

Environmental sustainability at European higher education institutions

EUROPEAN STAFF WEEK – GREEN INTERNATIONALISATION
4 JULY 2022 - UAS BURGENLAND, EISENSTADT

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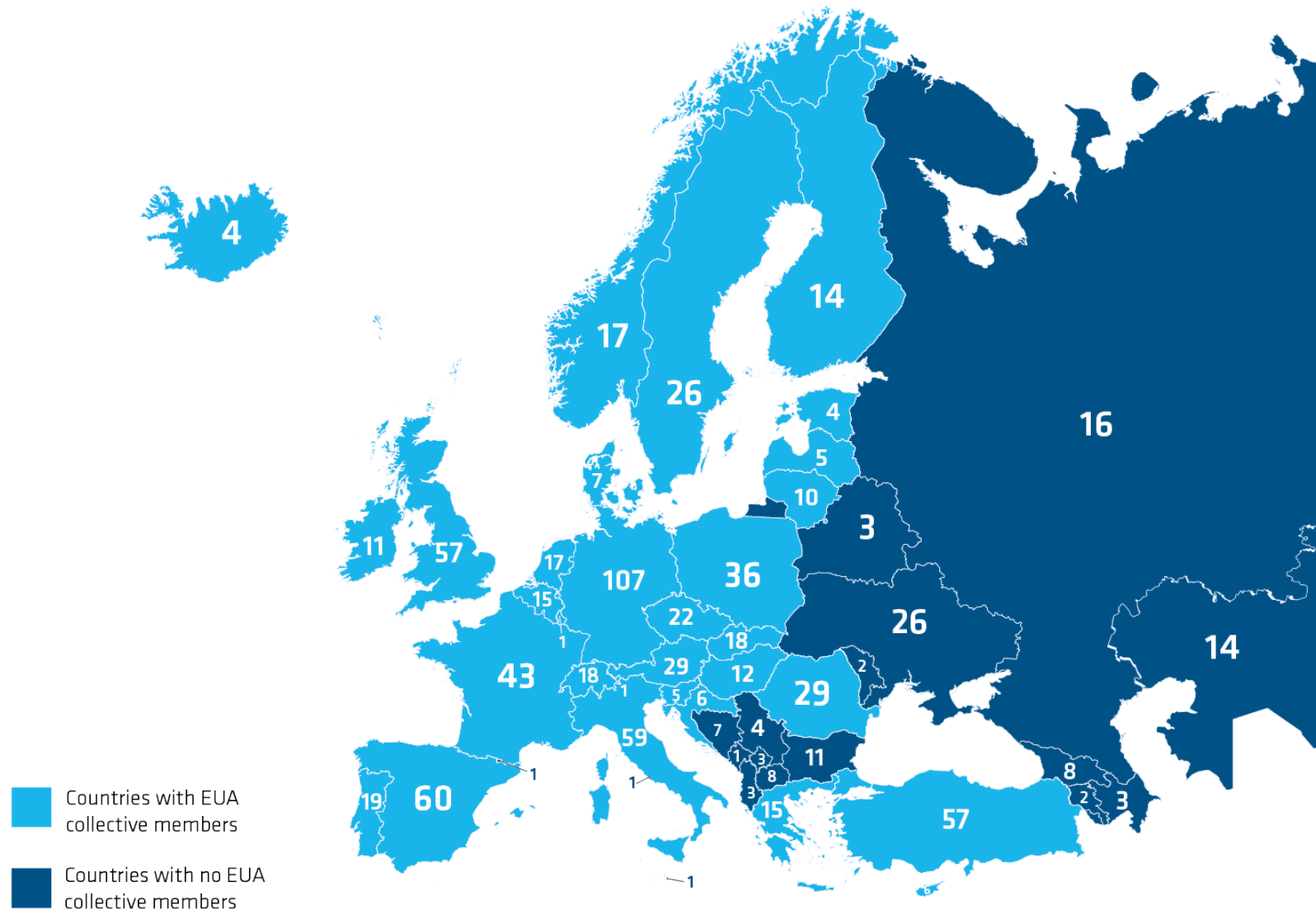


EUA

800+ member HEIs

48 European
countries

33 national university
associations





Observations

- Covid 19 inter- and to some extent disrupted international exchange & collaboration (the first victim ...)
- But also emphasised their importance for HEIs and societies
- Enhanced emphasis on digital and virtual approaches
- Sustainability and greening temporarily side-lined, but confirmed: important role in society, and also for higher education institutions
- How does/will this change HE internationalisation?

Greening in European higher education institutions EUA survey data

Henriette Stöber, Michael Gaebel and Alison Morrisroe
September 2021

- [Online survey to higher education institutions](#)
- conducted in April/May 2021
- 372 institutional responses - 40 countries



Strategy addressing greening

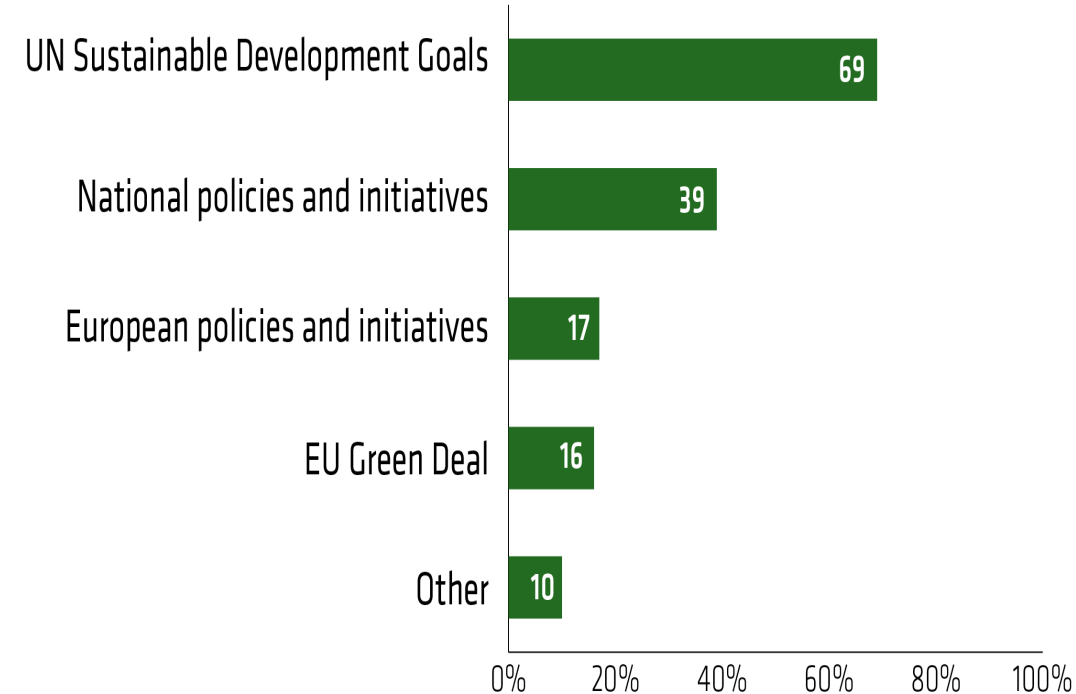
- 61% address in overall or dedicated strategy, usually referencing SDGs
- 27% under preparation

Institutions have activities for greening

- 64% across the institution,
- 18% at individual departments/faculties

Key areas of activity

- 86% consider greening (21%) or SDGs (61%) in curriculum reform
- 86% active in community engagement on greening
- 93% “green campus” - recycle/waste management – 68% a comprehensive policy
- Reducing the environmental footprint of laboratory research (24% comprehensive policies, 54% some activities)



*EUA survey on greening (2021).
Q9: Does your institution have a strategy or a similar document that refers to greening explicitly?; Q9.2 If yes, does your strategy explicitly relate to any of the following?*

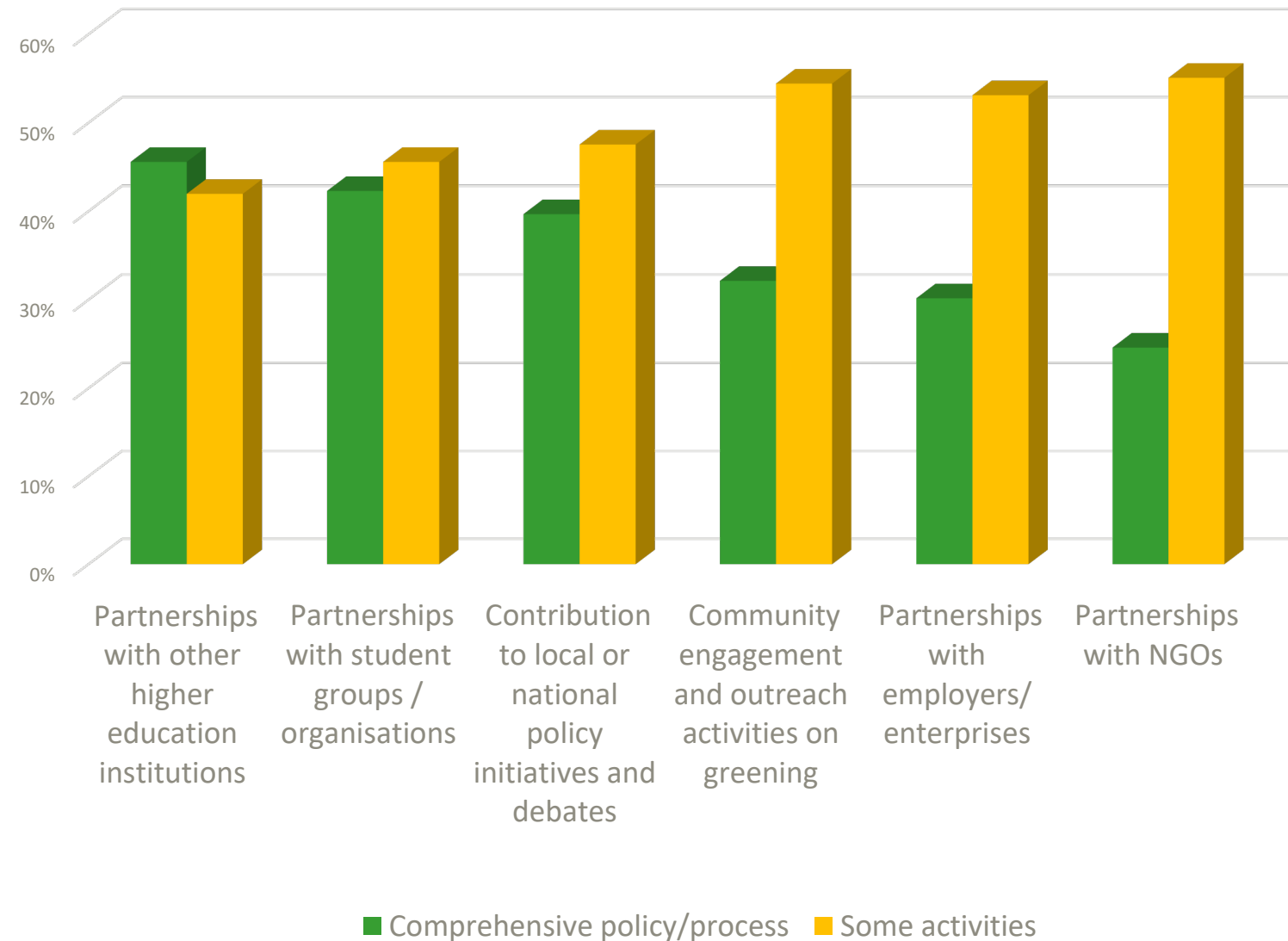


Communication & engagement beyond the institution

- Subject, topic of, & reason for external cooperation

75% participate in thematic networks (national or international)

- **83 networks greening/sustainability identified, incl. 35 with focus on HEI**





Mobility:

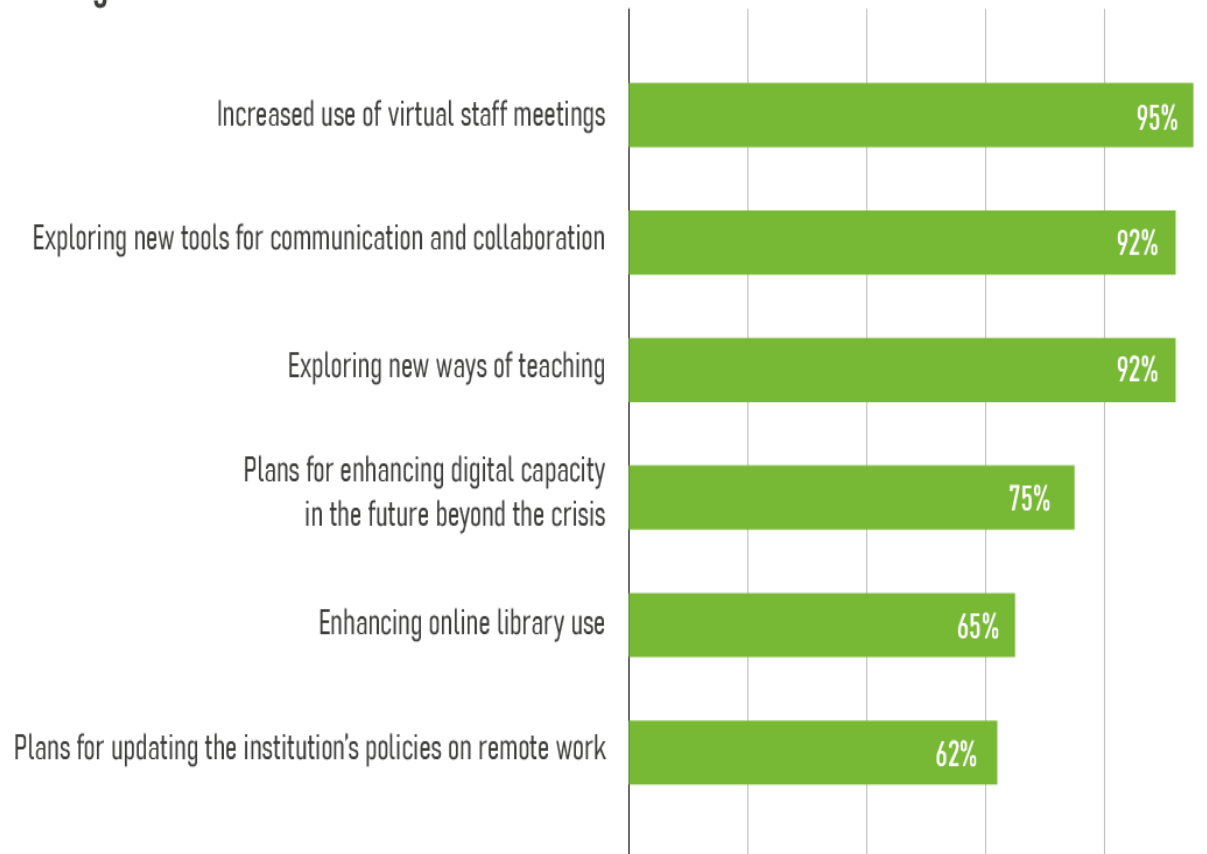
Most institutions gradually move towards greener mobility modes (commuting, business travel, study & research mobility)

EUA survey on greening (2021). Q6: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution? Please select all that apply in the following categories. (Mobility)

	Standard / compulsory	Incentivised / encouraged)
Digital tools for teleworking, teleconferencing, and virtual mobility	57%	48%
Teleworking or condensed working, also post Covid-19	37%	60%
Teleconferencing and hybrid conferencing over business trips and face-to-face events	34%	67%
Offer of replacement of physical by virtual mobility for staff & student	26%	60%
Sustainable commuting	15%	66%
Low-carbon transportation for staff mobility and meetings	15%	77%

Opportunity for enhancement: The (digital) education case

Changes due to Covid-19



Digitally enhanced learning
and teaching, EUA 2021

- Changed the way we look at education
 - Face to face - physical presence - synchron / asynchron
 - Questions to assessment approaches
 - Social process of learning (incl. Informal, peer support)
 - Role of students & staff
 - University as a social institution/venue
- As online is no longer default:
 - Which changes will stay, and be enhanced?
 - What sort of change is needed and socially desirable?
- Could green/sustainability be (one of) the new drivers?



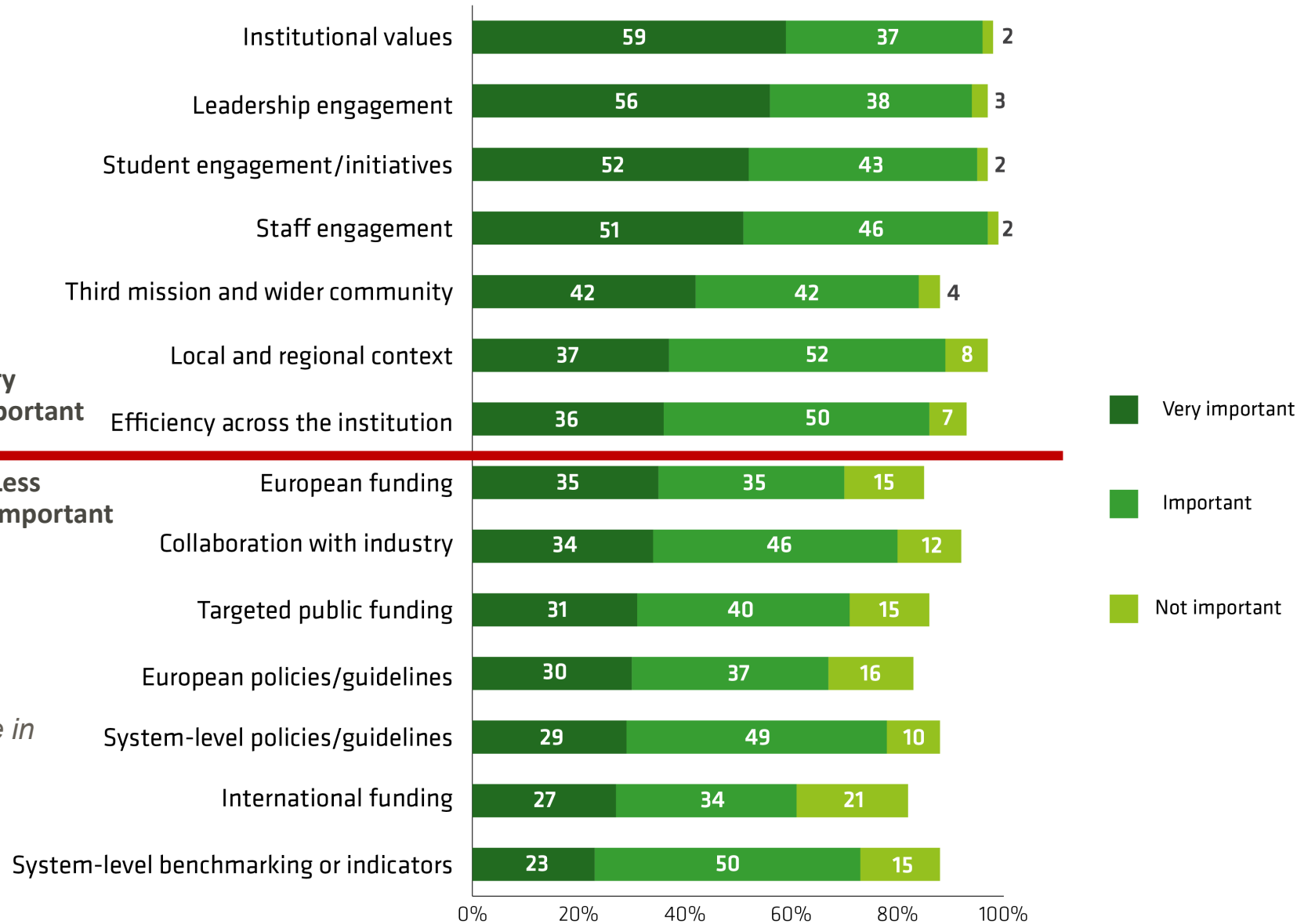
Virtual formats – pro's and cons



- **Virtual formats** reduce cost and emissions
 - digital tools have a significant carbon footprint
- **Student experience, education & research collaboration**
 - virtual formats not the same kind of learning experience (personal, professional, intercultural skills and competences, informal and non-formal learning, academic and professional cultures)
 - additional opportunities for dialogue & collaboration
 - enhance truly collaborative and productive partnerships
 - Internationalisation: more than mobility
- **Holistic approach to environmental sustainability**



Motives & drivers for engagement in greening

Very
importantLess
important

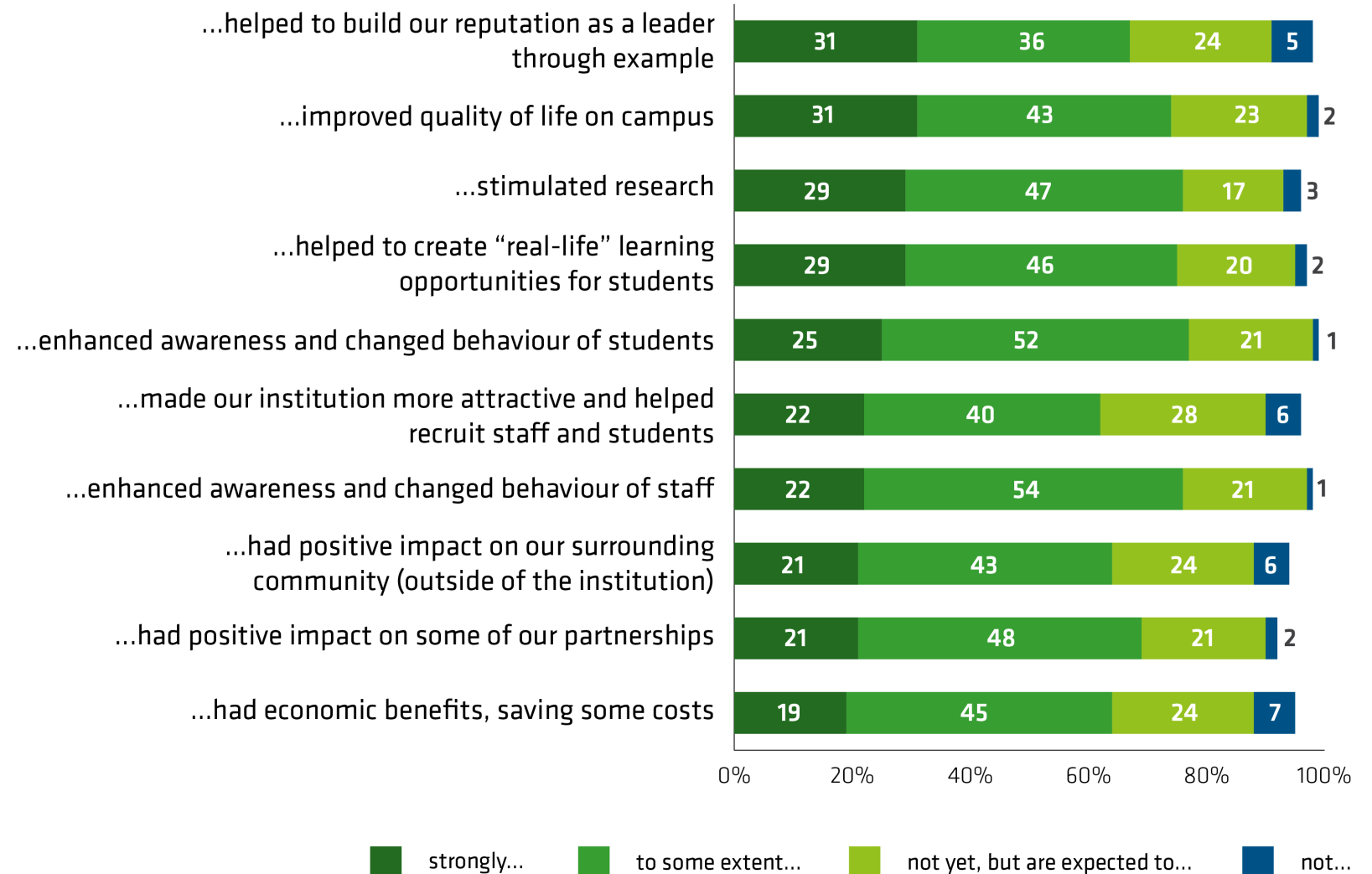
N=305. Q11: Please rate how important the following aspects are in driving forward your institution's engagement in greening?



Impact and benefits

- Many institutions experience them already
- Or at least expect them

N=305. Q11: How would you rate the impact/ benefits from your institution greening activities? The activities have...





Enablers for greener universities

EUA survey on greening (2021). Q13: Which barriers does the implementation of greening measures face at your institution?; Q14: What would be helpful for the future advancement of greening activities at your institution?

Funding

- generally underfunded (53%)
- Lack specific funding (46%)
- National (64%) & EU funding (51%)

Engagement of staff & students

Peer learning

Coordination – from activities to more strategic approaches

European initiative on greening higher education institutions (25%)



European policy

- European Commission: Twin transition “Green & Digital”
 - European Green Deal
 - Achieving a European Education Area by 2025
 - Priorities in EU funding programmes, incl. Erasmus+, MSCA, Horizon, Development Assistance
 - MSCA Green Charter
 - Education for Climate Coalition
 - Council Recommendation on Education for Environmental Sustainability
- Bologna Process / EHEA – [2020 Rome Communiqué](#)
 - HE systems & institutions to “the transition into green, sustainable and resilient economies and societies” & to achieving the SDGs
 - Strong commitment to European/ international exchange
 - All student to “experience some form of mobility, whether in physical, digitally enhanced (virtual) or blended formats”.



Conclusions - outlook

- HEIs a key role to play transition towards carbon neutrality, and generally towards sustainable societies and economies.
 - 3 missions of research, education, and services to society
 - Role models? Leaders of regional/ national innovation?
 - Ensure that HEIs are considered in national & European transformation agendas
- “Green internationalisation”
 - Key opportunities for dialogue & collaboration on SDGs with partners around the globe
 - New formats for exchange & collaboration to explore & define
 - Risks: targeted as carbon source, “greenwashing”
- Internationalisation impacted by other factors:
 - Focus on contribution to society
 - Economic & demographic changes
 - Governmental politics: geopolitics, focus on domestic affairs
 - Less funding for HE, and for internationalisation

Thank you for your attention

EUA survey on greening (2021)

<https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/greening%20report.pdf>

www.eua.eu





Mobility:

80-90% of institutions gradually change modes for mobility (commuting, business travel, study & research mobility)

EUA survey on greening (2021). Q6: Which of the following activities and measures take place at your institution? Please select all that apply in the following categories. (Mobility)

