

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

Spotlight on Sustainability: Taking stock of the SDGs and looking beyond 2030

The role of Leadership

2026 EUA Annual Conference

17 April 2026

“Leading the green transition in universities requires more than commitment—it demands strategic and shared leadership capable of connecting multiple, concurrent transformations across governance, funding, and partnerships.”



The multiple transformation challenges

NEWLEAD survey

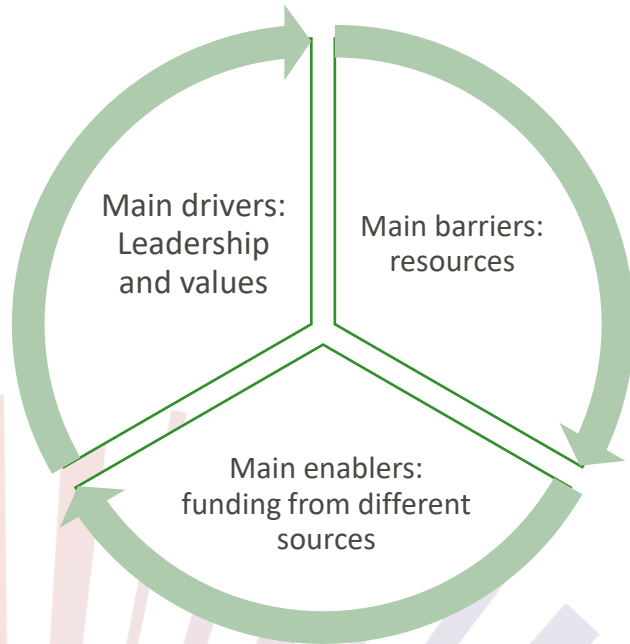
- 01 Improving efficiency, effectiveness and value for money
- 02 Further developing the societal mission of the institution
- 03 Enhancing equity, diversity and social inclusion
- 04 Quality education
- 05 Developing research capacities
- 06 Internationalisation
- 07 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- 08 Digitalisation

NEWLEAD Focus groups with university leaders: 3 core transformative leadership challenges are:

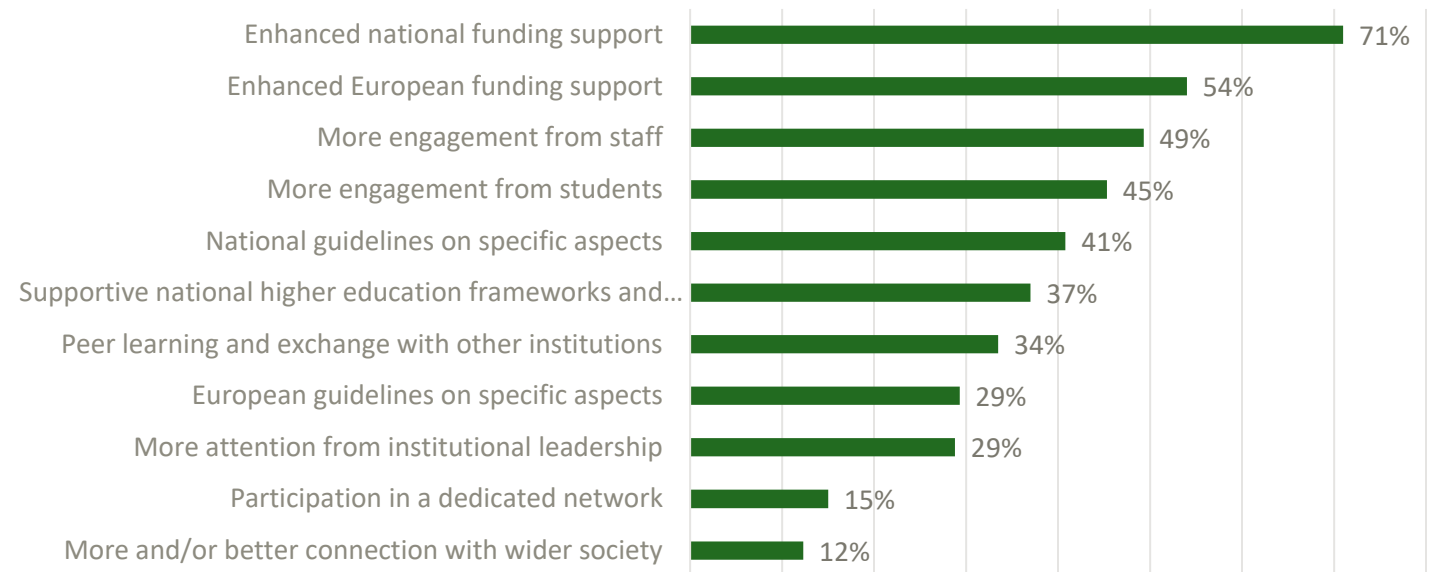
- 01 Greening and sustainability in HE
- 02 EDI/Female leadership in HE
- 03 Deeper International collaboration (European University Alliances)



Sustainability – The Leadership, Funding and Governance challenge



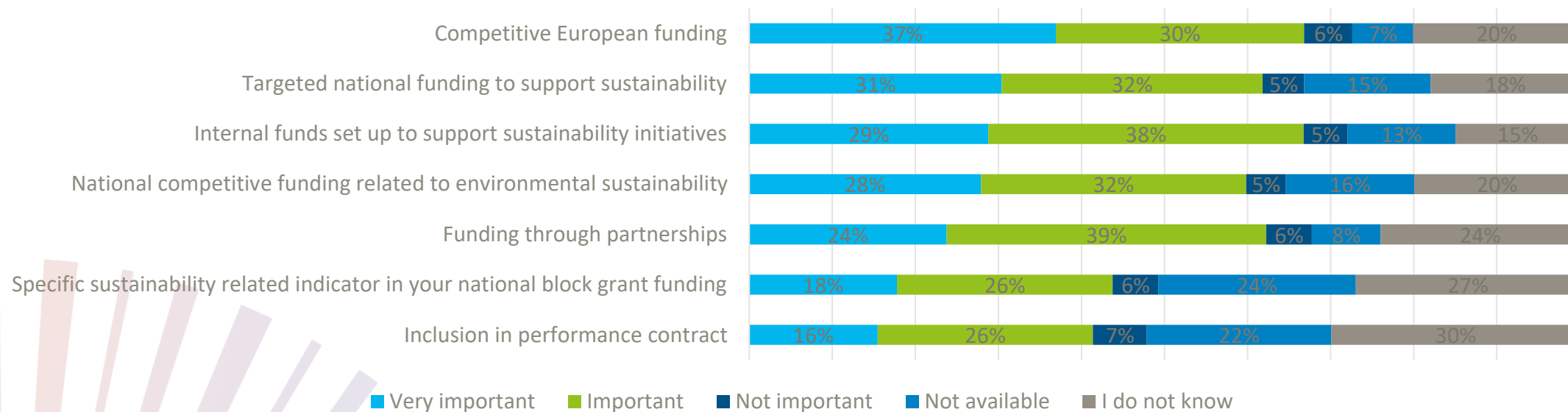
Top five enablers



Source: [2025 Greening Survey EUA](#)



Importance of funding sources for sustainability activities



Source: [2025 Greening Survey EUA](#)



The Competitiveness narrative and the future of European funding for universities

Shift from greening and sustainability transitions toward competitiveness narrative

Risk of reduced sustainability funding

Increasing geopolitical pressure



The role of institutional leadership for sustainability transformation

Leadership is central to driving sustainability engagement



Sustainability as a core leadership challenge - Some tools:



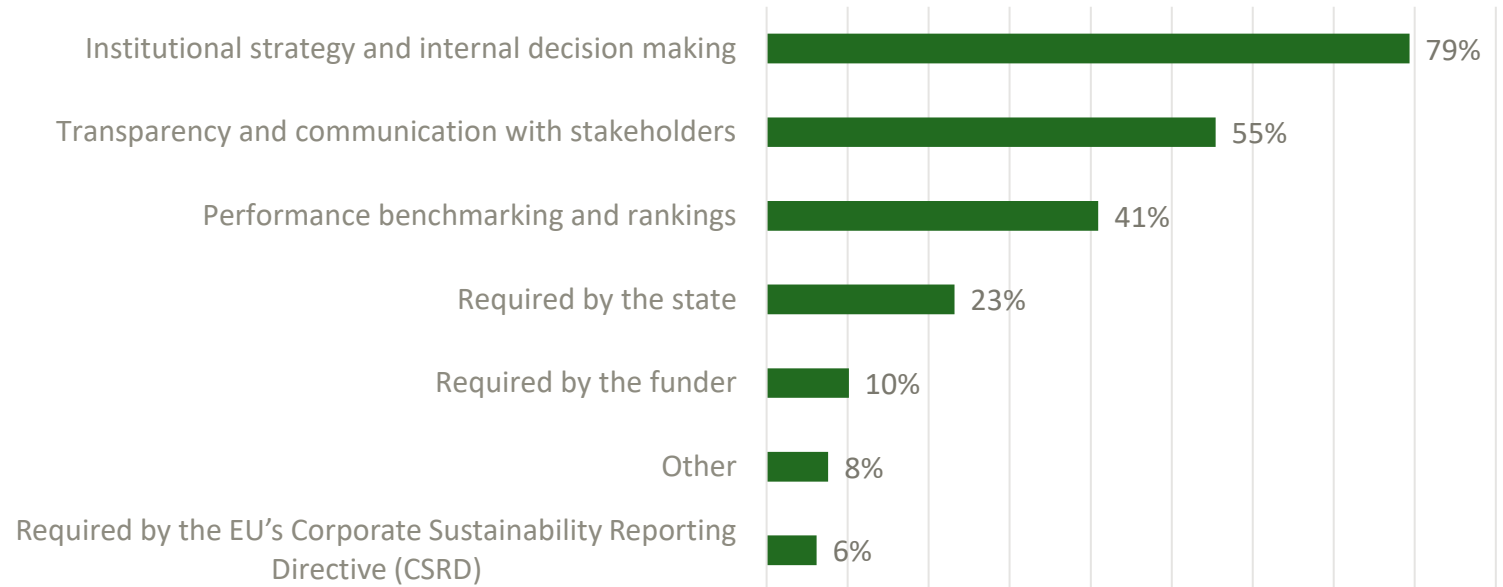
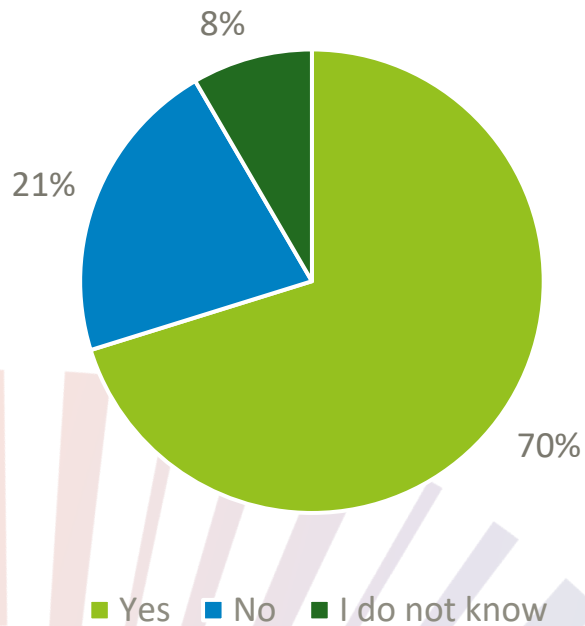
Governance and steering of sustainability and greening measures



Source: [2025 Greening Survey EUA](#)



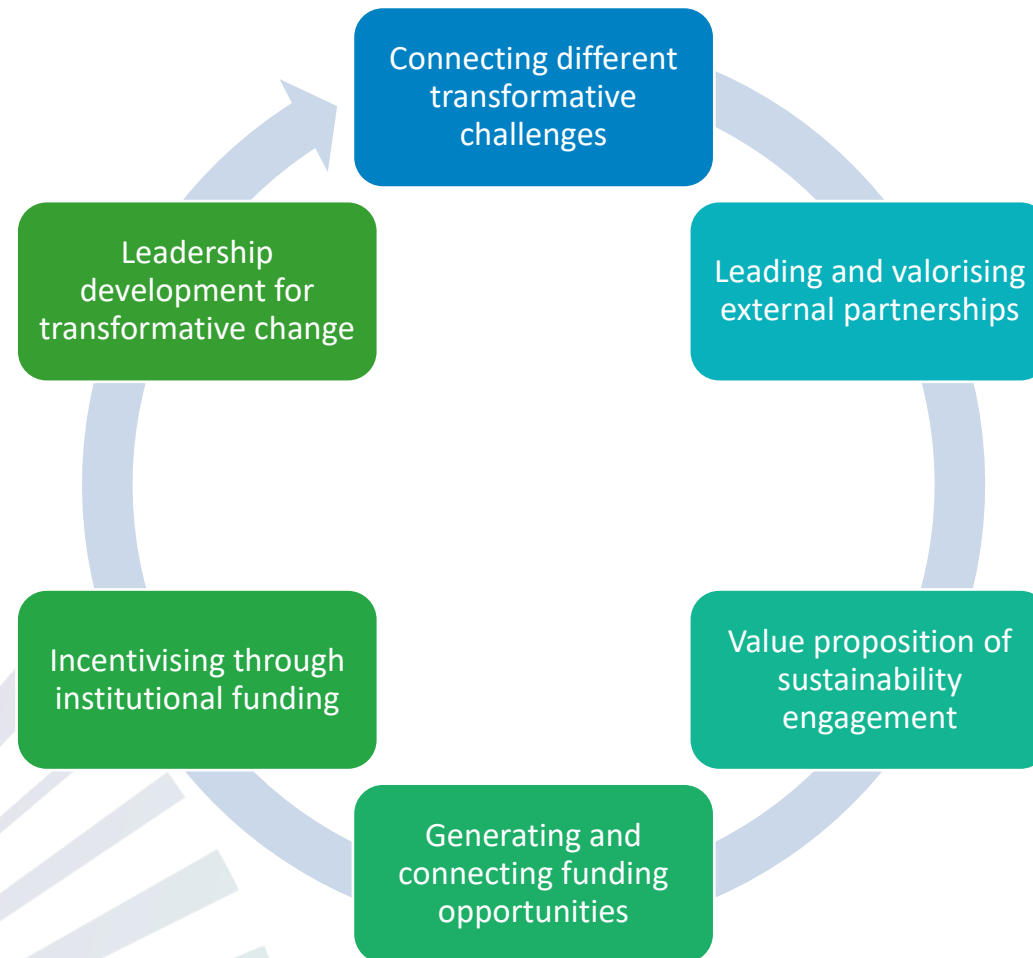
Monitoring and reporting as a strategic leadership tool: Adoption and purpose



Source: [2025 Greening Survey EUA](#)



Leadership, strategy and support



Thank you for your attention

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