

Climate actions at COPERNICUS Alliance member universities

Survey analysis report

24.04.2023

This initiative was carried out by the **University of Maribor**
with support of the **COPERNICUS Alliance** through a Cooperation Fund.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE PROJECT	3
ABSTRACT	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 METHODS	6
2.1 The purpose of questionnaire	6
3 RESULTS	7
3.1 Basic info.....	7
3.1.1 How many employees does your university have?	7
3.1.2 How many students are enrolled at your university?	8
3.1.3 What is your position at the university?	9
3.2 Sustainability management.....	10
3.2.1 Which department within your university primarily addresses topics of climate neutrality?	10
3.2.2 How many people are in this team?.....	11
3.2.3 Does your university have a plan for climate neutrality?.....	12
3.2.4 Does your university have a goal for renewable energy?	13
3.2.5 Is your university buying electricity from renewable sources?	14
3.2.6 Does your university produce its own energy (e.g., solar, wind, photovoltaic)?	15
3.2.7 How do you produce this energy? (multiple choices possible).....	16
3.2.8 Is your university using compensation for unavoidable GHG emissions?.....	17
3.2.9 Does your university have / fulfil / measure any of the following? (multiple choices possible)	18
3.2.10 Do you use international standards and methodologies to report on sustainability? (multiple choices possible).....	19
3.2.11 What is your university's ambition for climate neutrality?	20
3.3 Energy, buildings, waste, and water.....	21
3.3.1 Does your university have ...? (multiple choices possible).....	21
3.3.2 Is your university ...? (multiple choices possible)	22
3.3.3 Does your university have ...? (multiple choices possible).....	23
3.3.4 Does your university ...? (multiple choices possible)	24
3.4 IT devices and materials	25
3.4.1 What does your university do with depreciated IT equipment? (multiple choices possible).	25
3.4.2 Does your university have guidelines for purchasing new IT equipment?	26
3.4.3 Does your university provide infrastructure for online conferencing and teaching (e-conferencing room, live stream possibilities in lecture halls)?.....	27

3.4.4	Does your university provide information / courses on e-infrastructure (software and licenses)? (multiple choices possible)	28
3.5	Furniture	29
3.5.1	What does your university do with depreciated furniture? (multiple choices possible)	29
3.6	Mobility for employees and students	30
3.6.1	Does your university have / do any of the following? (multiple choices possible)	30
3.6.2	Does your university apply any of the following rules / measures for employees? (multiple choices possible)	31
3.6.3	Does your university offer any of the following for students? (multiple choices possible)	32
3.7	Food	33
3.7.1	How is the food supply organised at your university?	33
3.7.2	Do your university's canteens have guidelines for any of the following? (multiple choices possible)	34
3.7.3	Does your university offer ...? (multiple choices possible)	35
3.8	Students and education	36
3.8.1	Does your university offer courses for undergraduate students on the following topics? (multiple choices possible)	36
3.8.2	Are there obligatory sustainability courses for students?	37
3.9	Administration and communication	38
3.9.1	Does your university have a climate target policy for advertising on campus? (multiple choices possible)	38
3.9.2	Does your university practice ...? (multiple choices possible)	39
3.9.3	Is there a demand / pressure to act on climate neutrality? (multiple choices possible)	40
3.10	Opportunities and barriers	41
3.10.1	Which 3 of the following are the biggest motivational factors for climate neutrality at your university? (multiple choices possible)	41
3.10.2	Which 3 internal barriers to climate-related activities are the biggest obstacles for your university? (multiple choices possible)	42
3.11	Outlook	43
3.11.1	What is your university looking for to support its climate-neutral activities? (multiple choices possible)	43
4	DISCUSSION	44

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project aims explore the-state-of-the-art in fulfilling obligations from the UN Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal.

Expected outcomes

- Universities lowering their own carbon footprint and leading the sustainability transformation
- Students motivated to change personal habits, behaviours, and lifestyles
- Green, digital, and inclusive transition enabling a sustainable future

ABSTRACT

This survey explores the efforts of CA member universities towards achieving sustainability goals with a focus on climate actions. Member universities completed a questionnaire about their decarbonization plans and actions, and a workshop was held to share best practices in areas such as greenhouse gas emissions reduction, sustainable mobility, and online teaching. The survey covers topics such as sustainability management, energy, waste, IT, mobility, food, education, administration, and barriers to progress. The survey was intended to be completed by one person per university and takes about 10-15 minutes. The results will help define the future interests of CA members regarding the green transition.

The survey conducted on nine universities shows that employee and student numbers vary widely. Most universities have between 1,000–2,000 and 3,500–5,000 employees, while the majority of universities have 10,000–25,000 students. Professors, administrative support, and experts in sustainability are the most common positions. All universities have climate neutrality and renewable energy plan, with photovoltaic and solar energy being the most commonly used sources. SDG and CSR are the most popular sustainability-related initiatives, and SDGs, ISO, and GHG protocol are the most used international standards. Only 4 universities aim to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, and one university has already achieved this. All universities have bins for separate waste collection, and many have guidelines for reducing electricity consumption and energy-efficient buildings. Universities handle depreciated furniture differently, with most storing it for future use, and some selling it or donating it to NGOs. Hybrid work arrangements and sustainable travel courses are common, but few universities offer subsidies for city transport. The majority of universities surveyed do not own campus canteens, and those that do have a mix of organic food options and no guidelines. Most universities provide water stations, fair trade organic coffee, and guidelines for reducing canteen food waste. Some universities offer sustainability courses, with six offering elective courses and two having mandatory modules. Universities are primarily motivated to go climate-neutral by leadership, reputational benefits, and cost savings, but obstacles include a lack of financial resources, limited employee dedication, and competing priorities. To support climate-neutral activities, universities want to develop guidelines, exchange best practices, and seek expert advice, with only one university measuring its impact and co-creating practical measures.

A questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms to collect quantitative data from universities regarding their compliance with their commitments under the UN Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. The questionnaire consisted of 37 closed questions, of which 22 were multiple-choice questions. The use of skip logic ensured accurate and relevant responses for efficient data analysis. Between 1 and 26 March 2023, answers from nine universities were collected. The aim of the research was to present best practices and methodologies for fulfilling the obligations of the UN Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal.

1 INTRODUCTION

Universities play a key role in addressing the multiple crises we are currently facing. They are supposed to foster and lead the transformation towards sustainability in line with the UN 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal. This survey aims to explore the current status of CA member universities on their path to achieving sustainability goals with a focus on climate actions.

The CA member universities prepared a questionnaire about the state-of-the-art in their decarbonisation plans and actions. On the basis of the results, a one-day online workshop was organised together with the CA members to present methodologies and action plans of best practices in the topics of interest: greenhouse gas emissions balance, action plan elaboration with awareness raising and emission reduction measures in energy and materials (renewable sources, increased efficiency, zero waste and circular economy), sustainable mobility (travelling and commuting), online teaching and learning, meeting and conferencing, data management, measuring and evaluating results, and annual reporting. The hybrid workshop (face-to-face in Maribor and online) was used to define the future interests of the CA members regarding the green transition (networking, experience exchange, presentations at CA annual conferences, possible research project application, and publication of results).

The survey was meant to be answered by one person per university only (e.g., from the management or sustainability department). When answering the survey, the respondent had to consider their university, including all faculties and buildings related to the university's activities. It took about 10-15 minutes and contained questions related to:

- Sustainability management
- Energy, buildings, waste and water
- IT devices and materials
- Furniture
- Mobility for employees and students
- Food
- Students and education
- Administration and communication
- Opportunities and barriers

2 METHODS

The questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms. This allowed for easy distribution and collection of responses, as well as efficient data management and analysis. The questionnaire consisted of 37 questions that were closed-ended questions, with 22 questions of multiple choice. The questions provided a structured format for collecting quantitative data. Microsoft Forms provided options for skip logic, which helped to ensure that responses were accurate and relevant. This allowed for more efficient data analysis.

Nine universities responded to the questionnaire. The collection of answers took place from 1 to 15 March 2023 and from 20 to 26 March 2023.

2.1 The purpose of questionnaire

Aim of our research was to:

- explore the current status of CA member universities on their path to achieve sustainability goals with a focus on climate actions.

3 RESULTS

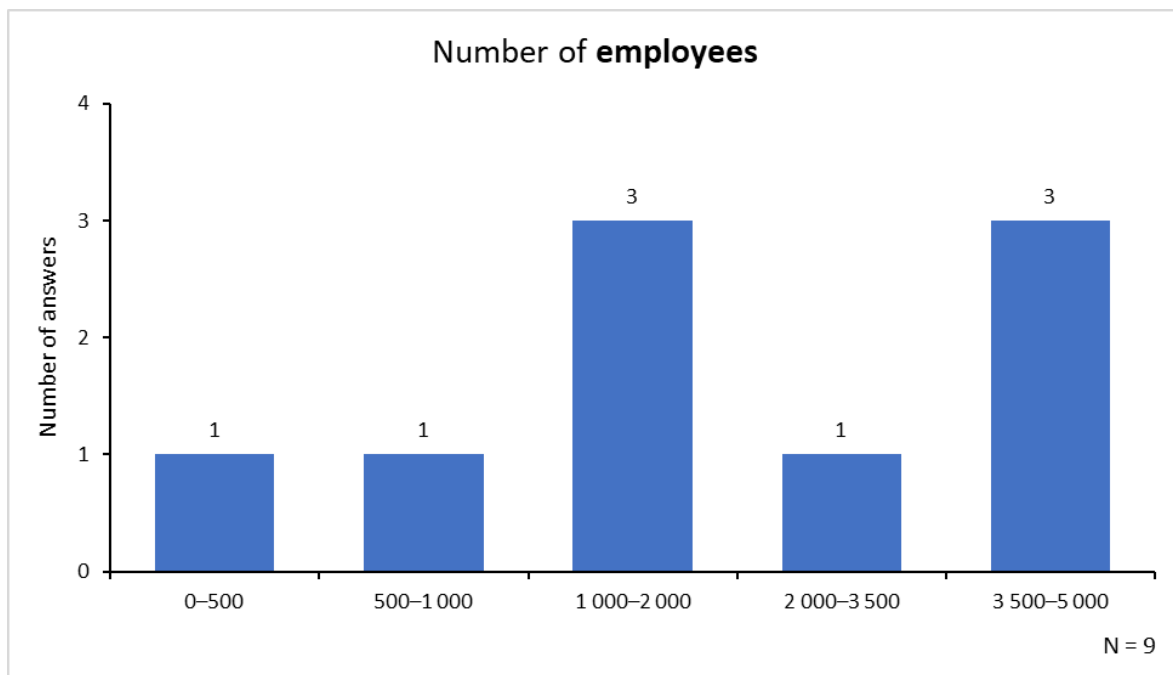
The text covers several chapters related to sustainability management in universities, including basic information about the institutions, energy, waste, IT devices, furniture, mobility, food, student education, administration and communication, opportunities and barriers, and outlook. Each chapter addresses specific questions and provides insights into various aspects of sustainability at universities, including the role of buildings, waste management, and reducing emissions from daily commuting and business travel. The chapters also explore the challenges and opportunities for achieving climate neutrality and promoting sustainable practices, such as developing guidelines, funding green change, and engaging in sustainability research and development.

3.1 Basic info

This chapter covers three questions related to basic information about the universities. The first question addresses the size of the university's workforce by examining the number of employees at universities. The second question concerns the number of students enrolled in the universities, while the third question refers to the participant's position at the university. Overall, these questions provide an overview of the structure, operation and governance of the university.

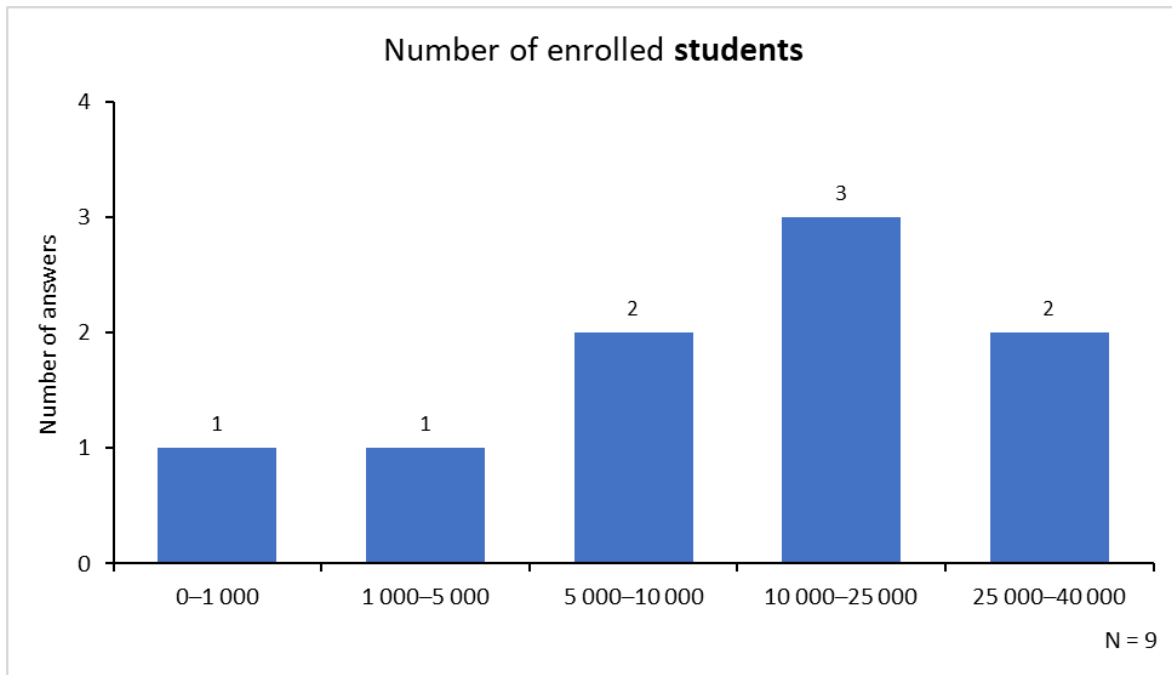
3.1.1 How many employees does your university have?

All 9 universities that participated in the survey answered this question. The results show that 3 of the universities (33,33 %) reported having 1,000–2,000 employees (respectively 1,300, 1,937 and 1,987), while another 3 universities (33,33 %) reported having 3,500–5,000 employees (respectively 4 261, 4,500 and 4,800). In addition, 1 university (11,11 %) reported having 0–500 employees (333), 1 university (11,11 %) reported having 500–1,000 employees (1 000), and 1 university (11,11%) reported having 2,000–3,500 employees (2,300). These answers show that the number of employees at the different universities varies greatly.



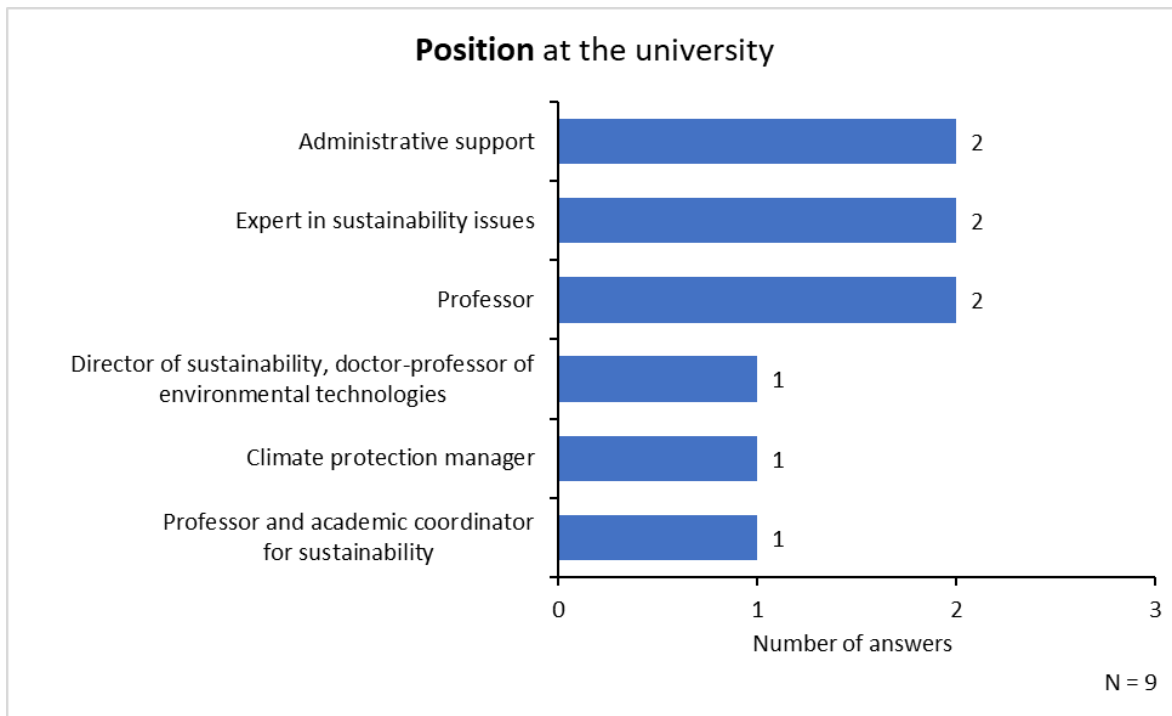
3.1.2 How many students are enrolled at your university?

Of the 9 universities, 3 universities (33,33 %) have 10,000–25,000 enrolled students (respectively 13,440, 17,000 and 20,450), 2 universities (22,22 %) have 5,000–10,000 enrolled students (respectively 6,712 and 7,364), and 2 universities (22,22 %) have 25,000–40,000 students (respectively 30,000 and 40,000). 1 university (11,11 %) has 0–1,000 (76) and 1 university (11,11 %) has 1,000–5,000 students (respectively 2,205).



3.1.3 What is your position at the university?

In response to the question about their position at the university, the answers varied. 2 participants (22,22 %) answered that their position is administrative support, while 2 others (22,22 %) identified themselves as experts in sustainability issues. 2 participants (22,22 %) responded that they are professors. 1 participant's (11,11 %) position is a climate protection manager, and another 1 (11,11 %) is a director of sustainability, a doctor-professor of environmental technologies. 1 participant (11,11 %) identified his/hers position as a professor and academic coordinator for sustainability.

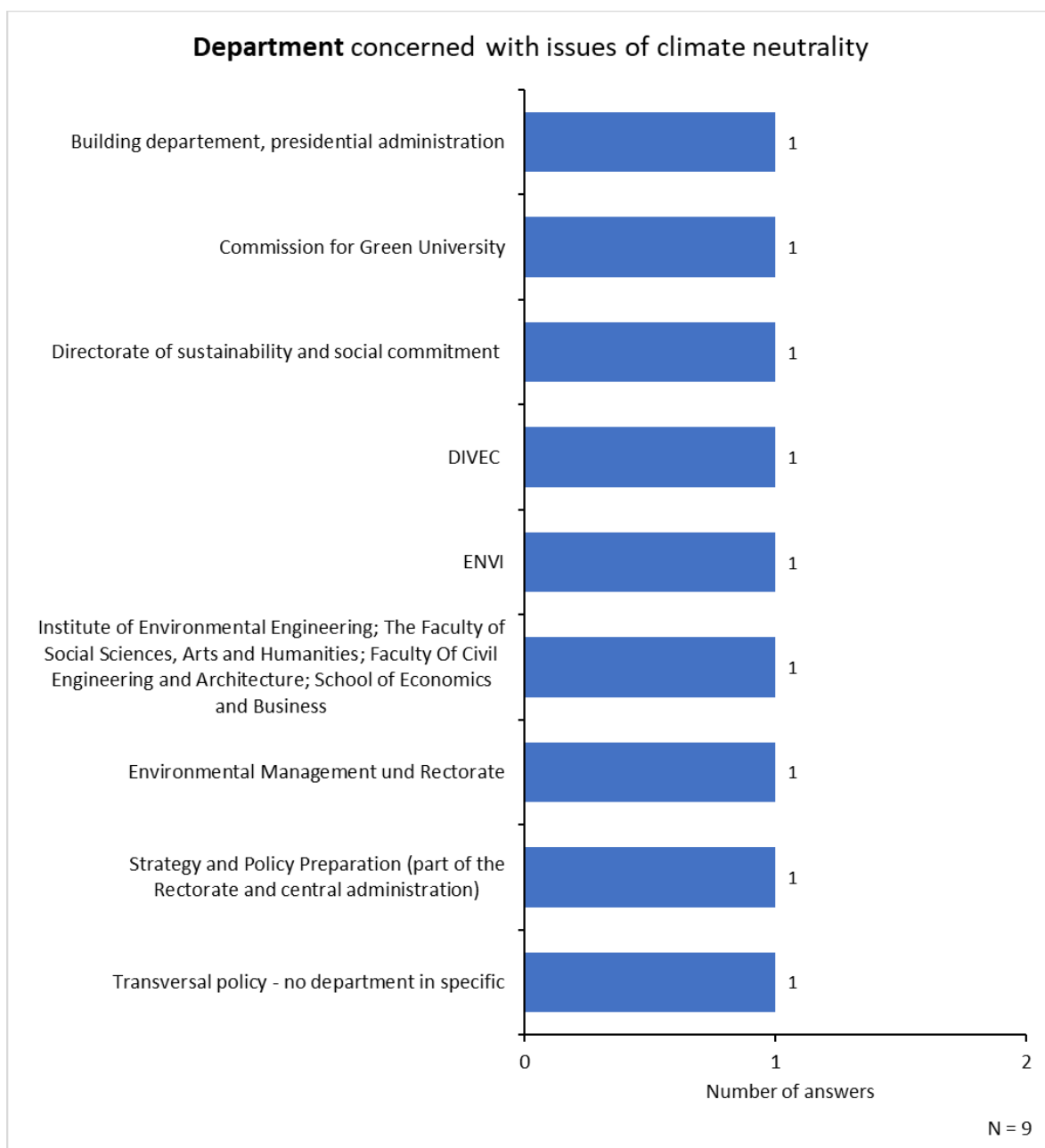


3.2 Sustainability management

The questions in this chapter relate to sustainability management in universities, which involves implementing measures to reduce the environmental impact of these institutions. These questions cover various aspects of sustainability management, such as achieving climate neutrality, using renewable energy sources, and reducing GHG emissions.

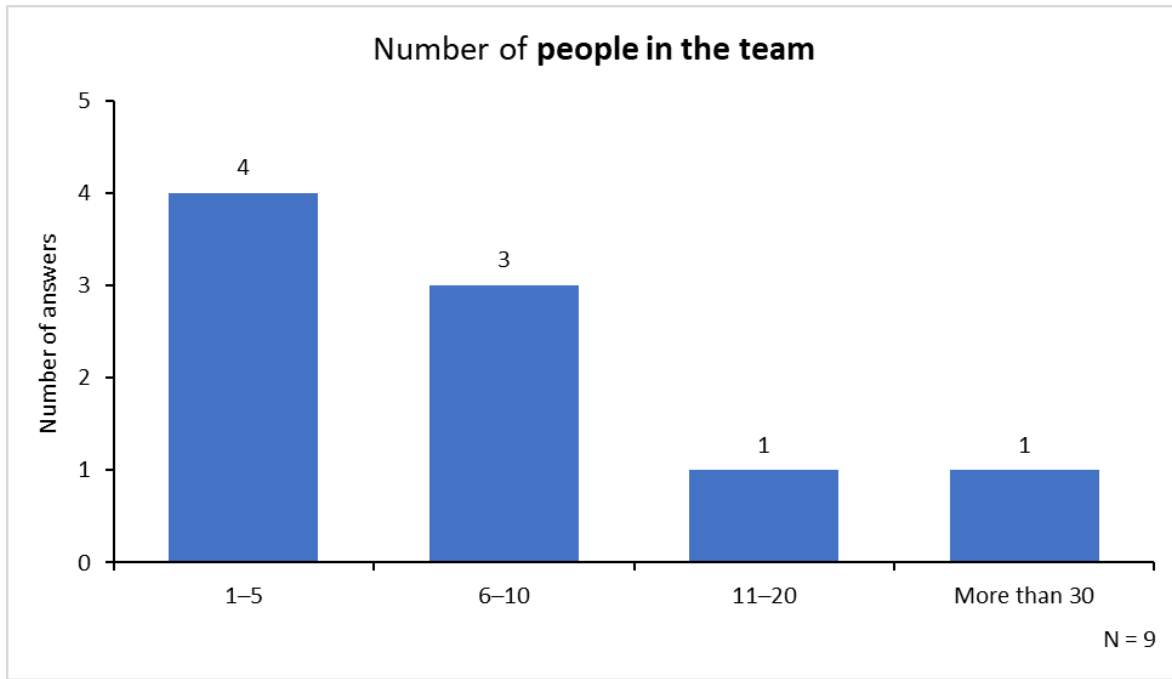
3.2.1 Which department within your university primarily addresses topics of climate neutrality?

Each university promotes climate neutrality through different departments, depending on their organisational structure and policies. 1 university (11,11 %) has a dedicated Department for Environmental Sustainability (ENVI), and 1 university (11,11 %) has the Department of Institutional and Campus Life (DIVEC). In 2 cases, the rectorate is involved in promoting climate neutrality, while in 2 cases, university management takes on this responsibility.



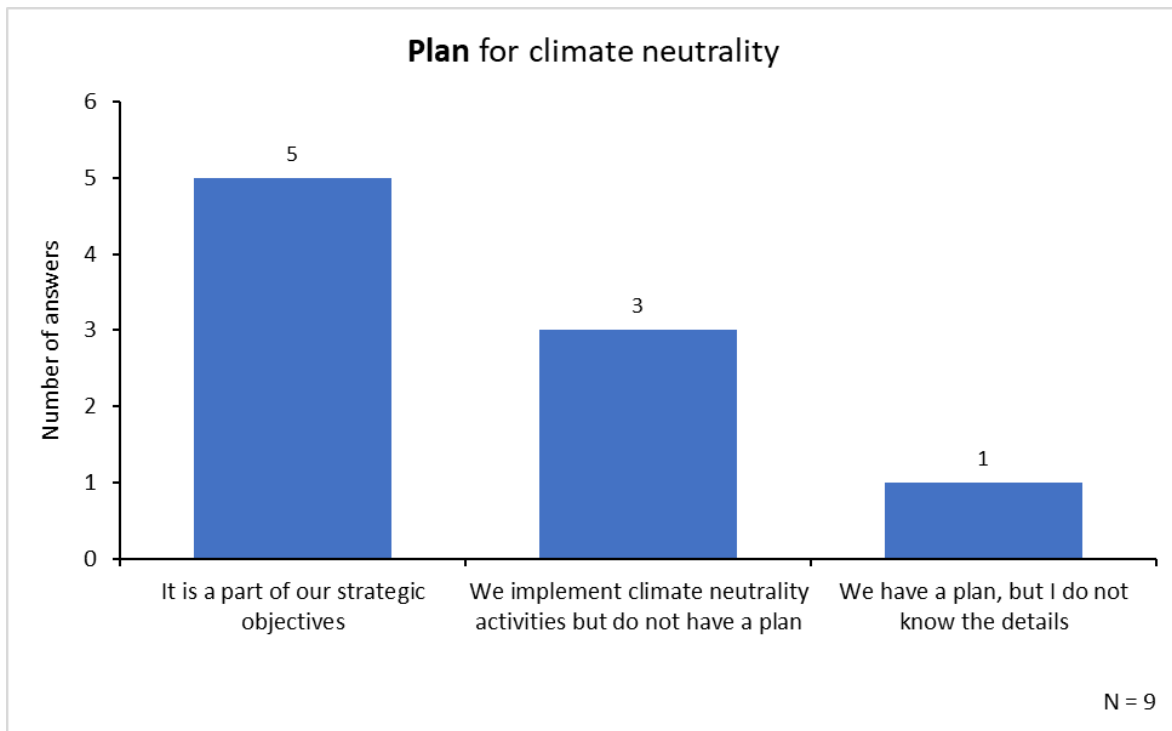
3.2.2 How many people are in this team?

Of the 9 universities surveyed, 4 universities (44,44 %) have a team consisting of 1–5 people. On the other hand, 3 universities (33,33 %) have a team of 6–10 persons. However, 1 university (11,11 %) has a team of 11–20 persons, while 1 university (11,11 %) has more than 30 persons involved in sustainability management, representing the most significant investment in this area among all the universities surveyed.



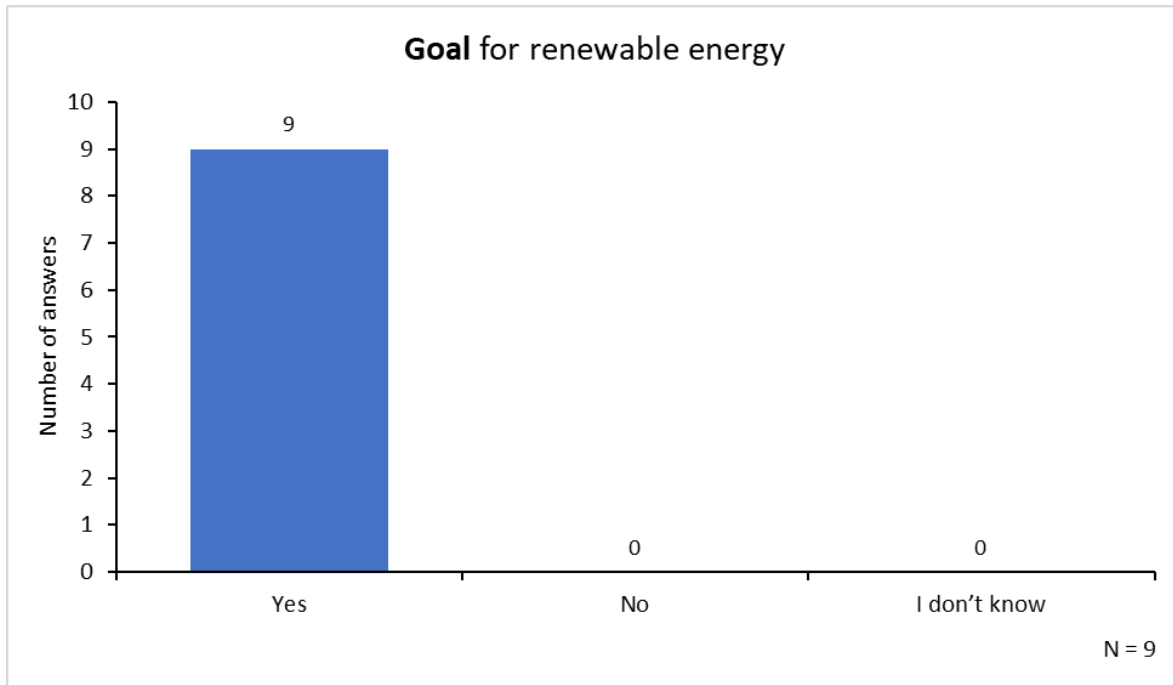
3.2.3 Does your university have a plan for climate neutrality?

When asked whether the universities have a plan for climate neutrality, the answers varied. 5 universities (55,56 %) answered affirmatively, stating that climate neutrality is part of their strategic objectives. In contrast, 3 universities (33,33 %) answered negatively and stated that they implement climate neutrality activities without a formal plan. 1 university (11,11 %) answered “yes”, but was unsure about the details of their climate neutrality plan. These responses indicate that some universities have prioritized climate neutrality as a strategic objective, while others have not yet developed a formal plan in this area.



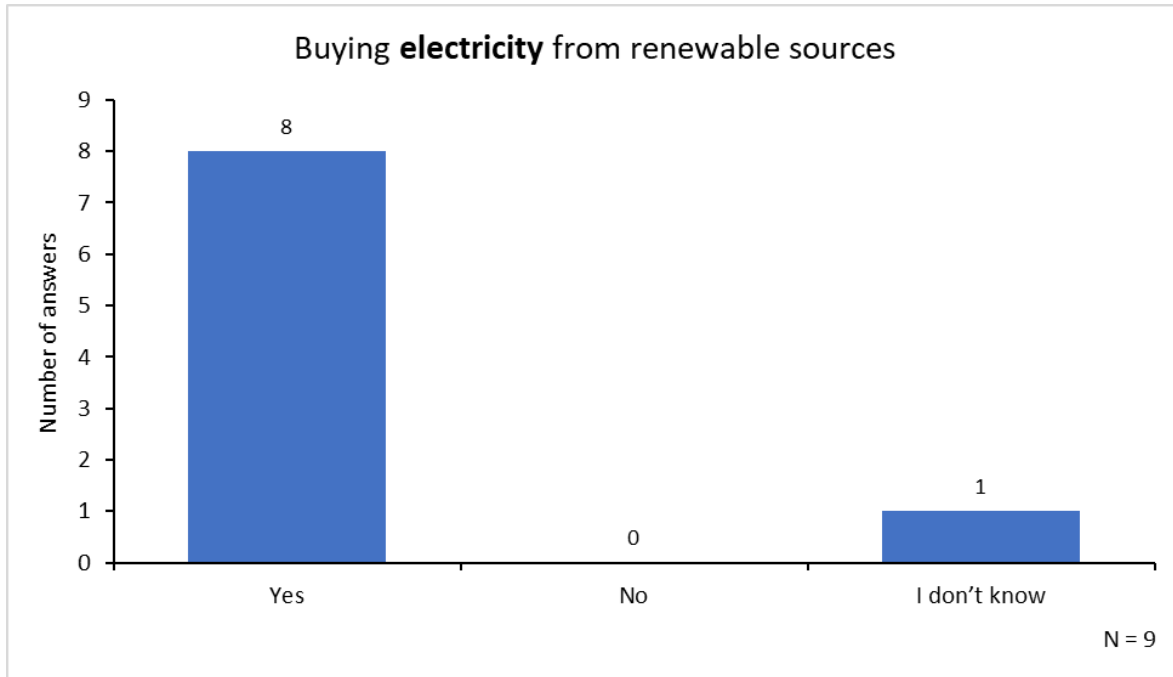
3.2.4 Does your university have a goal for renewable energy?

When asked about their renewable energy goals, all 9 universities (100 %) responded affirmatively, indicating that they have set goals in this area. This indicates a broad commitment to promoting sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of university operations.



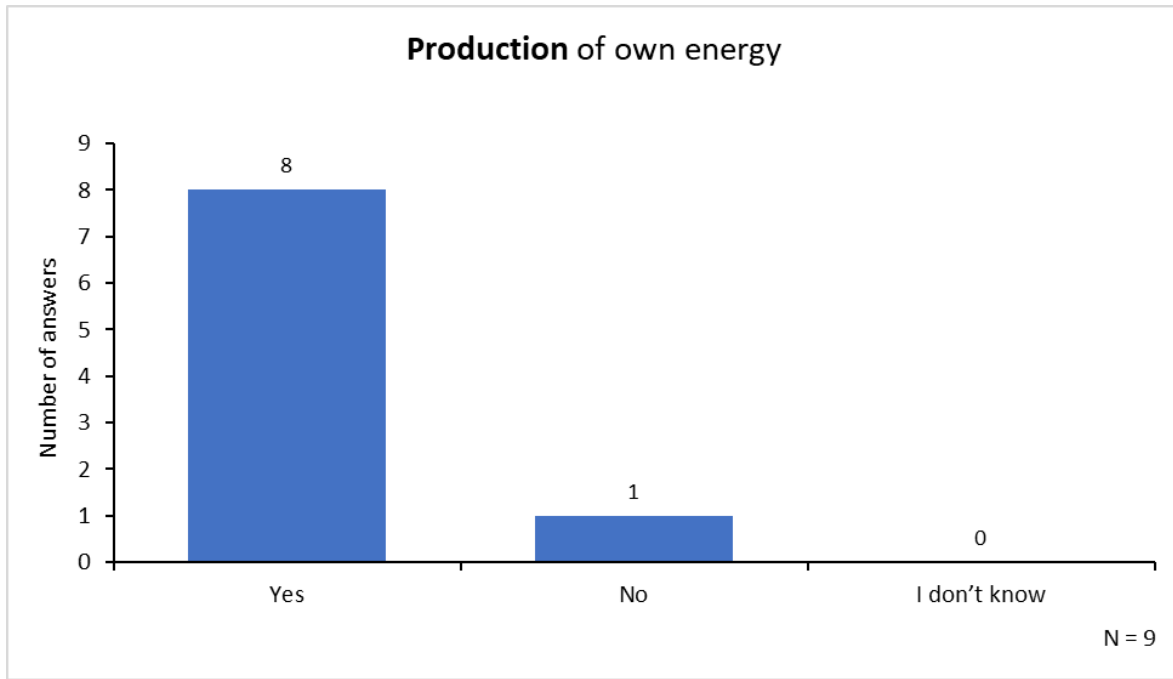
3.2.5 Is your university buying electricity from renewable sources?

When asked whether universities purchase electricity from renewable sources, 8 universities (88,89 %) responded positively, indicating that they have made efforts to switch to sustainable energy sources. However, 1 university (11,11 %) was unsure about its energy procurement practices. These responses indicate that many universities are taking steps to promote sustainability and reduce their environmental impact.



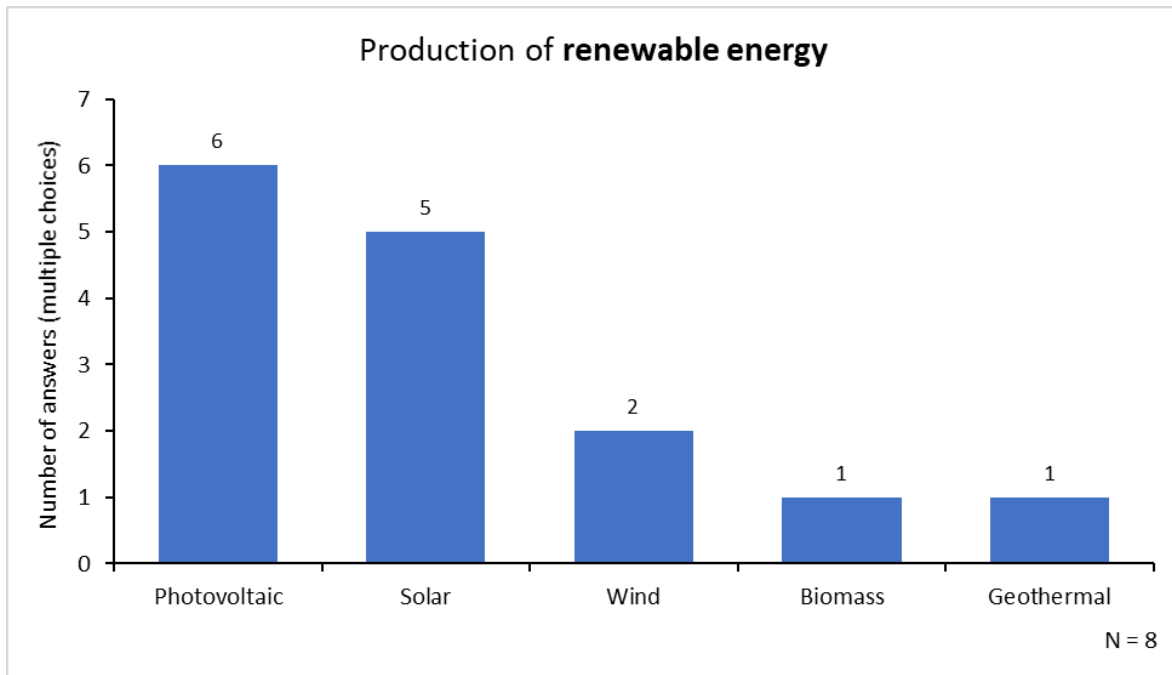
3.2.6 Does your university produce its own energy (e.g., solar, wind, photovoltaic)?

When asked if their universities produce their own energy through renewable sources such as solar, wind, or photovoltaic systems, 8 universities (88,89 %) responded affirmatively, indicating that they have invested in sustainable energy infrastructure. However, 1 university (11,11 %) answered negatively, suggesting that they have yet to establish their own renewable energy production capabilities.



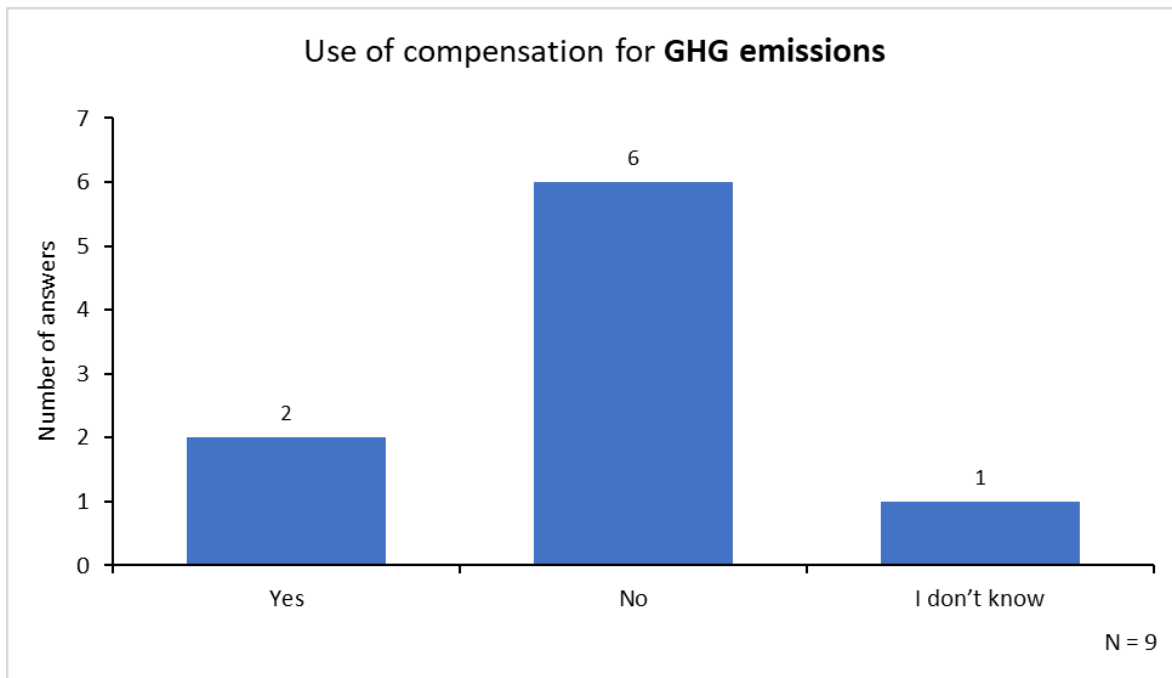
3.2.7 How do you produce this energy? (multiple choices possible)

When asked how they produce renewable energy, 8 universities provided 15 responses after answering "yes" to the previous question. The results show that photovoltaic is the most popular choice with 6 responses (40,00 %), followed by solar with 5 responses (33,33 %). 2 responses (13,33) are wind power, 1 biomass (6,67 %) and 1 geothermal (6,67 %). These responses indicate that universities are using a variety of renewable energy technologies to promote sustainability and reduce their reliance on non-renewable energy sources.



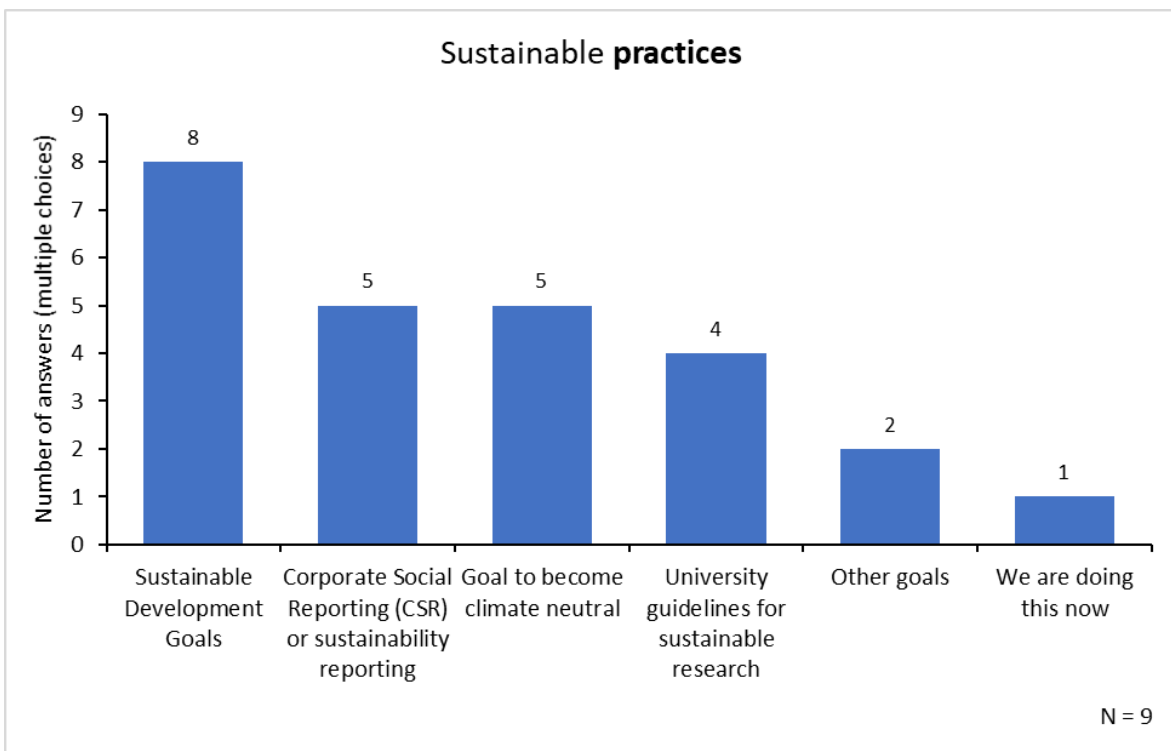
3.2.8 Is your university using compensation for unavoidable GHG emissions?

All 9 universities responded to the question of whether they use compensation for unavoidable greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. 6 universities (66,67 %) reported that they do not use compensation, while 2 universities (22,22 %) reported that they do. 1 university (11,11 %) responded that it is not sure whether or not they use compensation for unavoidable GHG emissions. The responses from the universities suggest that compensation is not widely used to address unavoidable GHG emissions, even though some universities have opted for this approach.



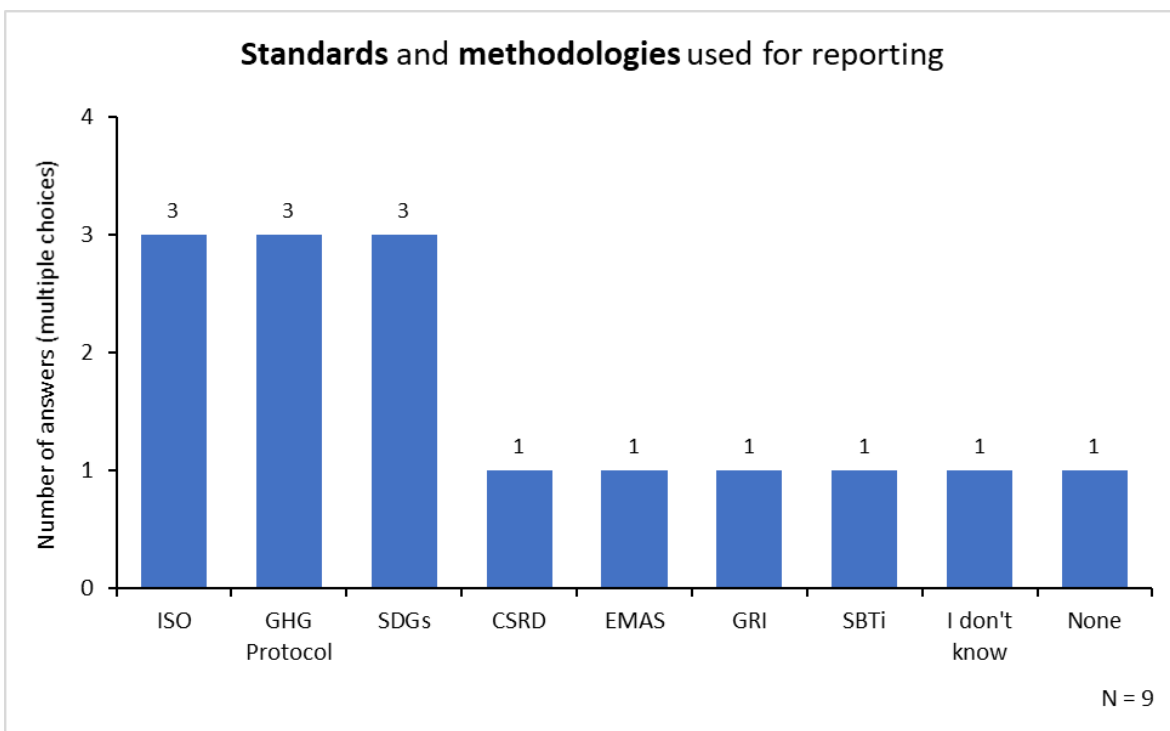
3.2.9 Does your university have / fulfil / measure any of the following? (multiple choices possible)

The graph illustrates the results of a survey that asked respondents whether their university has, fulfils or measures any of the sustainability-related initiatives. A total of 25 responses were collected and the data shows that 8 responses (32,00 %) of participants selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), 5 responses (20,00 %) selected Corporate Social Reporting (SCR) or sustainability reporting, 5 responses (20,00 %) indicated the goal of becoming climate neutral, 4 responses (16,00 %) reported having university guidelines for sustainable research, 2 responses (8,00 %) mentioned other goals and 1 response (4,00 %) indicated that they are currently working towards these objectives. The diversity of initiatives implemented by universities shows that there is no single approach to sustainability management in higher education.



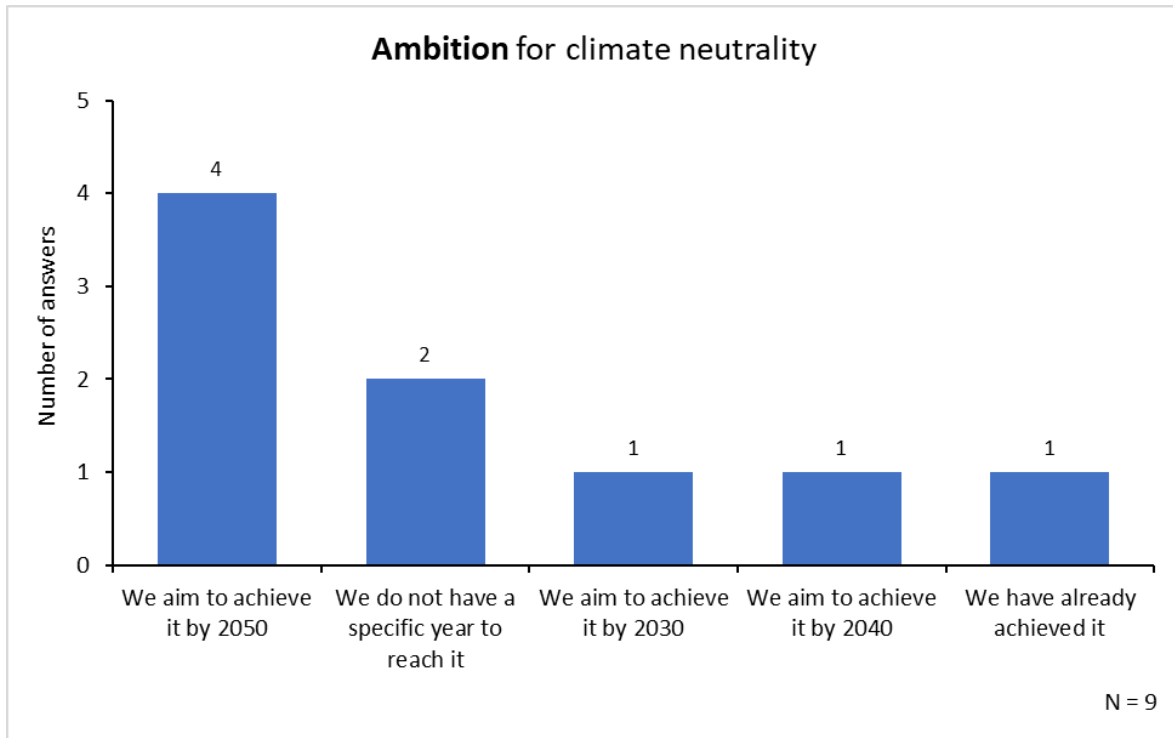
3.2.10 Do you use international standards and methodologies to report on sustainability? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the answers to a question on the use of international standards and methodologies to report on sustainability. In response to this multiple-choice question, 9 universities provided 15 answers. The most frequently used standards and methodologies were ISO (20,00 %), GHG Protocol (20,00 %), and SDGs (20,00 %) with 3 responses each. On the other hand, only 1 response (6,70 %) was received for each of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), EMAS, GRI and Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Additionally, 1 response (6,70 %) indicates that they do not know if international standards and methodologies are used for reporting on sustainability, while 1 response (6,70 %) indicates the absence of any such reporting. The results indicate that most universities use more than one standard or methodology for sustainability reporting. On average, universities use 1,67 % of the standard for sustainability reporting.



3.2.11 What is your university's ambition for climate neutrality?

All 9 universities answered the question about their ambition for climate neutrality. 4 universities (44,44 %) aim to achieve it by 2050, 2 universities (22,22 %) do not have a specific year to reach it, 1 university (11,11 %) aims to achieve it by 2030, 1 university (11,11 %) aims to achieve it by 2040 and 1 university (11,11 %) has already achieved it.

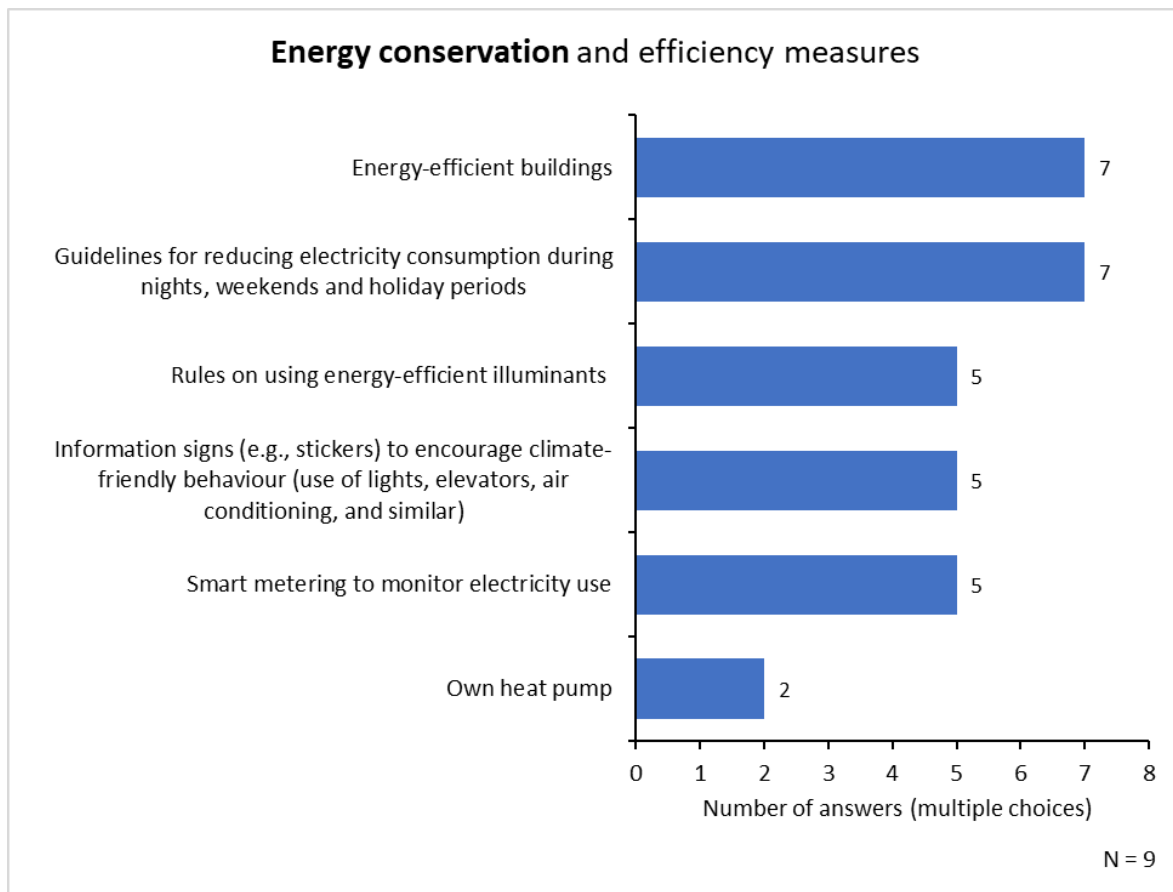


3.3 Energy, buildings, waste, and water

This chapter addresses a range of four questions related to energy, buildings, waste, and water, providing insights into various aspects of sustainability at universities. It covers the role of buildings in sustainable development and the need for sustainable building practises, waste management and recycling in universities to reduce environmental pollution and promote sustainability.

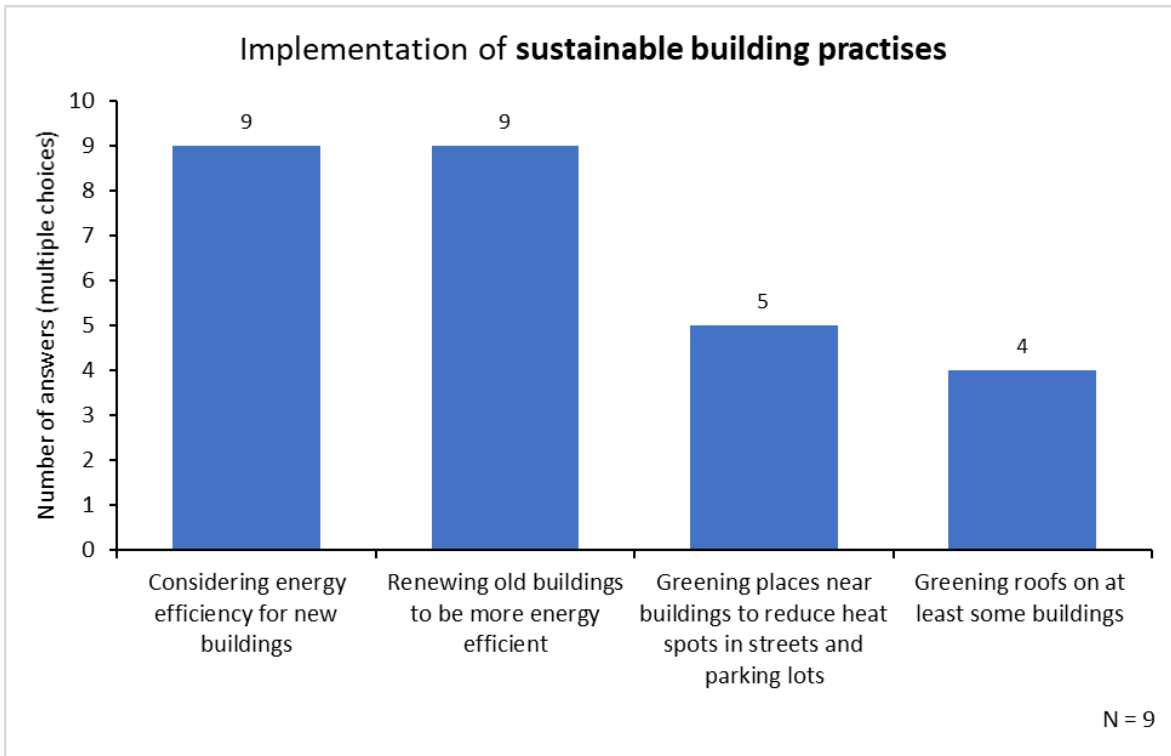
3.3.1 Does your university have ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph illustrates the results of a question about whether their university had implemented various measures to reduce energy consumption and promote climate-friendly behaviour. The options were multiple-choice, and a total of 31 responses were collected. Of these, 7 responses (22,58 %) indicated that they have energy-efficient buildings, while 7 responses (22,58 %) indicated that their university has guidelines for reducing electricity consumption outside business hours. 5 responses (16,13%) reported the introduction of smart metering to monitor electricity use, 5 responses (16,13%) reported regulations on the use of energy-efficient illuminants, and 5 responses (16,13%) reported the use of information signs to promote climate-friendly behaviour. Finally, 2 responses (6,45 %) mentioned having their own heat pump.



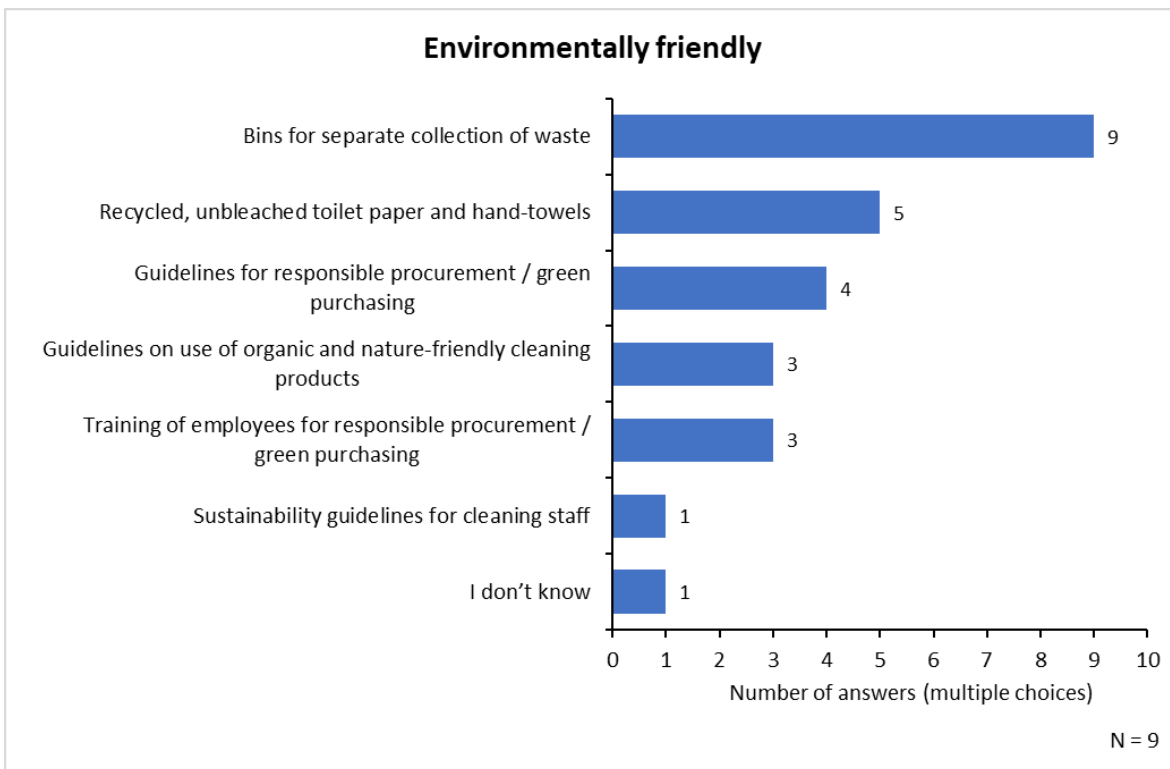
3.3.2 Is your university ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the results of a question to participants on whether their university has implemented specific measures to promote energy efficiency and reduce heat spots around buildings. A total of 27 responses were collected. Of these, 9 responses (33,33 %) indicated that their university considers energy efficiency when constructing new buildings, while the same number of responses (33,33 %) reported that their university renovates old buildings to make them more energy efficient. 5 responses (18,52 %) reported that their university has implemented greening measures near buildings to reduce heat spots in streets and parking lots, while 4 responses (14,81 %) mentioned greening roofs on at least some buildings.



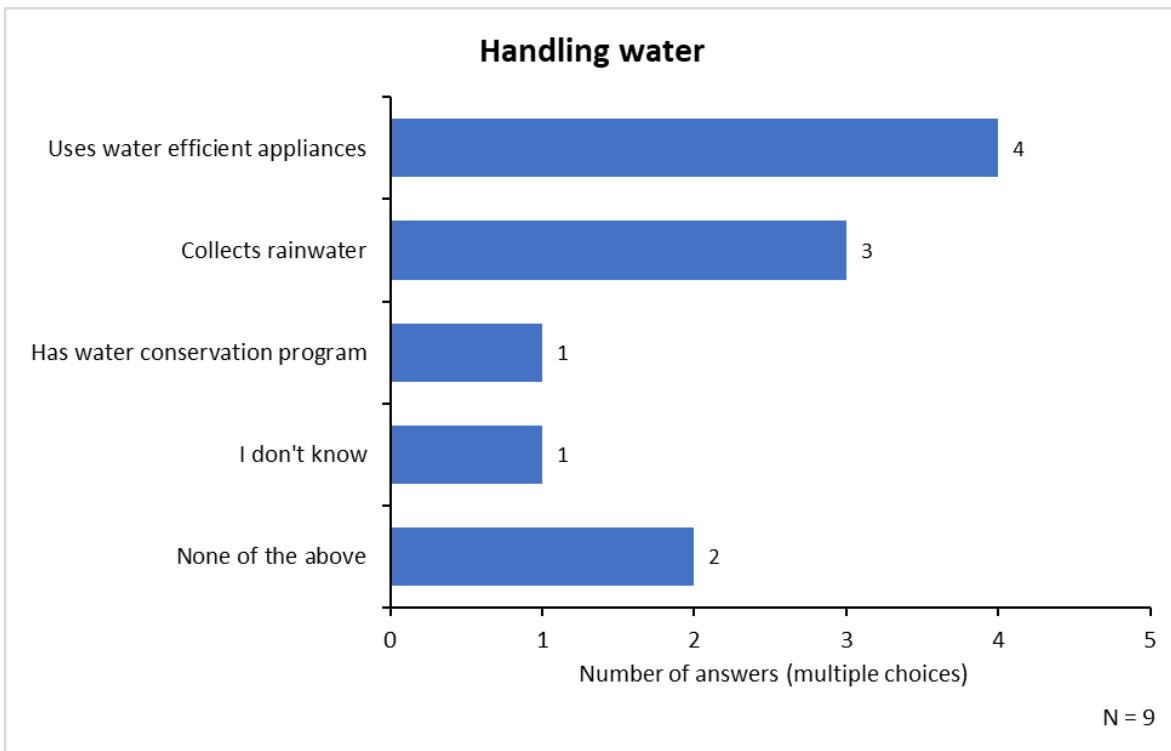
3.3.3 Does your university have ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the results of the multiple-choice question to participants on whether their university has implemented specific measures to promote sustainability and environmentally conscious practises. A total of 26 responses were collected. Of these, the majority of responses (9 responses, 34,62 %) indicated that their university has bins for separate waste collection. 5 responses (19,23 %) reported that their university provides recycled, unbleached toilet paper and hand-towels, while 4 responses (15,38 %) mentioned guidelines for responsible procurement/green purchasing. 3 responses (11,54 %) indicated that their university has guidelines on the use of organic and nature-friendly cleaning products, while 3 responses (11,54 %) indicated that their university provides training for employees on responsible procurement/green purchasing. 1 response (3,85 %) indicated that their university has implemented sustainability guidelines for cleaning staff and 1 response (3,85 %) indicated that they didn't know if their university has implemented any of the measures.



3.3.4 Does your university ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the responses to the multiple-choice question on whether the participants' universities have implemented specific water conservation measures. A total of 11 responses were collected. Of these, 4 responses (36,36 %) indicated that their university uses water efficient appliances, while 3 responses (27,27 %) reported that their university collects rainwater. 1 response (9,09 %) indicated that their university has a water conservation program. 2 responses (18,18 %) selected "None of the above" indicating that their university has not implemented any of the listed measures. 1 response (9,09 %) indicated that they do not know if their university has implemented any of the measures.

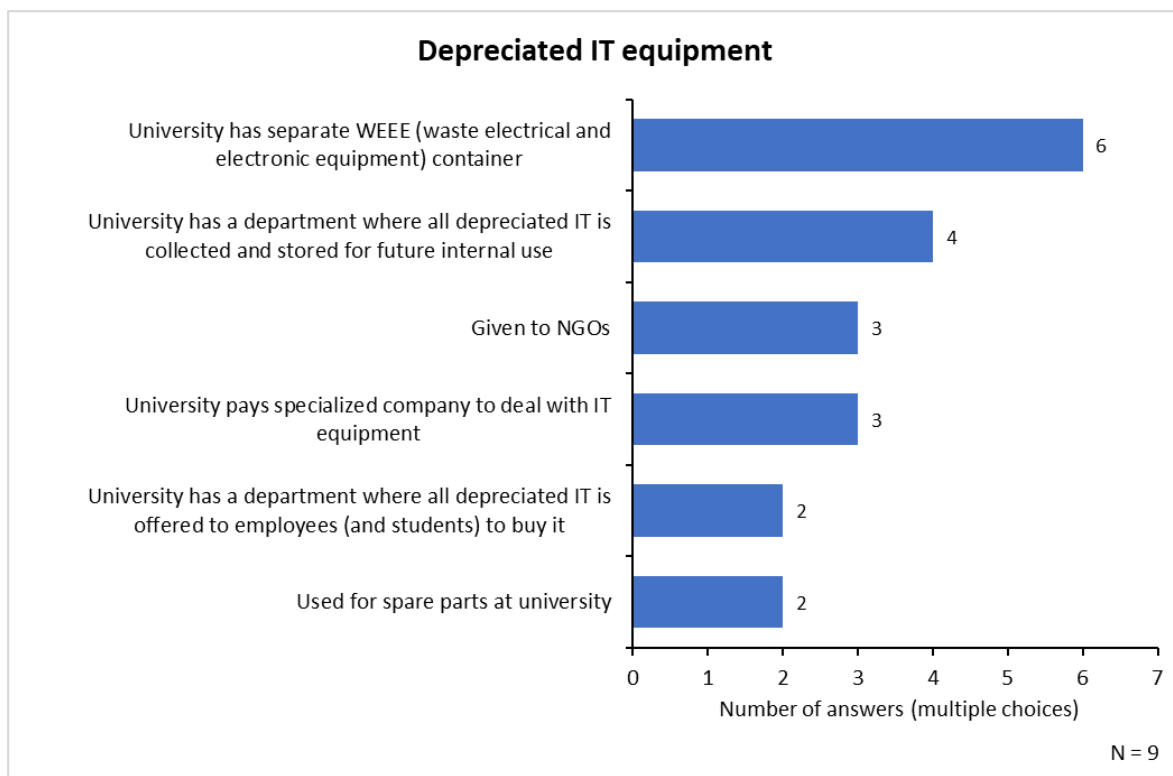


3.4 IT devices and materials

This chapter covers the important topic of IT infrastructure at universities. One of the key areas that the chapter explores is how universities handle depreciated IT equipment. The chapter also looks at the guidelines that universities follow when purchasing new IT equipment. It further examines the infrastructure that universities must provide for online conferencing and teaching, including e-conferencing rooms and live streaming capabilities in lecture halls. Additionally, the chapter covers the importance of offering information and courses on e-infrastructure, such as software and licenses, to help students and faculty make the most of the technological tools available to them.

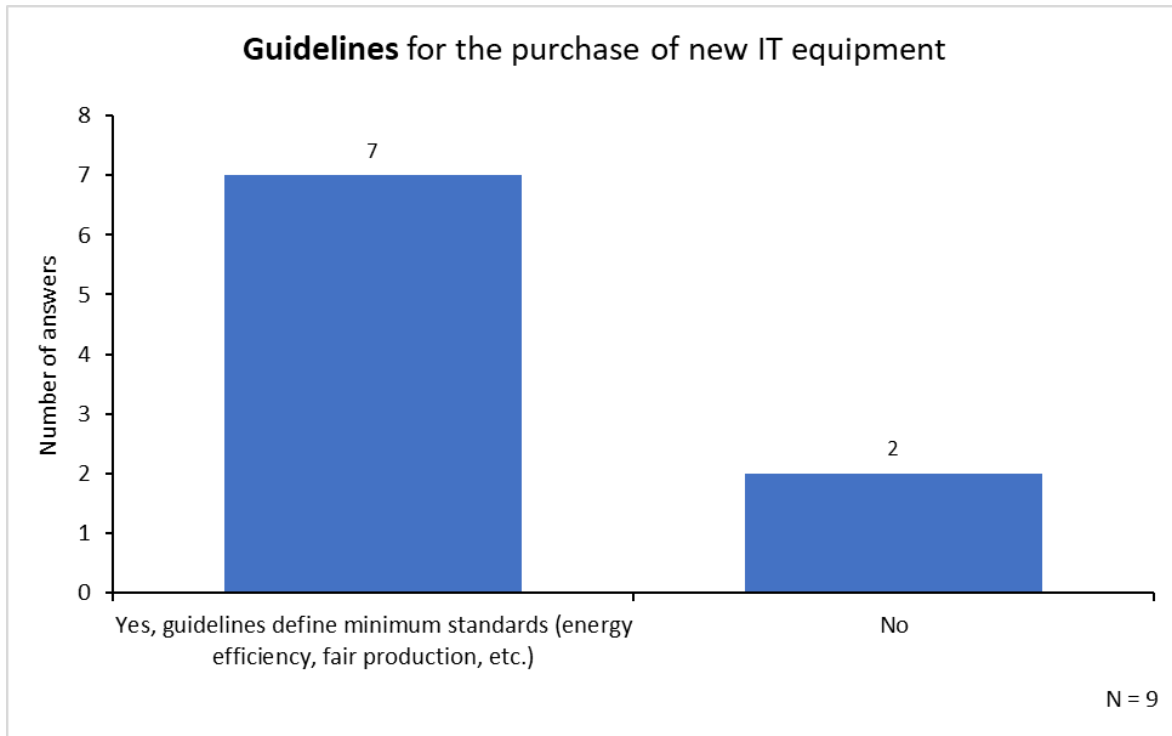
3.4.1 What does your university do with depreciated IT equipment? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the results of a multiple-choice question on the disposal of depreciated IT equipment in the participants' universities. A total of 20 responses were collected. Of these, 6 responses (30,00 %) indicated that their university has a separate WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) container. 4 responses (20,00 %) indicated that their university has a department where all depreciated IT is collected and stored for future internal use. 3 responses (15,00 %) indicated that their university donates the depreciated IT equipment to NGOs, while the same number of responses (15,00 %) indicated that their university pays a specialised company to dispose of the IT equipment. 2 responses (10,00 %) reported that their university has a department where all depreciated IT is offered for sale to employees (and students), while another 2 responses (10,00 %) reported that their university uses the depreciated IT for spare parts at the university.



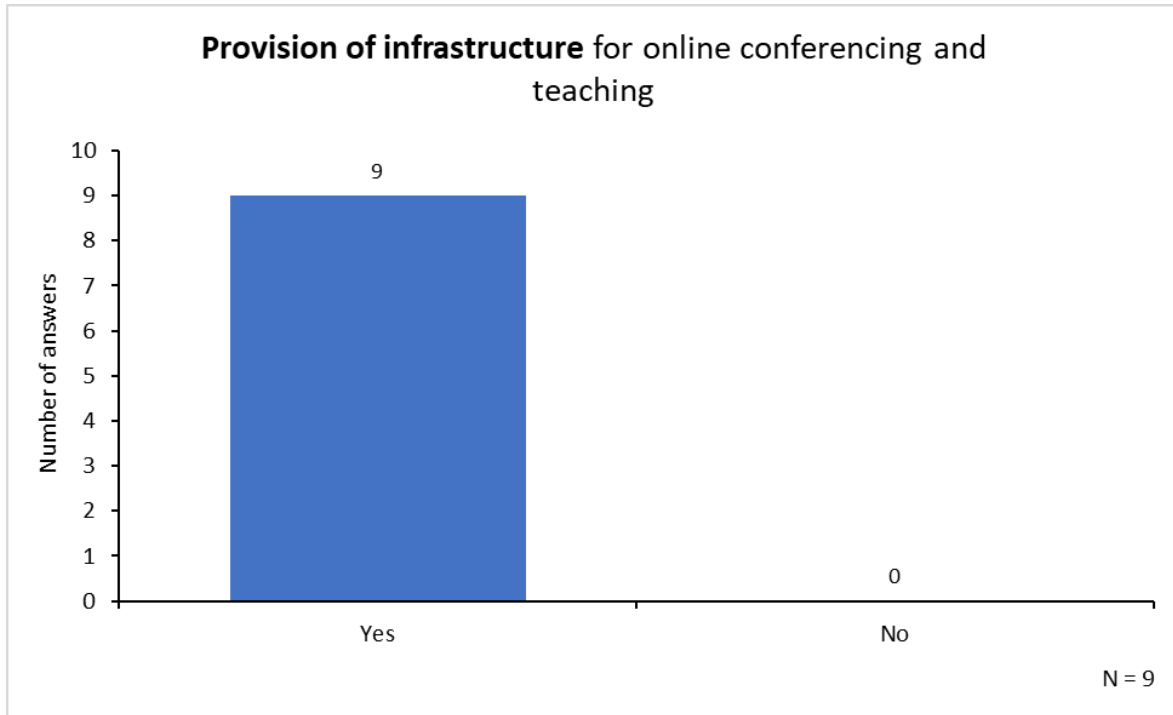
3.4.2 Does your university have guidelines for purchasing new IT equipment?

When asked about guidelines for purchasing new IT equipment, 7 out of 9 universities (77,78 %) responded that they have guidelines in place. These guidelines define minimum standards for energy efficiency, fair production, and other factors. The remaining 2 universities (22,22 %) indicated that they do not have any guidelines.



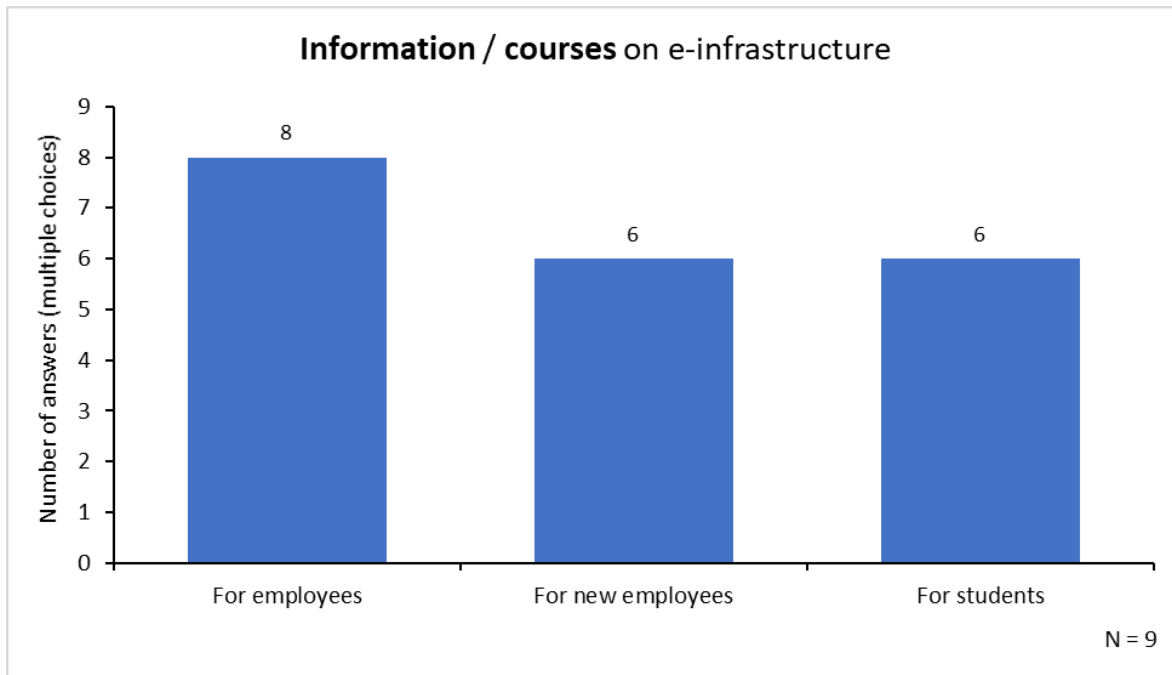
3.4.3 Does your university provide infrastructure for online conferencing and teaching (e-conferencing room, live stream possibilities in lecture halls)?

Regarding the infrastructure for online conferencing and teaching, the results of the survey were clear. All 9 universities (100 %) reported providing e-conferencing rooms and live streaming capabilities in the lecture halls.



3.4.4 Does your university provide information / courses on e-infrastructure (software and licenses)? (multiple choices possible)

The results show the availability of information / courses on e-infrastructure at universities. A total of 20 responses were collected regarding the availability of such courses for different groups. Of these, 8 responses (40,00 %) indicated that their university provides information / courses on e-infrastructure for employees, and 6 responses (30,00 %) indicated that their university provides information/courses on e-infrastructure specifically for new employees. Similarly, 6 responses (30,00 %) indicated that their university provides information/courses on e-infrastructure for students.

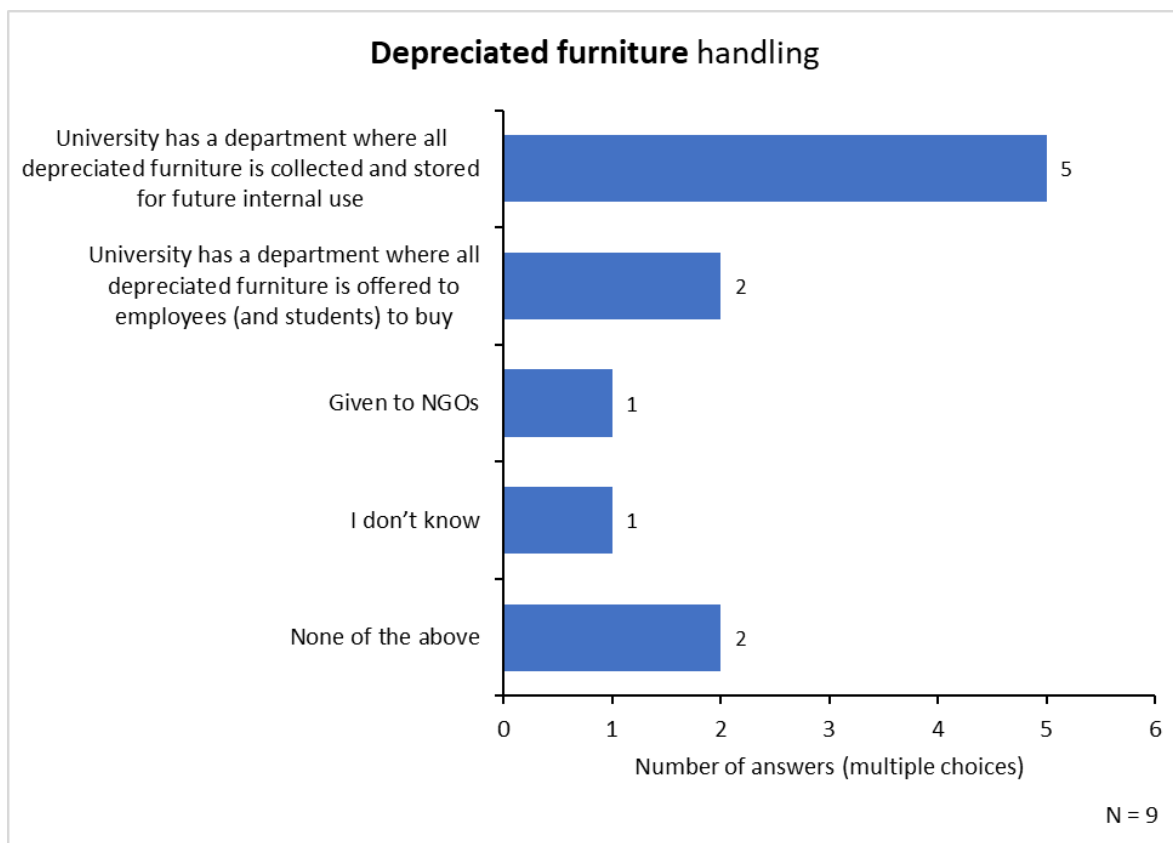


3.5 Furniture

This chapter covers the important topic of facilities management at universities. One of the key areas that the chapter explores is how universities handle depreciated furniture. The chapter looks at how many universities repurpose or recycle furniture to minimize waste and reduce the institution's environmental footprint.

3.5.1 What does your university do with depreciated furniture? (multiple choices possible)

The results show how differently universities dispose of their depreciated furniture. A total of 11 responses were collected on the disposal of such furniture. Of these, 5 responses (45,45 %) indicated that their university has a department where all depreciated furniture is collected and stored for future internal use. 2 responses (18,18 %) indicated that their university has a department where all depreciated furniture is offered to employees (and students) to buy. 1 response (9,09 %) indicated that their university donates the depreciated furniture to NGOs. In addition, 2 respondents (18,18 %) answered "None of the above", indicating that their university does not dispose of the depreciated furniture in any of the ways mentioned in the response options. Finally, 1 response (9,09 %) answered "I don't know", indicating that the respondent has no information about the disposal of depreciated furniture at their university.

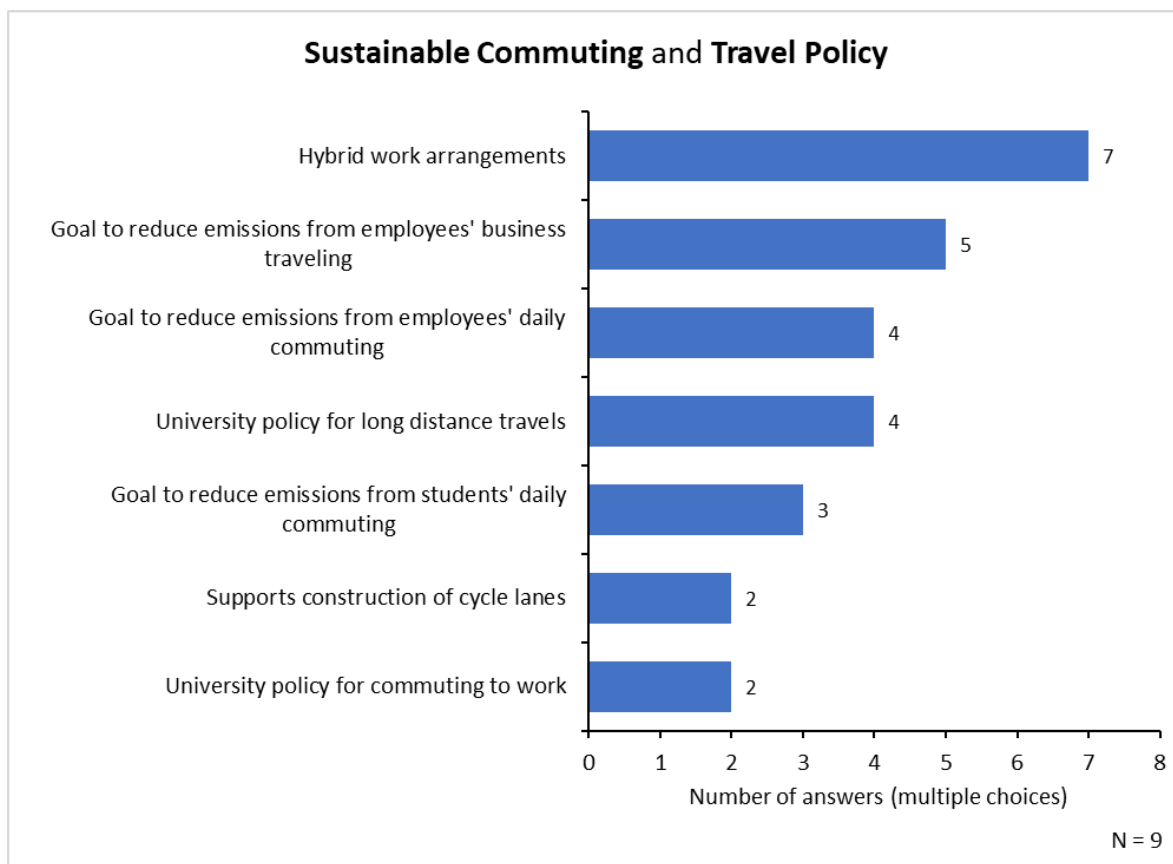


3.6 Mobility for employees and students

This chapter focuses on the mobility of employees and students at universities and addresses three questions related to university policies and measures to reduce emissions from daily commuting and business travel. Universities can take measures to promote public transport, bikes, and e-bikes and provide e-charging stations for electric vehicles. They can also offer incentives such as subsidising public transport, promoting sustainable travel courses and providing green travel promotional materials for international students.

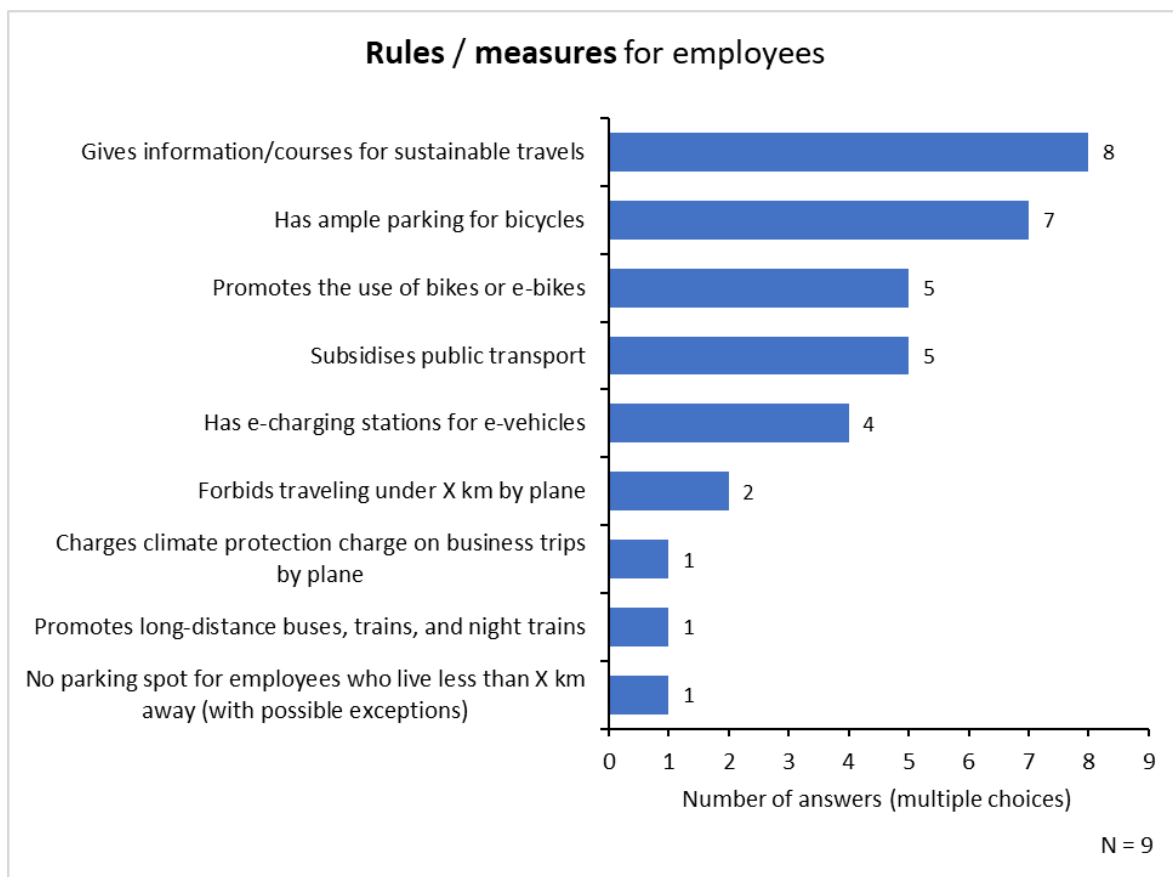
3.6.1 Does your university have / do any of the following? (multiple choices possible)

The results show that various sustainability initiatives exist at the universities. A total of 27 responses were collected on the existence of specific initiatives. Of these, 7 responses (25,93 %) indicated that their university has hybrid work arrangements. 5 responses (18,52 %) indicated that their university has a goal to reduce emissions from employees' business traveling. Similarly, 4 responses (14,81 %) indicated that their university has a university policy on long distance travels. 4 responses (14,81 %) also indicated that their university has a goal to reduce emissions from employees' daily commuting. 3 responses (11,11 %) indicated that their university has a goal to reduce emissions from students' daily commuting. 2 responses (7,41%) indicated that their university supports the construction of cycle lanes and 2 responses (7,41%) indicated that their university has a university policy on commuting to work.



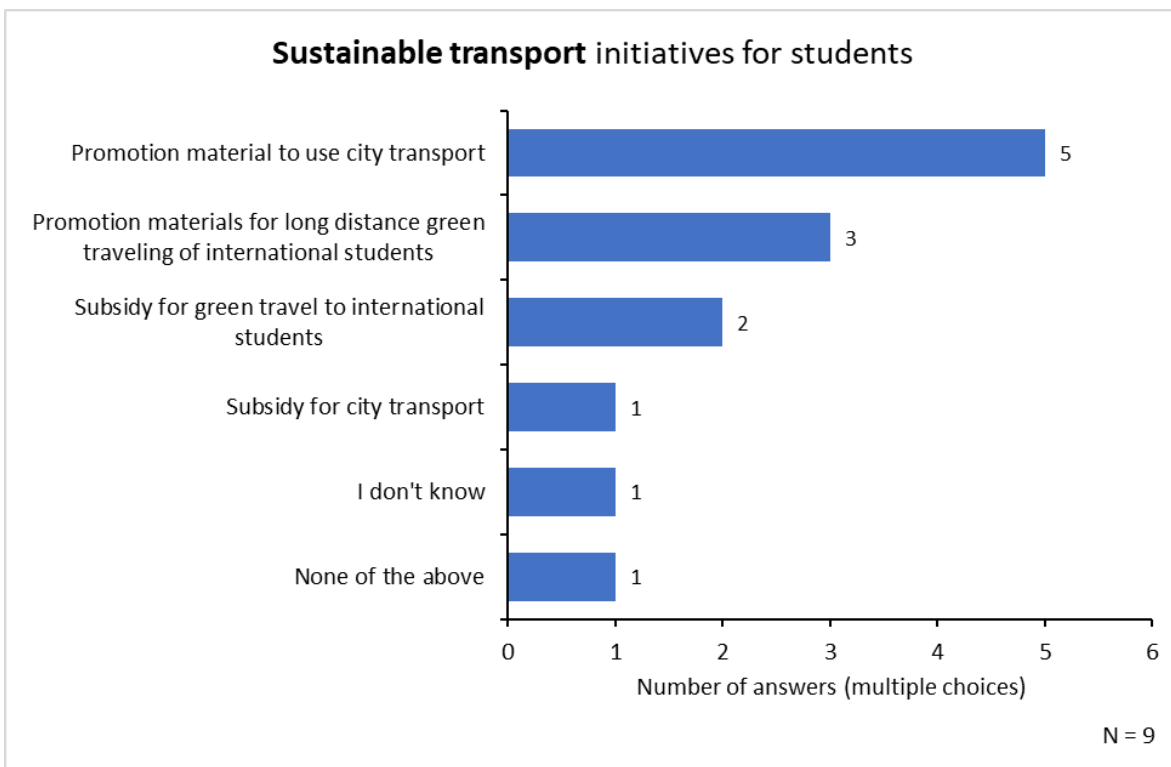
3.6.2 Does your university apply any of the following rules / measures for employees? (multiple choices possible)

The results show the sustainability measures that universities apply for their employees. A total of 34 responses were collected regarding the presence of specific rules / measures for employees. Of these, 8 responses (23,53 %) indicated that their university provides information / courses for sustainable travels. 7 responses (20,59 %) indicated that their university has ample parking for bicycles. Similarly, 5 responses (14,71 %) indicated that their university subsidises public transport, while another 5 responses (14,71 %) reported that their university encourages the use of bikes or e-bikes. 4 responses (11,76 %) indicated that their university has e-charging stations for e-vehicles. Additionally, 2 responses (5,88 %) indicated that their university forbids traveling under X km by plane, while one response (2,94 %) indicated that their university promotes long-distance buses, trains and night trains. 1 response (2,94 %) also reported that their university has no parking spot for employees who live less than X km away (with possible exceptions). Finally, 1 response (2,94 %) indicated that their university charges a climate protection charge on business trips by plane.



3.6.3 Does your university offer any of the following for students? (multiple choices possible)

A total of 13 responses were collected on the existence of specific rules / measures for students. Of these, 5 responses (38,46 %) indicated that their university provides promotion material to use city transport. 3 responses (23,08 %) indicated that their university provides promotion materials for long distance green traveling of international students. Additionally, 2 responses (15,38 %) indicated that their university provides a subsidy for green travel to international students, while 1 response (7,69 %) reported that their university offers a subsidy for city transport. 1 response (7,69 %) indicated that they do not know if their university offers any measures for students, while another response (7,69 %) reported that their university does not offer any of the above listed measures.

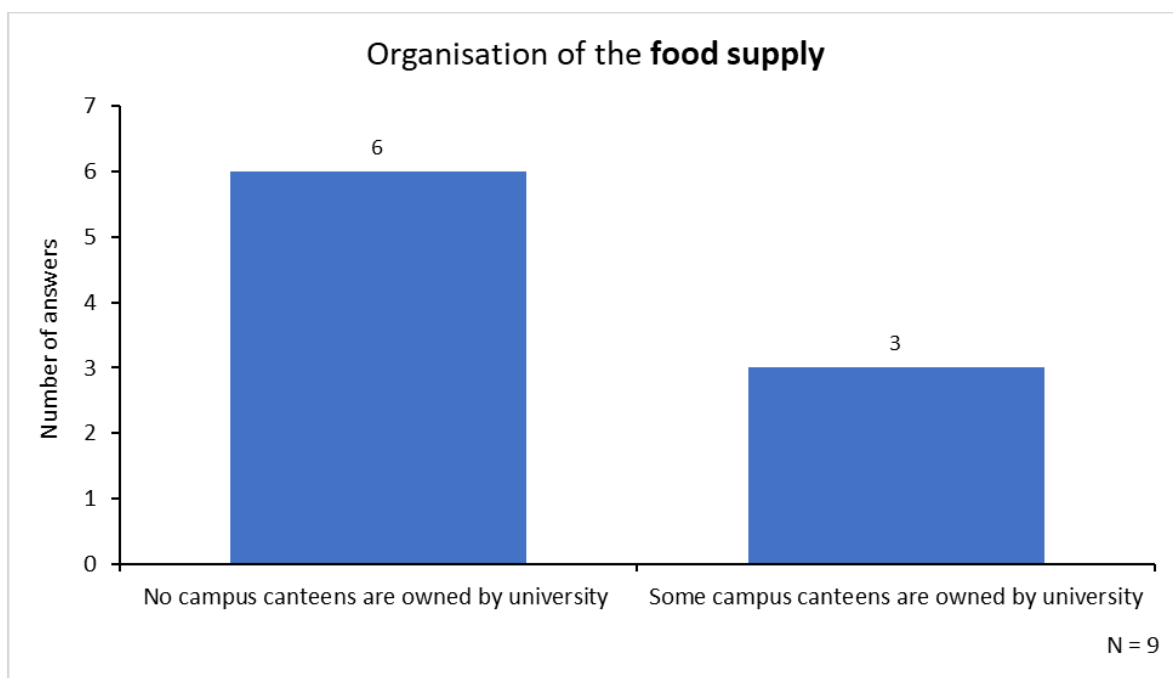


3.7 Food

This chapter deals with the organisation and guidelines for food supply in campus canteens at universities. It addresses several questions related to food guidelines, such as whether canteens have guidelines for vegetarian, vegan, organic and locally sourced food. It also looks at whether universities offer healthy options at vending machines and events, and if they have guidelines for reducing food waste. It also examines if universities offer free, healthy snacks and fair trade organic coffee at vending machines, and if they have water stations where students and staff can fill up their bottles.

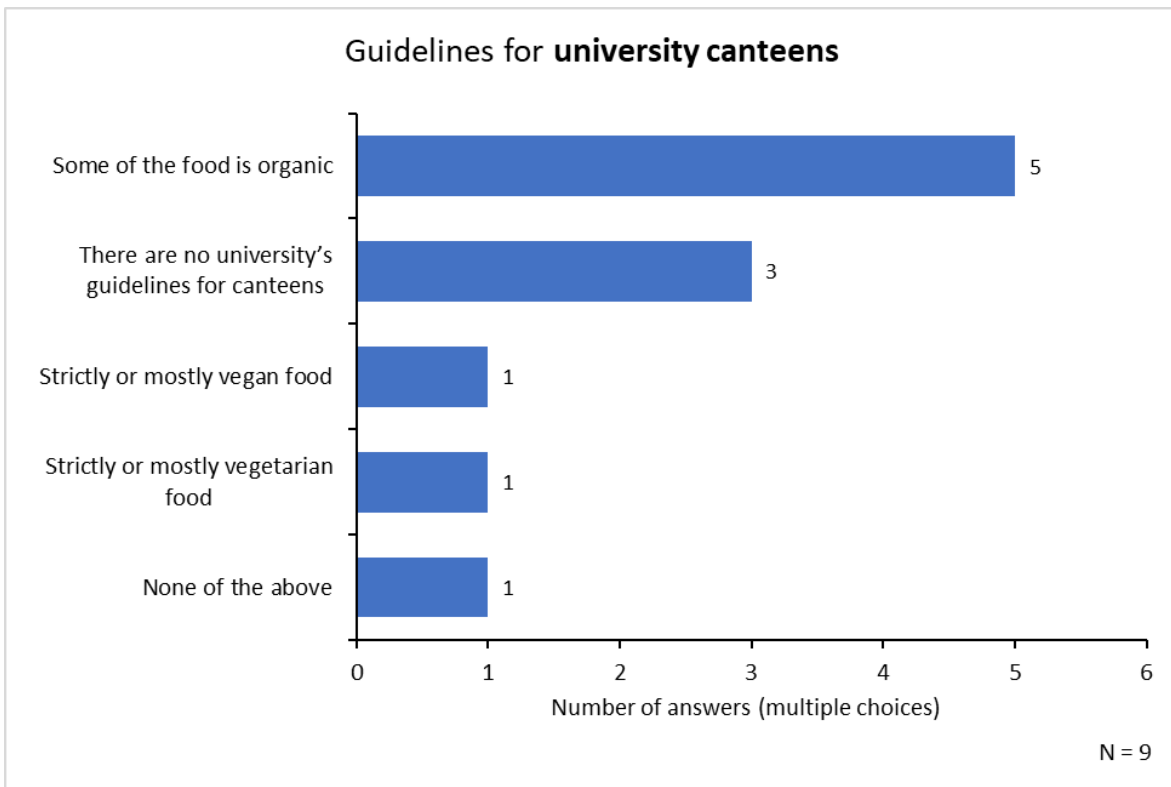
3.7.1 How is the food supply organised at your university?

Out of the 9 universities, 6 universities (66,67 %) reported that they do not own any of the campus canteens when asked about the organisation of food supply. On the other hand, 3 universities (33,33 %) reported that some of their campus canteens are owned by the university.



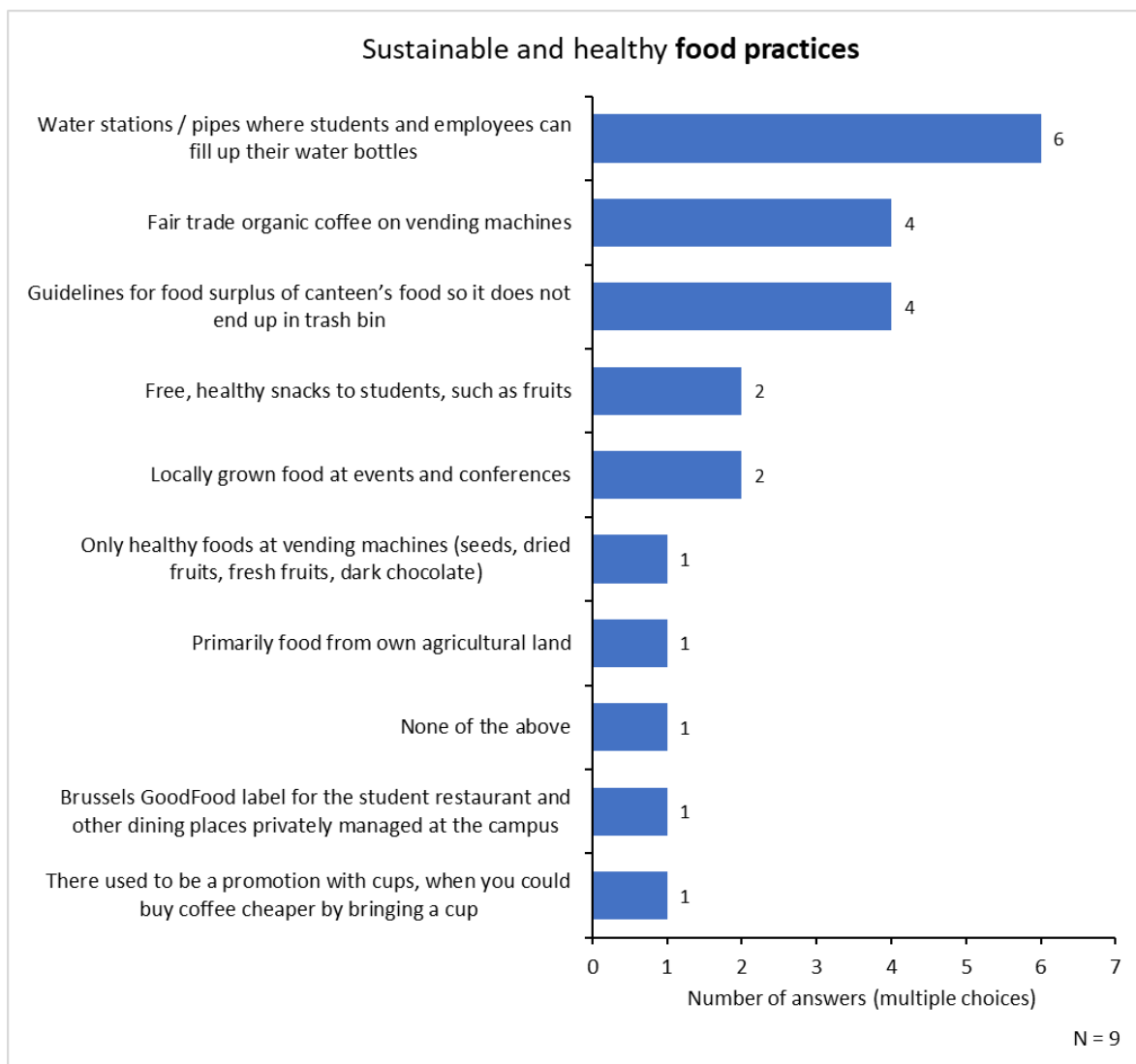
3.7.2 Do your university's canteens have guidelines for any of the following? (multiple choices possible)

When asked if universities have guidelines for their canteens regarding sustainable food options, a total of 11 responses were collected. Of these, 5 responses (45,45 %) indicated that their university canteens offer some organic food options, while 3 responses (27,27 %) indicated that there are no specific guidelines for university canteens. 1 response (9,09 %) indicated that their university's canteens serve strictly or mostly vegetarian food, and another response (9,09 %) indicated that their canteens serve strictly or mostly vegan food. 1 response (9,09 %) indicated that none of the above guidelines apply to their university.



3.7.3 Does your university offer ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the responses to the question of whether the university offers different sustainable food and beverage options. A total of 23 responses were collected. Of these, 6 responses (26,09 %) indicated that the university provides water stations or pipes where students and employees can fill up their water bottles, while 4 responses (17,39 %) reported the availability of fair trade organic coffee on vending machines. Similarly, 4 responses (17,39 %) indicated the provision of guidelines for food surplus of canteen's food to avoid wastage. Additionally, 2 responses (8,70 %) reported the availability of free, healthy snacks such as fruits, while 2 responses (8,70 %) indicated the use of locally grown food at events and conferences. On the other hand, there was only 1 response each for offering only healthy foods at vending machines (4,35 %), primarily food from own agricultural land (4,35 %), the Brussels GoodFood label for the student restaurant and other dining places privately managed at the campus (4,35 %) and promotion with cups (4,35 %), with the last 2 responses being written by the universities themselves. 1 response (4,35 %) indicates that there are no sustainable food and beverage options at the university.

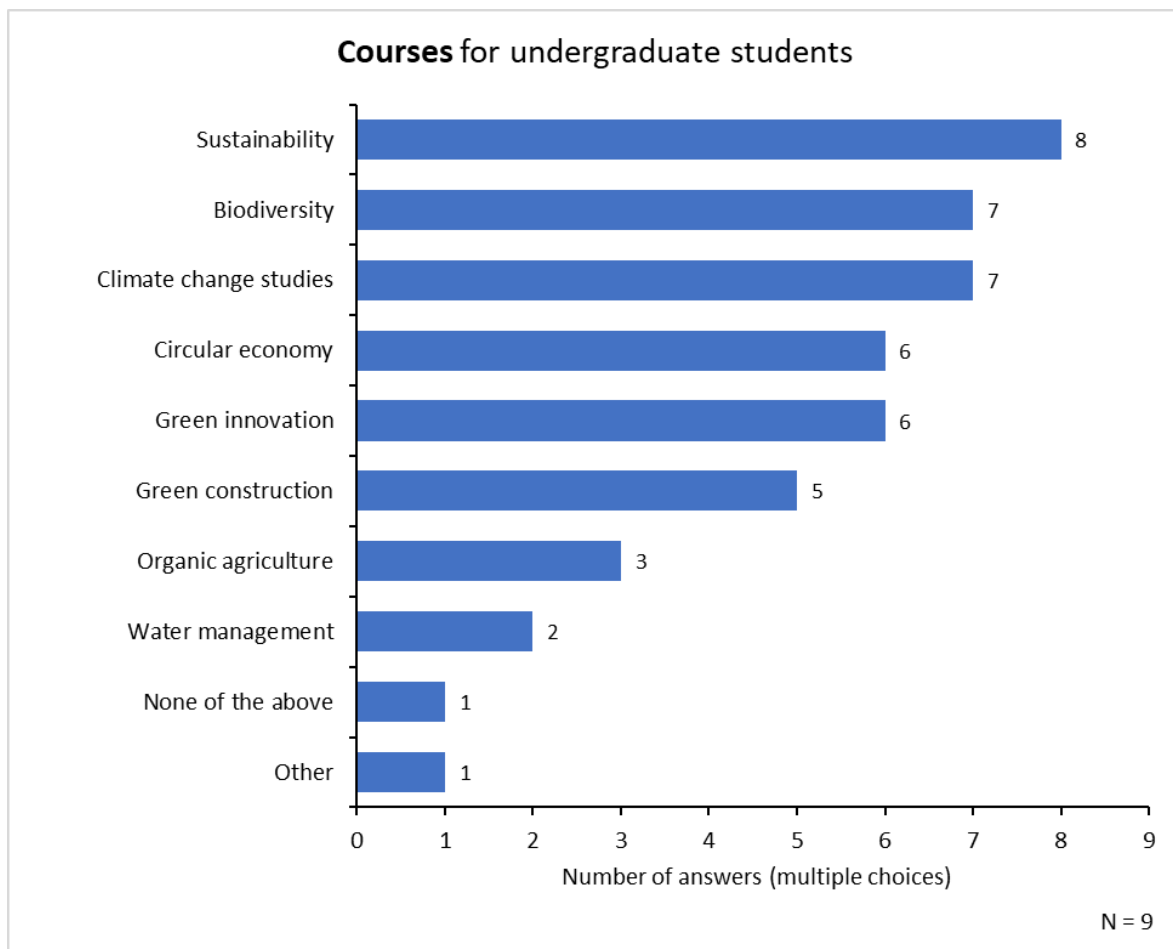


3.8 Students and education

This chapter covers the role of universities in educating students on sustainability and environmental topics. It addresses two questions related to the courses offered to undergraduate students and examines whether there are obligatory sustainability courses for students. By exploring these questions, the chapter aims to understand how universities prepare students to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practises.

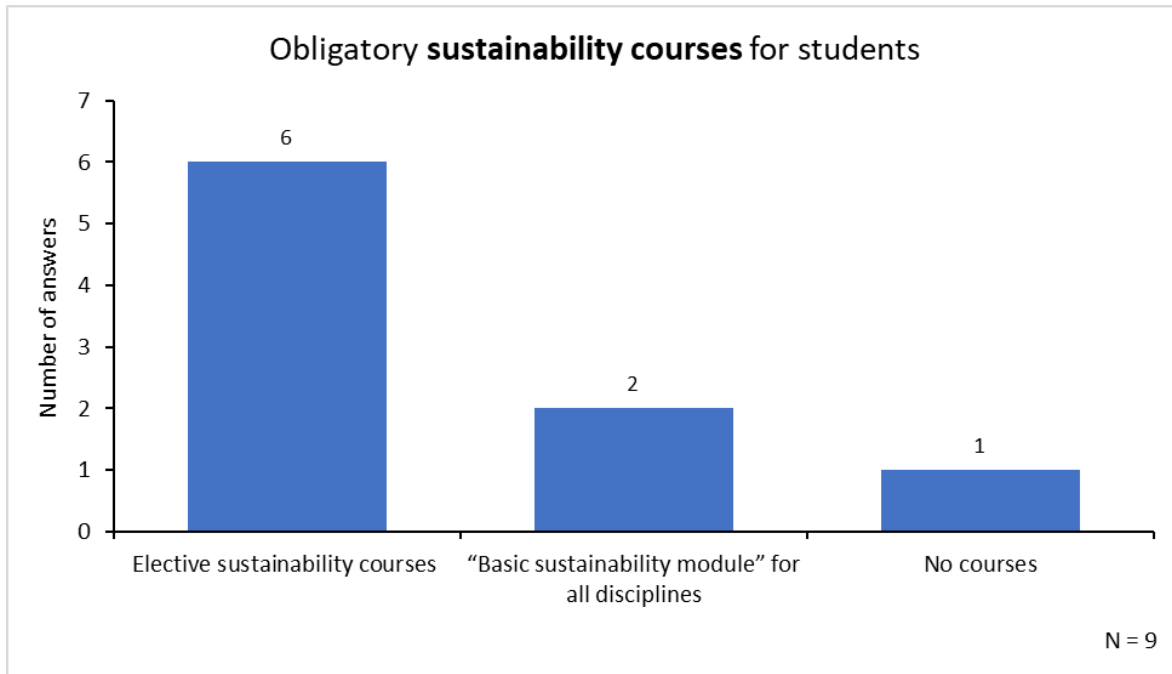
3.8.1 Does your university offer courses for undergraduate students on the following topics? (multiple choices possible)

When asked whether universities offer courses for undergraduate students on various sustainability topics, a total of 46 responses were collected. Of these, 8 responses (17,39 %) indicated that their university offers courses on sustainability, while 7 responses (15,22 %) indicated that their university offers courses on climate change studies and biodiversity. 6 responses (13,04 %) indicated that their university offers courses on green innovation, 6 responses (13,04 %) on circular economy and 5 responses (10,87 %) on green construction. 3 responses (6,52 %) indicated that their university offers courses on organic agriculture, while 2 responses (4,35 %) indicated that their university offers courses on water management. 1 response (2,17 %) indicated that none of the above applies to their university and 1 response (2,17 %) indicated that their university offers 232 courses on sustainability at VUB, with a specific source indicated (<https://education4climate.be/courses.html?lang=en>)



3.8.2 Are there obligatory sustainability courses for students?

Of the 9 universities surveyed, most, namely 6 universities (66,67 %), offer elective courses on sustainability for students. 2 universities (22,22 %) have a mandatory "basic sustainability module" for all disciplines, and 1 university (11,11 %) does not have any obligatory sustainability courses.

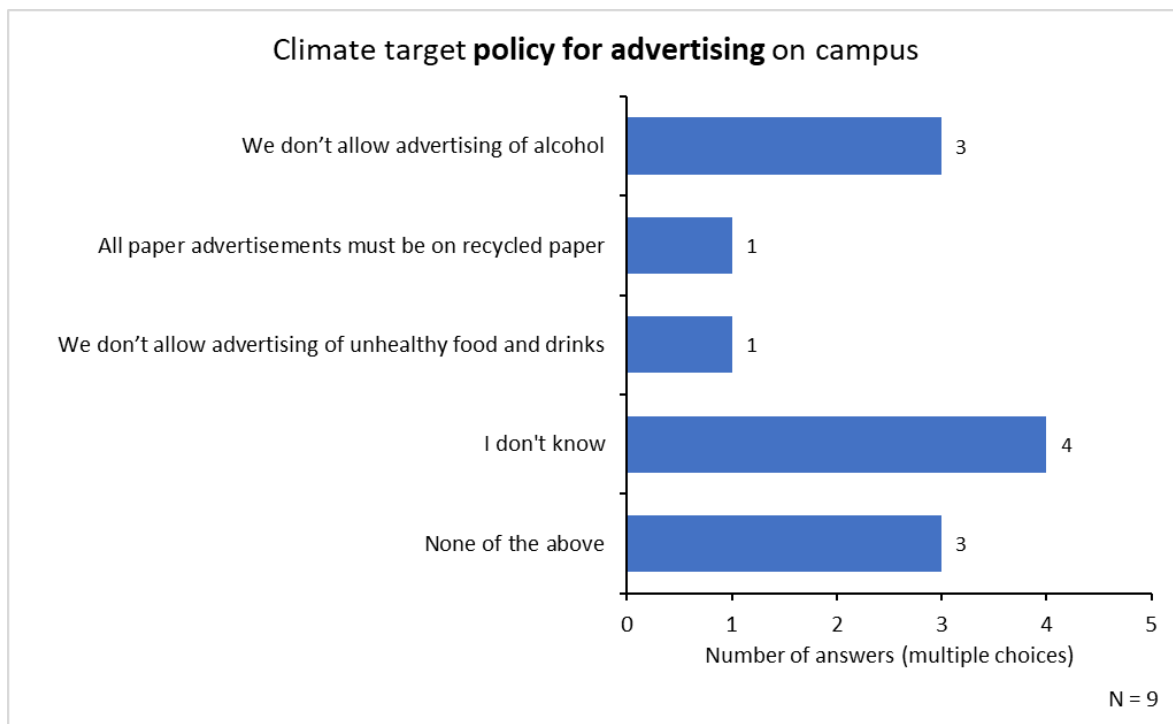


3.9 Administration and communication

This chapter covers the administrative and communication practises related to climate target policies in universities. It addresses three main questions, including whether universities have a climate target policy for advertising on campus. The chapter examines whether universities practise various environmentally friendly initiatives, such as the use of recycled office paper, preference for e-administration and standard environmentally friendly printer settings. It also explores whether there is a demand or pressure to act on climate neutrality at the university from various quarters, such as students, employees, local government, business partners and regulators. By examining these questions, the chapter aims to provide insight into the efforts of universities to promote sustainable practises.

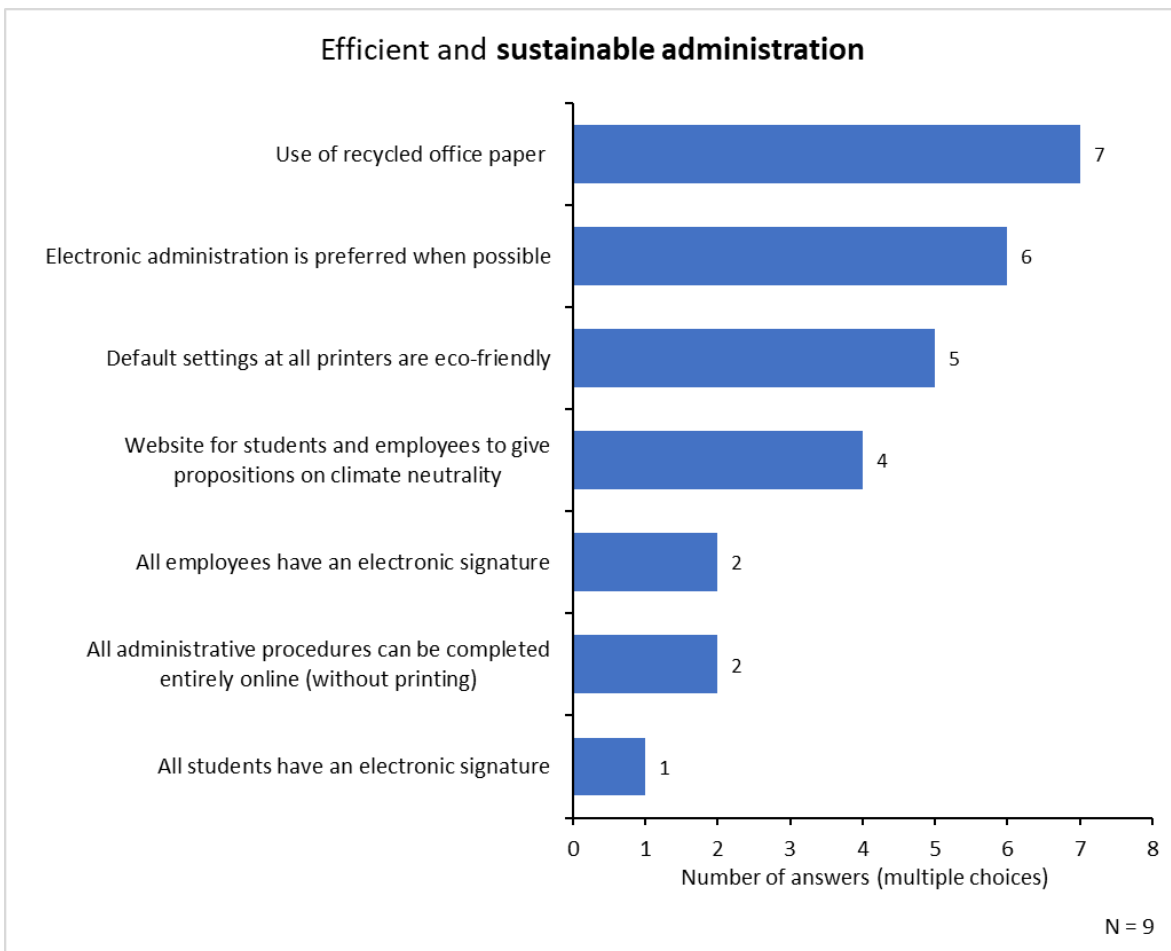
3.9.1 Does your university have a climate target policy for advertising on campus? (multiple choices possible)

A total of 11 responses were collected for the question on whether the university has a climate target policy for advertising on campus. Of these, 4 responses (33,33 %) indicated that they didn't know if their university had such a policy. 3 responses (25,00 %) indicated that their university doesn't allow alcohol advertising. Similarly, 3 responses (25,00 %) indicated that none of the mentioned options applies to their university. Only 1 response (8,33 %) indicated that their university has a policy that all paper advertisements must be on recycled paper. In addition, only 1 response (8,33 %) indicated that their university doesn't allow advertising of unhealthy food and drinks.



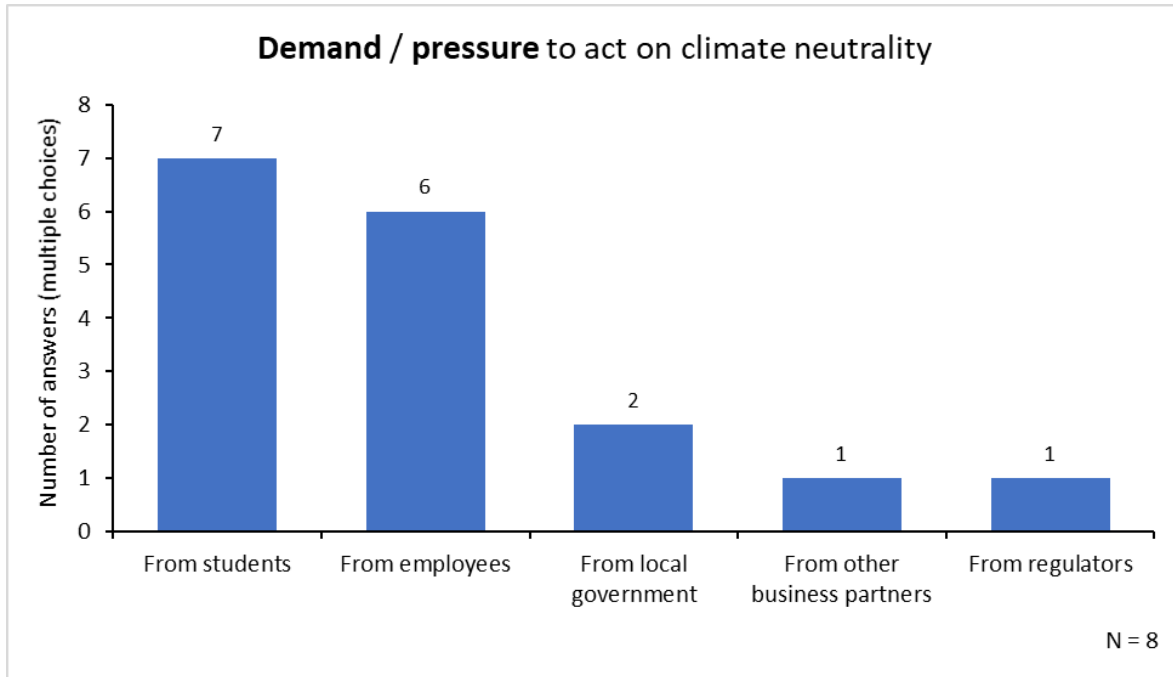
3.9.2 Does your university practice ...? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the results of a multiple-choice question on whether the university practices certain sustainability measures. A total of 27 responses were collected. Of these, 7 responses (25,93 %) indicated that their university uses recycled office paper. 6 responses (22,22 %) indicated that electronic administration is preferred when possible. 5 responses (18,52 %) indicated that the default settings on all printers are eco-friendly. 4 responses (14,81 %) indicated that their university has a website for students and employees to give propositions on climate neutrality. 2 responses (7,41 %) indicated that all administrative procedures can be completed entirely online (without printing), while another 2 responses (7,41 %) indicated that all employees have an electronic signature and 1 response (3,70 %) indicated that all students have an electronic signature.



3.9.3 Is there a demand / pressure to act on climate neutrality? (multiple choices possible)

For the question of whether there is a demand / pressure to act on climate neutrality, a total of 17 answers were collected. Of these, 7 responses (41,18 %) indicated that there is pressure from students, while 6 responses (35,29 %) indicated that there is pressure from employees. 2 responses (11,76 %) indicated that there is demand from the local government while 1 response (5,88 %) indicated that there is demand from other business partners. Similarly, 1 response (5,88 %) indicated that there is a demand from regulators.

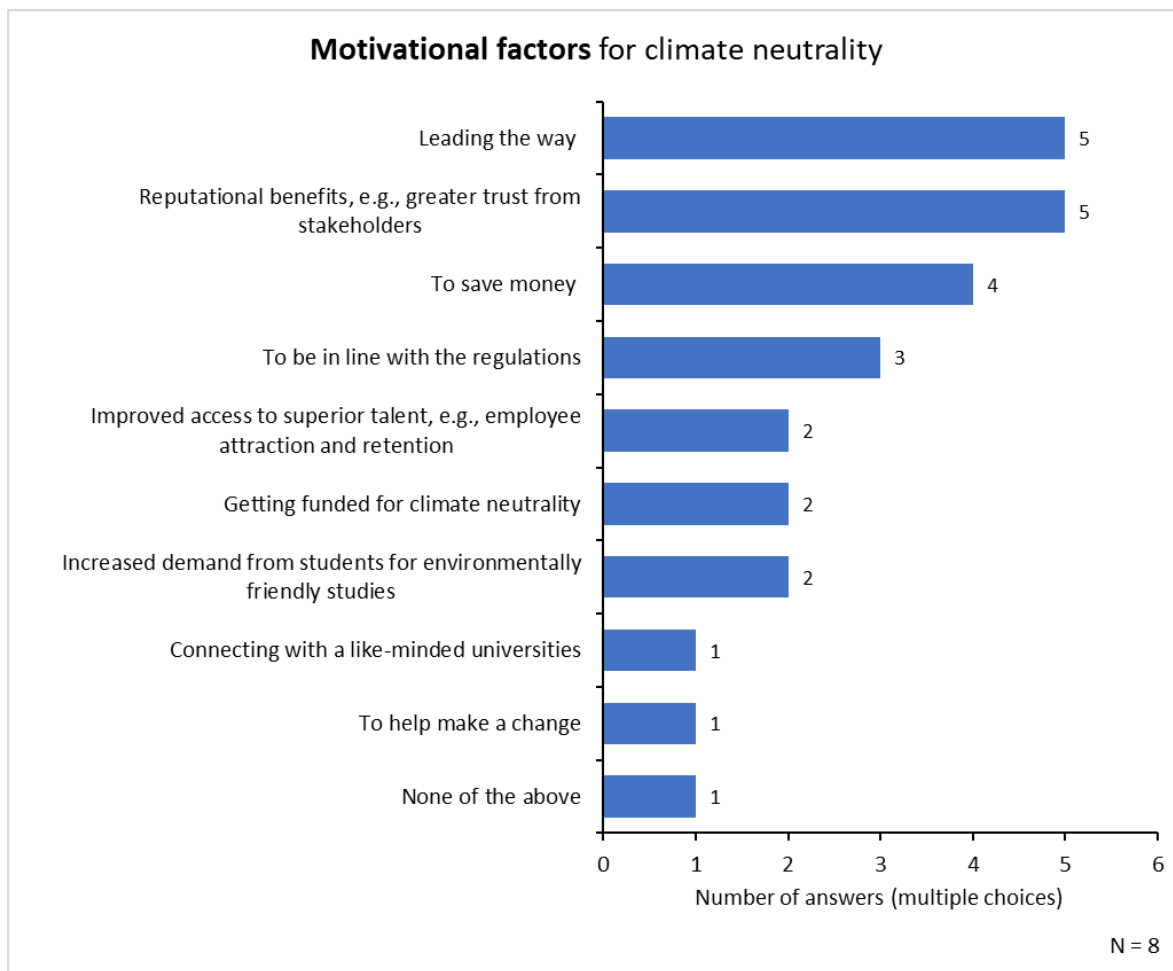


3.10 Opportunities and barriers

This chapter provides insight into the opportunities and barriers universities face in achieving climate neutrality. It addresses two questions related to the biggest motivational factors for climate neutrality at universities and the biggest internal barriers to climate-related activities. The chapter aims to shed light on how universities can overcome these barriers and seize the opportunities to achieve climate neutrality.

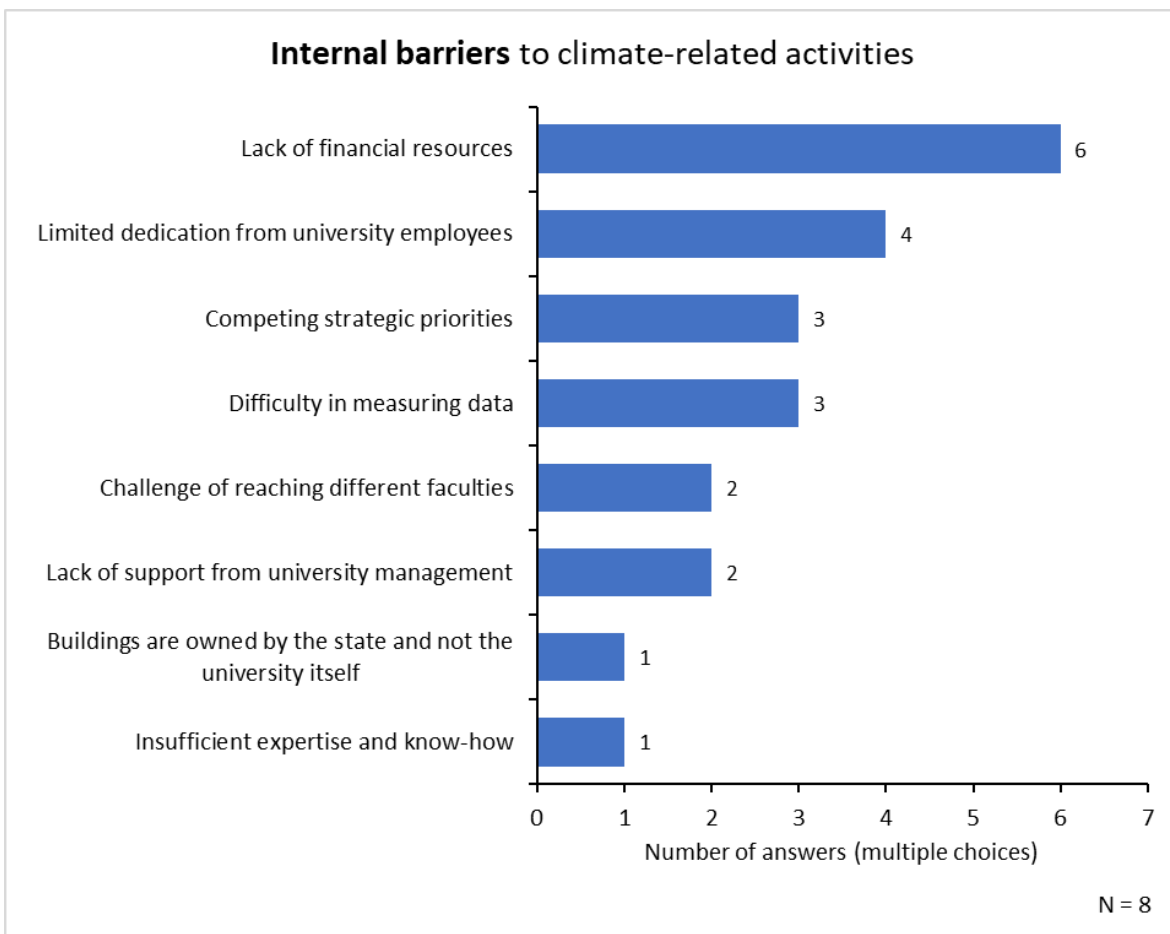
3.10.1 Which 3 of the following are the biggest motivational factors for climate neutrality at your university? (multiple choices possible)

The graph shows the results of a multiple-choice question on the biggest motivational factors for climate neutrality at the participants' universities. A total of 26 responses were collected. Of these, 5 responses (19,23 %) indicated that leading the way was one of the biggest motivating factors, while another 5 responses (19,23 %) indicated that reputational benefits, such as greater trust from stakeholders, were important. 4 responses (15,38 %) indicated that saving money was an important motivator, while 3 responses (11,54 %) indicated that being in line with regulations was an important factor. 2 responses (7,69 %) reported increased demand from students for environmentally friendly studies, and the same number of responses (7,69 %) reported improved access to superior talent, such as employee attraction and retention. In addition, 2 responses (7,69 %) reported getting funded for climate neutrality. Only 1 response (3,85 %) indicated that connecting with like-minded universities was an important motivation, while 1 response (3,85 %) indicated that the biggest motivation was to help make change.



3.10.2 Which 3 internal barriers to climate-related activities are the biggest obstacles for your university? (multiple choices possible)

Participants were asked to name the three internal barriers that pose the biggest obstacles to climate-related activities at their university. A total of 22 responses were collected. Of these, 6 responses (27,27 %) indicated that lack of financial resources is a major obstacle. Limited dedication from university employees is the second biggest obstacle with 4 responses (18,18 %). Competing strategic priorities (13,64 %) and difficulty in measuring data (13,64 %) received 3 responses each. 2 responses identified the challenge of reaching different faculties (9,09 %) and lack of support from university management (9,09 %) as a significant obstacle. Insufficient expertise and know-how (4,55 %) and buildings being owned by the state and not the university itself (4,55 %), which was written by the university, both received 1 response.

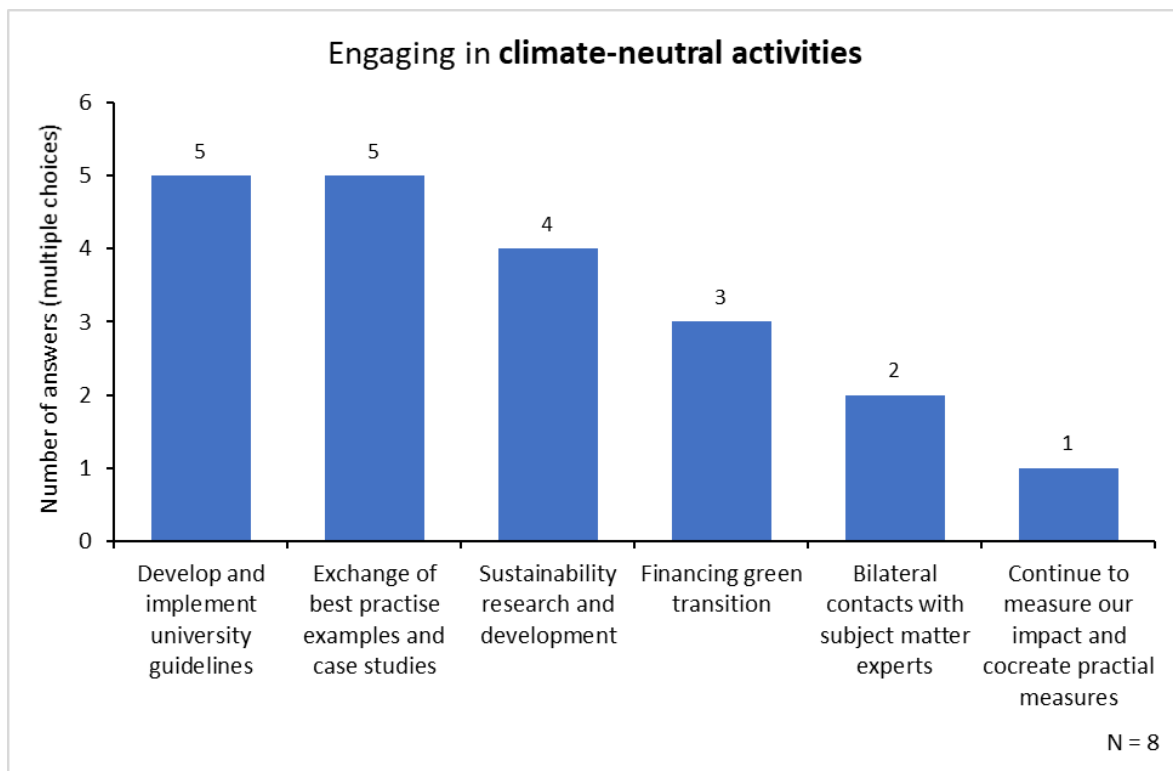


3.11 Outlook

This chapter addresses the question of what universities are looking for to support their climate-neutral activities. The main focus is on how universities can effectively support their efforts towards climate neutrality. Actions include developing and implementing university guidelines, engaging in sustainability research and development, funding green change, establishing bilateral links with subject matter experts, continuously measuring impact and jointly developing practical measures. These strategies can help universities overcome the challenges and barriers associated with achieving climate neutrality and pave the way to a more sustainable future.

3.11.1 What is your university looking for to support its climate-neutral activities? (multiple choices possible)

Of the 20 responses collected, 5 (25,00 %) indicated that their university is looking to develop and implement university guidelines to support its climate-neutral activities. Another 5 responses (25,00 %) indicated that their university is looking for an exchange of best practice examples and case studies. 4 responses (20,00 %) indicated that their university focuses on sustainability research and development, while 3 responses (15,00 %) indicated that financing the green transition is a key factor. 2 responses (10,00 %) indicated that their university seeks bilateral contacts with subject matter experts, while only 1 response (5,00 %) indicated that their university continues to measure its impact and co-create practical measures to support its climate-neutral activities.



4 DISCUSSION

The survey conducted among 9 universities has revealed a significant variation in the number of employees, enrolled students, and sustainable practices among the institutions.

The results of the survey show that the number of employees and enrolled students varies greatly in all 9 universities that participated in the survey. The majority of universities have between 1,000–2,000 employees (33,33 %) and 3,500–5,000 employees (33,33 %), while 1 university (11,11 %) has only 333 employees. Most universities (33,33 %) have 10,000–25,000 students, while 1 university (11,11 %) has only 76 enrolled students. Regarding the position of participants in the university, most participants identified themselves as professors (22,22 %), administrative support (22,22%) and experts in sustainability issues (22,22 %).

All universities have a plan for climate neutrality and renewable energy plan. The vast majority of the universities purchase electricity from renewable sources (88,89 %), and produce their own energy (88,89 %), with photovoltaic (40,00 %) and solar energy (33,33 %) being the most presented sources. 6 universities (66,67 %) are not using compensation for unavoidable GHG emissions. The most frequently presented sustainability-related initiatives are SDG (32,00 %), followed by CSR (20,00 %). SDGs (20,00 %), ISO (20,00 %) and GHG protocol (20,00 %) are the most used international standards and methodologies to report on sustainability. According to the survey, 4 universities (44,44 %) aim to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. However, we consider these goals to be inadequately ambitious, especially in view of the fact that one university (11,11 %) has already achieved this objective.

Most universities have energy-efficient buildings (22,58 %) and guidelines for reducing electricity consumption outside business hours (22,58 %). Only 2 universities (6,45 %) have their own heat pump. All universities consider energy efficiency when constructing new buildings (33,33 %) and renovating old buildings (33,33 %). 5 universities (18,52 %) have already implemented greening measures near buildings to reduce heat spots in streets and parking lots. Every university (34,62 %) has bins for separate waste collection. 1 university (3,85 %) has also implemented sustainability guidelines for cleaning staff. Furthermore, 4 universities (36,36 %) use water efficient appliances, 3 (27,27 %) collect rainwater and 1 university (9,09 %) has water conservation programs.

Majority of the universities have guidelines for purchase of new IT equipment (77,78 %), and have a separate WEEE container for disposal of depreciated IT equipment (30,00 %), while only 2 universities (10,00 %) use depreciated IT equipment for spare parts at the university. All 9 universities (100 %) provide infrastructure for online conferencing and teaching. 8 universities provide information or courses on e-infrastructure for employees (40,00 %), 6 for new employees (30,00 %) and 6 for students (30,00 %).

Universities handle depreciated furniture in different manners. Most universities (45,45 %) have a department where all depreciated furniture is collected and stored for future internal use, 2 universities (18,18 %) have a department where all depreciated furniture is offered for sale to employees and students, and 1 university (9,09 %) gives depreciated furniture to NGOs.

Most universities have hybrid work arrangements (25,93 %) and offer information or courses on sustainable travel (23,53 %). Many universities have ample parking for bicycles (20,59 %) and promote the use of bikes

or e-bikes (14,71 %). 5 universities (38,46 %) offer students promotional material to use city transport, while only 1 university (7,69 %) offers a subsidy for city transport.

6 universities (66,67 %) do not own any of the campus canteens, while 3 universities (33,33 %) own some of the campus canteens, most of which offer some organic food options (45,45 %) or have no guidelines for canteens (27,27 %). The majority of universities provide water stations or pipes where students and employees can fill up their water bottles (26,09 %), offer fair trade organic coffee at vending machines (17,39 %) and have guidelines for food surplus of canteen's food to avoid waste (17,39 %).

Most universities offer courses for undergraduate students on sustainability (17,39 %), biodiversity (15,22 %), climate change (15,22 %), circular economy (13,04 %), green innovation (13,04 %) and green construction (10,87 %). 6 universities (66,67 %) offer elective courses on sustainability for students and 2 universities (22,22 %) have a mandatory "basic sustainability module" for all disciplines.

4 respondents (33,33 %) do not know if their university has a climate target policy for advertising on campus. 3 universities do not allow alcohol advertising (25,00 %) and only 1 university doesn't allow advertising of unhealthy food and drinks (8,33 %) and has a policy that all paper advertising must be on recycled paper (8,33 %). Most universities use recycled office paper (25,93 %) and electronic administration (22,22 %). At 2 universities, all administrative procedures can be completed entirely online (7,41 %) and all employees have an electronic signature (7,41 %), while only at 1 university do all students have an electronic signature (3,70%). Although it is mainly students (41,18 %) and employees (35,29 %) who put pressure on universities to act in a climate-neutral way, this does not motivate universities.

For most universities, the biggest motivators for going climate neutral are leadership (19,23 %), reputational benefits (19,23 %), and cost saving (15,38 %). Increased demand from students for environmentally friendly studies (7,69 %), improved access to superior talent (7,69 %), and reported getting funded for climate neutrality (7,69 %) are motivating factors of only 2 universities, while only 1 university considers connecting with like-minded universities (3,85 %) and supporting a change (3,85 %) as important motivation. The biggest obstacles to climate-related activities for the majority of universities are lack of financial resources (27,27 %), limited dedication from university employees (18,18 %), competing strategic priorities (13,64 %) and difficulty in measuring data (13,64 %).

To support climate-neutral activities, most universities want to develop and implement university guidelines (25,00 %) and exchange best practice examples and case studies (25,00 %). 2 universities (10,00 %) seek bilateral contacts with subject matter experts, and only 1 university (5,00 %) continues to measure its impact and co-create practical measures to support its climate-neutral activities.

In conclusion, while all universities have shown some commitment to sustainability, there is a need for more ambitious climate targets and a greater implementation of sustainable practices to mitigate the impact of higher education institutions on the environment.