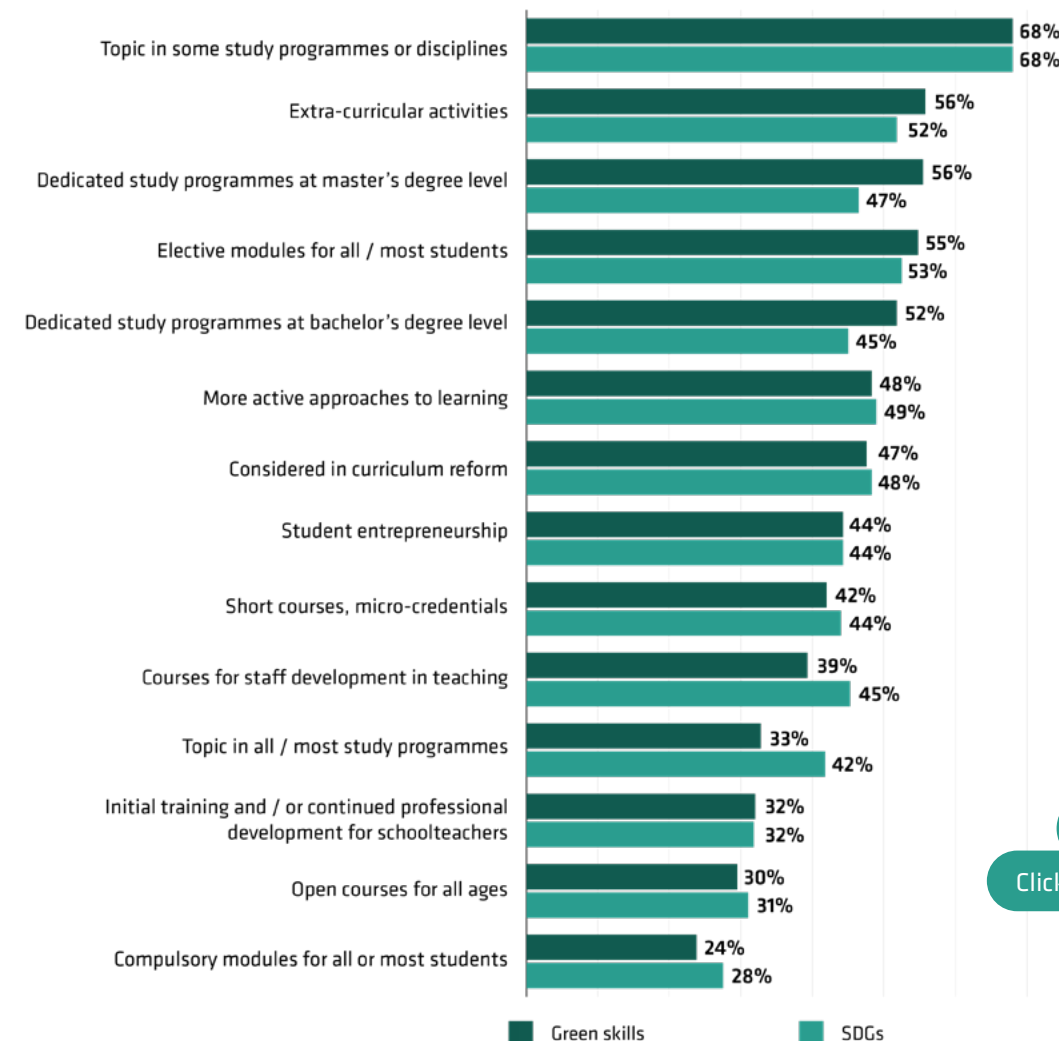
Learning and teaching

When asked to distinguish between learning and teaching activities that address the SDGs and those that provide green skills¹¹, most survey respondents report to offer them on par.

- For example, 68% cover both green skills and SDGs in some study programmes or disciplines.
- Elective modules are offered by more than half (55% green skills / 53% SDGs). Slightly more than a quarter offers compulsory modules for all or most students (24% green skills / 28% SDGs), making this the least common measure.
- About half also consider green skills and SDGs in curriculum reform (47% green skills / 48% SDGs), extra-curricular activities (56% green skills / 52% SDGs) and active approaches to learning¹² (48% green skills / 49% SDGs). This is slightly lower for student entrepreneurship (44% for both), however this is still a high uptake, as not every institution may engage in student entrepreneurship.
- Many universities also extend their learning offer in this area to society at large. More than 40% do so via micro-credentials, and more than 30% via courses for learners of all ages.

Since 2021¹³, measures have remained relatively stable, but most have experienced some growth, in particular when it comes to dedicated study programmes.

Q6.5: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Mobility. N=400

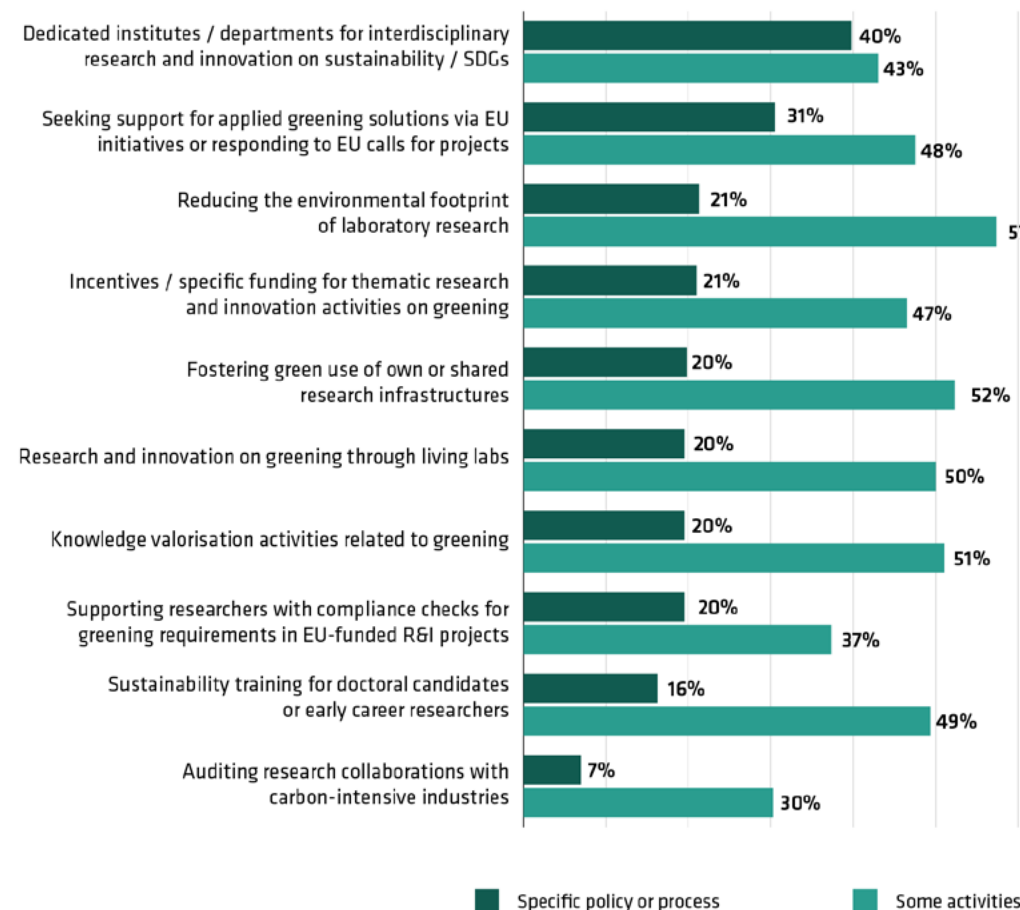


Research and innovation

While many universities strive to make their R&I activities more sustainable, in comparison with other areas, e.g. L&T, they are much less likely to have specific policies or processes in place across the entire institution.

- However, 40% of respondents have dedicated institutes or departments for interdisciplinary research and innovation on sustainability or the SDGs in place, with another 43% carrying out some activities in this area.
- Most also use EU initiatives¹⁴ and apply to EU project calls in order to establish applied greening solutions (31% specific policies and processes / 48% some activities). This is an increase since 2021 (25% and 39% respectively).
- While about three quarters of institutions actively engage, only around a fifth have dedicated sustainability and greening policies in place to reduce the footprint of laboratory research¹⁵ (21%), provide specific funding for thematic research and innovation activities (21%), foster green use of own or shared research infrastructures¹⁶ (20%), engage in research and innovation through living labs¹⁷ (20%) and undertake knowledge valorisation activities¹⁸ (20%).
- Research collaborations with carbon-intensive industries are subject to audits at about one third of institutions (7% specific policies and processes, 30% some activities).

Q6.6: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Research and innovation. N=400

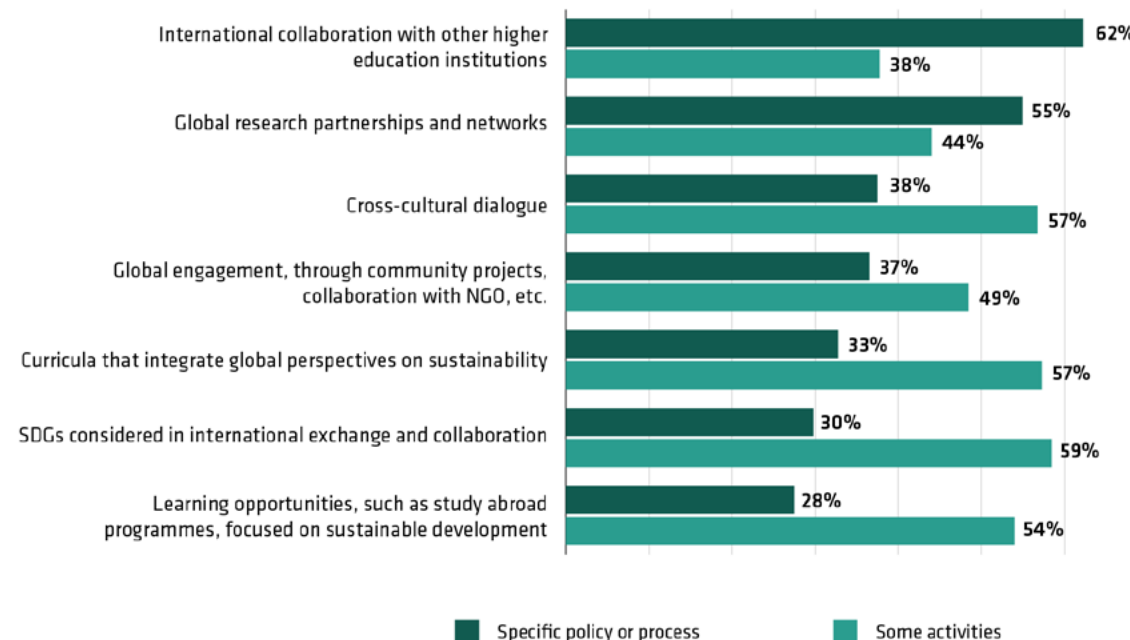


Internationalisation

European universities actively seek opportunities for partnership and collaboration on sustainability and greening with their local communities, but also internationally (cf. Q6.2):

- All survey respondents collaborate with international higher education institutions on the topic, and 62% underpin this with policies.
- Almost all (99%) participate in global research partnerships and networks (55% have specific policies and processes / 44% conduct some activities), and participate in cross-cultural dialogue on sustainability and greening (38% specific policies and processes / 57% some activities).
- The vast majority (90%) integrates global perspectives on sustainability into curricula, however only a third does so consistently.
- Similarly, while the majority considers the SDGs in international exchange and collaboration measures (89%), only 30% have dedicated policies in place to do so.
- 82% also offer international learning opportunities, such as study abroad programmes, focused on sustainable development (28% specific policies and processes; 54% some activities).

Q6.7: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution?
– Internationalisation. N=400

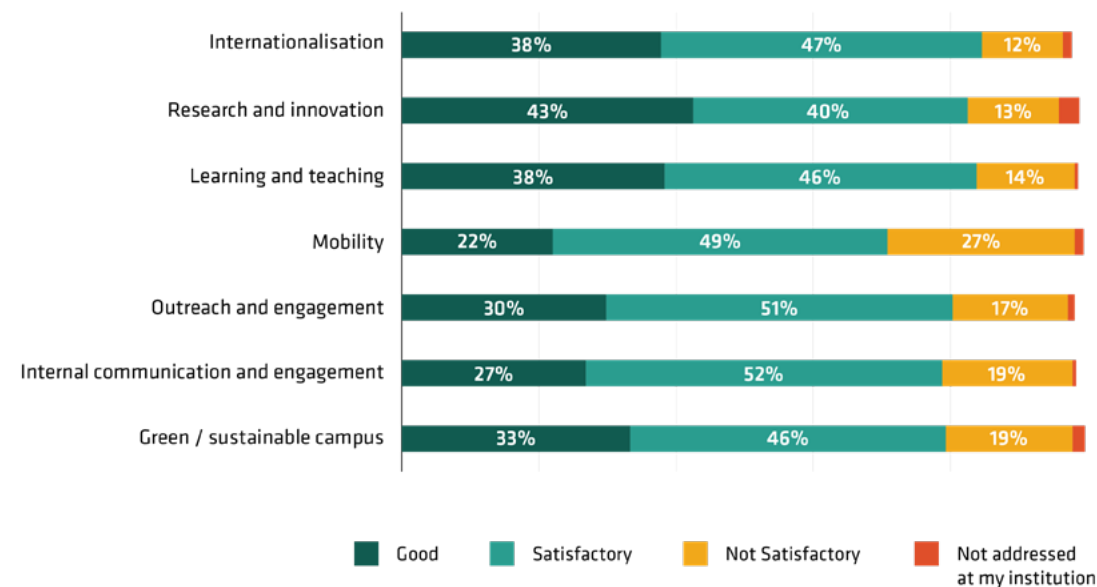


Performance

When asked to rate their institution's activities and performance, survey respondents gave quite consistent feedback across all areas:

- Activities in the areas of internationalisation, research and innovation and learning and teaching received the most positive feedback overall, with respectively 85%, 84% and 83% saying that their institution performed well or satisfactorily.
- Mobility stood out as the area where they see the greatest room for improvement, with 27% rating their institution's performance as not satisfactory.

Q7. How would you rate your institution's activities and performance in the following sustainability and greening areas? N=400



How are universities putting sustainability and greening into practice?

309 institutions also shared examples of good practices, spanning research, teaching, student life governance, and infrastructure – and demonstrating how European universities are integrating sustainability and greening across strategy, operations, and community engagement.

Key takeaways:

- Universities promote sustainability and greening in R&I through dedicated institutes and living labs that address themes such as energy, biodiversity, housing, and climate adaptation, often in partnership with local communities and external stakeholders.
- Technical innovation plays a central role, sometimes with very tangible impacts. Universities have put in place renewable energy installations, biomass heating, advanced building management systems, and energy-efficient renovations. Several noted significant reductions in CO² emissions, energy use, and waste.
- For education, good practices include mandatory sustainability courses for undergraduates, training for staff and doctoral candidates, and lifelong learning modules.
- Events and cultural projects also help embed sustainability into campus life and raise awareness, e.g. summer schools and sustainability days.
- Campus and student initiatives further strengthen impact through recycling programmes, bans on single-use plastics, biodiversity projects, bike-repair stations, and student-led Green Offices.

Networks

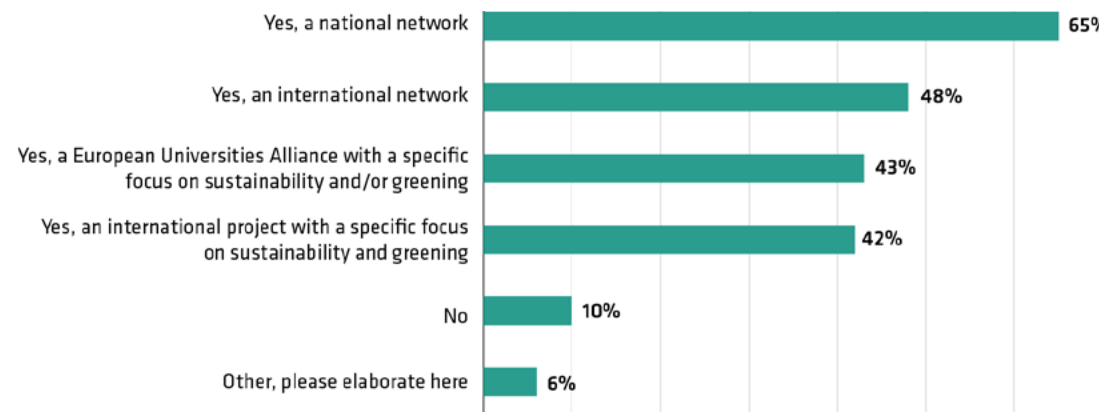
In addition to individual partnerships and collaboration activities, networks play an important role in sustainability and greening in higher education. In 2021, three quarters of survey respondents participated in relevant networks. In 2025, this has increased to 90%.

- Participation in international networks has risen from 33% to 48%, and participation in national networks has risen from 58% to 65%.
- Close to half of institutions also participate in international projects with a specific focus on sustainability and greening. (Many also mentioned Erasmus+ projects under “Other”.)
- The number of European Universities alliances with a specific focus on sustainability and greening rose to 43%, from 18% in 2021.

Annex 1 provides a comprehensive overview of national and international networks listed by survey respondents:

- This includes a total of 60 networks, either dedicated to environmental sustainability in general, or to specific issues such as green energy, water management practices, etc.
- Most of the networks are not specific to higher education but have a broad membership.
- They engage in exchange and coordination between institutions, best practice sharing, data gathering, and the development and implementation of institutional policies and processes.
- Frequently addressed topics are new degrees and courses, community engagement, carbon footprint/emissions, waste, energy consumption, plastic use and green mobility.
- Some networks also offer evaluation or review processes.

Q9. *Is your institution part of any networks or working groups specifically dedicated to sustainability and greening in higher education and research? N=400*



Strategies

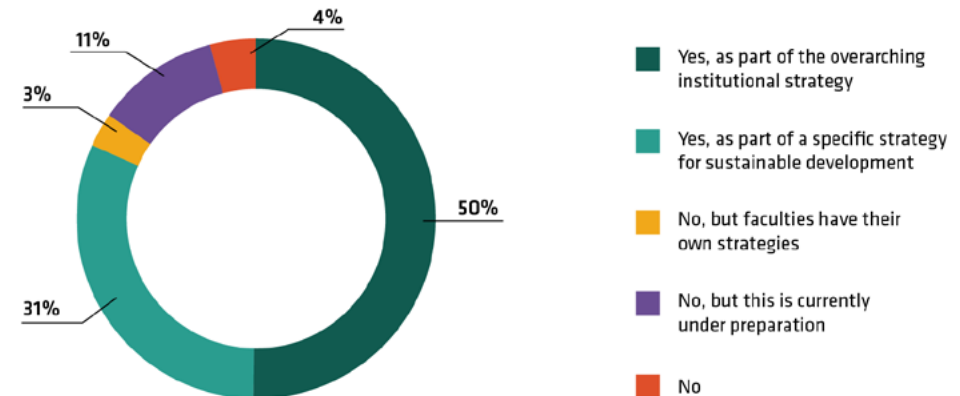
European universities have become increasingly strategic about sustainability and greening.

- In 2025, 84% of survey respondents have dedicated strategies in place, and 11% are currently preparing one. This is a major increase compared to 2021, when 61% already had a strategy, and another 25% planned to develop one.

Whereas 31% have a specific strategy for sustainable development, 50% include this topic in their overarching institutional strategy, and another 3% have faculty level-only strategies.

Indeed, in a 2024 EUA survey on higher education reform implementation and institutional development trends¹⁹, 74% of institutions stated that greening and sustainable development are of high strategic importance for their mission.

Q10. Does your institution have a strategy or a similar document that refers to sustainability and/or greening explicitly? N=400



Governance and steering

Almost all survey respondents (95%) have concrete governance and steering mechanisms in place for sustainability and greening measures.

- Since 2021, the number of institutions that have dedicated leadership portfolios (vice-rector, dean or similar) in place has increased from 38% to 50%.
- 40% of institutions also have other structures dedicated to sustainability, such as a committee, a team or an office.
- Dedicated advisory boards with external experts are less common.

Q12. Who is in charge of the governance and steering of your institution's sustainability and greening measures? N=400



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Goals, targets, indicators and timelines

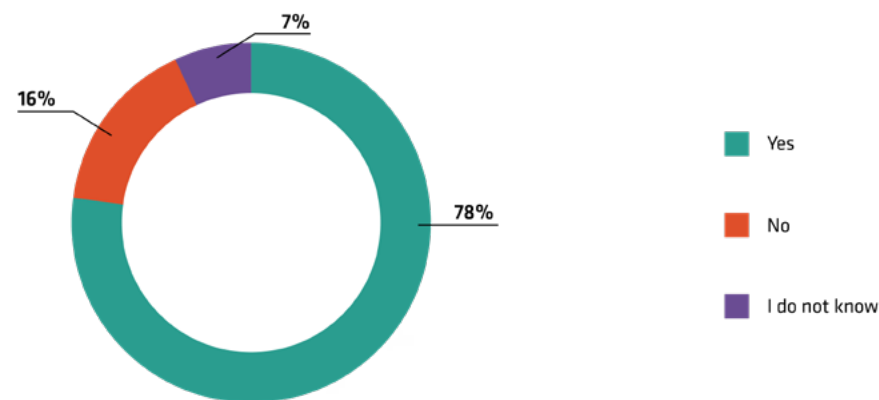
Similarly to 2021, the vast majority of institutions (78%) monitor their work on sustainability and greening with concrete goals, targets, indicators and/or timelines. For instance:

- The majority (65%) explicitly monitor carbon emissions and consumption.
- Monitoring is conducted via an internal QA process at 47%, as part of an external QA process at 19%.
- 42% conduct a dedicated annual greening report and 22% carry out an impact audit.

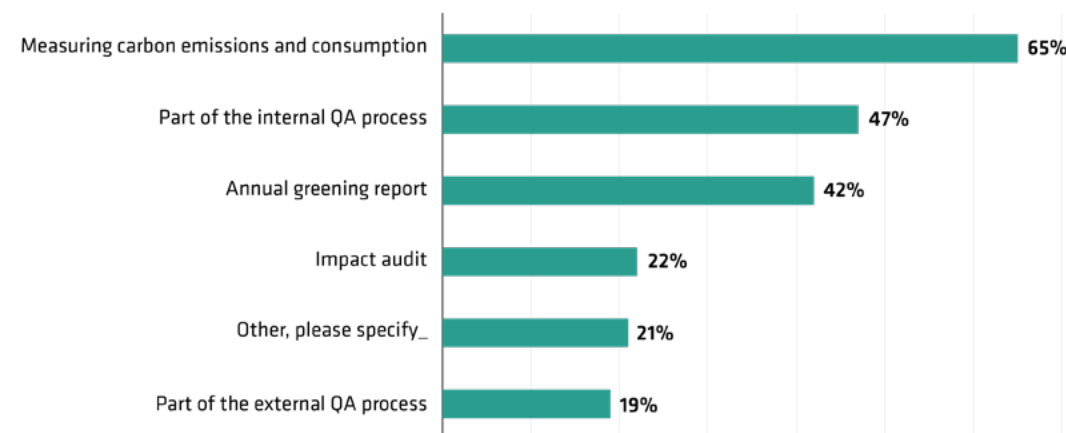
When asked about why they monitor these activities, responses reveal three main drivers:

1. Internal drivers – including institutional self-monitoring through sustainability reports and SDG-aligned assessments, including internal QA requirements;
2. Regulatory compliance – i.e. to frameworks like the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the EU's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), and ISO sustainability standards;
3. Reputational benchmarking – participation in global rankings, such as Times Higher Education Impact Rankings/Ratings, QS World University Ranking, and the UI GreenMetric, to enhance their visibility and reputation.

Q11. Does your institution's work on sustainability and greening include concrete goals, targets, indicators and/or timelines? N=400



Q11.1 If yes [targets], how are they measured? N= 310

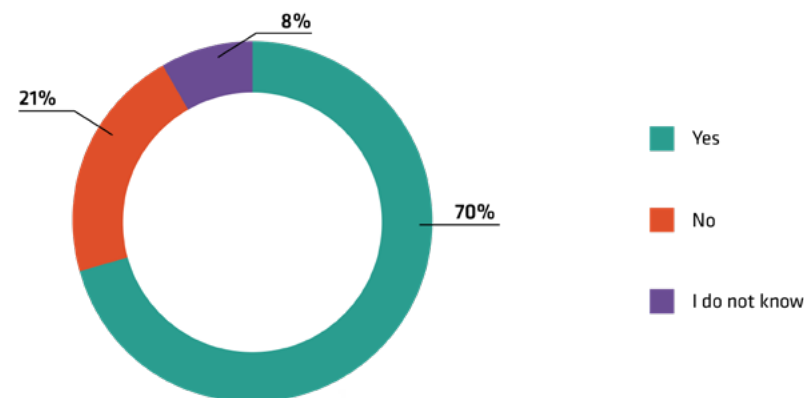


Reporting

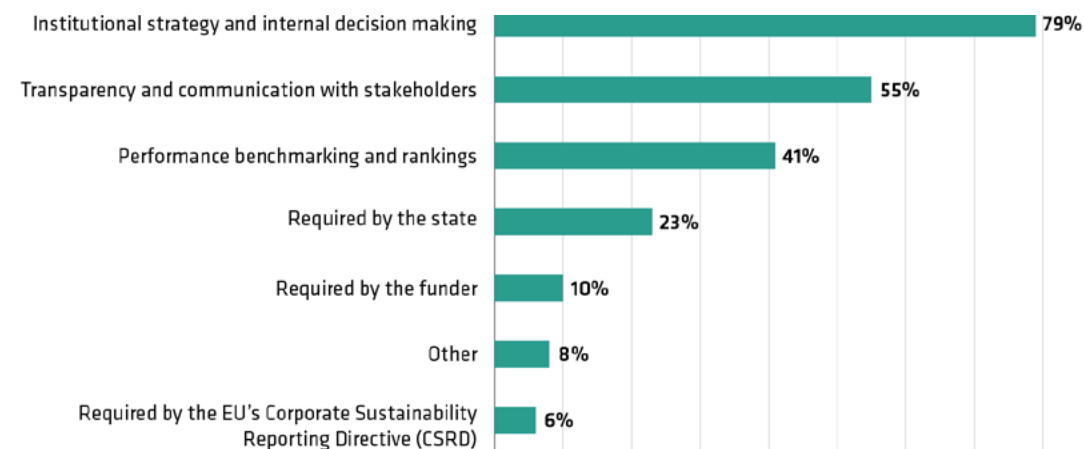
Most universities (70%) engage in sustainability reporting. They mainly do so on a voluntary basis, but for about 40% it is also a formal requirement (state, funder, CSRD, etc.).

- The main driver for sustainability reporting is to inform the institution's strategy and decision making (79%).
- Transparency and communication with stakeholders is the second most cited motivation (55%), followed by performance benchmarking and rankings (41%).
- At 23% of institutions, reporting is required by the state, at 10% by the funder, and only 6% are subject to the CSRD.

Q15. Does your institution engage in sustainability reporting? N=393



Q15.1 (If yes,) Why has your institution implemented sustainability reporting? N=276



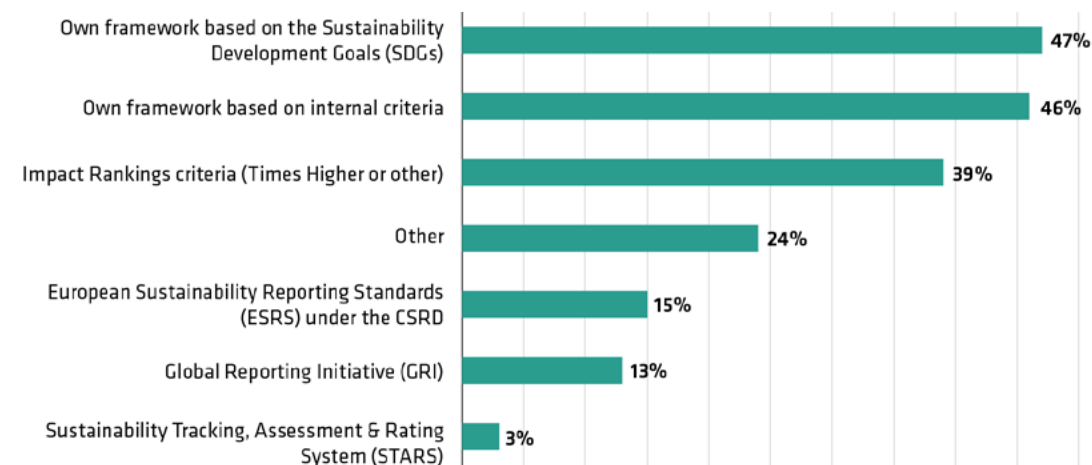
Frameworks and standards for reporting

- Nearly half of universities have developed their own frameworks and standards for sustainability reporting, either based on the SDGs (47%) and/or on internal criteria (46%).
- Impact rankings (e.g. Times Higher Education) are also highly relevant (39%).
- In contrast, other external frameworks, such as the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS) appear to be less frequently used by institutions (15% or less).
- A notable 24% of institutions selected the “Other” category, referring to a mix of global and national frameworks, such as the UI GreenMetric, the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and others.

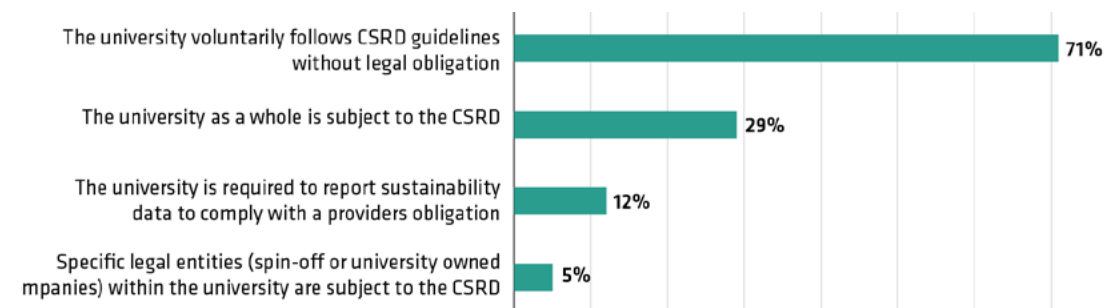
The EU’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

- Among the 42 institutions that had selected the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) in the previous question (15%), the majority reported following the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) in 2025 voluntarily, while only 12 institutions indicated they are fully subject to the CSRD.
- The remaining options – compliance with providers’ obligations and applicability to specific legal entities – were selected by only a small subset of institutions.

Q15.2 (If yes,) Which framework(s) or standard(s) does your institution use for sustainability reporting? N= 276



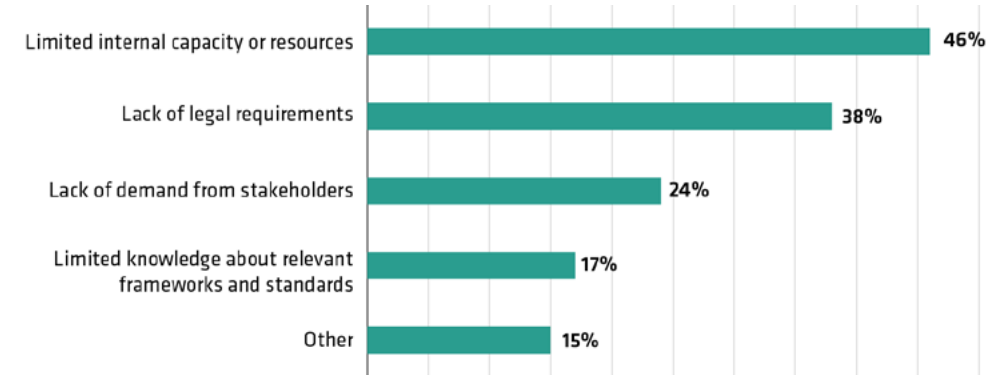
15.2.1 (If European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) under CSRD,) your institution engages in sustainability reporting under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), what is the scope of application? N= 42



Reasons for lack of reporting

- 29% of survey respondents do not engage in sustainability reporting. Amongst the primary reasons is limited internal capacity or resources (46%), followed by the absence of legal requirements (38%) and lack of demand from stakeholders (24%).

Q15.3. *If no sustainability reporting, what are the main reasons? N=84*

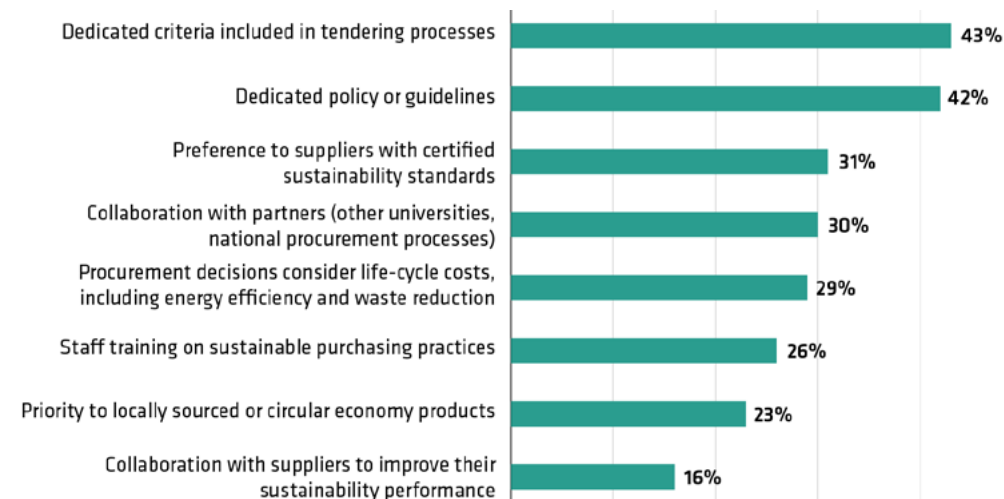


Procurement

Many universities actively integrate sustainability into their procurement processes²⁰.

- At 42% of survey respondents, there are dedicated policies and guidelines in place.
- 43% include dedicated criteria in tendering processes, and at 29% procurement decisions consider life-cycle costs, including energy efficiency and waste reduction.
- 31% give preference to suppliers with certified sustainability standards, and 23% give priority to locally sourced or circular products.
- In addition, 30% collaborate with partners (other universities, national processes) to pool procurement and enhance sustainability.

Q13. (If Q6.1 options Sustainable procurement - Specific policy or process, or some activities is selected) How does your institution integrate sustainability into its procurement processes? N= 352



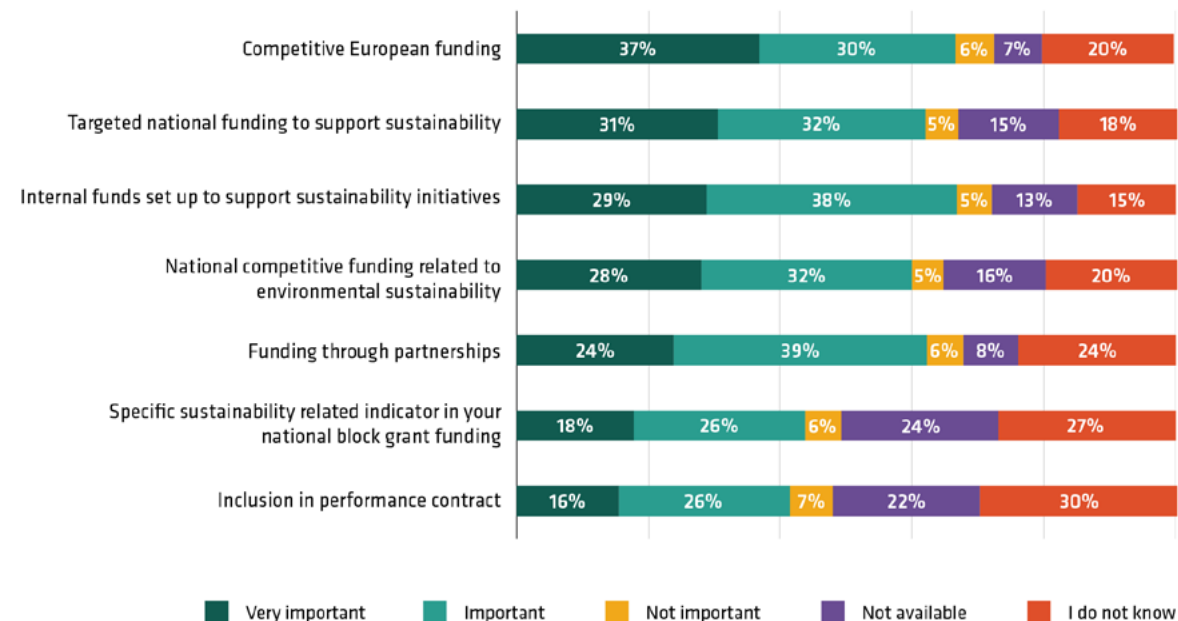
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Funding sources

Measures for sustainability and greening require investment and resources. As such, universities deploy a mix of funding sources to support their activities.

- Competitive European funding is rated as the most important funding source to support sustainability activities (37% very important / 30% important).
- This is closely followed by targeted (31% very important / 32% important) and competitive (28% very important / 32% important) national funding, internal funds (29% very important / 38% important) and funding through partnerships (24% very important / 39% important).
- Over 40% of institutions recognise the importance of integrating sustainability indicators in block grant funding or performance contracts. But about a fifth state that these are not available to them, showing that there is greater potential to mainstream funding for sustainability.

Q14. Please rate the importance of the following funding sources for your sustainability activities. N= 400



Sustainability and greening in European higher education

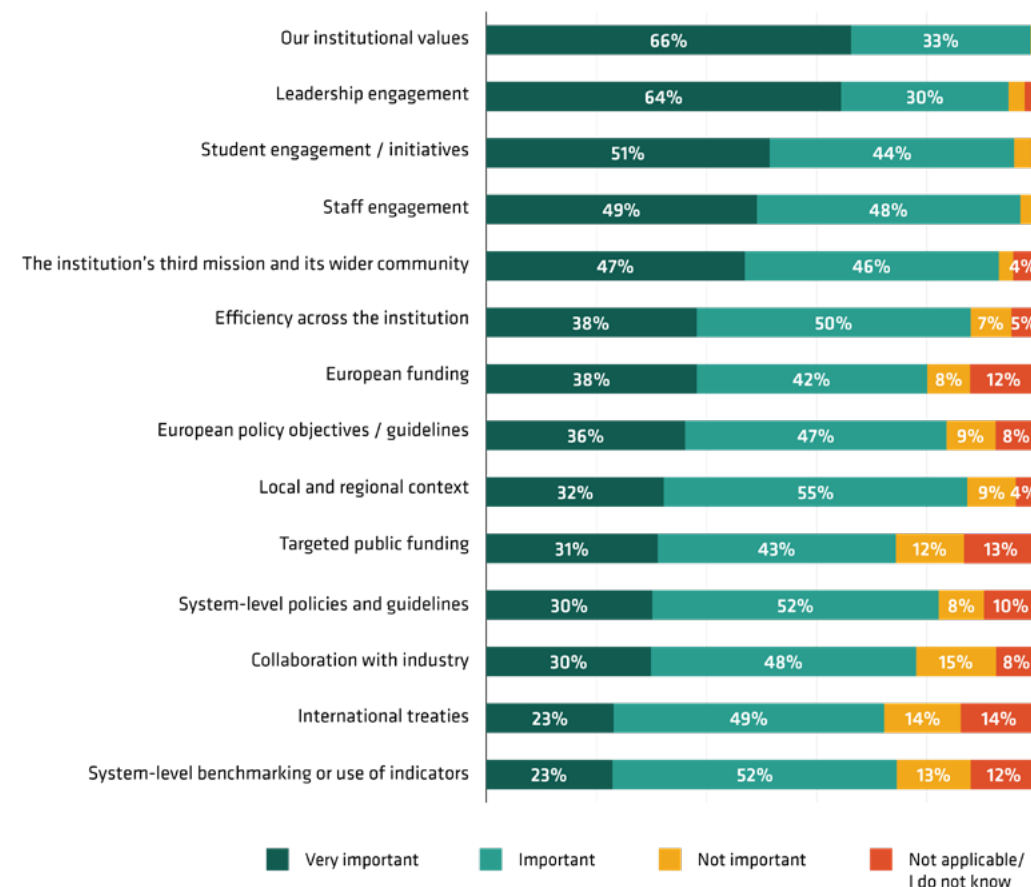
Drivers of engagement

Neither sustainability nor greening are typically listed among the three core missions of universities (teaching, research and the 'third mission' of service to society). So, what motivates their efforts in this area).

When asked to identify the main drivers of their universities' engagement with sustainability and greening, survey respondents in 2025 gave very similar answers to the previous EUA survey in 2021:

- Values and leadership engagement are the main drivers: almost all institutions rate sustainability and greening's links to their institutional values as either very important (66%) or important (33%). In addition, the institution's third mission and its wider community are rated as very important by 47% very important and important by 46%.
- The engagement of all members of the university community is highly rated by 94% or more: staff (49% very important / 48% important), students (51% very important / 44% important) and leadership (64% very important / 30% important).
- For 88% of respondents enhanced efficiency is another key driver (38% very important / 50% important).
- 80% or more also rank European funding (38% very important / 42% important) incentives and European guidelines and policy objectives (36% very important / 47% important) – both have slightly increased compared to 2021.
- Targeted system-level policies were ranked as important or very important by 82%, while targeted funding was ranked as important or very important by 74%. This is relatively high, when considering that such measures might not be available in all countries, as evidenced by the 13% that answered 'not applicable' for public funding and 10% for national policies.
- The local and regional context matters to 87% of institutions. Engagement with external partners continues to be important, as also evidenced by the large array of community engagement activities many have in place (cf. Q6.3).

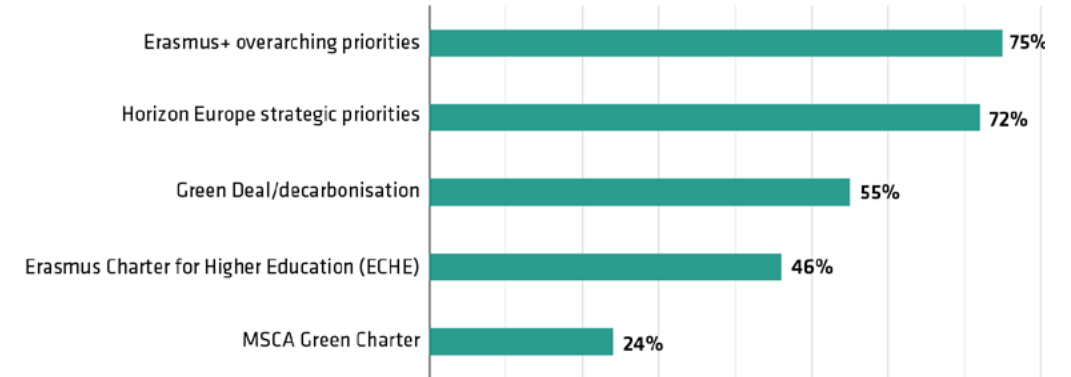
Q16. Please rate how important the following aspects are in advancing your institution's engagement in sustainability and greening. N= 389



European policy drivers

- Respondents that had selected European policy objectives and guidelines as an important or very important driver of engagement in sustainability and greening underlined the importance of this being a strategic priority in both the Erasmus+ (75%) and Horizon Europe (72%) programmes.
- Universities also see the European Green Deal as an important European policy driver (55%).
- Close to a quarter (24%) also mentioned the MSCA Green Charter²¹ (newly updated in October 2025).

Q16.2 (If European policy objectives / guidelines selected as (very) important) please indicate which policy objectives / guidelines. N= 319



Impact & benefits

Enhancing sustainability and greening in higher education has multifaceted benefits:

- Three quarters or more of institutions see strong to moderate impact for stimulating research and innovation (80%), but also for learning and teaching, including the creation of 'real-life' learning opportunities for students (80%).
- A majority of respondents also flagged a positive impact on quality of life on campus (79%), awareness and behaviour of staff (82%), students (77%) and external partnerships (78%).
- Looking to the future, a quarter of institutions expects to see positive impacts in areas such as recruiting staff and students, providing economic benefits and cost savings, and contributing to science-based policies locally and regionally.

Q17. How would you rate the impact / benefits from your institution's sustainability and greening activities? The activities have ... N= 384

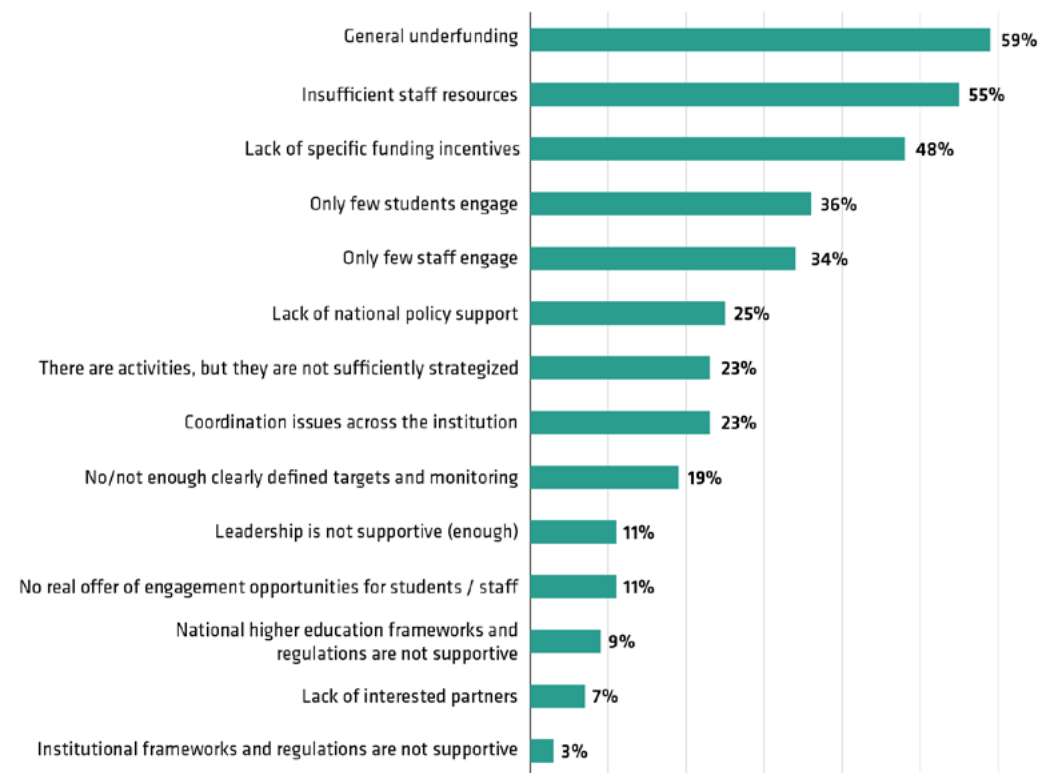


Top five barriers

The most frequently mentioned barriers to sustainability and greening activities are largely the same as in 2021: funding and engagement. But the institution's strategic management, while still a challenge, is no longer a top 5 concern.

- General underfunding (59%), insufficient staff resources (55%), lack of specific funding incentives (48%), and limited student (36%) and staff (34%) engagement are listed as the top five barriers.
- This is followed by lack of national policy support (25%).
- Less than a quarter (23%) of survey respondents mentions a lack of strategy and institutional coordination, a major improvement compared to 2021 when around a third listed it as a significant barrier.
- Few universities (7%) experience difficulties in finding partners for their greening initiatives, which is consistent with 2021 (8%).
- Very few universities see institutional frameworks and regulations as a top five challenge (3%).

Q19. What would be helpful for the future advancement of sustainability and greening activities at your institution? N= 400



Click to enlarge

Top five enablers

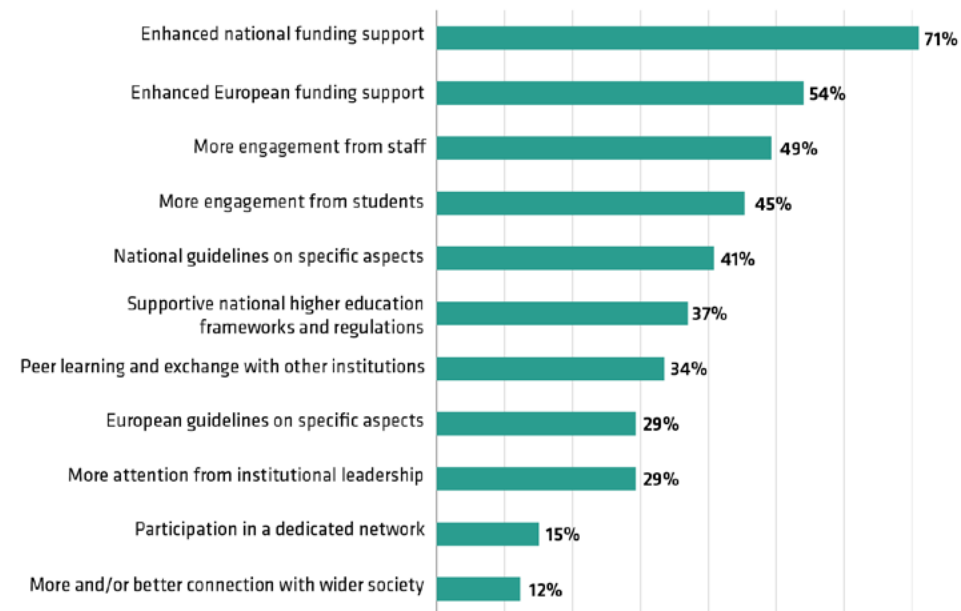
When asked what they need to overcome the barriers they face in implementing sustainability and greening measures, universities call for:

- Enhanced national (71%) and European (54%) funding support.
- National (41%) and European (29%) guidelines on specific aspects of sustainability.

External attention, acknowledgement and support might also help to address another barrier:

- Roughly every second institution wants to enhance the commitment of staff (49%) and students (45%).
- One of the means to do so could be peer learning and exchange with other institutions. But compared to 2021, when it was ranked as the second highest enabler (53%), in 2025 it dropped to seventh place, and is yet still seen as an enabler by one third of respondents.

Q19. What would be helpful for the future advancement of sustainability and greening activities at your institution? Please select up to five enablers. N= 400



Click to enlarge

Useful formats – European / national guidelines

Half of the institutions (52%) ranked either national and/or European guidelines on specific aspects of sustainability and greenings as a potential enabler, but how?

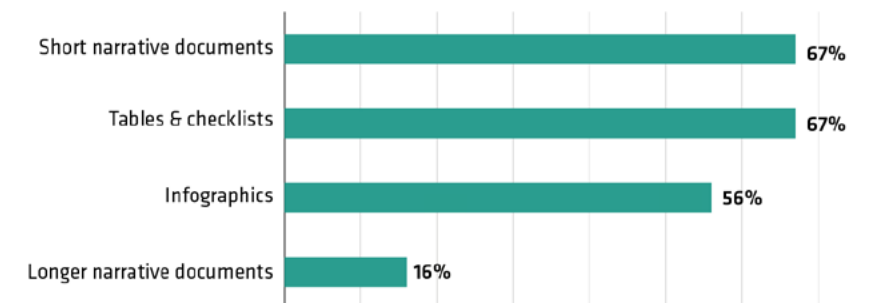
- Universities have a clear preference for short, narrative documents (67%), tables and checklists (67%), and infographics (56%). Yet, some institutions would appreciate longer narrative documents (16%).

Guidelines

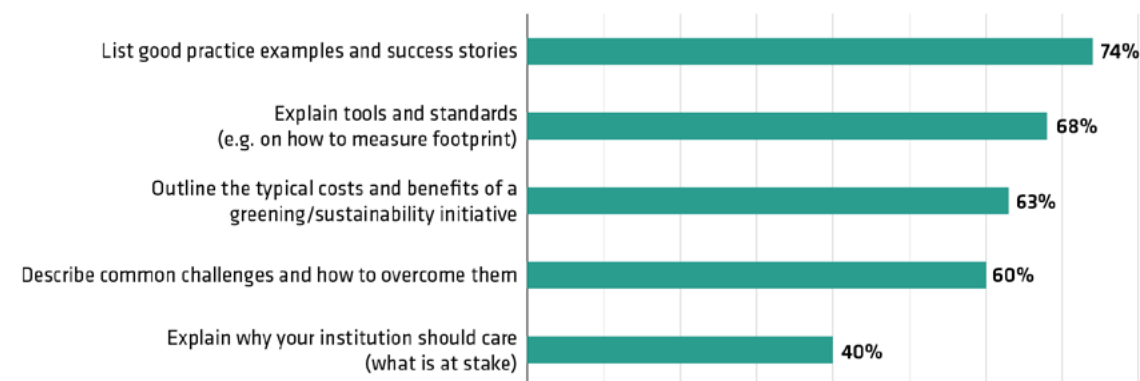
For a majority of respondents, sustainability and greening guidelines should:

- Focus on good practice examples and success stories (74%);
- Explain tools and standards, e.g. on how to measure footprint (68%);
- Outline the typical costs and benefits of each initiative (63%), and;
- Describe common challenges and how to overcome them (60%).

Q19.1. As you selected European / national guidelines on specific aspects, which formats would be most useful? N= 209



Q19.2. As you selected European / national guidelines on specific aspects, what should these guidelines cover? N= 209



Holistic approaches to SDGs

Many institutions address the SDGs in their strategies, taking a global approach that goes beyond climate and environmental issues. Interestingly, the SDGs are most prevalent in learning and teaching, followed by research and innovation and lastly the third mission and community engagement. While many institutions focus on specific SDGs, 44 institutions (11%) state that they address all SDGs, across all university missions.

Across all university missions, the three SDGs most likely to be addressed by universities are, on average: Goal 4 – Quality education, Goal 5 – Gender equality, and Goal 13 – Climate action.

- Others follow quite closely: Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities, and Goal 3 – Good health and well-being.
- Those least likely to be covered are Goal 14 – Life below water, and Goal 2 – Zero hunger (44%).

In the area of learning and teaching, the top five SDGs addressed include:

- Goal 4 – Quality education (96%),
- Goal 5 – Gender equality (84%),
- Goal 13 – Climate action (79%),
- Goal 3 – Good health and well-being (79%),
- Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth (78%).

Sustainability and greening in European higher education

This is quite different for research and innovation, which highly ranks:

- Goal 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure is on top (81%),
- Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities (78%),
- Goal 13 – Climate action (78%),
- Goal 5 – Gender equality (75%),
- Goal 4 – Quality education (73%).

In general, fewer respondents selected specific SDGs for outreach and community engagement:

- Goal 5 – Gender equality (73%),
- Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities (71%),
- Goal 17 – Partnerships for the SDGs (69%),
- Goal 4 – Quality education (68%),
- Goal 3 – Good health and well-being (67%).

Q 20. SDGs across the university missions.

	In learning and teaching	In research and innovation	In outreach and community engagement
SDG 1. No poverty	54%	49%	46%
SDG 2. Zero hunger	48%	46%	39%
SDG 3. Good health and well-being	79%	72%	67%
SDG 4. Quality education	96%	73%	68%
SDG 5. Gender equality	84%	75%	73%
SDG 6. Clean water and sanitation	57%	65%	48%
SDG 7. Affordable and clean energy	69%	71%	57%
SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth	78%	70%	57%
SDG 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	71%	81%	60%
SDG 10. Reduced inequalities	74%	65%	63%
SDG 11. Sustainable cities and communities	73%	78%	71%
SDG 12. Responsible consumption and production	74%	72%	61%
SDG 13. Climate action	79%	78%	67%
SDG 14. Life below water	44%	50%	34%
SDG 15. Life on land	59%	62%	48%
SDG 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions	71%	64%	59%
SDG 17. Partnerships for the SDGs	69%	67%	69%

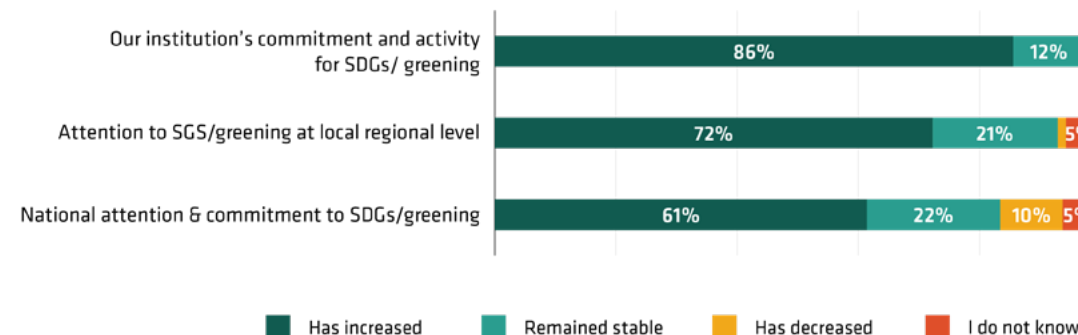


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Commitment to the SDGs

Most universities have increased their commitment towards the SDGs over the past five years, be it on the institutional (86%), regional (72%) or national (61%) level. For a fifth, attention to the topic has remained stable at national (22%) and regional (21%) level. However, for 10% commitment at national level has decreased.

Q22. How has your institution's situation changed over the past 5 years? Please select one option per statement. N=368



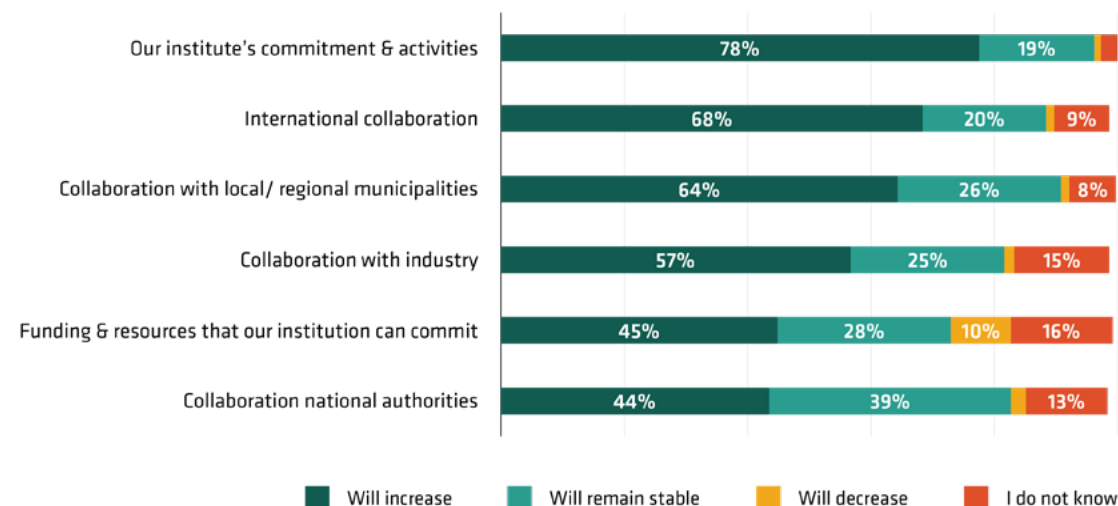
Towards 2030

Most universities expect their commitment to the SDGs to continuously grow in the next five years.

- The majority expect additional or enhanced activities (78%), as well as increased collaboration at international (68%) and local/regional (64%) levels, as well as with industry (57%). Between a fifth and a quarter expect these partnerships to remain stable.
- At national level, 44% predict increases, whereas 39% hope that collaboration with national authorities will remain stable.

Future developments will depend to a large extent on funding and the resources that institutions can commit to the SDGs. Respondents are split on how this will develop over the next five years: while 44% are optimistic and foresee increased budget allocation, 28% state that funding will remain stable and 10% predict decreases.

Q23. For the next 5 years, how do you see the following to develop regarding the SDGs? N= 370



Endnotes

- 1 See Annex 2 for the full survey questionnaire text. ([→p. 3](#))
- 2 EUA (2021) Greening in European higher education institutions. Available online: <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/greening-in-european-higher-education-institutions2.html> ([→p. 3](#))
- 3 See Annex 3 for a list of participating institutions. ([→p. 3](#))
- 4 Insulation or energy efficiency for new or renovated buildings. ([→p. 5](#))
- 5 Replacing university owned cars with electric vehicles, provision of charging facilities for electric cars etc. ([→p. 5](#))
- 6 Whole life-cycle costing includes the costs that will be incurred during the lifetime of the product, work or service and may include the cost of greenhouse gas emissions, i.e. purchase price and all associated costs (delivery, installation, insurance, etc.); operating costs, including energy, fuel and water use, spares, and maintenance; end-of-life costs (such as decommissioning or disposal) or residual value. ([→p. 5](#))
- 7 Process of enhancing activities through the integration of game design elements and principles in non-game contexts to foster participation, e.g. using points, badges and leaderboards. ([→p. 6](#))
- 8 Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme. Available online: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme> ([→p. 8](#))
- 9 EUA (2024) Trends 2024 - European higher education institutions in times of transition. Available online: <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/trends-2024.html> ([→p. 8](#))
- 10 European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2024. The European Higher Education Area in 2024: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Available online: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/54542f20-1986-11ef-a251-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> ([→p. 8](#))
- 11 Green skills are the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society. They are the skills needed to support the green transition. ([→p. 9](#))
- 12 Project-based learning, authentic learning (i.e. learning with a link to reality/making an impact in real life), such as hackathons, entrepreneurship etc. ([→p. 9](#))
- 13 In 2021 respondents were asked to select only one option, either “greening as part of sustainability/SDGs” or “greening specifically”, whereas respondents in 2025 could choose SDGs and green skills separately, or both. ([→p. 9](#))
- 14 Digital Innovation Hubs, Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. ([→p. 10](#))
- 15 Substituting hazardous materials with less - or non-hazardous alternatives, limiting the environmental impact of cold storage. ([→p. 10](#))
- 16 Major scientific equipment or instruments, computing systems, communication networks, archives or collections. ([→p. 10](#))
- 17 Using buildings/sites for energy/environment-related research as testbeds for sustainable solutions/technologies. ([→p. 10](#))
- 18 Patenting, technology transfer, start-up creation, promoting green solutions to partners in the innovation ecosystem. ([→p. 10](#))
- 19 EUA (2024) Trends 2024 - European higher education institutions in times of transition. Available online: <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/trends-2024.html> ([→p. 15](#))
- 20 Food, materials and products – choice of low carbon, environmentally friendly products and materials. ([→p. 21](#))
- 21 Available online: <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/about-msca/msca-green-charter> ([→p. 24](#))

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