



Embedding sustainability in academia: Deans as change makers

Final Report

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DECODE: EUROPEAN DEANS COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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The DECODE project

Sustainability and sustainable development are emerging as important policy priorities in higher education (Global University Network for Innovation, 2017). The DECODE project is based on the belief that higher education institutions do not merely have a remarkable capability but also a special responsibility to lead sustainable development.

More and more universities are designing strategic initiatives to promote sustainability. At the very top level of management of institutions, but at the same time also through individual academics or small groups of academics who are undertaking initiatives at the ground level. In the DECODE project, we are looking at the middle level – in particular at the level of the academic unit – where deans, heads of departments, faculties and schools manage their academic units, while keeping an eye on the university-wide strategy and the areas of expertise in their departments. These middle managers are regarded as the driving force pushing initiatives such as SD – they are the *change-makers*.

Empowering deans of university faculties, schools and departments to design and implement sustainability impact plans in their academic units is all about embedding sustainability in program offerings, curricula, the department's research portfolio and its outreach activities. In this summary report, we will describe the current state-of-the-art with respect to

Transformation

A commitment to promote sustainability goes further than providing merely transactional services to society. Instead, it is about truly transformational activities – not merely about add-ons, but about integrating sustainable development challenges in the department's education, research and engagement work. To succeed in this transformation requires commitment both at the central level of the university and at the academic-unit level.

DECODE strives to support deans in this transformation journey by providing insights in the design of – what we would like to label as: sustainability impact pathways. At the centre of Decode stands the creation of the European Deans council for sustainable development. This Council, consisting of Deans, vice-deans and other people responsible for promoting sustainability at the management level of academic units, will provide the platform that will bring deans together to increase the impact of sustainability from and within higher education.

Decode: three actions

To lay the foundations for the DEANS Council, the DECODE project carried out three complementary actions:

1. Reviewing the existing literature on embedding sustainability in academic activities
2. Conducting a series of interviews with deans from various EU member states
3. Carrying out two surveys: one among deans and another among academics in Europe¹

The outcomes of these actions have been published in four separate reports (see <https://decode-council.org/>).

The three actions can shed more light on the question of how deans can embed sustainability and attention for sustainable development in their department's education, research, and societal engagement portfolio.

Obstacles and how to overcome them

When trying to act as pro-active change-makers, deans are bound to encounter challenges and obstacles:

1. they may disagree with the values implicit in the means or ends;
2. the situation may involve such high levels of uncertainty that the nature of the problem is not known, and it is unclear what people should do or how they might be motivated;
3. they may lack the capacity to take the actions needed;
4. they may lack incentives;
5. they may believe the law does not direct them or authorise them to take action.

To better understand these challenges, the DECODE project makes use of a guiding framework (see Figure 1), based on policy theory (in particular: Schneider and Ingram, 1990). The five policy levers distinguished in this framework point to the key themes that were discussed in interviews conducted with 30 European deans and that were addressed in the surveys of more than 500 deans and more than 300 academics.

¹ The survey consisted of a core section (26 questions) and a supplementary section (10 questions). The core section covered sustainability strategies and policies, drivers and obstacles, sustainability activities undertaken and progress made over time. The supplementary section covered capacity building, incentives, collaboration and networks and governance mechanisms. The split in two parts was made to increase response rates.

Figure 1: Analytical framework



Adapted from Schneider
& Ingram (1990)

Policy levers

Five policy levers were identified as the guiding framework and as key themes in the interviews and surveys carried out by the DECODE team:

1. **strategy and awareness building:** using symbolic and encouragement signals to influence perceptions or values;
2. **monitoring and organisational learning:** to increase the understanding of an issue or reduce uncertainty about how to address it;
3. **capacity building,** to provide information, training, skills and resources to enable individuals or groups to make decisions or carry out activities;
4. **incentives,** using tangible payoffs (rewards, bonuses, prizes) to induce compliance or to encourage people to do things that they might not have done otherwise;
5. **authority,** ranging from voluntary actions and permissions to regulation that prohibits or prescribes conduct.

Each of the five policy levers/themes is covered in the sections below. While we focus on the role of the *dean* in sustainability initiatives, attention will also be paid to *students* as initiators of change in a higher education institution – putting issues on the agenda, undertaking voluntary activities, etc.

Strategy and Awareness

Strategies and policies play an important role in awareness building and establishing a shared vision among the academic community. One of the first steps that higher education institutions (HEIs) and their academic units can take towards becoming more sustainable is incorporating sustainability in the strategy for their institution as a whole. The question then is whether this central sustainability strategy is reflected or complemented by that of the individual academic units.

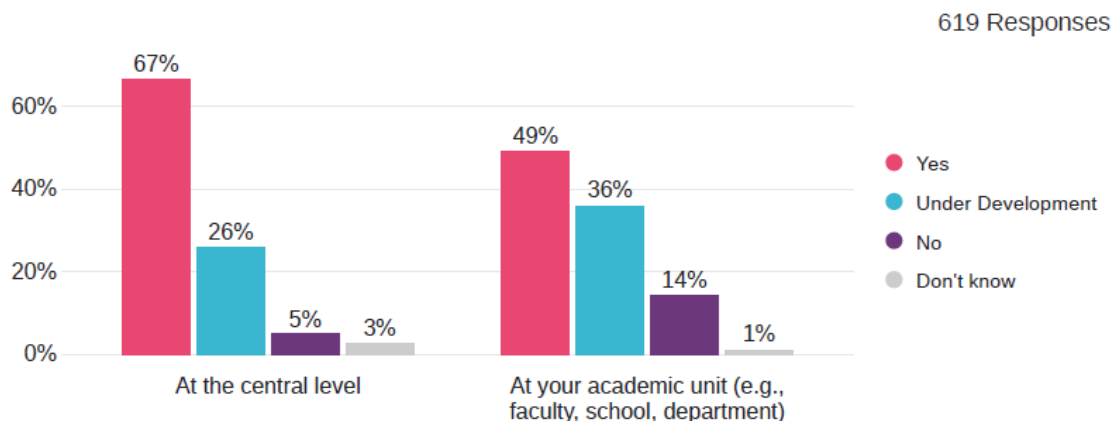
Ideally, the central sustainability strategy is co-created utilising both top-down and bottom-up approaches and involving external stakeholders. Preferably the sustainability strategy will have to be recognised and embraced by students and staff throughout the various academic units. Deans can play an important role in aligning the sustainability strategy with their academic unit's specific needs and expertise.

Since the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN, multiple initiatives have encouraged HEIs to align their teaching, research and third mission activities with these global goals. This was reaffirmed in the United Nations' Agenda 2030 (UNESCO, 2017).

One of the initiatives is the SDG Accord, launched in 2017. In 2020, 178 HEIs across five continents had signed it. More recently, the *European Green Deal* and the United Nations' Higher Education Sustainability Initiative have appeared.

Education has a critical role in promoting sustainability. *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD), developed and endorsed by the UN, is highlighted as one of the most promising approaches to promote sustainable development in the field of education. ESD is holistic and transformational education, addressing not only learning content, but also pedagogy, outcomes, and learning environment.

Figure 2: Is sustainability addressed in your institution's strategy or policies?



According to the deans that responded to our Decode survey, sustainability strategies are more common at the central level of the HEI than at the academic unit level (67% vs 49%; see Figure 2). Most deans (82%) feel that the strategy of their academic unit is influenced by their institution's sustainability strategy. During our interviews with deans we learned that many universities in Europe indeed have linked their unit's strategy to plans and activities carried out at the corporate level of the institution. The activity areas mentioned were food, environment, nutrition, technology, and infrastructure, gender and diversity. National and regional strategies, and the UN's SDGs/ 2030 Agenda also have had an influence (more than two-thirds) on the strategies.

A large share of the respondents in our survey are quite familiar with unit-level sustainability strategies. Almost a fifth of the academic departments already had a strategy in place for more than 5 years. A third (32%) indicated that they had a sustainability strategy for a period between 3 and 5 years. A slightly higher share (36%) had it in place only recently. Almost a third of the deans (30%) mention that sustainability is addressed in their academic unit's *education* strategy. It also appears in their *research* strategies (27% say so) or its *operational & administrative* strategies, i.e. its energy, waste management practices (24%).

Implementing a sustainability strategy will require stronger collaborations and relationships between the units of the HEI as well as with their regional partners. This is what we heard from some of the deans who were interviewed. Deans frequently mentioned the fragmented organisational structure of their institutions, describing it as a *silos that are not connected* – neither physically nor culturally. Collaboration is also key when multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are needed to embed sustainability practices in the faculties' degree programs and their research activities. Some of the deans we interviewed mentioned that the high rate of specialisation does not fit well with multi-disciplinarity.

Our literature review suggests that sustainability strategies should not be an isolated top-down exercise. Using a bottom-up approach and engaging in a dialogue with diverse stakeholders are some of the ways to address this challenge. This dialogue is affected by the wider public discourse that is taking place in societies around SDGs. Our surveys indicate that a large majority of academic leaders and their academics have the feeling that sustainability is a shared value among the staff in the department (83% respectively 96% of the deans and the academics) and that sustainability indeed is a strategic priority for them (81%, resp. 74%).

Many (68%) of the academic leaders responding to our survey state that pursuing sustainability initiatives provides more collaboration opportunities with external partners (e.g., NGOs, citizens, industry) and 54% say that it increases external funding opportunities (e.g., provided by EU and national agencies). In fact, 41% of them think that the students nowadays are demanding that sustainability be incorporated in the faculties' activities.

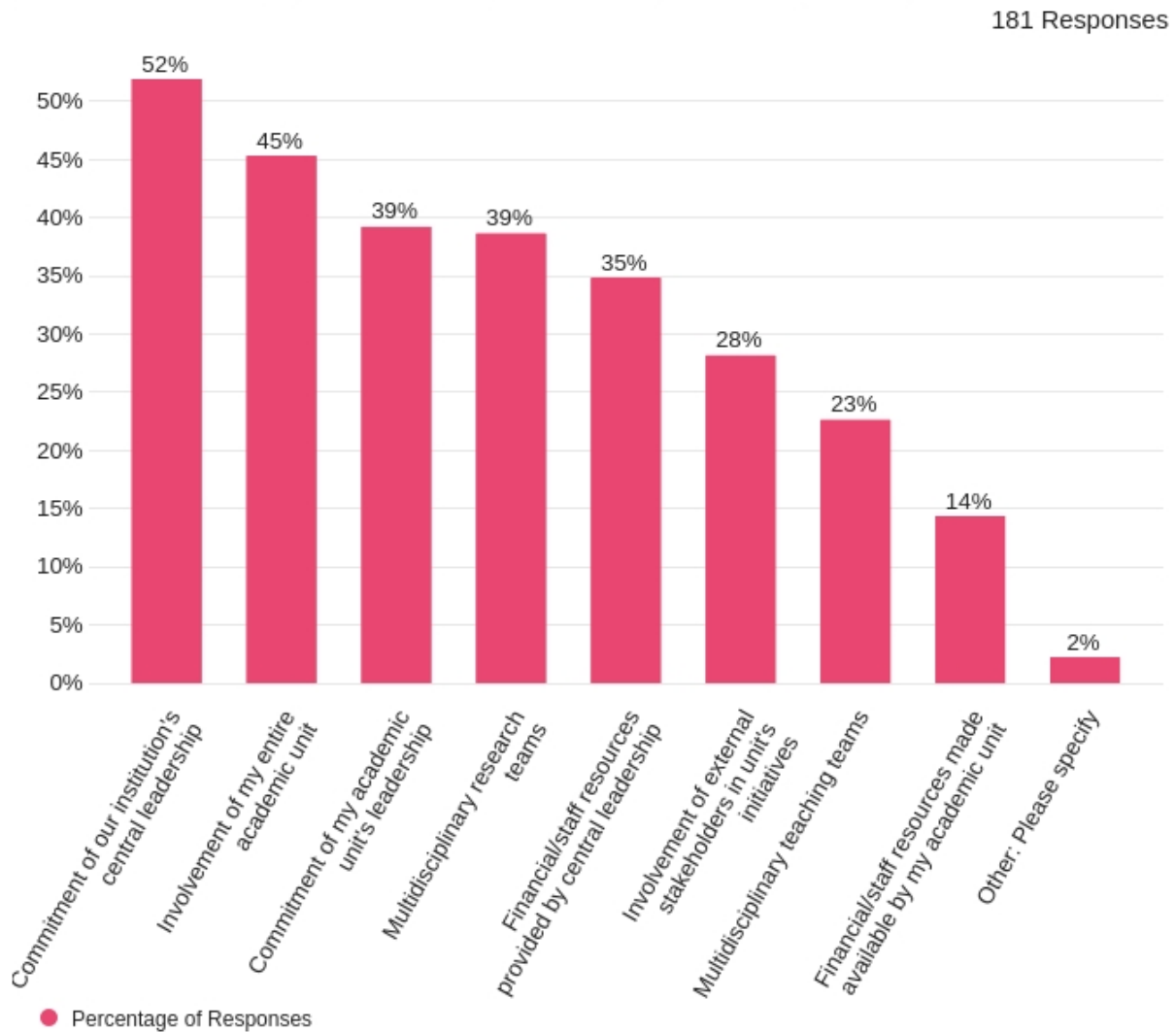
The most commonly indicated partners that academic departments work with to realise sustainability initiatives in education or research projects are other academic units in their own institution. Many deans also mention other higher education institutions. Governmental

agencies, NGOs, charities and business partners feature somewhat less as partners in sustainability endeavours.

When deans were asked about the critical success factors that enable their academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives, their responses (Figure 3) highlight in particular two most the commitment and support of the institution's central leadership and the commitment of the department's leadership. However, the broad involvement of the academic unit (i.e. its staff, students and alumni) is also a crucial factor. This highlights the importance of aligned leadership both at the central and the unit level. Also, the importance of multi-disciplinary research teams and the availability of resources (in particular from the institution's central funds) was seen as a success factor.

Figure 3: What are the critical success factors that enable your academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives?

*Some answers in the graph are truncated; see the description above for a complete version.



Monitoring and Organisational Learning

More than two-thirds of deans and half of the academic staff who responded to our survey felt that their unit has made good progress over the last three years towards embedding sustainability in their unit's research and teaching activities. Evidence on progress is important for reasons of communication and accountability to the outside world. But it also helps inform the university's internal stakeholders and points at how the university can do better.

Stakeholders increasingly demand higher education institutions to demonstrate their attention to sustainability. Some universities actually publish a sustainability report as part of the SDG Accord they have subscribed to. Information tools are required to monitor the progress attained by institutions in implementing sustainability strategies. Monitoring – and, based on that, evaluation – allows universities to assess progress against goals and to learn about what worked.

Examples of monitoring tools are the *STARS* (i.e. Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System; see Urbanski & Leal Filho, 2015) system, available since 2020. The STARS rating has four levels (bronze, silver, gold, platinum) and assesses sustainability performance across a wide range of impact areas, including education, research, outreach, operations, diversity and health. In 2020, more than 1000 institutions from 42 countries were registered for STARS, of which 450 were either rated or actively pursued a rating (AASHE, 2020a).

The Times Higher Education (= THE) *Impact ranking* has gained more recognition and popularity in recent years. The THE Impact ranking was first released in 2019 (Times Higher Education, 2020b). So far, it is the only ranking assessing higher education institutions' performance against the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In 2020, in its second edition, 768 higher education institutions from 85 countries participated in the ranking. The indicators cover four broad areas – research, stewardship, outreach and teaching. Universities can submit data on as many SDGs as they are able to.

The UI (= Universities Indonesia) *Green Metric World University Ranking* was launched in 2010 to provide information about the sustainability efforts of universities around the world (UI Green Metric World University rankings, 2019c).

The *SDG Accord*, launched in 2017, has been signed by 178 institutions worldwide committed to embedding SDGs into their education, research, leadership, operations, administration and engagement activities, and report their progress towards SDGs on annual basis. Every year survey results of the signatory institutions are published, identifying progress made, priority areas and the key obstacles (The SDG Accord, 2020).

The *University Sustainability Assessment Framework* (UniSAF) is an open-source, sustainability assessment tool with concrete indicators across five dimensions – education, research, community, operations, governance. Co-created by students and offered by the Green Office Movement, it is a comprehensive and customisable framework used for self-reporting at the

institutional level. UniSAF has been piloted at multiple European higher education institutions (Green Office Movement, 2020).

While quite a few monitoring and ranking tools are available (Findler et al., 2018), our deans' survey indicates that less than half of the deans (44%) regard the visibility they might gain from participating in the international SDG rankings as driving their sustainability strategy. Rankings were not mentioned in the interviews that were carried out with deans. Only a few deans have attempted to develop SDG-related performance indicators or KPIs to monitor their sustainability initiatives. Some deans state that this is partly related to the fact that sustainability goals are not always explicitly defined and that goals are very heterogeneous, making them difficult to compare between the institution's departments. Moreover, collecting data for standardised indicators is a resource-intensive process. Finally, the tools mentioned here are predominantly designed to assess the sustainability performance of the institutions as a whole rather than performance at the academic unit level.

Despite these challenges and drawbacks, the monitoring and assessment of the results of an academic unit's sustainability initiatives can be useful for furthering sustainability and learning about good practices, as well as dissemination purposes (Urbanski & Leal Filho, 2015).

Capacity Building

Strategy and vision alone will not suffice to attain the necessary transformation towards sustainability. To overcome the barriers for transformation, often training and professional development – in short, *capacity building* – is needed. A lack of capacity – of expertise, skills, experience – can be a major barrier for the attainment of sustainability goals.

Capacity building for ESD

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has become one of the integral steps towards addressing sustainability challenges. One of the key pillars for ESD is strengthening the capacity of educators – enabling them to teach sustainability and SDG-related content, while applying transformational pedagogies (UNESCO, 2020). This capacity heavily relies on the ability to understand, utilise, or develop ESD-specific learning content and curriculum.

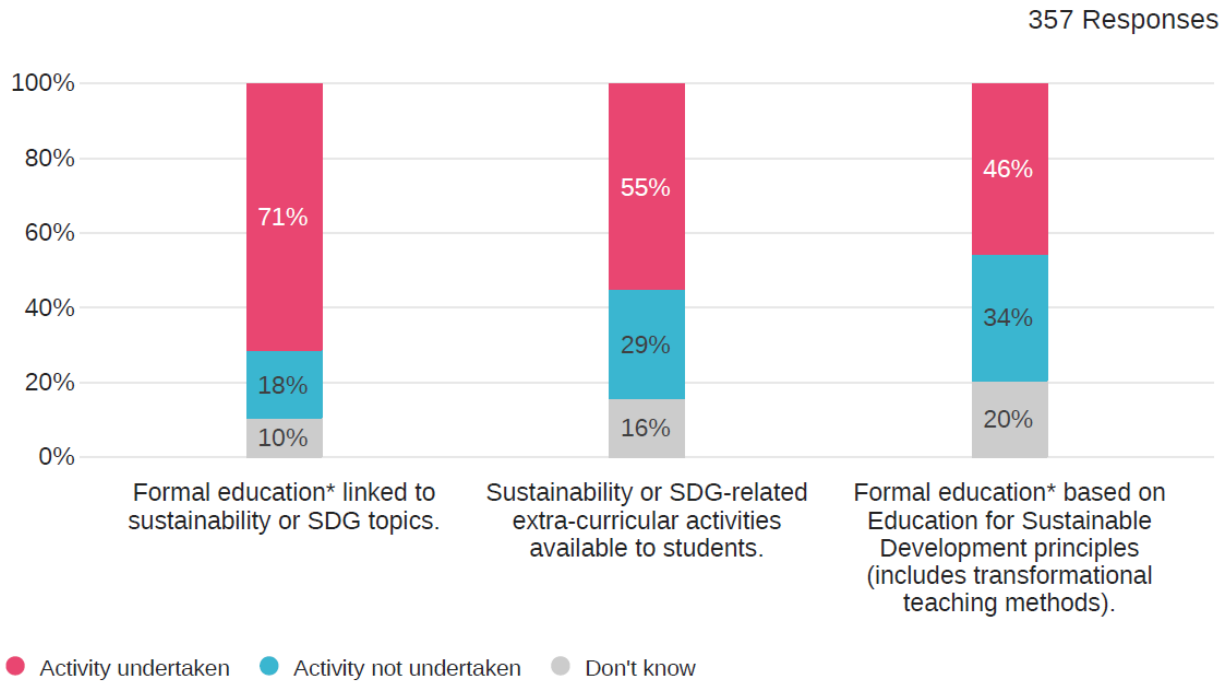
Setting ESD as a priority will require numerous changes at the institutional and academic unit level, including curriculum redesign, capacity building for educators on transformational teaching pedagogies, building learning environments more connected to external communities, and a strong focus on ESD competences. To foster curriculum change, institutions need to provide ESD professional development opportunities for their educators (Mader et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2014).

A learner-centred approach is a cornerstone of ESD, emphasising the changing role of educators: students are treated as independent learners instead of passive receivers; attention is placed on facilitating the development of student competencies instead of directly transferring structured knowledge. Such truly transformative and interactive pedagogies may not yet be in place in academic departments.

In addition, educators need to gain a better understanding of sustainable development and, for that, they will need to develop interdisciplinary perspectives on sustainability issues and become acquainted with action-oriented – challenge-based – pedagogies. Promising approaches associated with more interactive pedagogies are interdisciplinary and community-based learning (UNESCO, 2017).

Examples include internships, undergraduate research, service learning, experiential learning, and collaborative work with external stakeholders (Sonetti et al., 2020). The Global Citizenship Program (GCP) is a good example of experiential learning, where students had opportunities to engage with NGOs, and both students and faculty staff were encouraged to pursue exchange programs abroad (Sperandio et al., 2010). Community or service-based learning is another interactive approach educators can utilise. Findler et al. (2019) noted that positive outcomes often come from the inclusion of the local community in the setting for learning.

Figure 4: Which sustainability-related education activities does your academic unit undertake?

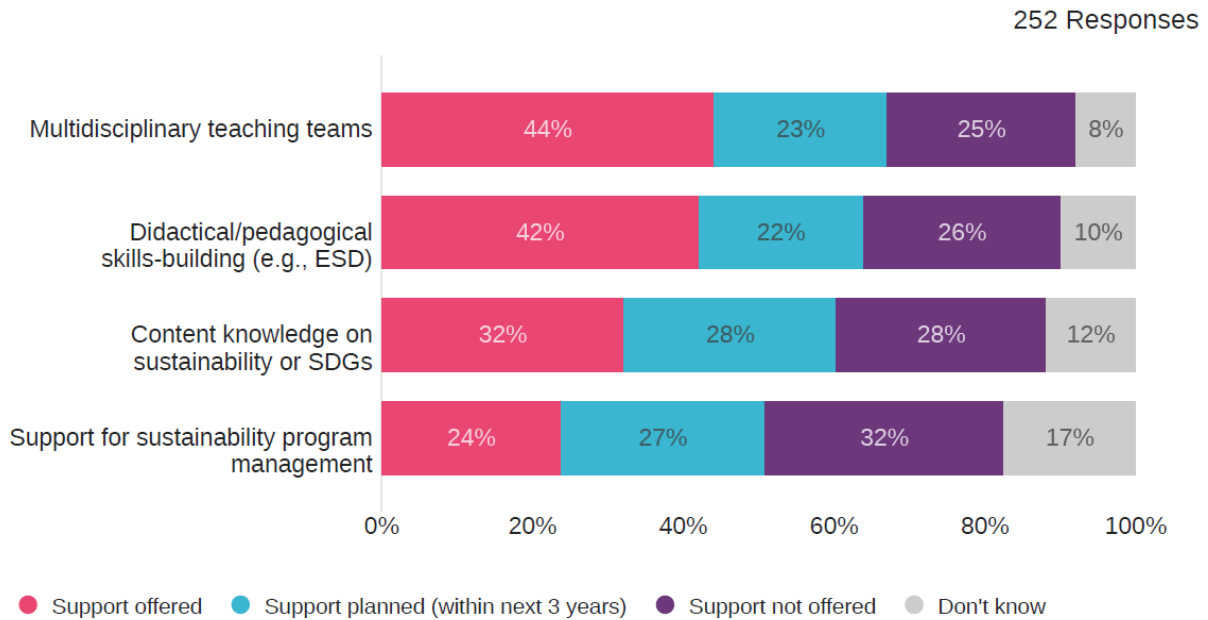


From our deans' survey (see Figure 4), we learn that almost half of the academic units (46%) are undertaking education based on ESD principles, which, beyond content, also includes transformational teaching methods. More than two-thirds (71%) of the units we surveyed were offering education linked to sustainability or SDG topics. More than half of the deans (55%) stated that their unit undertakes sustainability or SDG-related extra-curricular activities.

The academics we surveyed pointed at the same professional development opportunities. In addition, they mentioned three other capacity-building mechanisms: engaging with other partners, providing support for quality teaching (whether or not oriented towards sustainability), and enabling lecturers and researchers to work together on topics and develop position papers.

In a supplementary part of our survey that was completed by over 250 deans, we asked deans about the capacity building measures offered in their academic units (see Figure 5). In terms of education-oriented support, deans reported opportunities for lecturers to engage in multi-disciplinary teaching teams (44%) and didactical/ pedagogical skills-building (e.g. ESD, challenge-based learning linked to SDG topics) (42%). Almost a quarter of the academic units expect to be offering such capacity-building activities in the near future.

Figure 5: Which professional development opportunities does your academic unit offer to its educators?



Capacity building for sustainability-related research

The majority of the deans we surveyed (77%) responded that sustainability or SDG topics are already addressed in their unit's research portfolio. Nearly half (49%) indicated that sustainability or SDG topics are addressed in their unit's external research contracts and consultancy work. They also indicate that as part of their societal engagement activities, their academic units regularly organise sustainability-related events for or with external stakeholders (70%).

Since the 1990s, research focusing on sustainability topics has expanded substantially in terms of volume and variety of topics covered. Interdisciplinary research also has increased. In 2018, more than 35,000 academic articles addressed sustainability topics (Asatani et al., 2020; Kordestani et al., 2015). Climate change is a topic that is heavily researched across the world, but priority areas for other SDGs differ across world regions, and some research areas have so far been neglected.

Leal Filho et al. (2021) suggest that researchers should utilise existing research networks to identify promising partnerships that could help to address these areas. Moreover, Salvia et al. (2019) propose that the academic community needs to be more active in providing institutional support for research on SDGs.

With respect to research-oriented capacity building, more than half of the academic leaders we surveyed indicated that they provide opportunities to engage in multi-disciplinary research teams (57%). In an equal amount of cases, they support building up multi-disciplinary research skills and methodologies (57%). A bit less than one-third also provide content knowledge on

sustainability or SDG-related topics (31%). Our academics' survey pointed at similar capacity building initiatives. However, also support to develop excellent research (sustainability-oriented or not) was mentioned, next to (financial and other) support for researchers to join international conferences and for network memberships.

General issues around capacity building

Most of the deans we interviewed for this study stated that they are in the process of embedding SDGs into the education, research, operations, administration and societal engagement activities of their units. With respect to capacity building, efforts are undertaken to integrate sustainability-related topics in the graduate and undergraduate curricula by incorporating attention for the environment and the wider socio-economic implications.

In this context, emphasis is given to the theme of *entrepreneurship* – i.e. taking the initiative, understanding risks and building networks. Deans mention the need for students and academics to 'think outside the box'. Some of the new education and/or research programs incorporate attention to environmental sustainability, e.g., addressing climate change, renewable energy, depletion of natural resources, etc.

While there are plenty of examples of projects and programs addressing SDG-related issues, it appears that the main challenges relate to competencies – for instance, systems thinking competency, critical thinking skills, and integrated problem-solving competencies. These are all part of the eight ESD competencies (UNESCO, 2017; Haan, 2010; Rieckmann, 2012; Wiek et al., 2011) and will need to be addressed in capacity building initiatives for educators, students and researchers alike.

Incentives and rewards

Organisational change to embrace sustainability is a resource-intensive process, often competing with other priorities of higher education departments. One way to encourage a department's staff to prioritise sustainability initiatives and to encourage them is to utilise incentives. Incentives may come in different forms, such as rewards, subsidies, recognition in rankings, promotion criteria, or prizes. Financial incentives can be used not only to address the need for resources, but also to stimulate capacity building and staff development (see above), or encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange between different higher education institutions and departments.

Recent survey results showed that 80% of academic leaders identified a lack of funding as one of the major obstacles for pursuing sustainability ambitions (Di Carlo et al., 2019; Leal Filho et al., 2020; Leal Filho et al., 2018). Similar obstacles were mentioned in the SDG Accord survey (The SDG Accord, 2020).

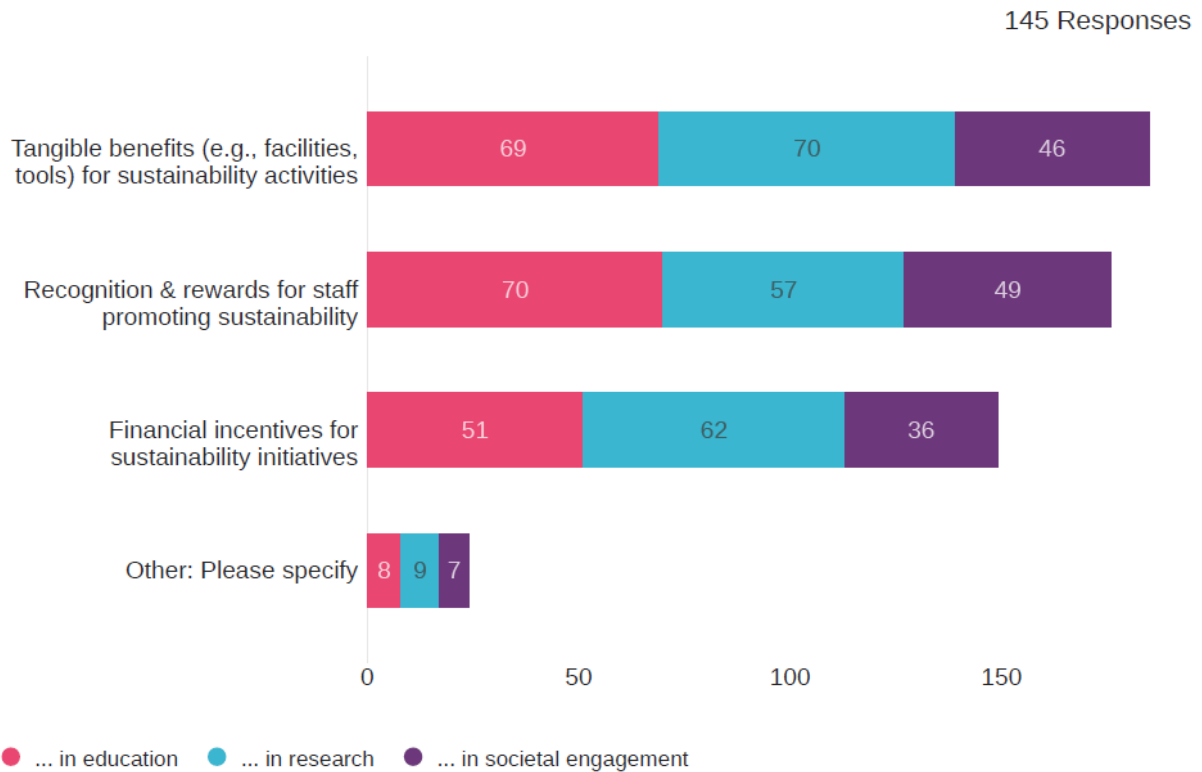
The European Universities Initiative, launched in 2019 by the European Commission, provides funding to transnational university alliances allowing them to collectively tackle the grand societal challenges. Several of these European Universities Alliances (e.g., AURORA and ECIU University) have a strong focus on sustainability initiatives (Aurora European Universities Alliance, n.d.; ECIU University, n.d.). The initiative encourages transnational collaboration and capacity building in high priority areas such as climate protection, migration and health.

Currently, there are 41 alliances representing more than 280 higher education institutions from over thirty European countries (European Commission, 2019b, 2020c). Some national governments provide funding on top of the EC funding for their national universities participating in the alliances.

Many governments as well as national and international research councils award financial incentives to encourage attention for sustainability in education and research. To steer their academic research agendas or to innovate their educational portfolio, individual HEIs may also provide financial incentives from their own resources – at the institutional or departmental level.

A lack of funding for the sustainability agenda has been identified as a major obstacle for driving sustainability initiatives in higher education (Di Carlo et al., 2019; Leal Filho et al., 2020; Leal Filho et al., 2018). In our survey of European deans, we asked the question, 'What incentives & rewards (if any) does your academic unit use to encourage sustainability and SDG-related initiatives amongst your staff?' (see Figure 6). In our interviews, several deans stated that there is only little financial support to carry out activities related to sustainability-related projects, with some suggesting that European funding might facilitate the promotion of sustainability research.

Figure 6: What incentives & rewards (if any) does your academic unit use to encourage sustainability and SDG-related initiatives amongst your staff?



More than 180 deans mentioned that they used incentives such as giving access to facilities or platforms for sustainability activities. A somewhat smaller number use recognition and rewards such as prizes, awards, and symbolic gifts for staff who promote sustainability in their academic work. Slightly less used were financial incentives for advancing new or existing sustainability programs and initiatives. An example of an incentive that can be put in place to encourage sustainability-oriented education and research is the creation of some sort of facility or laboratory. The labs mentioned were living lab, synergy lab or lab for social innovation – with the latter focusing on research in topics related to democracy and social governance.

Almost two-thirds of the 250 deans that were asked about the incentives they have in place to encourage sustainability-related efforts amongst students or student associations mentioned the recognition of these initiatives by means of awarding study credits or prizes for thesis work, student projects, internships, and community work. The second most popular incentive was providing financial support and facilities for extra-curricular sustainability initiatives.

Reputational incentives such as positions held in rankings can be attractive because of the prestige this can bring if a high position is attained. Rankings can help promote the HEI, and make it more attractive for prospective students and staff, generating increased demand for its programs. A number of sustainability rankings have already been mentioned above, along with the challenges surrounding them. In the interviews and the survey, these rankings, however, were hardly mentioned.

Authority and Voluntary Actions

HEIs often rely on authority tools, such as regulations and procedures, to guide the behaviour of their employees and students. Authority can be about mandating compulsory actions, for instance, about recycling of waste, use of energy, transport or canteen food sold on the campus. Sometimes softer approaches are used, such as granting permission for voluntary actions, awareness campaigns and eco challenges. Some HEIs allow students to carry out self-initiated bottom-up sustainability initiatives on or off-campus, as part of or outside of the curriculum.

The regulation around approving (or disapproving) the introduction of new courses, elective programs or innovative study programs was hardly mentioned by the deans we surveyed and interviewed as part of the DECODE project. Some deans however expressed concerns about the national accreditation procedures and regulations around sustainability-related degree programmes, but their own institution's authority tools were hardly used. In their own institution, they rely more on soft steering and bottom-up initiatives.

In the interviews, the slow pace of bureaucracy was mentioned by some deans as a critical matter; the formal administrative procedures sometimes can sometimes be time-consuming and stand in the way of innovations in their institution.

Active engagement of campus stakeholders is essential in achieving sustainability in higher education (Murray, 2018). For example, The Green Office Movement, launched in 2010, provides a sustainability platform that enables students and staff to collaborate on institutionalising sustainability. Green offices were a recurrent theme in the interviews with deans that were carried out as part of the DECODE project. The projects undertaken by the Green Offices are approved by the HEIs' management and financed through the HEIs' own resources. The Green Offices often provide internships to students, including students in the development of sustainability awareness building within HEIs. Nearly 60 Green Offices have been launched worldwide, and a large majority is located in Europe (Green Office Movement, 2021).

However, student initiatives often face certain challenges, such as a lack of funding, insufficient institutional power, or a limited capacity to expand student involvement (Duram & Williams, 2015; Helferty & Clarke, 2009; Hongyan, 2003).

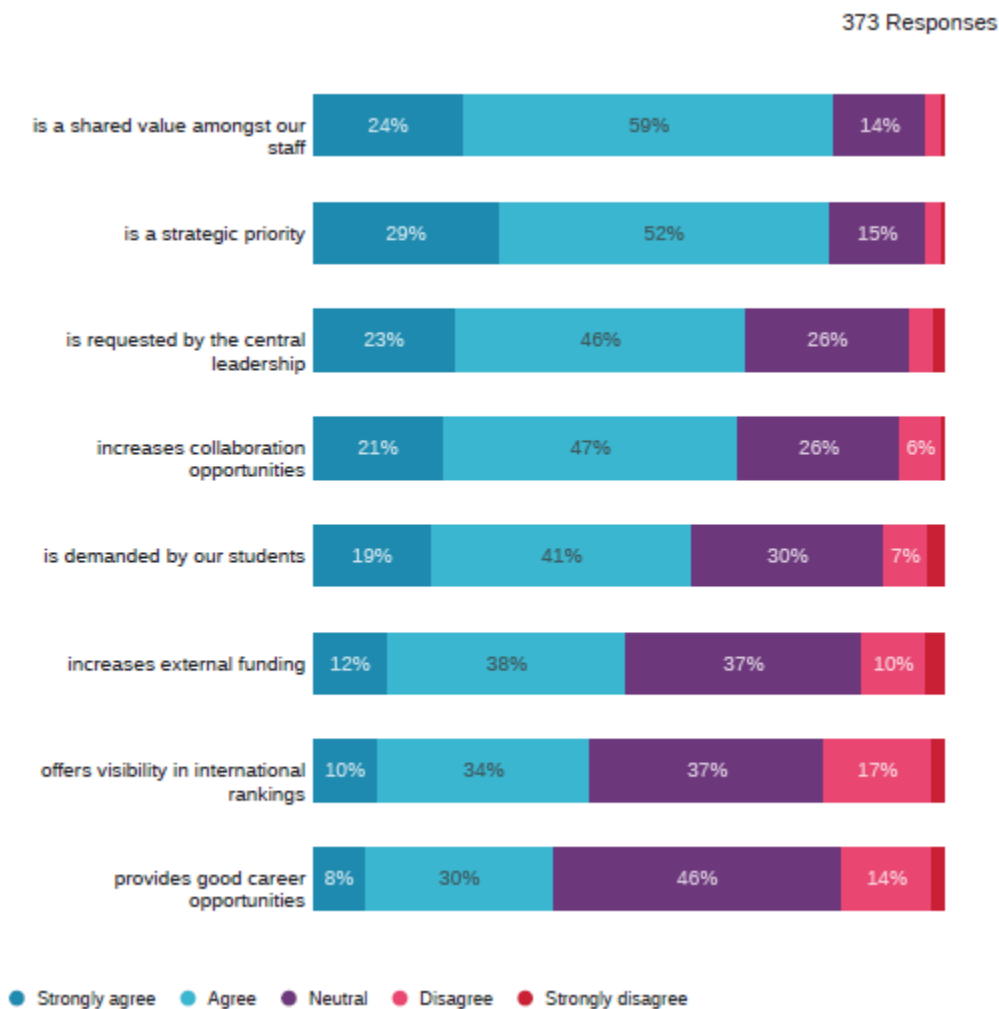
Drivers, Obstacles and the Deans' Council

Identifying drivers and obstacles is critical when an institution undergoes organisational change processes. Overlooking the literature on the subject of embedding sustainability in academia and looking at the responses to our interviews and surveys, we can make some final observations on the drivers of the initiatives and the obstacles that deans are facing.

Drivers

Starting with the drivers, deans state that making sustainability a shared value amongst the staff and a strategic priority are the crucial drivers for embedding sustainability in their academic units (see Figure 7). The overwhelming majority of deans and academics responding to our survey agreed or strongly agreed that sustainability is a value they share, suggesting strong intrinsic motivation.

Figure 7: What are the key drivers for your academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives?

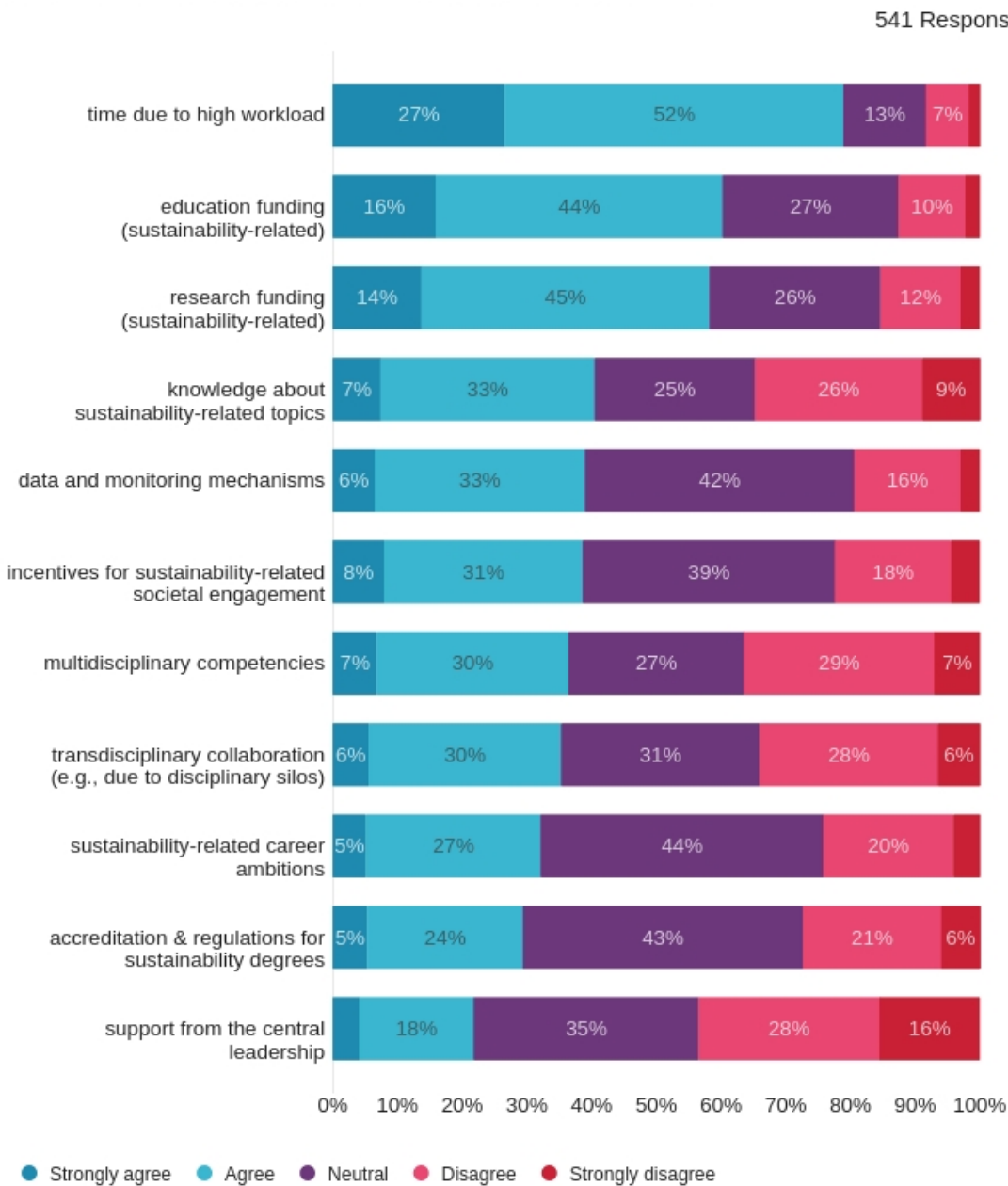


Obstacles

We also asked deans about the obstacles they encountered when undertaking sustainability initiatives. The three most important obstacles mentioned were (see Figure 8):

- (1) the lack of time (for instance, because of a high workload)
- (2) a lack of sustainability-related education and research funding
- (3) a lack of knowledge about sustainability-related topics.

Figure 8: What are the key obstacles that stand in the way of your academic staff to undertake sustainability initiatives?



For the deans we interviewed, the availability of time for staff and faculty members to think about and to implement sustainability-oriented initiatives and changes represents a very important matter. More than 70% of the deans mentioned this barrier. Nearly half emphasised a lack of funding. In addition, the absence of transdisciplinary collaboration – for instance, due to the existence of disciplinary silos – was mentioned by 40% of the academics we surveyed. In quite a number of interviews the deans also mentioned that lengthy bureaucratic procedures and the fragmented nature of their institution are obstacles that stand in the way of organisational transformation.

Support mechanisms

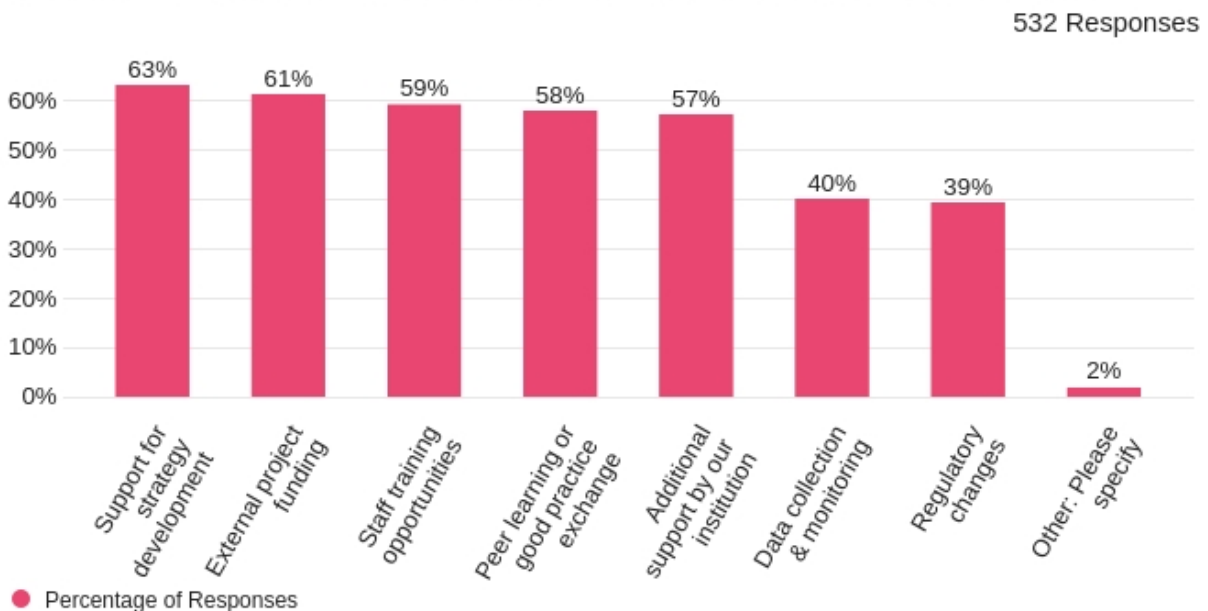
To make progress on pushing the sustainability agenda, most of the deans we surveyed or interviewed mentioned the following five types of support (see Figure 9):

- (1) support to further develop their unit's sustainability strategy
- (2) external project funding
- (3) staff training opportunities
- (4) peer learning or good practice exchange
- (5) support provided by their institution (e.g., funding).

All of these types were found to be more or less equally important. The last two supports , namely (6) data collection & monitoring mechanisms, (7) regulatory changes (e.g., standards around sustainability) were selected less frequently.

Figure 9: What type of support would be necessary to make progress on the sustainability agenda at your academic unit? Select all applicable.

**Some answers in the graph are truncated; see the description above for a complete version.*





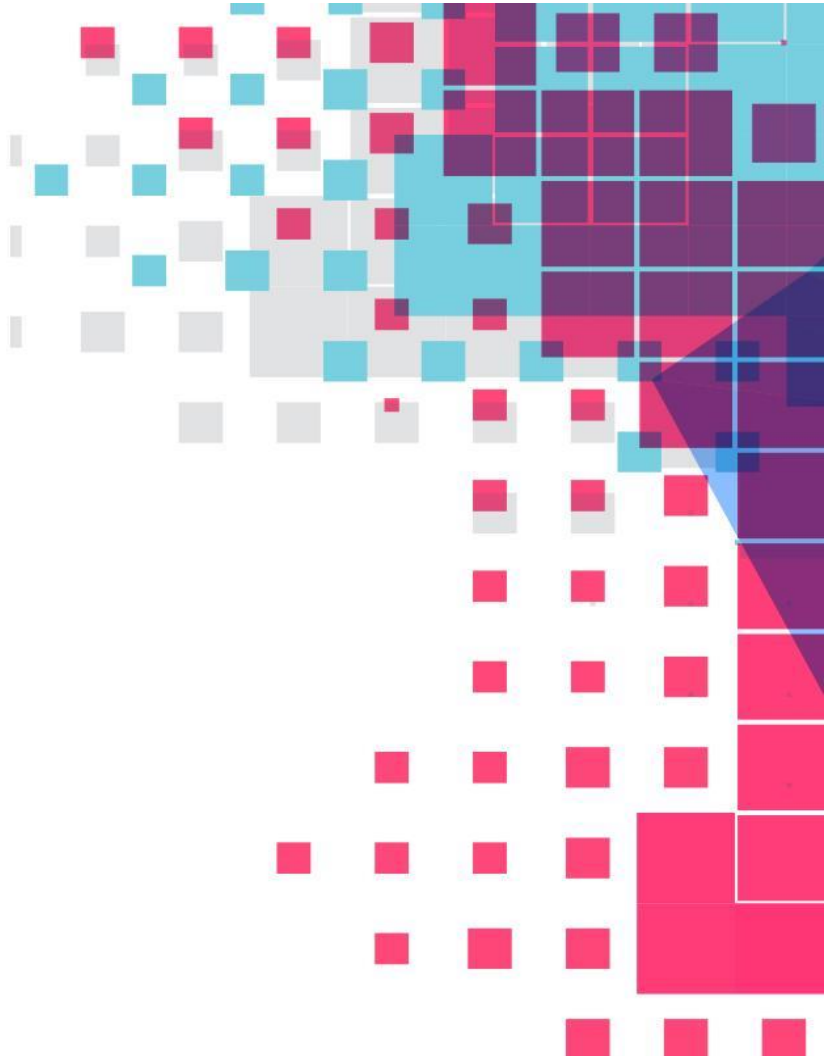
Future outlook and role for the European Deans Council for Sustainable Development

The majority of the deans we surveyed or interviewed believe that attention to sustainability or SDGs in their academic unit will increase in the next five years. When we asked deans whether they would like to become a member of a European Deans' Council for Sustainability, three-quarters of our respondents said that it is either likely or very likely that they would join the Council. This signals a clearly felt need for deans from across Europe to share their ambitions and experiences around embedding sustainability in their academic departments. Many deans regard international collaboration as very useful for sharing ideas and practices – and possibly also for collaboration in common projects.

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