



# Embedding sustainability in academia: Deans as change makers

## Survey of Deans

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# Introduction to the Deans' survey

## Purpose

Sustainability and sustainable development are increasingly important priorities in the higher education sector. As part of the **DECODE** project, this survey aims to identify the **opportunities and obstacles** that deans or other heads of academic units (e.g., heads of departments/schools/faculties) face when embedding 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' into their **academic units** (e.g. faculties, schools, departments). It is complementary to the academics survey, investing the same issues from the perspective of academic staff. As indicated in the DECODE Literature review, embedding sustainability into academic units is a complex and multi-faceted task. We hope that insights obtained from this survey can assist academic leaders in better understanding the change processes.

## Key terms

When running the survey, we provided an overview of the key terms used in the questionnaire. These terms were sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable development goals, education for sustainable development, and societal engagement.

1. **Sustainability & Sustainable Development** – Within DECODE, both terms are used interchangeably and cover i) all three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic as well as ii) sustainable development goals (SDGs).
2. **SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals refer to the 17 SDGs adopted by the UN member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. **ESD** – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), recognised in SDGs and the Paris agreement, is holistic and transformational education 'about' and 'for' sustainable development. Since 2017 it is linked to SDGs.
4. **Societal engagement** – Activities where higher education institutions interact with external stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, municipalities, citizens, private sector) for mutual benefit (also known as the 'third mission' in some countries).

## Structure of the report

The survey consists of the core and supplementary parts. The core section provides an overview of the survey sample (chapter 1), followed by strategies & policies (chapter 2), drivers & obstacles (chapter 3). It then reviews sustainability activities (chapter 4), engagement of staff and students (chapter 5) and progress attained (chapter 6). In the supplementary part, the survey covers capacity building (chapter 7), incentive & rewards (chapter 8), partnerships (chapter 9) and success factors & governance (chapter 10).

## CORE PART

### 1. SAMPLE OF THE DEANS' SURVEY

#### 1.1 Response rate

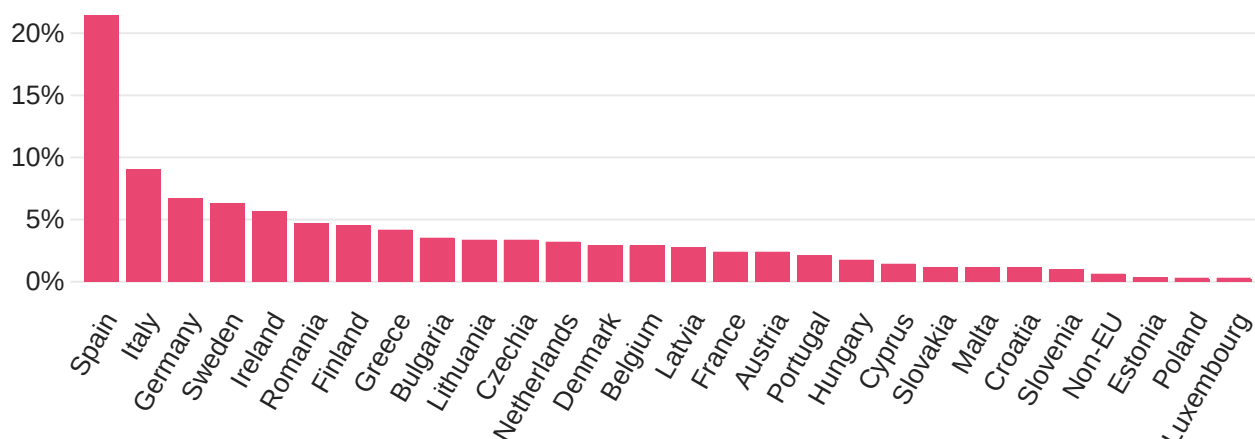
The survey consists of the core section (28 questions) and the supplementary section (11 questions). The majority of academic leaders chose to respond to the core section only. The survey was delivered to 7027 heads of academic units. The core section was started by 635 respondents, and completed by 509, resulting in a completion rate of 80,16%. Partial responses have been included in the report (126 = 635 - 509). The survey response rate for the core part was 7.2%, calculated as complete responses (509) over e-mails delivered (7027). The supplementary section was started by 254 respondents and completed by 251, with a completion rate equalling 98%. Partial responses (3=254-251) were also included. All respondents who completed the supplementary section had already completed the core section. While the response rate is relatively low, which can be partially attributed to the busy schedules of academic leaders, the completion rate is rather high.

#### 1.2 Geographical coverage

In total, 509 academic leaders from Europe completed the core part of the survey. Out of those, 506 were from the 27 EU countries and 3 from non-EU countries. The countries with the highest number of responses were Spain and Italy. The insights from the survey can shed light on the EU developments in embedding sustainable development principles in higher education institutions, and particularly academic units. The sample is likely to have some self-selection bias.

Q30 - Please indicate the country of your institution.

509 Responses

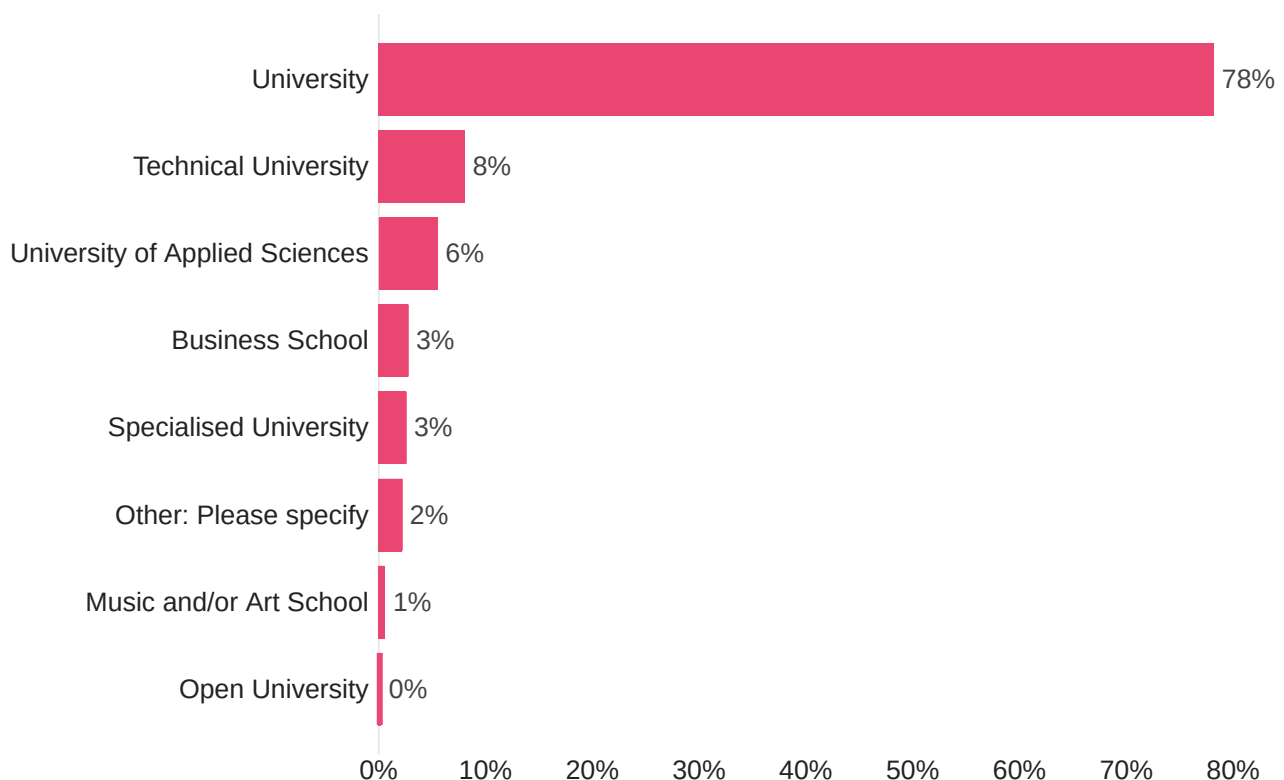


### 1.3 Institutional profiles

From 509 respondents, a large majority of respondents represented universities (78%), followed by technical universities (8%), and universities of applied sciences (6%). Both business schools and specialised institutions represented 3% each. Other institutions (e.g., music or art schools, open universities, others) represented around 2% in total.

Q25 - What is your institution's profile? Please select from the list below.

509 Responses

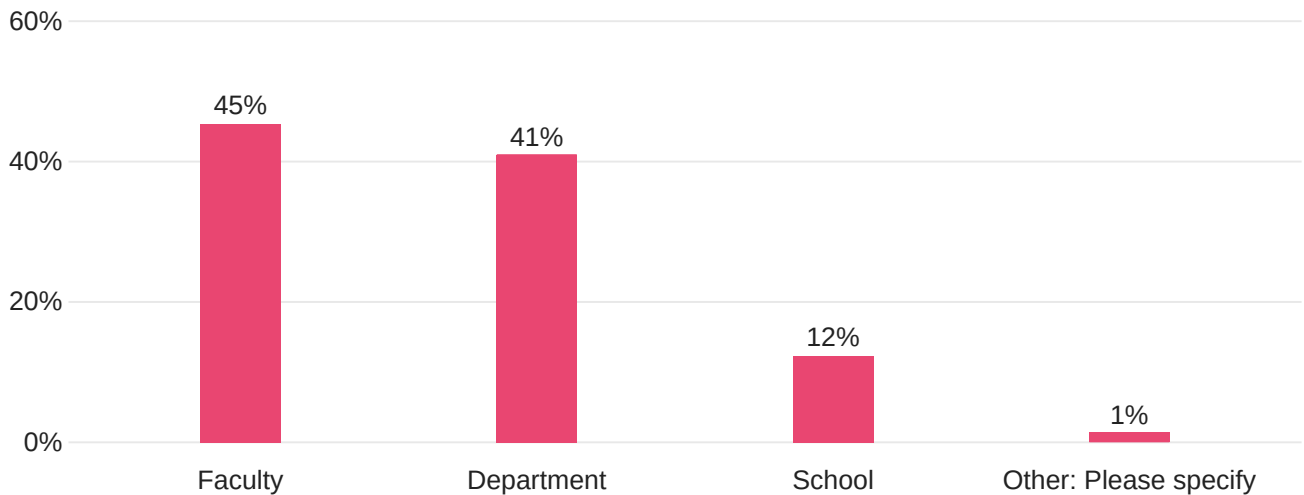


### 1.4 Academic unit level

This survey focused on the academic unit level, not the whole institution. Therefore, academic leaders were asked to indicate the academic unit level of their analysis. The survey specified that, depending on the higher education system, the academic unit may refer to a faculty, school, department or a similar unit. Most academic leaders responded either on behalf of their faculties (45%) or departments (41%). A relatively small share selected schools as their reference point (12%), and just 1% picked other academic unit types (1%), specifying 'institute', 'graduate school', 'academic programs' and 'association of international universities' amongst other alternatives.

Q2 - Please indicate the level at which you would like to evaluate your academic unit.

635 Responses

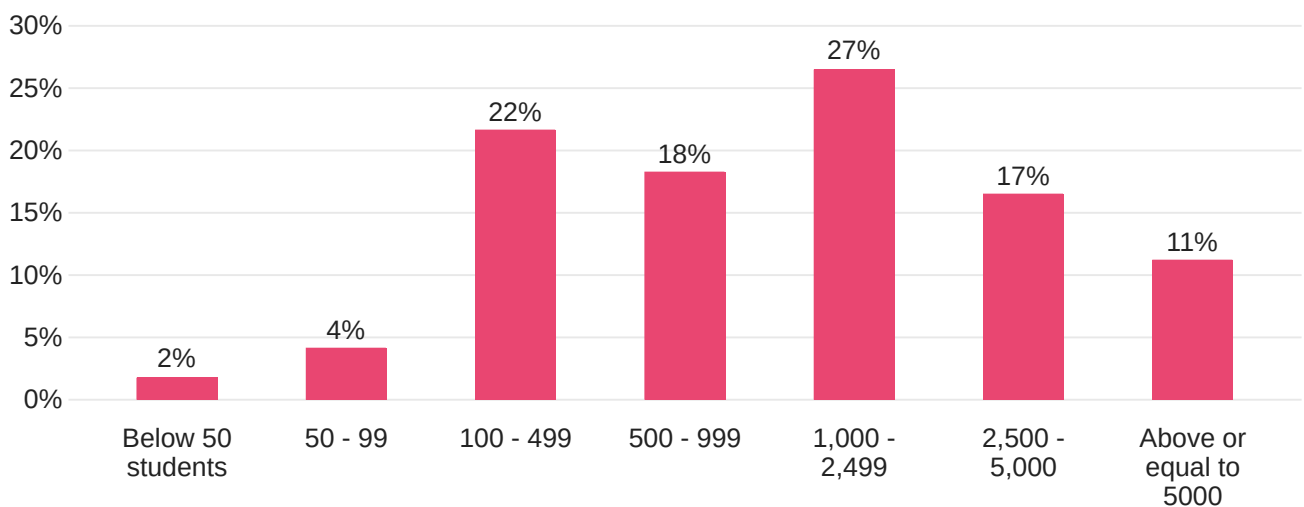


## 1.5 Academic unit size

A large majority of academic units (84%) have between 100 and 5000 students, while the remaining departments were either really large ( $\geq 5000$ ) or small ( $>100$ ).

Q27 - How many students are enrolled in your academic unit (i.e., your faculty, school, department)? Please select the applicable range from the list below.

509 Responses



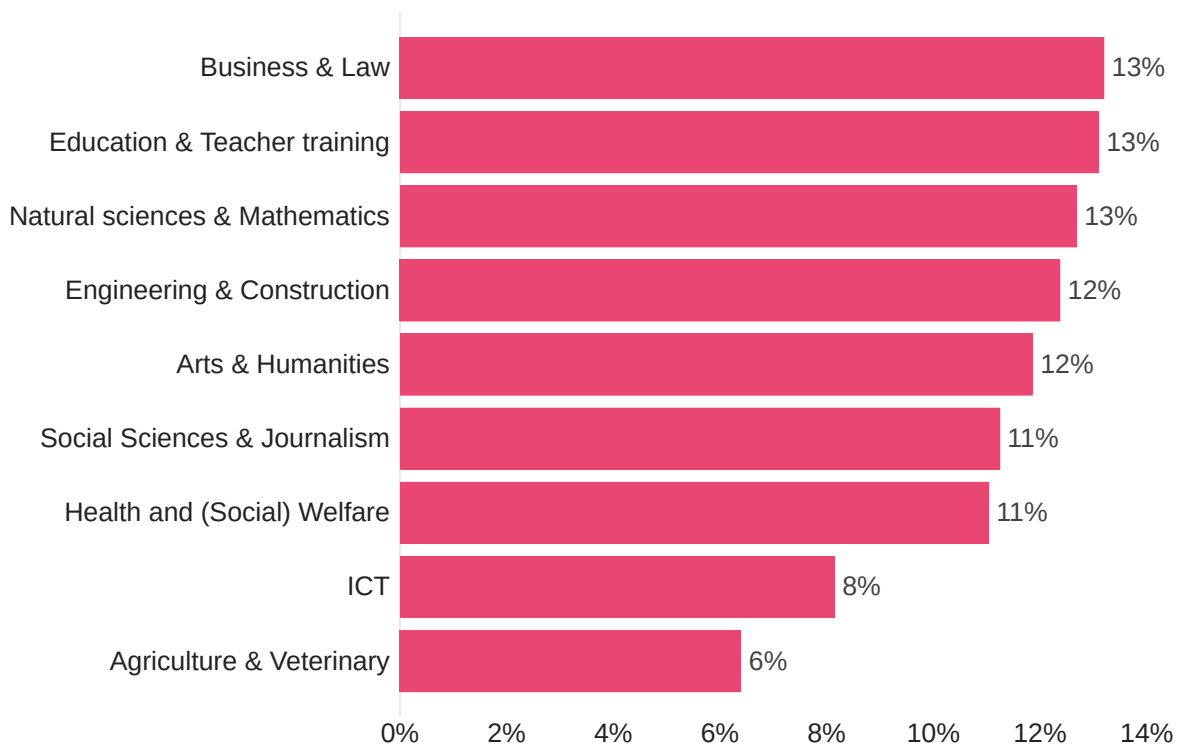
## 1.6 Academic unit specialisations

Each respondent could indicate all applicable disciplinary fields of their academic unit. Overall, nearly all disciplines are well represented. The most represented disciplines are 'Business, Administration and Law' (13%), 'Education and Teacher Training' (13%), 'Natural sciences, Mathematics & Statistics' (13%). Also well represented are 'Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction' (12%), 'Arts and Humanities' (12%) , 'Social Sciences, Journalism & Information' (11%) and 'Health and (Social) Welfare'. The least represented fields are 'Information and Communication Technologies' (8%) 'Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary (6%).

Q26 - What are the broad disciplinary fields covered by your academic unit? Select all applicable.

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

509 Responses





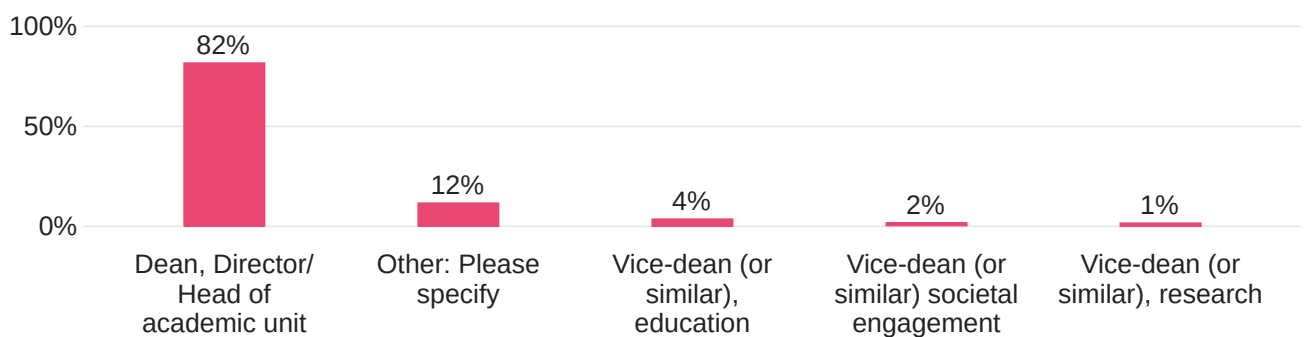
## 1.7 Function of respondent

Most of the respondents are Deans, directors or heads of academic units (82%). Other respondents cover a rather small share of the sample (around 6%) mostly consisting of vice-deans for education, research or 'societal engagement or third mission or sustainability' or similar responsibilities. In addition, 12% reported other functions, indicating 'head of research group', 'managing director of a unit', 'sustainability ambassador' 'former dean of the head of an academic unit' amongst others.

Q28 - What is your main function in your academic unit?

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

509 Responses

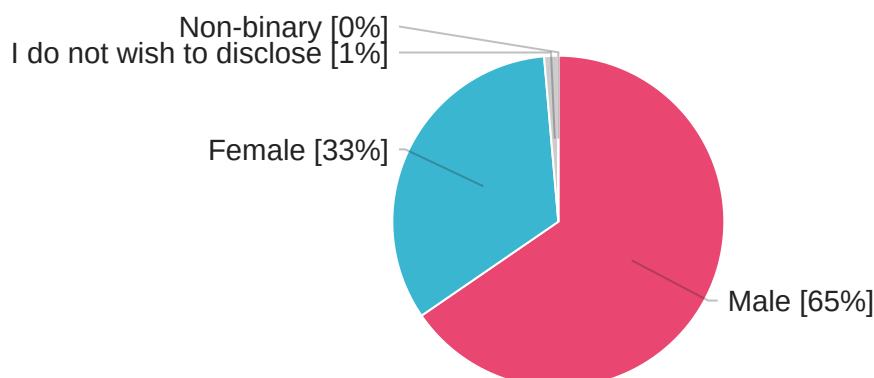


## 1.8 Gender of respondent

Among 509 respondents, about two-thirds were male (65%), followed by females (33%), and a small minority either chose not to disclose gender (1%).

Q29 - Please select your gender.

509 Responses



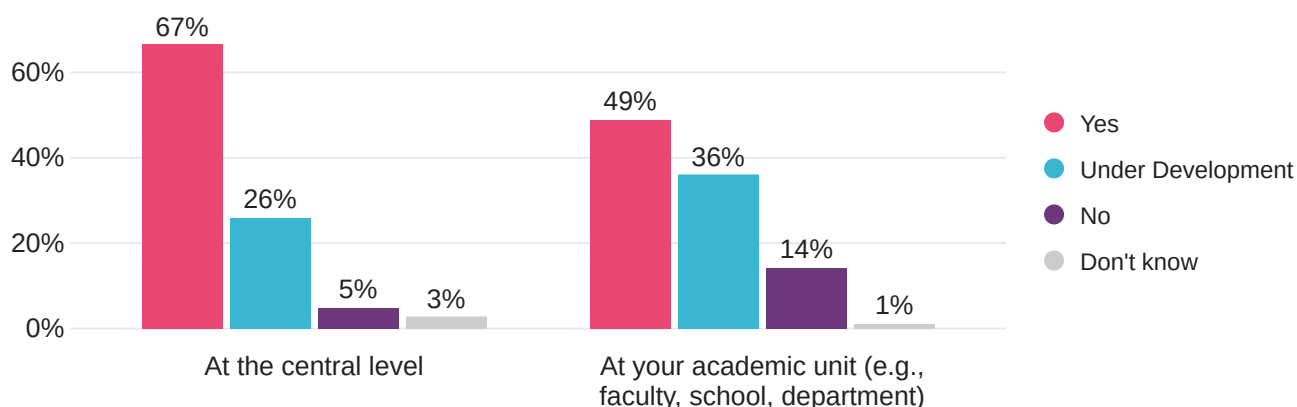
## 2. STRATEGIES & POLICIES

### 2.1 Central & academic unit level strategies

Strategy and policies play an important role in awareness building and establishing a common vision amongst the academic community. According to respondents, sustainability strategies or policies are more common at the central level than at the academic unit level (67% vs 49%). Moreover, many central and academic units have their strategies under development (26% and 36% respectively). Only a small proportion do not have sustainability strategies at the central level while at the unit level this applies to one-fifth of respondents (5% vs 14%). The rest of the respondents were not certain of such developments.

Q3 - Is sustainability addressed in your institution's strategy or policies?

619 Responses

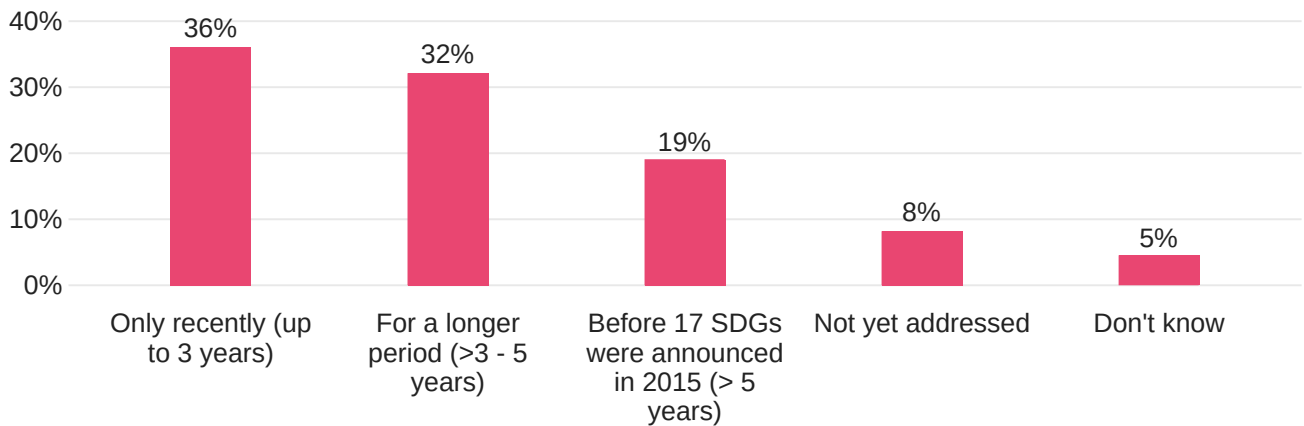


### 2.2 Duration of academic unit strategies

Most of the respondents indicated that sustainability has been addressed in their academic unit's strategy only recently, no longer than 3 years (36%). Yet almost a third (32%) selected above 3 to 5 years and around one-fifth (19%) said that sustainability was already addressed in their unit before 2015 when SDGs appeared on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus, a relatively large share of respondents (51%) are quite familiar (> 3 years of experience) with unit-level sustainability strategies. A relatively small percentage did not know or indicated that it was not yet addressed. Additional analysis showed that the category 'not yet addressed' was selected by respondents who had previously replied that the unit-level strategy is under development. The graph below shows how long have the sustainability strategies been in place in respondents' academic units.

Q4 - [If Q3 - 'academic unit level' equals YES or Under Development.] How long has sustainability been addressed in the strategy or policy of your academic unit (e.g., faculty, school, department)?

510 Responses

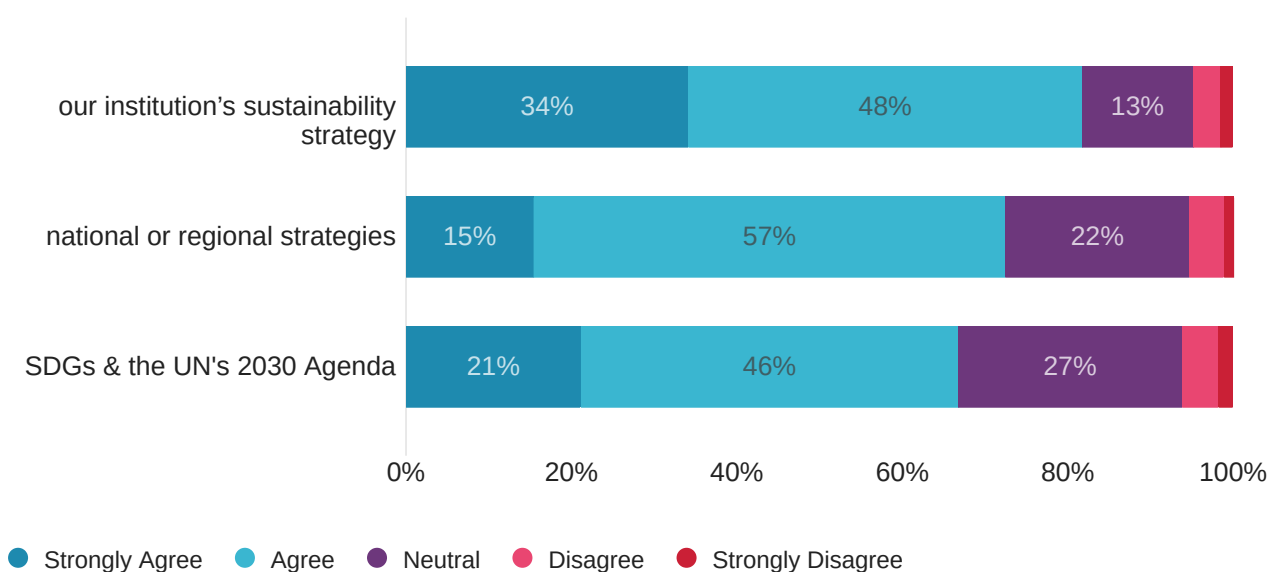


### 2.3 Influencers of academic unit level strategies

Most heads of academic units either strongly agree or agree (hereafter agree) that the strategy of their academic unit is influenced by their institution's sustainability strategy (82%). The majority also agrees that national and regional strategies (72%) and SDGs & the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (67%) have an influence on their academic unit's sustainability strategy. Only a very small share of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that these external factors have influenced the strategy of their unit (5 - 6%).

Q6 - The sustainability strategy of our academic unit is influenced by...

454 Responses



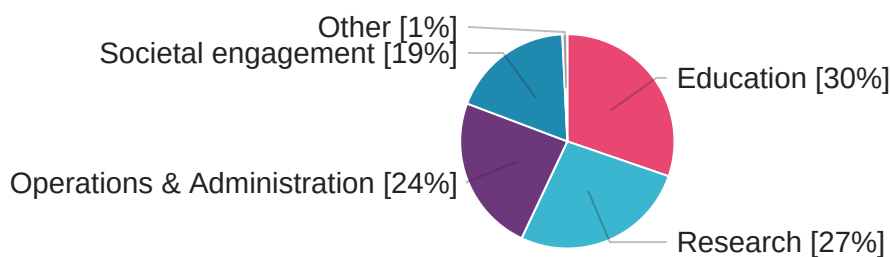
## 2.4 Areas addressed in academic unit strategies

Academic leaders indicated that dimensions most commonly addressed in the academic unit's strategy included 'education strategy' (30%) and 'research strategy' (27%). It was followed by 'operational & administrative strategy (e.g., energy, waste management)' (24%) and 'societal engagement strategy' (19%). Respondents could select all applicable choices. A very small share indicated other strategies (1%) such as environmental, ecological strategy, media literacy and cultural studies, wider university strategies, as the unit's contribution to the institution's SDGs commitments.

Q7 - In your academic unit, where is sustainability addressed exactly? Select all applicable.

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

450 Responses

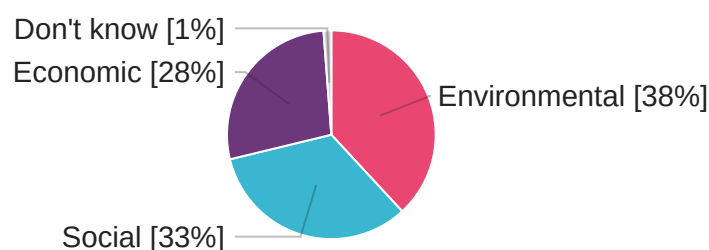


## 2.5 Dimensions of academic unit level strategies

Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept, often covering economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Academic leaders reported addressing all three dimensions, the most popular answer being the environmental dimension (38%), followed by social (33%) and economic dimensions (28%). Respondents could select all applicable dimensions and only 1% reported not knowing which dimensions are addressed.

Q5 - Which dimensions are addressed in the sustainability strategy of your academic unit? Select all applicable.

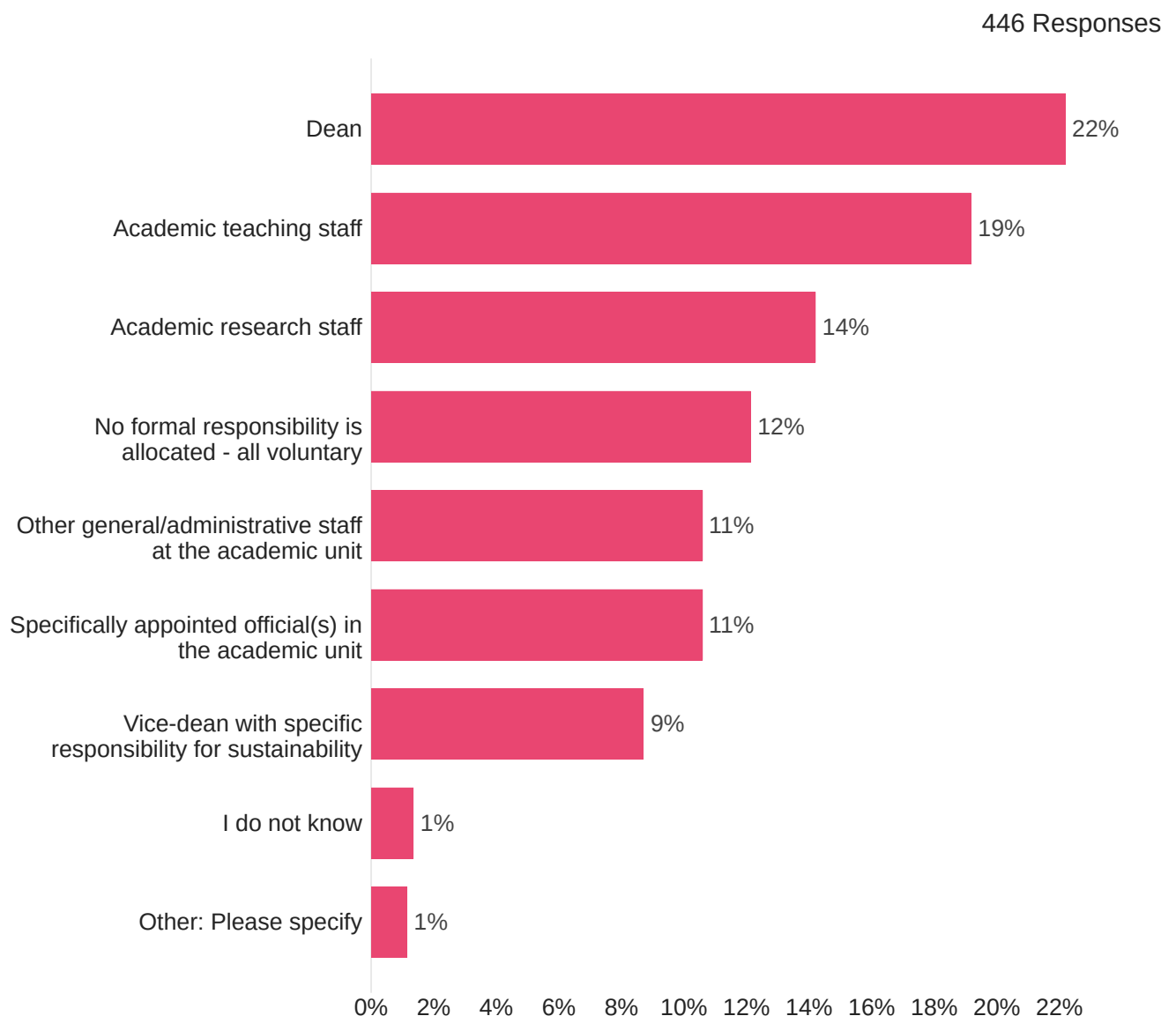
462 Responses



## 2.6 Responsibility for implementing strategies

Employees more often responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives are deans (22%) and academic teaching (19%) and research staff (14%). The other four alternatives are approximately equally represented (9-12%), suggesting that various forms of implementation strategy can be found across academic units. Some 1% of the respondents mentioned other responsible stakeholders such as heads of departments within a faculty, heads of study programmes, and teams with stakeholders from different levels (e.g., deans, vice-rectors, services).

Q8 - Who at your academic unit is responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives?  
Select all applicable.



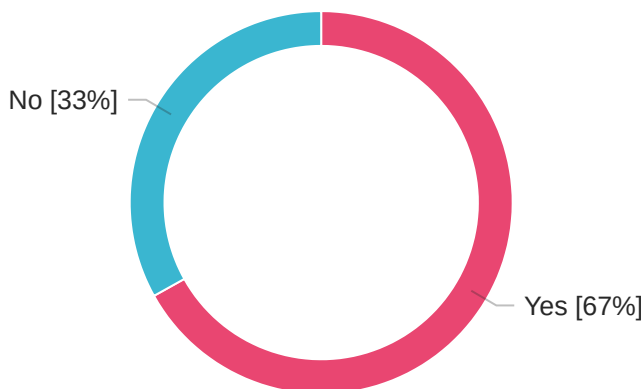
## 3. DRIVERS AND OBSTACLES

### 3.1 Sustainability activity profile

Identifying drivers and obstacles is critical when an organization undergoes organizational change processes. In our analysis of drivers, we distinguish between representatives of HEIs who are already undertaking sustainability initiatives and representatives that would like to pursue sustainability initiatives in the future but have not done so yet. The graph below indicates that two thirds (67%) of respondents are already pursuing sustainability or SDG-related initiatives. From those, who are not pursuing the initiatives, the majority (77%) would like to pursue such initiatives in the future.

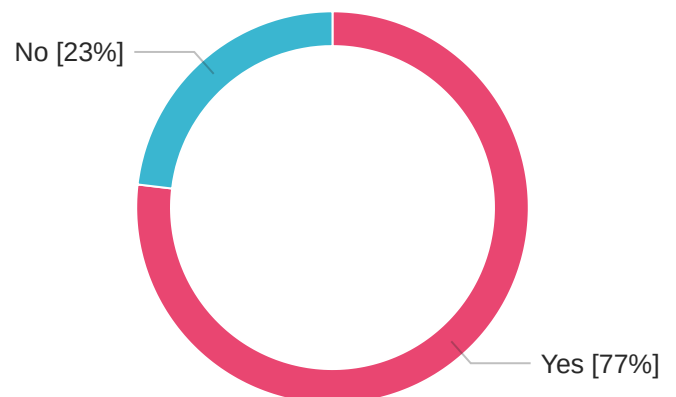
Q10 - Does your academic unit undertake any sustainability or SDG-related initiatives?

565 Responses



Q12 - [If Q10 equals NO] Does your academic unit have an ambition to pursue sustainability or SDG-related initiatives in the future?

186 Responses



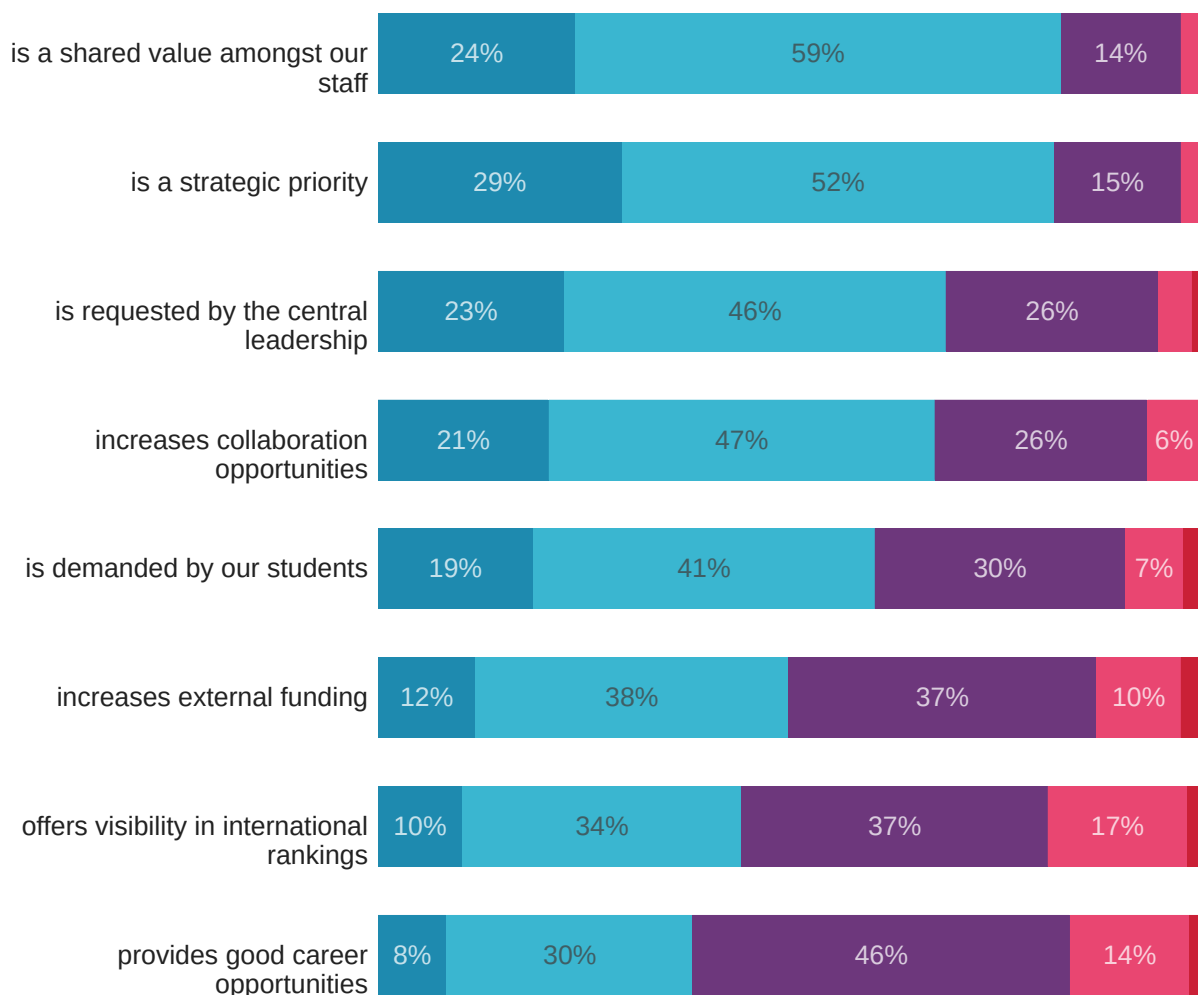
### 3.2 Drivers - activities already pursued

A large majority of academic leaders from units that pursue sustainability initiatives either agree or strongly agree (hereafter agree) that sustainability is a shared value amongst its staff (83%) as well as a strategic priority (81%). Just above two-thirds indicate that it is requested by the central leadership (69%) and 'provides more collaboration opportunities with external partners (e.g., NGOs, citizens, industry)' (68%). Over half report that it is demanded by their students (60%), and exactly half (50%) believe that it 'increases external funding opportunities (e.g., EU, national)'. The two least popular drivers supported by less than half were visibility in international rankings (44%), and good career opportunities (38%).

Q11: What are the key drivers for your academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives?

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

373 Responses



● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree

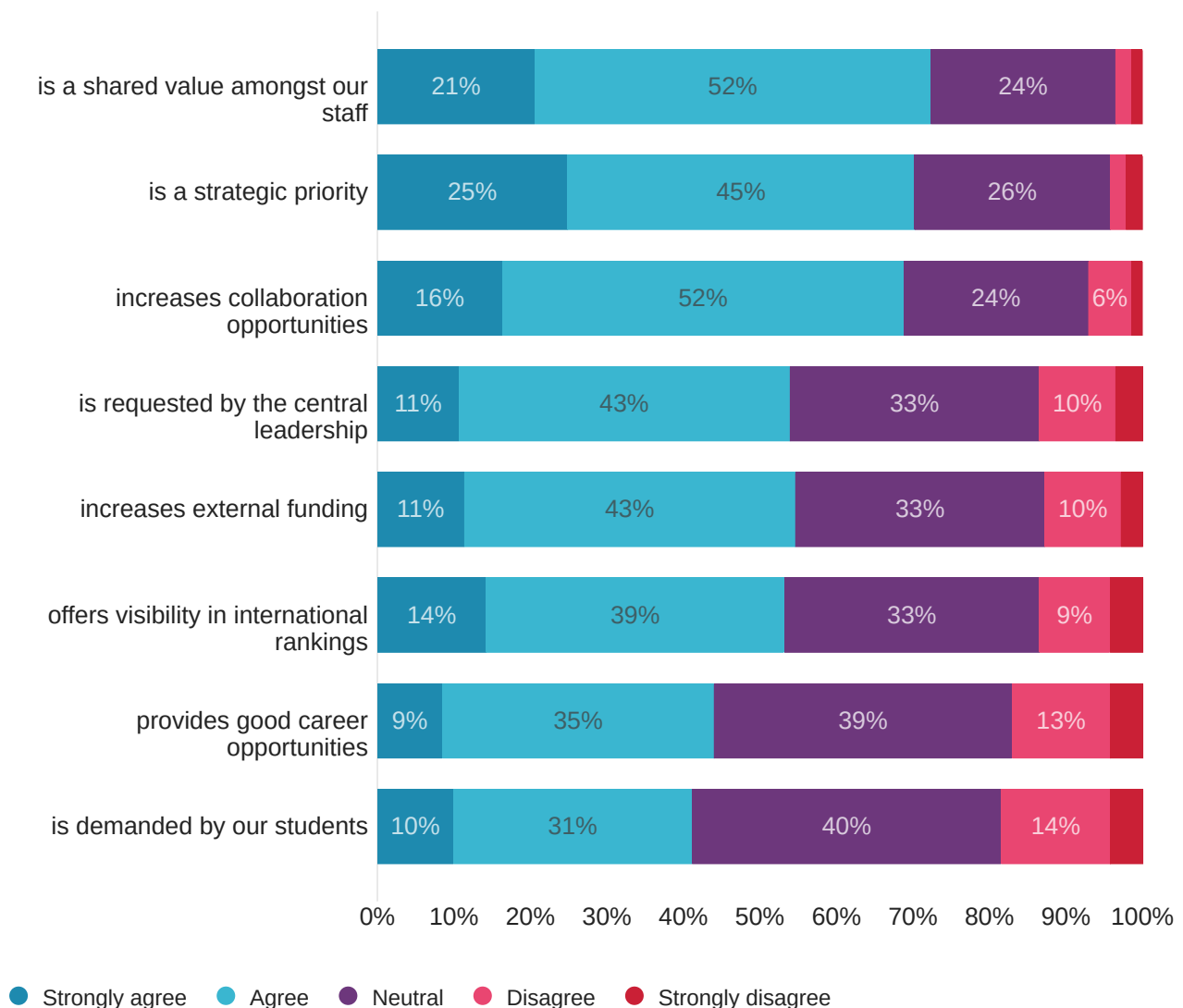
### 3.3 Drivers - ambition to pursue activities

Amongst academic leaders who aspire to pursue sustainability initiatives in their academic units, many drivers are similar to those already pursuing such activities (group above). Similarly, a majority considers sustainability to be a shared value (73%) and a strategic priority (70%). They also think that it 'provides more collaboration opportunities with external partners (e.g., NGOs, citizens, industry)' (68%) and is requested by the central leadership (54%). In contrast, this group gives lesser priority to student demand (41% versus 60% for the group above), prioritizing external funding opportunities (54%), and visibility in international rankings (53%).

Q13 - [If Q10 equals NO & Q12 equals YES] What are the key drivers for your academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives in the future?

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

141 Responses





Respondents were also given an opportunity to select the "other" category for drivers and specify their answers. In total, 17 respondents provided additional responses. Amongst other drivers, respondents indicated more structural and work-related considerations as well as strategic and value-driven considerations. Amongst more structural drivers (n=4), respondents mentioned that sustainability initiatives are driven by 'faculty champions' and 'administrative staff', are demanded by sponsors and are required for accreditation. For work-related drivers (n=5) respondents emphasized that it is 'core research of several colleagues at the academic unit', 'sustainability is the academic focus of the department', 'they have engaged in sustainability already since 1974', it 'increases collaboration opportunities with international academic partners' and 'that they are doing organic farming'.

Amongst more strategic reasons (n=4), respondents emphasized that sustainability is a priority in the unit's strategic plan, is 'a value promoted by the lead management', is a 'personal interest of directive staff', corresponds to the units conviction to 'save the climate and biodiversity now'. Most of these reasons can be seen as a mix of strategic considerations strongly aligned with personal values. Multiple respondents (n=4) also emphasized reasons linked to personal values and perceptions such as sustainability being 'required by our planet', 'simply necessary', 'demanded by society' and initiatives being driven by 'personal staff initiatives'.

### 3.4 Obstacles

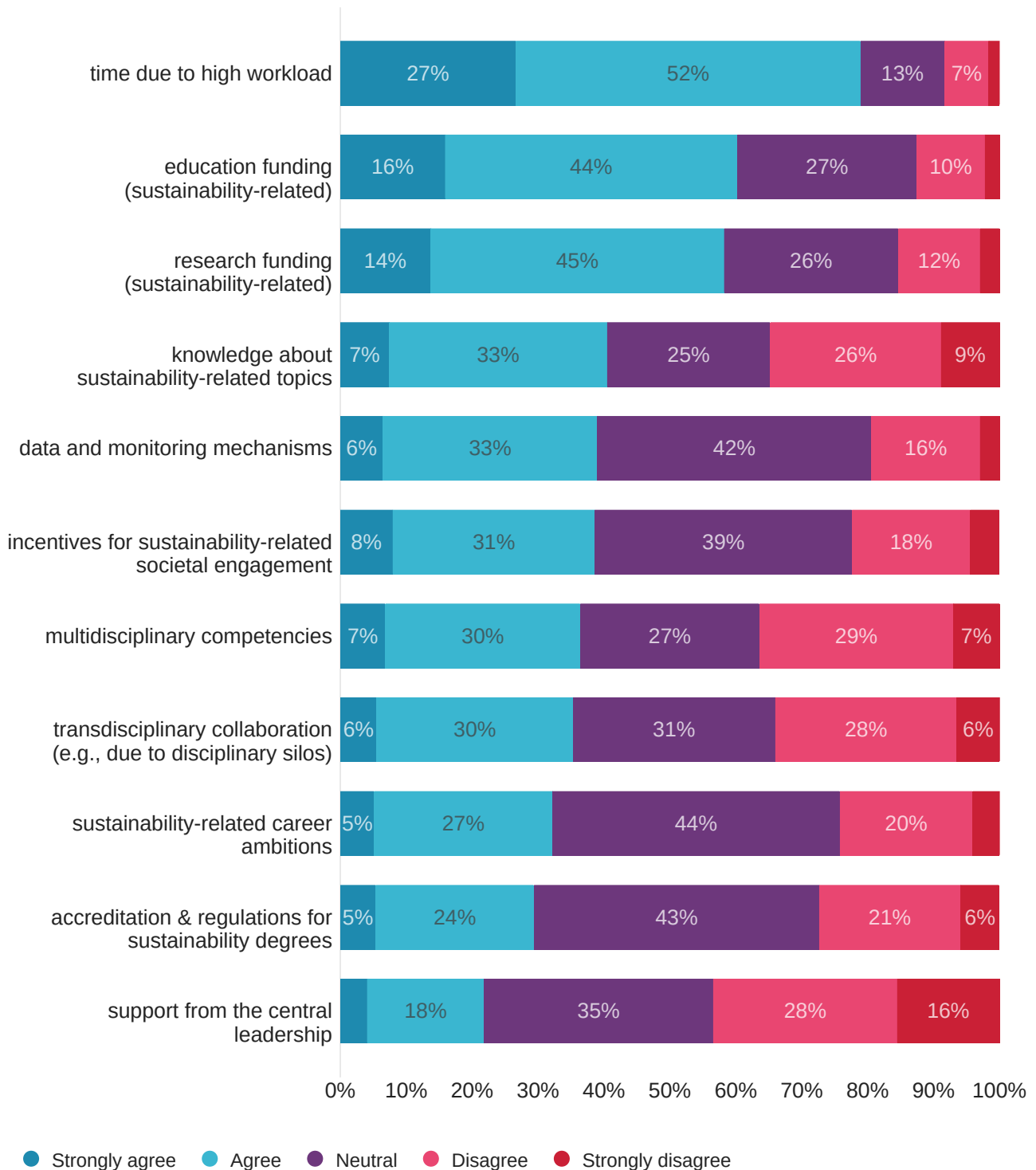
We asked all respondents about obstacles encountered irrespective of whether they already pursued sustainability initiatives. The majority agreed on three key obstacles. The main obstacle was the lack of time due to a high workload (79%), followed by sustainability-related education funding (60%) and research funding (59%). The remaining obstacles were emphasized by less than half of the respondents. However, around 40% indicated that the lack of knowledge about sustainability-related topics (40%) is an obstacle. Nearly the same number of respondents listed data and monitoring mechanisms (39%) and incentives for sustainability-related societal engagement initiatives (39%), and lack of 'competencies (e.g., multidisciplinary research & teaching skills)' (37%). The obstacles of lesser importance, mentioned by fewer than one-third of respondents, were lack of sustainability-related career ambitions (32%), 'accreditation and regulations around sustainability-related degree programmes' (29%) and support from the central leadership (21%).

Q14 - What are the key obstacles that stand in the way of your academic staff to undertake sustainability initiatives?

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

**FOR OUR ACADEMIC UNIT, THE KEY OBSTACLES INCLUDE THE LACK OF...**

541 Responses



In total, 12 respondents mentioned other obstacles, which could be classified into mostly structural and perception-related obstacles. Under structural issues (N=6), respondents pointed out 'lack of sufficient human resources and infrastructure', 'funding', 'time' and more broadly 'discrepancies between the economic lobby and the requirements of the transformation of society', 'economic reasons'. The obstacles linked to (N=6) perception and knowledge were indicated as 'lack of priority and awareness how this could contribute to success of organisation', 'lack of interest', lack of 'appropriate shared information', 'lip service paid by responsible parties', false sense of having sufficient information, lack of sustainability-oriented culture in the country.

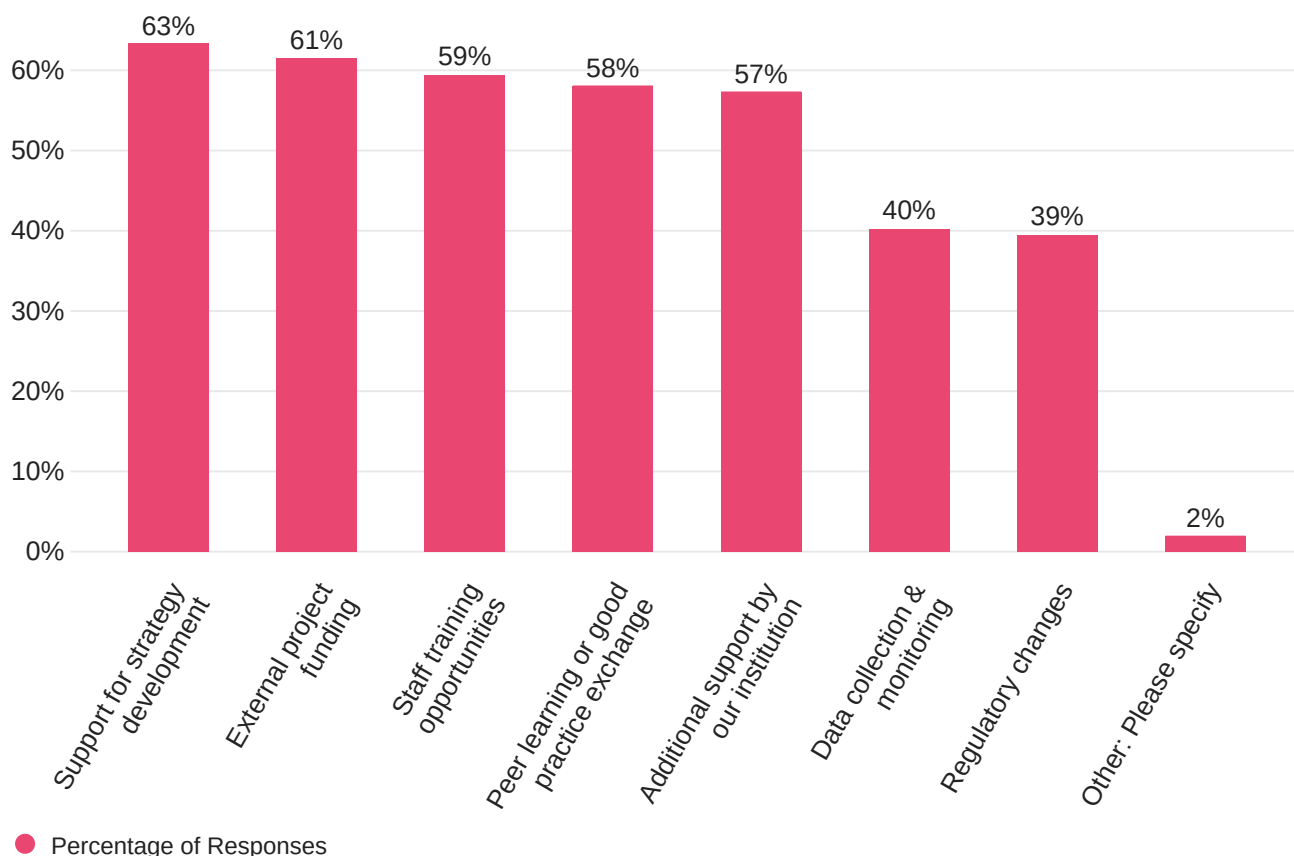
### 3.5 Support Mechanisms

When asked about support (multiple answers possible), all support mechanisms were seen as valuable. Yet most heads of academic units prioritized support to further develop their unit's sustainability strategy (63%) followed by the external project funding (61%), staff training opportunities (59%), peer learning or good practice exchange (58%) and support by their own institution (57%).

Q15 - 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.*

532 Responses



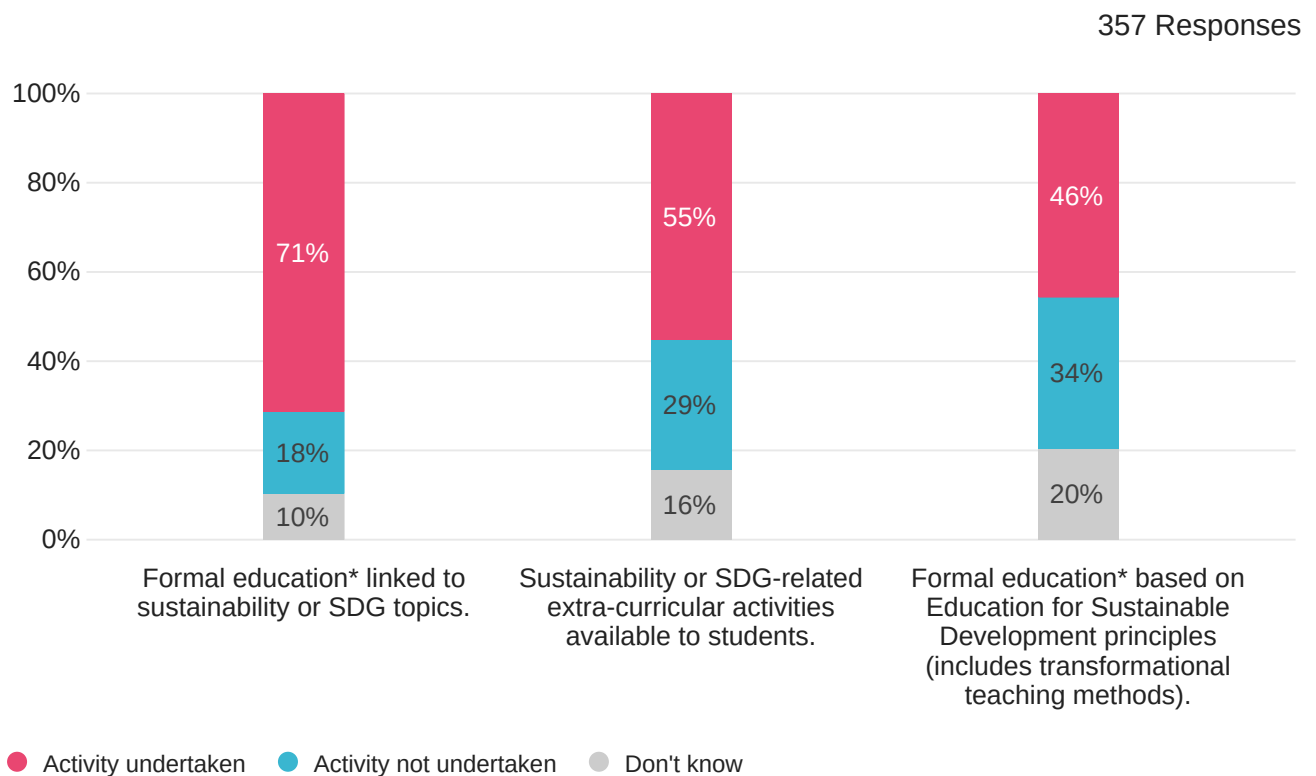
## 4. SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITIES

### 4.1 Education activities

More than two-thirds (71%) of academic unit heads reported that their units undertaking formal education linked to sustainability or SDG topics. More than half (55%) stated that their unit undertakes sustainability or SDG-related extra-curricular activities. Lastly, a bit fewer than half (46%) reported undertaking formal education based on ESD principles, which, beyond content, also includes transformational teaching methods.

Amongst other answers, respondents (n=8) indicated the development of new and specialised programs, courses and workshops and the need to plan more courses across disciplines. Several respondents also mentioned competitions and interuniversity challenges (e.g., Solar Decathlon Conquest). One respondent noted that sustainability initiatives should not override freedom of research and education.

Q16 - Which sustainability-related education activities does your academic unit undertake? Select all applicable. (\*Formal education includes educational programs, minors, courses.)

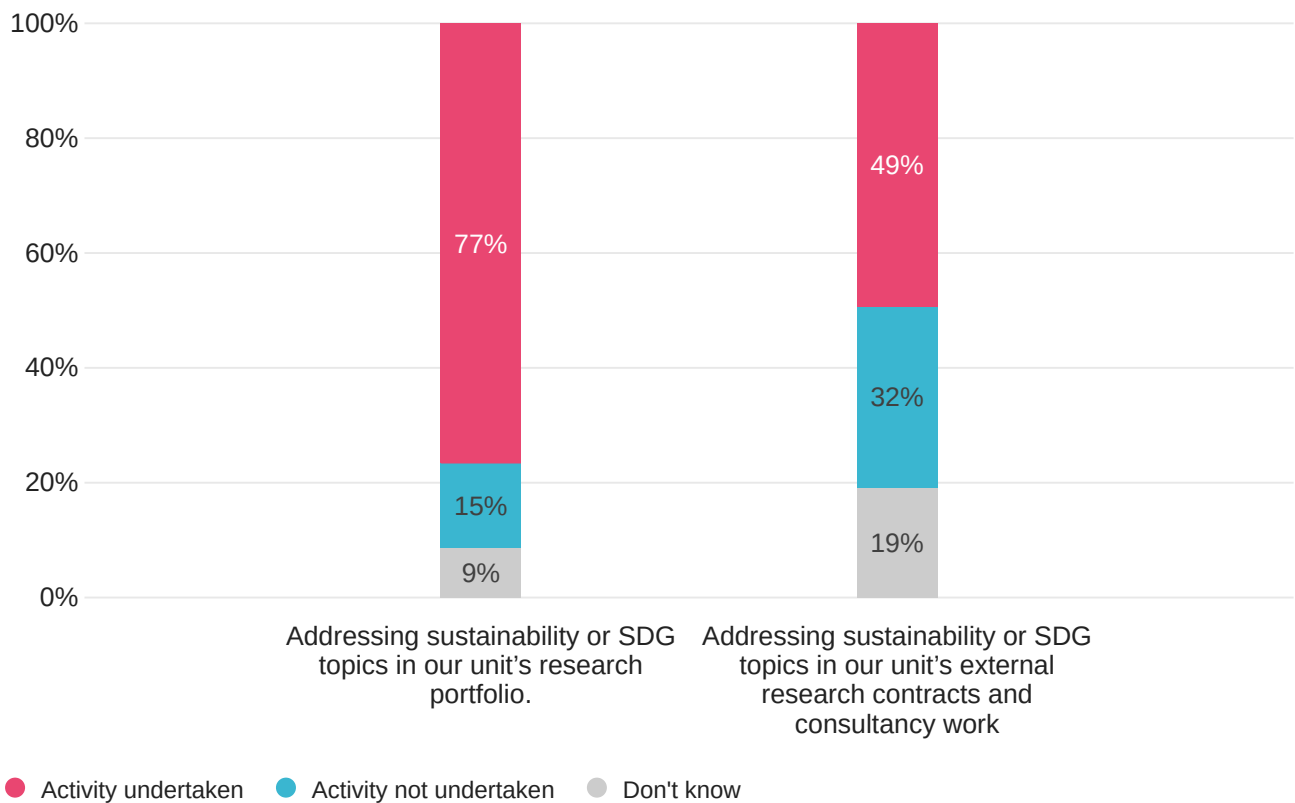


## 4.2 Research activities

The majority of the academic unit heads (77%) responded that sustainability or SDG topics are 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. A number of respondents (n=15) filled in the "other" option, indicating such activities as 'applying for Horizon Europe funding', 'service methodology', 'bio-economy and LCA spin-offs', 'PCK specific Model development', 'setting up a special research unit', 'individual researchers' projects' and 'travel grants'.

Q17 - Which sustainability-related research activities does your academic unit undertake?

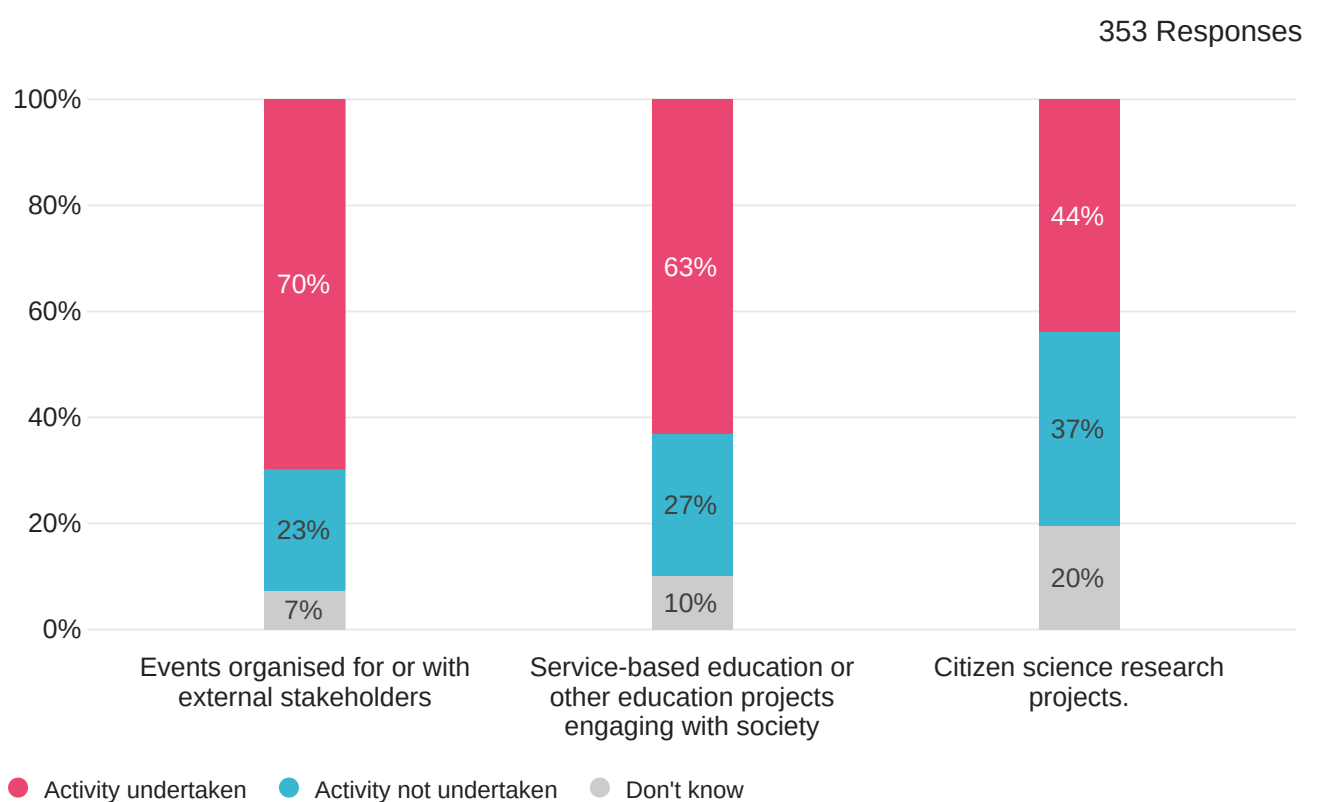
355 Responses



### 4.3 Societal engagement activities

The majority of respondents indicated that their academic units organise sustainability-related events for or with external stakeholders (70%), followed by service-based education or other education projects engaging with society (63%). Close to half (44%) said that their units engage in citizen science projects. Some (n=4) respondents specified 'other' activities which included 'transdisciplinary research', 'professional advice' and 'open/public lectures'.

Q18 - Which sustainability-related societal engagement activities does your academic unit undertake?



## 5. STAFF & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

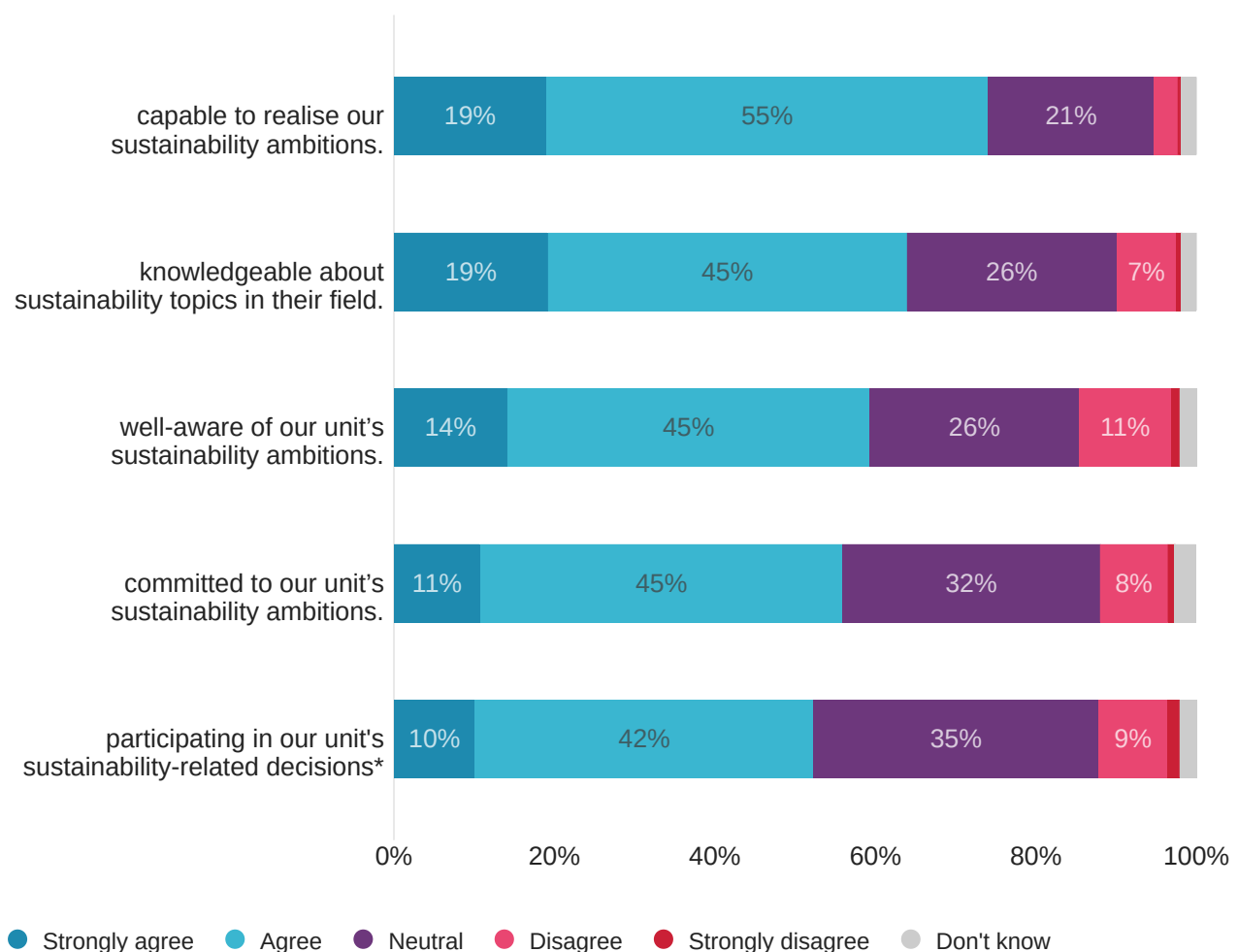
### 5.1 Staff engagement

Around three-quarters of respondents believe that academic staff at their unit are capable to realise the unit's sustainability ambitions (74%) while nearly two-thirds think that academics at their unit are knowledgeable about sustainability topics in their field (64%). In addition, the majority of respondents think that academic staff at their unit is well-aware of their unit's sustainability ambitions (59%) committed to these ambitions (56%) and are participating in the unit's 'sustainability-related decision-making process' (52%).

Q20 - Please rate the following statements: Academic staff at our unit are...

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

474 Responses

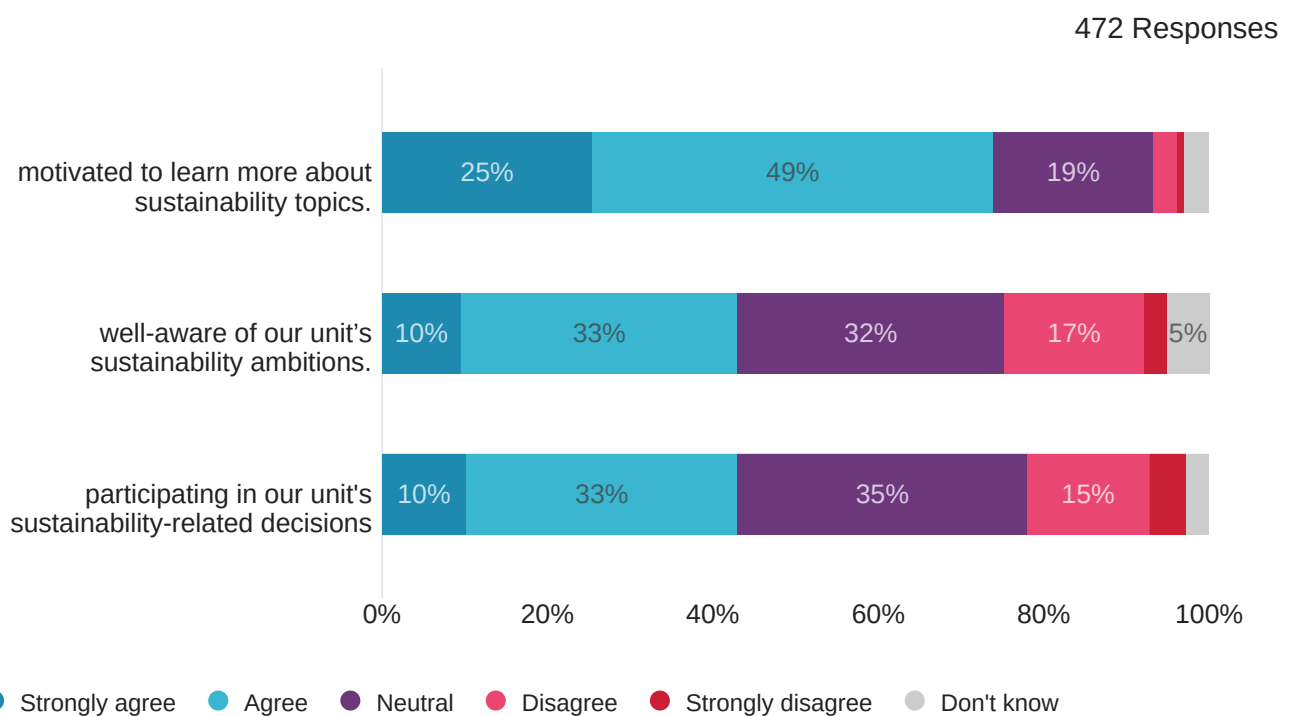


## 5.2 Student engagement

Nearly three-quarters of respondents believe that students at their academic unit are motivated to learn more about sustainability topics (74%), but less than half thinks that students are well-aware of their unit's sustainability ambitions (43%) or participate in the unit's 'sustainability-related decision-making process' (43%). This indicates that even though students appear to be highly interested in sustainability topics, their involvement at the academic unit level is rather limited.

Q21 - Please rate the following statements: Students at our academic unit are...

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





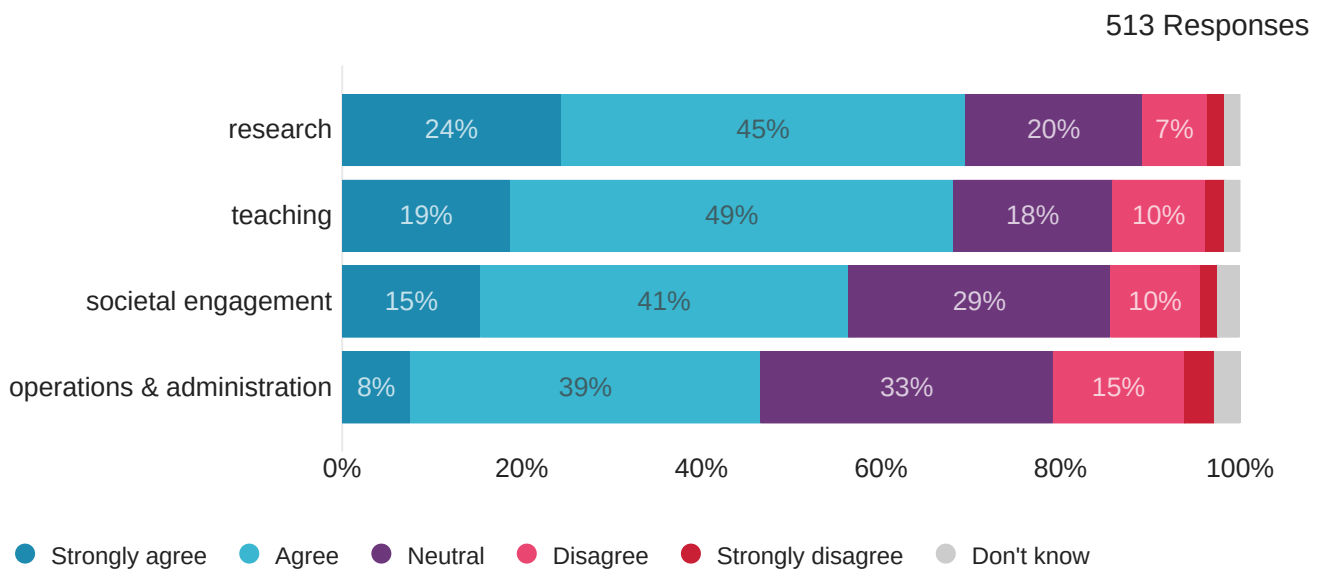
## 6. PROGRESS & FUTURE OUTLOOK

### 6.1 Progress attained

More than two-thirds of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their unit has made good progress over the last three years towards embedding sustainability in their unit's research (69%) and teaching activities (68%). More than half agreed that they have made good progress in embedding sustainability in their societal engagement activities (56%) while less than half thought that good progress has been made in operations & administration (47%).

Q22 - Please rate the following statements:

Over the last three years, our academic unit has made good progress towards embedding sustainability in the following activities:

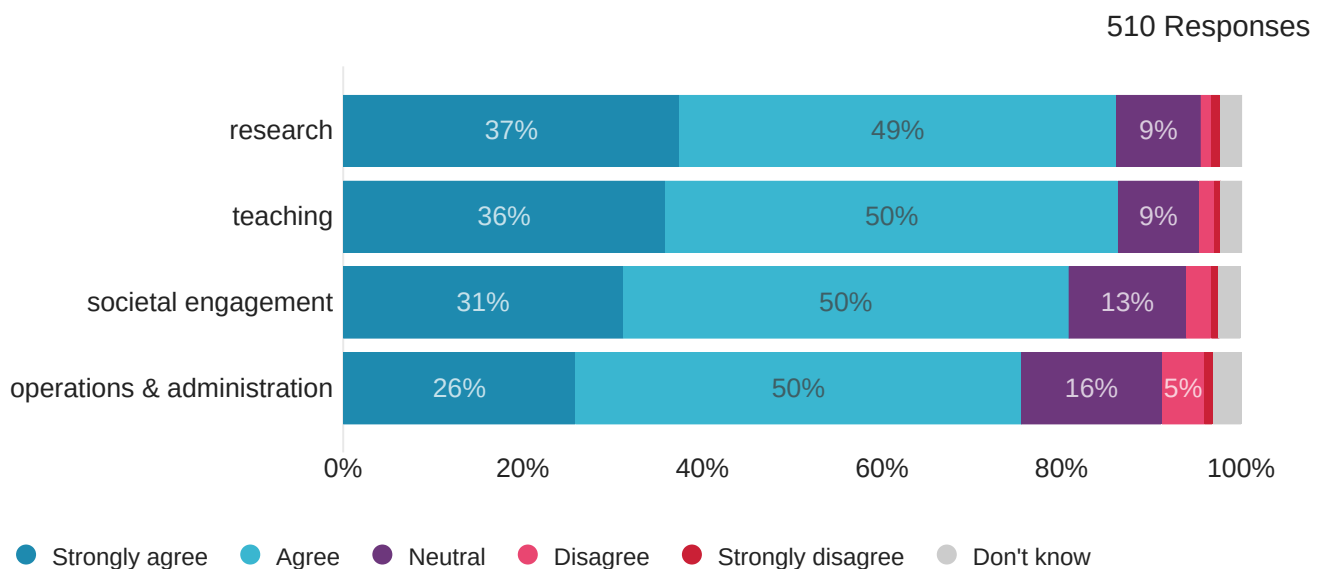


## 6.2 Future Outlook

The majority of respondents believe that attention to sustainability or SDGs in their academic unit will increase across all four dimensions in the next five years. The agreement is stronger for core missions of higher education - research (86%) and teaching (86%), but most respondents think that attention will also increase societal engagement (81%) activities and operations and administration (76%).

Q23 - Please rate the following statements:

Attention to sustainability or SDGs is likely to increase in the next five years in our academic unit's...

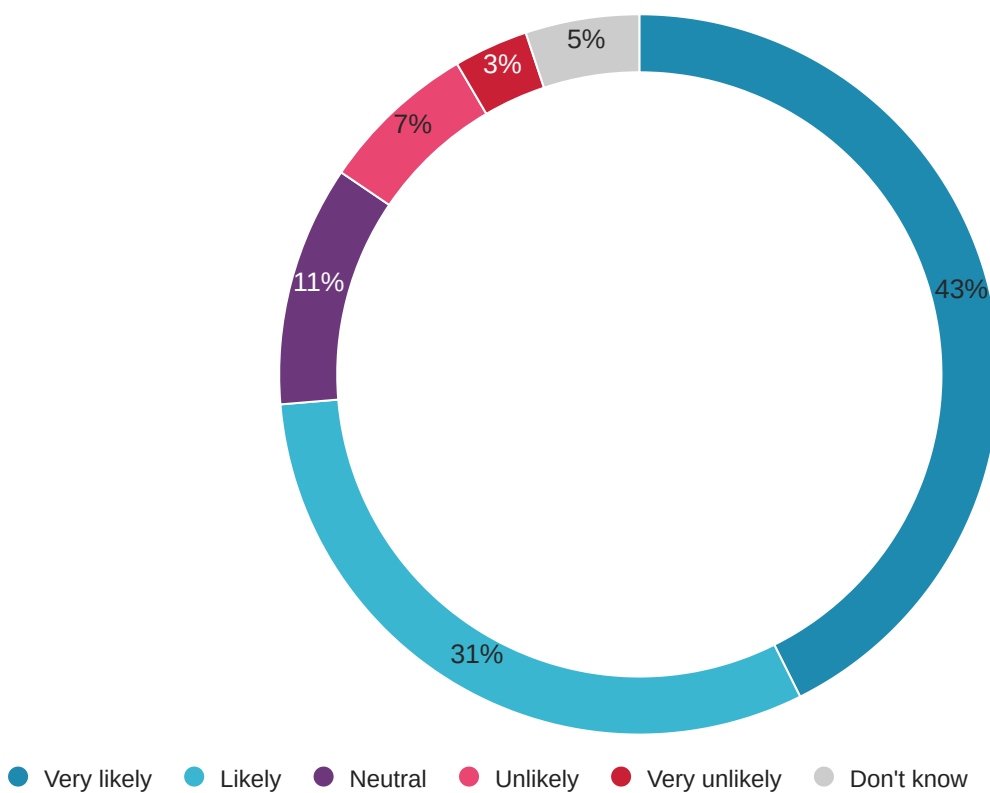


### 6.3 Joining the Council

When asked about the respondents' likeliness to become a member of the European Deans' Council for sustainability, the majority of respondents (74%) said that it is either likely or very likely that they would join the Council while a small minority said that it is unlikely (10%) or did not know (5%).

Q24 - Would you consider becoming a member of a European Deans' Council for sustainability (if this were to be established)?

509 Responses



# SUPPLEMENTARY PART

After completing the core part, respondents were invited to complete the supplementary part. Out of 509 respondents who completed the core part, 254 proceeded to the supplementary section (49.9%) and 251 completed it (completion rate = 98%). Partial responses (3=254-251) were included.

## 7. CAPACITY BUILDING

### 7.1 Education-oriented

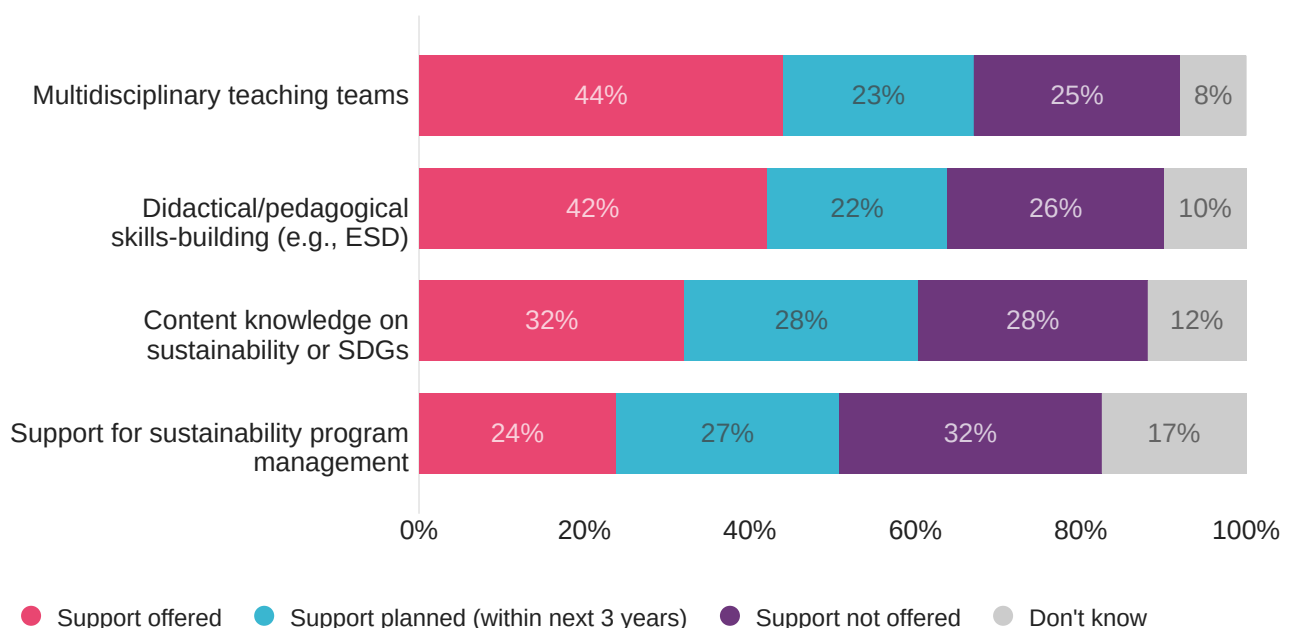
The most popular capacity building initiative for education was 'opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary teaching teams' (44%) followed by 'didactical/ pedagogical skills-building (e.g. ESD, challenge-based learning linked to SDG topics)' (42%). Fewer development opportunities were provided for acquiring 'content knowledge on sustainability or SDG topics' (32%) and receiving 'support for sustainability-related program management (e.g. partners, learning environments)' (24%).

Q33 - Which professional development opportunities does your academic unit offer to its educators?

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

#### EDUCATION-ORIENTED

252 Responses



## 7.2 Research-oriented

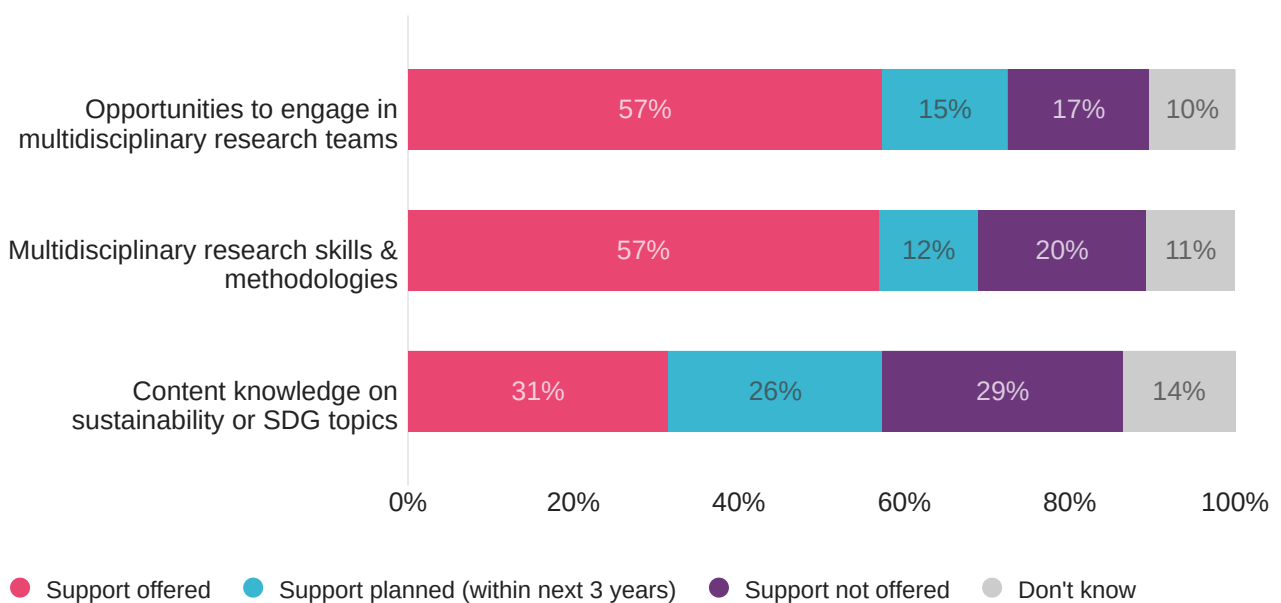
With respect to research-oriented capacity building, more than half of the academic leaders indicated that their units provide 'opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary research teams' (57%) and offer support in 'multidisciplinary research skills & methodologies' (57%). A bit less than one-third also receives support for acquiring 'content knowledge on sustainability or SDG-related topics' (31%). In addition, one respondent specified that such training is offered at a higher (central) level, another indicated that their unit is specifically specialised in sustainability.

Q34 - Which professional development opportunities does your academic unit offer to its researchers?

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

### RESEARCH-ORIENTED

251 Responses



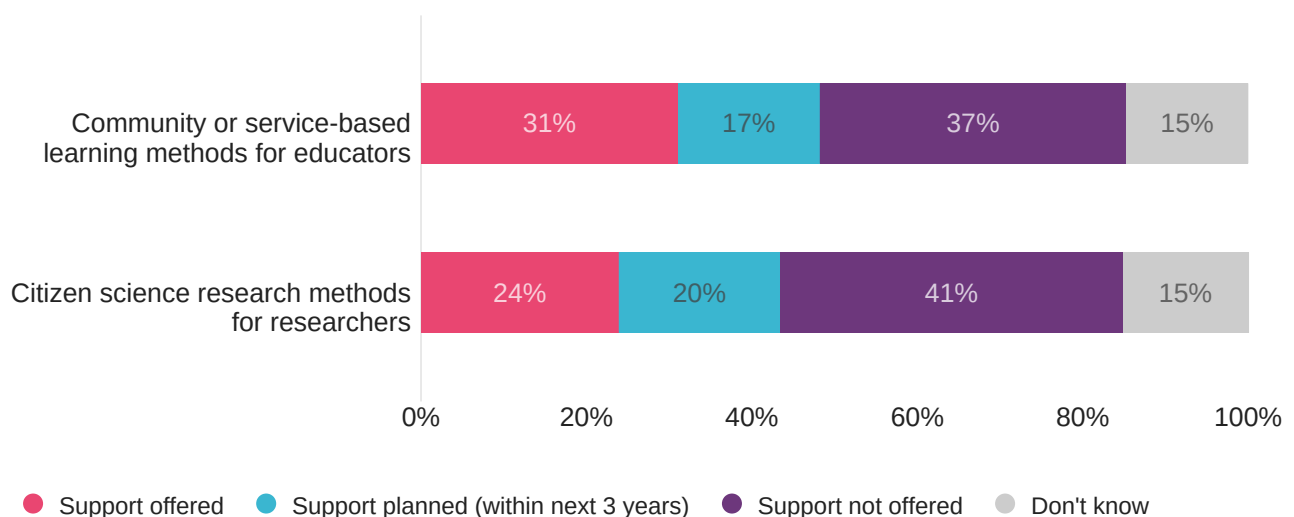
### 7.3 Societal engagement-oriented

Compared to education and research, capacity building activities for societal engagement are less common. Under one-third of respondents indicated that their unit offers any support. Most support is provided for community or service-based learning methods for educators (31%) followed by citizen science research methods for researchers (24%). However, approximately a fifth of respondents (17%, 20%) indicated that such support is planned in the near future for both categories. Respondents suggested a few other capacity building possibilities for societal engagement such as 'collaboration with local government', 'dialogue and focus groups', 'informal groups of cooperation'.

Q35 - Which professional development opportunities does your academic unit offer to its academic staff?

#### SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT

251 Responses



## 8. INCENTIVES & REWARDS

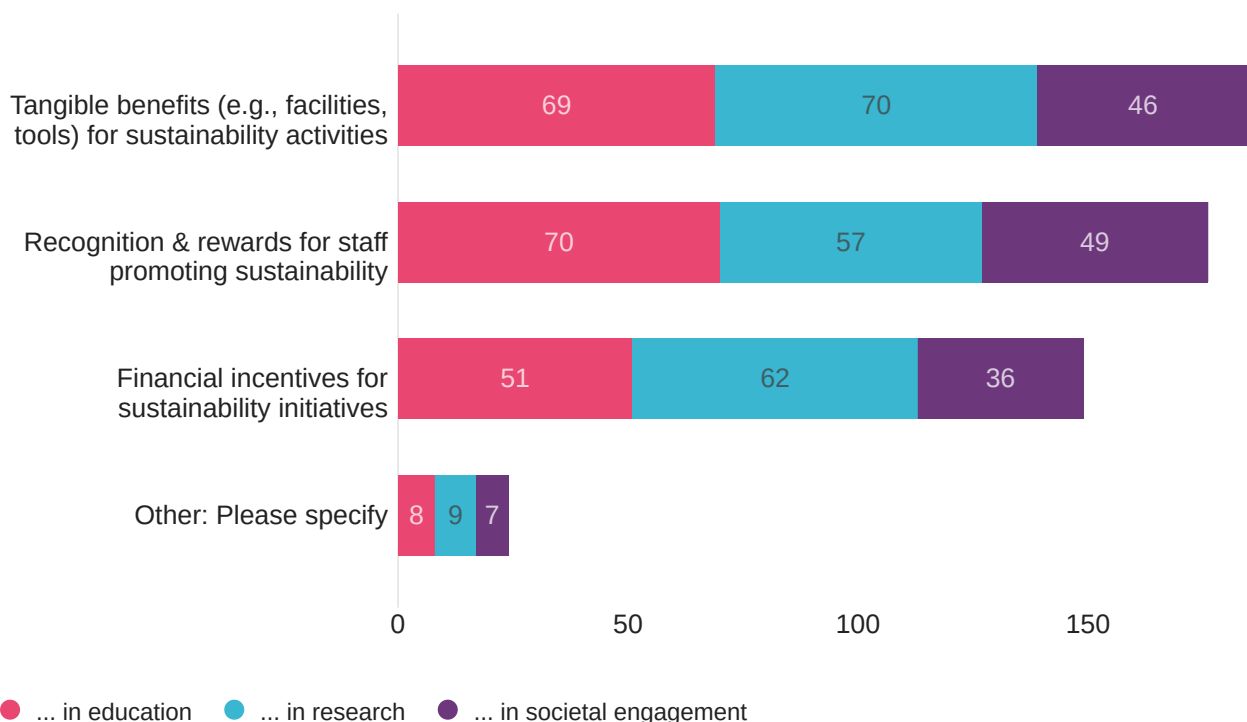
### 8.1 Incentives & rewards for academic staff

The use of incentives was reported by 58% of respondents (145 out of 249 who opened the question). The most commonly used incentive was 'tangible benefits such as access to facilities, tools, or platforms for sustainability activities' (N=185), followed by 'recognition & rewards such as prizes, awards, and symbolic gifts for staff who promote sustainability in their academic work' (N=176). Slightly less used were 'financial incentives for advancing new or existing sustainability programs & initiatives' (N=149). Under the 'other' category, a couple of academic leaders reported that incentives are not necessary because sustainability is part of the units strategy or the staff at an academic unit is intrinsically motivated to pursue sustainability initiatives.

Q38 - What incentives & rewards (if any) does your academic unit use to encourage sustainability and SDG-related initiatives amongst your staff? Select all applicable.

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

145 Responses

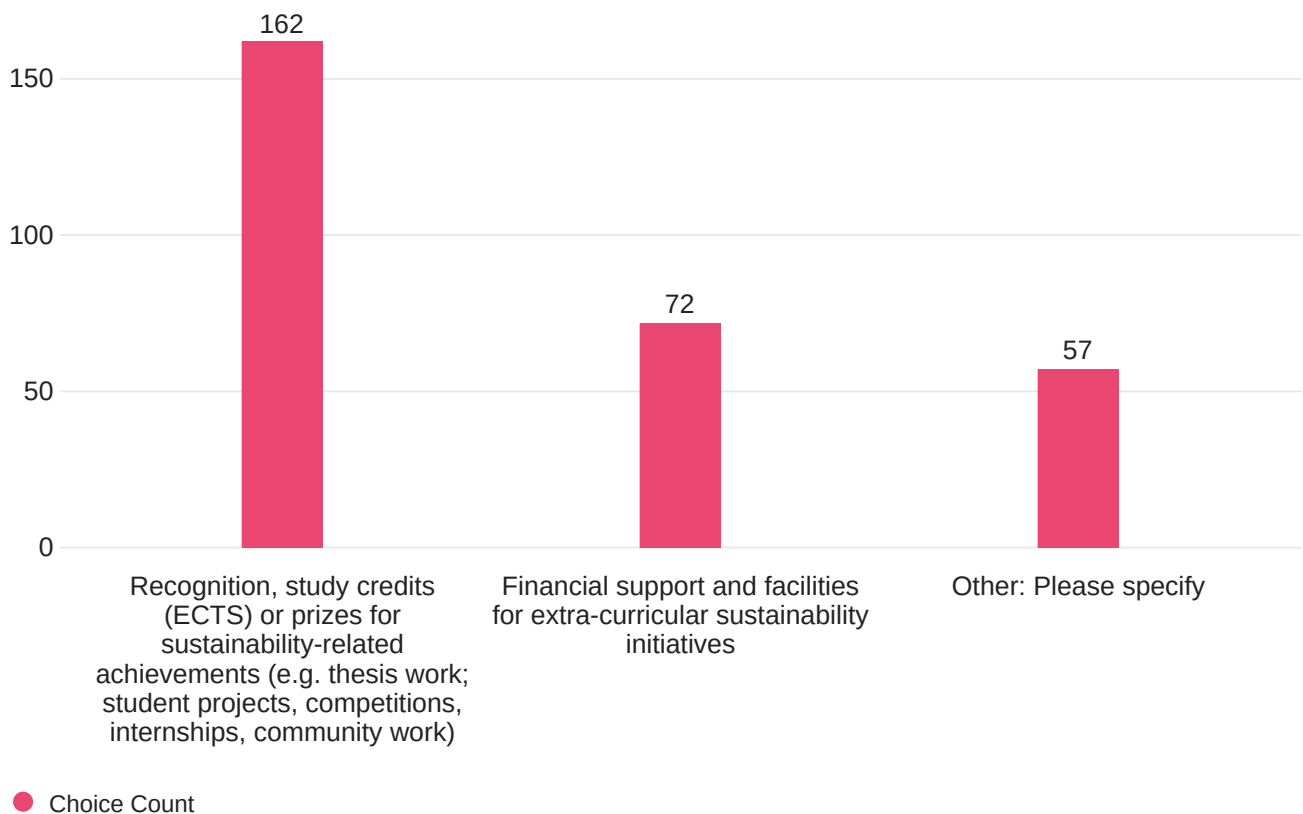


## 8.2 Incentives & rewards for students

Out of all respondents, 251 responded to this question. The most common incentive was 'recognition, study credits (ECTS) or prizes for sustainability-related achievements (e.g. thesis work; student projects, competitions, internships, community work)' (N=162), followed by 'financial support and facilities for extra-curricular sustainability initiatives' (N=72). Several respondents provided examples under the 'other' category, mentioning student exhibitions, developing cross-department interdisciplinary SDG course, providing resources for initiatives. Others indicated that sustainability is ingrained in the institution's ways of working since the 'university is committed to social justice and environmental issues since 1795' and such commitment "is expected of all staff in the university if they are to be members of our community'.

Q39 - What incentives & rewards (if any) does your academic unit use to encourage sustainability-related initiatives amongst your students or student associations? Select all applicable.

251 Responses





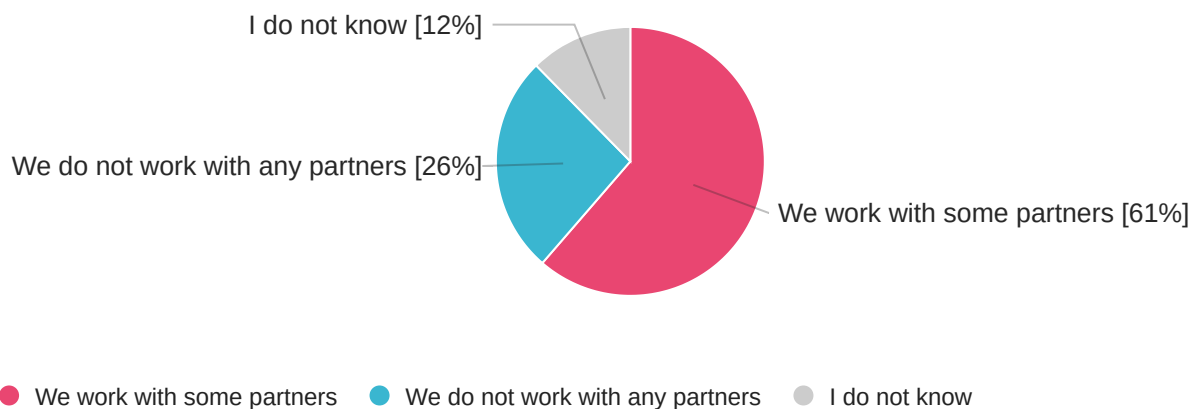
## 9. PARTNERSHIPS

### 9.1 Working with partners

More than half of academic leaders indicated working with some partners (61%), approximately a quarter (26%) stated that they do not work with partners, and relatively few respondents indicated (12%) that they do not know if there are any partnerships.

Q40 - Do you work with partners or external stakeholders to realise sustainability initiatives or projects?

251 Responses



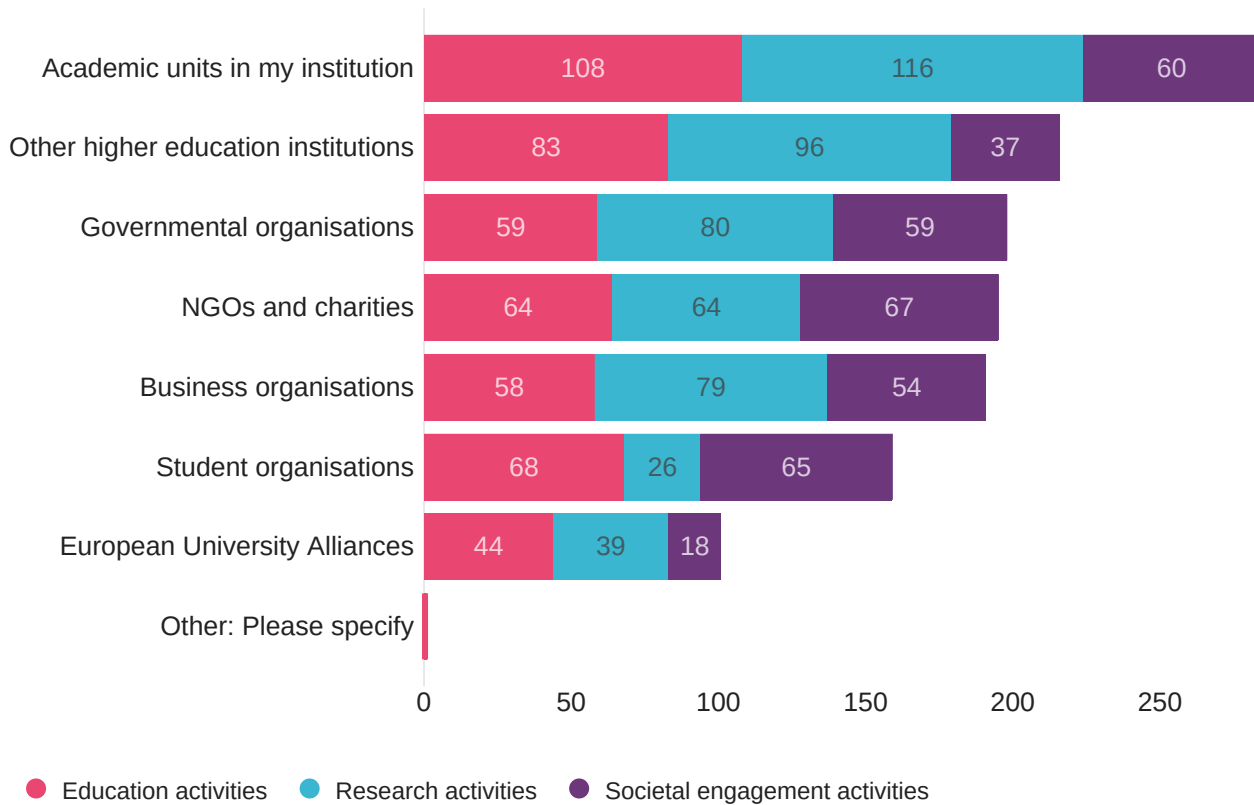
### 9.2 Most common partners

The most commonly indicated partners across all functions (education, research, societal engagement) were 'other academic units in my university/institution' (N=164). It was followed by other higher education institutions (N=133) and business & employer organisations (N=78). When looking at the most frequently mentioned partners per function, for education and research the most popular partners were still 'other academic units in my university/institution' (N=54, N=74) while for societal engagement activities these were business & employer organisations (N=39). The least common partnership was European University Alliances. However, given that these alliances are limited to less than 300 institutions across Europe, the alliance was still quite prominent in the sample (n=60, note - multiple answers possible, meaning that each respondent could select EUA up to three times, once for each function).

Q41 - Please indicate your academic unit's partners for realising sustainability-related initiatives or projects (e.g., in education, research, and societal engagement activities). Select all applicable.

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

154 Responses



## 10. SUCCESS FACTORS & GOVERNANCE

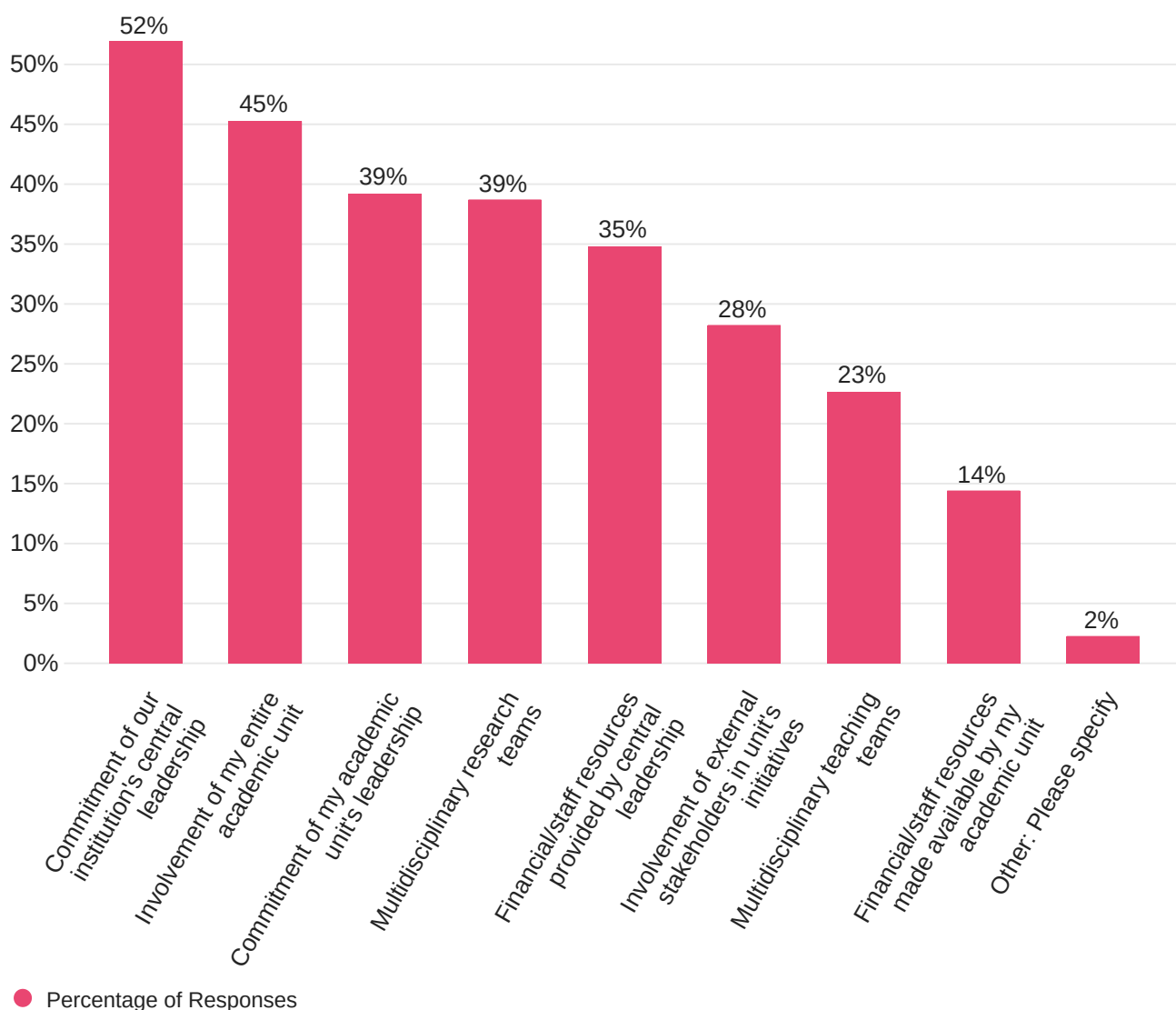
### 10.1 Success factors

The two most important factors were 'commitment and support of our institution's central leadership' (52 %) and 'involvement of my entire academic unit (staff, students, alumni)' (45%), followed by and 'commitment and support of my academic unit's leadership' (39%) 'multidisciplinary research teams' (39%). This highlights the importance of aligned leadership both at the central and the units level.

Q36 - What are the critical success factors that enable your academic unit to undertake sustainability initiatives? Select up to 3 answers.

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

181 Responses

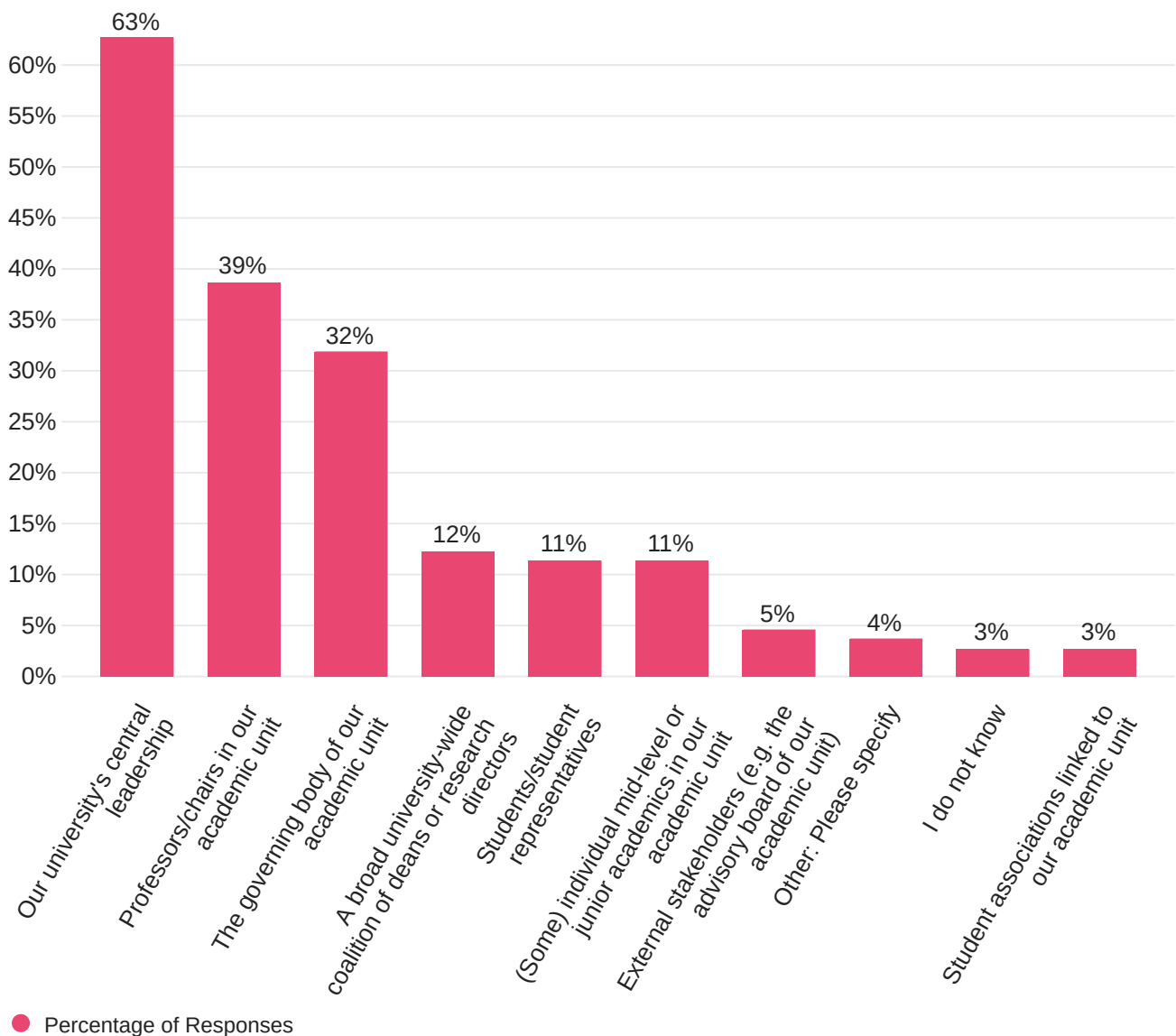


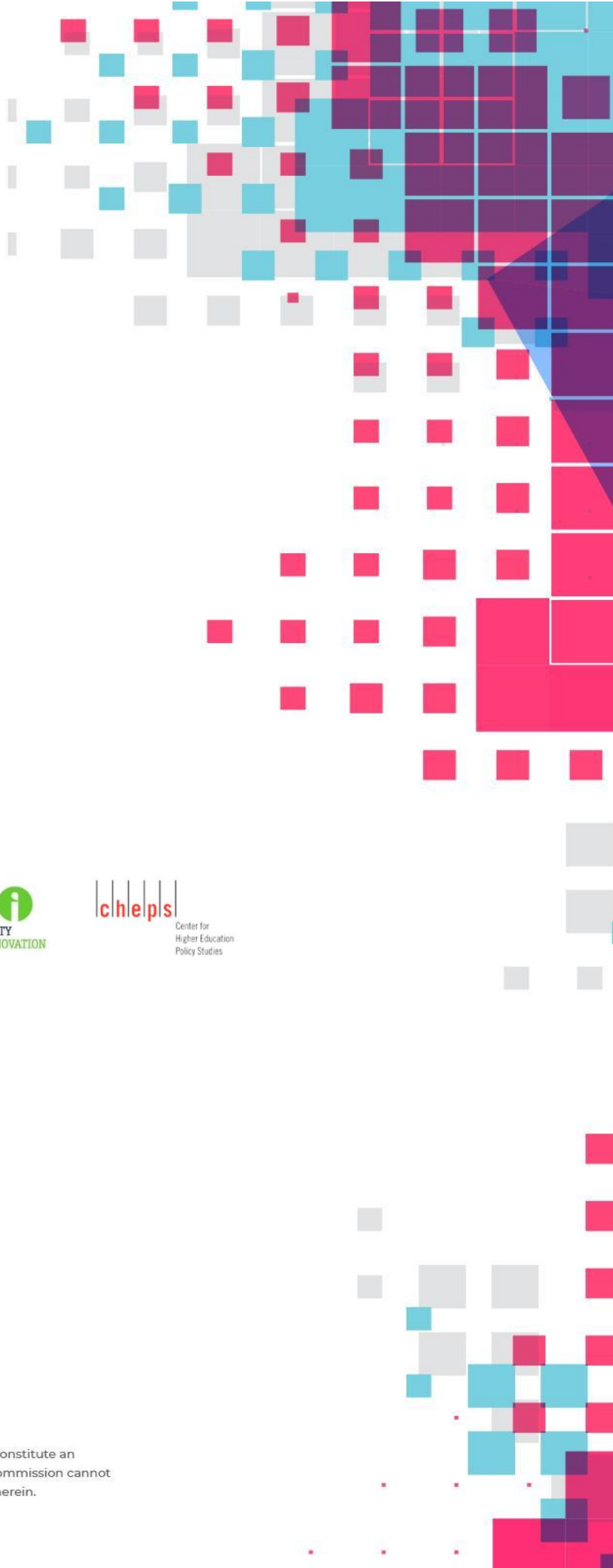
## 10.2 Governance

The answers suggested that sustainability strategy was most frequently initiated by the university's central leadership (e.g. executive board & its policy support; cabinet of the rector, Vice-chancellor/president) (63%), followed by professors and chairs from the academic unit (39%), a governing body of the academic unit (32%). Other answers were less popular.

Q32 - Who took the initiative in formulating your academic unit's sustainability strategy?  
Select up to 3 options.

220 Responses





**Project Partners**



[www.decode-council.org](http://www.decode-council.org)

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