



## **BEYOND THE SECTOR:**

How university partnerships are  
accelerating progress towards the  
**Sustainable Development Goals**



Times  
Higher  
Education



# Contents

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6

Introduction 3

SDG 1: Assistance to start-ups 5

SDG 2: Food security and support to farmers 8

SDG 3 and SDG 6: Health and clean water 10

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy 14

SDG 17: Partnership for the goals 18

## Case studies

- An-Najah National University, Palestine
- Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria
- Central Queensland University, Australia ■ Oklahoma State University, US
- IMT Atlantique, France ■ Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania ■ University of Chile, Chile

View from a vice-chancellor 13

View from a partner 16

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1

# Introduction

By producing cutting-edge research and teaching the sustainability champions of the future, universities are at the forefront of the fight for a sustainable planet. But the challenge is a huge one and to have a substantial impact universities must look beyond the sector and partner with organisations elsewhere.

*Times Higher Education's (THE's)* unique Impact Ranking dataset assesses how universities are performing against each of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Universities demonstrating productive engagement with all sectors of society is key to achieving the goals defined by the UN: no significant progress can be made by any sector in isolation, and the purpose of the *THE* Impact Rankings is to recognise the role universities play in this.

For each SDG, we collect data and assess universities on several indicators. Many of these indicators look at partnership and related concepts. These encompass cooperation with institutions, collaborative work as well as various types of support offered by universities to external organisations or people. The partners in those relationships include the non-profit and corporate sectors, other higher education institutions (HEIs), and governmental organisations at various levels.

The institutional data for these impact indicators are provided directly by universities, which opt in to take part in the exercise. They can submit data on as many of the SDGs as they are able. The voluntary effort required in gathering and providing the data already suggests that universities are committed to taking action to achieve sustainable development in those areas.



◀ **Table 1. The indicators used in the analysis of the SDGs**

<b>SDG</b>	<b>THE Impact Rankings indicator</b>
SDG 1 – No poverty	Local start-up assistance
	Local start-up financial assistance
SDG 2 – Zero hunger	Access to food security knowledge
	Events for local farmers and food producers
	University access to local farmers and food producers
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	Current collaborations with health institutions
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation	Cooperation on water security
SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy	Energy-efficiency services for industry
	Policy development for clean energy technology
	Assistance to low-carbon innovation
SDG 17 – Partnership for the goals	Relationships with NGOs and government for SDG policy
	Cross-sectoral dialogue about SDGs
	International collaboration for SDG data gathering
	Collaboration for SDG best practice
	Collaboration with NGOs for SDGs

All those indicators are evidence indicators, which means we ask participating universities whether they support or have policies on a given topic, and we then assess both the universities’ replies and the documents they provided to support their claim. Provision of evidence is not mandatory; university responses are taken on trust. However, institutions do earn more points if they provide evidence, especially if the evidence is publicly accessible (which can help to share best practice) and specifically relevant to the question asked.



# 2

## **SDG 1 (NO POVERTY): ASSISTANCE TO START-UPS**

*THE's* SDG 1 ranking table measures universities' research on poverty and their support for poor students and citizens in the local community. Two of the indicators specifically measure the support universities offer start-up businesses.

### **1.4.1 – Local start-up assistance**

This measures whether a university provides assistance in the local community through supporting the start-up of financially and socially sustainable businesses with relevant education or resources such as mentorship programmes, training workshops or access to university facilities.

### **1.4.2 – Local start-up financial assistance**

This measures whether a university provides financial assistance to the local community supporting the start-up of financially and socially sustainable businesses.

### **◀ SDG 1 partnership indicators**

The businesses must be sustainable, by which we mean they must have a positive social impact and provide real opportunities for the community as well as be economically sustainable in the long term.

The two indicators cover different types of support: the first one asks universities about material and logistical support – for example, “incubator” schemes designed to help start-up businesses. The second one concerns financial support and as such shows less take-up. Of the 769 universities participating in SDG 1, 93 per cent said they did provide the first type of support, but only 75 per cent provide financial support.



## An-Najah National University, Palestine

## Case study

An-Najah National runs “incubator” schemes designed to help small start-up businesses. In 2019, 30 women with disabilities or mothers of children with disabilities took part in three training workshops over six months. They received support in various aspects of running a social enterprise, from purchasing cooking and bee-keeping equipment to renovating places in which to produce their ultimate products.

The women ran fairs to market their goods and network with customers and were invited by the

university to guest lecture to students interested in entrepreneurship, especially women.

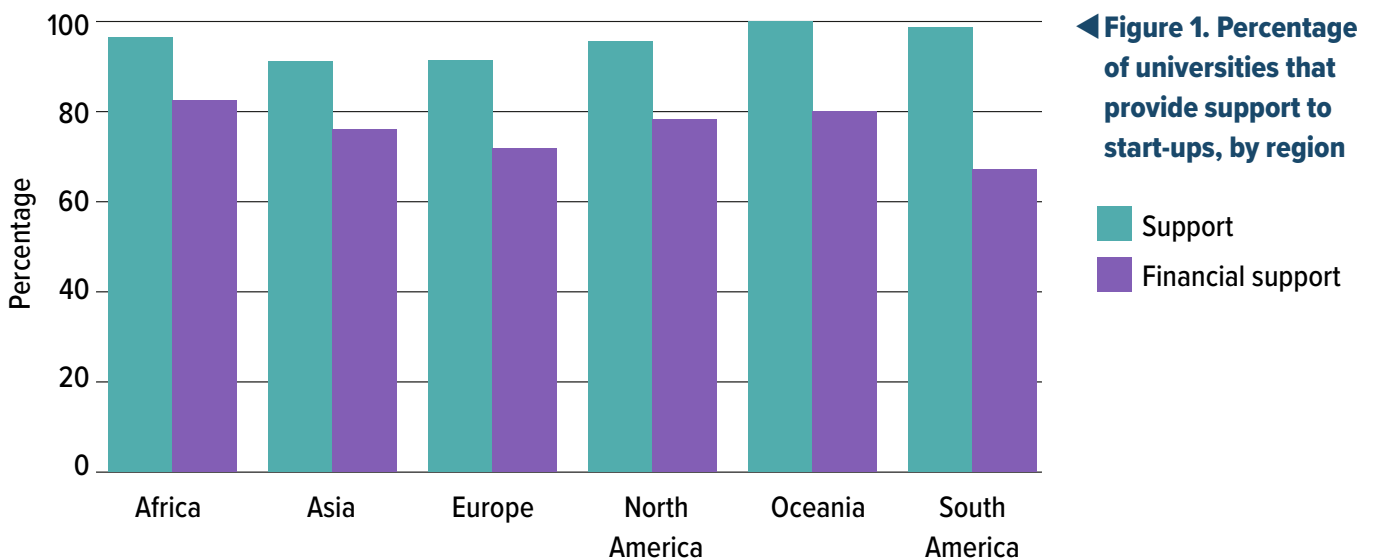
Each woman submitted a business plan that was evaluated by a joint committee of Palestinian and Italian partners, from organisations including the university, the local chamber of commerce and NGOs. Six of the businesses received funding.

Previously, each woman had been at home caring for their families – but the opening of their businesses allowed them to make sufficient incomes to improve their standard of

living and quality of life for their children.

One woman who participated in the project said: “Before joining you in this project, people were calling me my first name, as my older son has a difficult disability...but, after starting my business, they started calling me ‘Um Saéd’ (‘the mother of Saéd’). In our culture, calling mothers and fathers by ‘the father of (the son’s name)’, or ‘the mother of (the son’s name)’ indicates high respect. I feel very proud and confident of what I have achieved.”

In all regions, the percentage of institutions providing financial support to start-ups is significantly lower than those that provide other types of support; this difference is largest in South America, with almost all (99 per cent) of the 73 participating institutions answering “yes” to the first indicator, but only 67 per cent for the second indicator. The 57 participating African universities show strong widespread support, with 97 per cent and 83 per cent respectively on the two indicators.





A total of 28 countries have 10 or more institutions in the SDG 1 ranking, and hence in those two indicators. Out of those, only in two countries do less than half the institutions offer financial support to start-ups: Ukraine and Japan (27 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

(Note, the data were collected before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and are unrelated to the war.)

In Malaysia, China and South Korea, all participating institutions reported offering this type of support.





# 3

## SDG 2 (ZERO HUNGER): FOOD SECURITY AND SUPPORT TO FARMERS

THE's SDG 2 ranking table measures universities' research on hunger, their teaching on food sustainability, and their commitment to tackling food waste and addressing hunger on campus and locally.

### 2.5.1 – Access to food security knowledge:

This measures whether universities provide local farmers and food producers with access to knowledge, skills or technology related to food security and sustainable agriculture and aquaculture.

### 2.5.2 – Events for local farmers and food producers:

This measures whether universities host events for local farmers and food producers to connect and transfer knowledge.

### 2.5.3 – University access to local farmers and food producers:

This measures whether universities provide access to university facilities such as labs, technological equipment and plant stocks to local farmers and food producers to improve sustainable farming practices.

### ◀ Indicator definitions

Food security has become especially pertinent over the past few years. Both the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine destabilised global food supply networks, revealing the urgent need to strengthen local food producers and boost innovative approaches to sustainable land use.

Of the 553 universities that provided data for the SDG 2 ranking, access to food security knowledge is the most commonly provided service: 83 per cent of institutions answered "yes" to this question. Events for local farmers and food producers are provided by 81 per cent of institutions, and access to university facilities by 77 per cent.

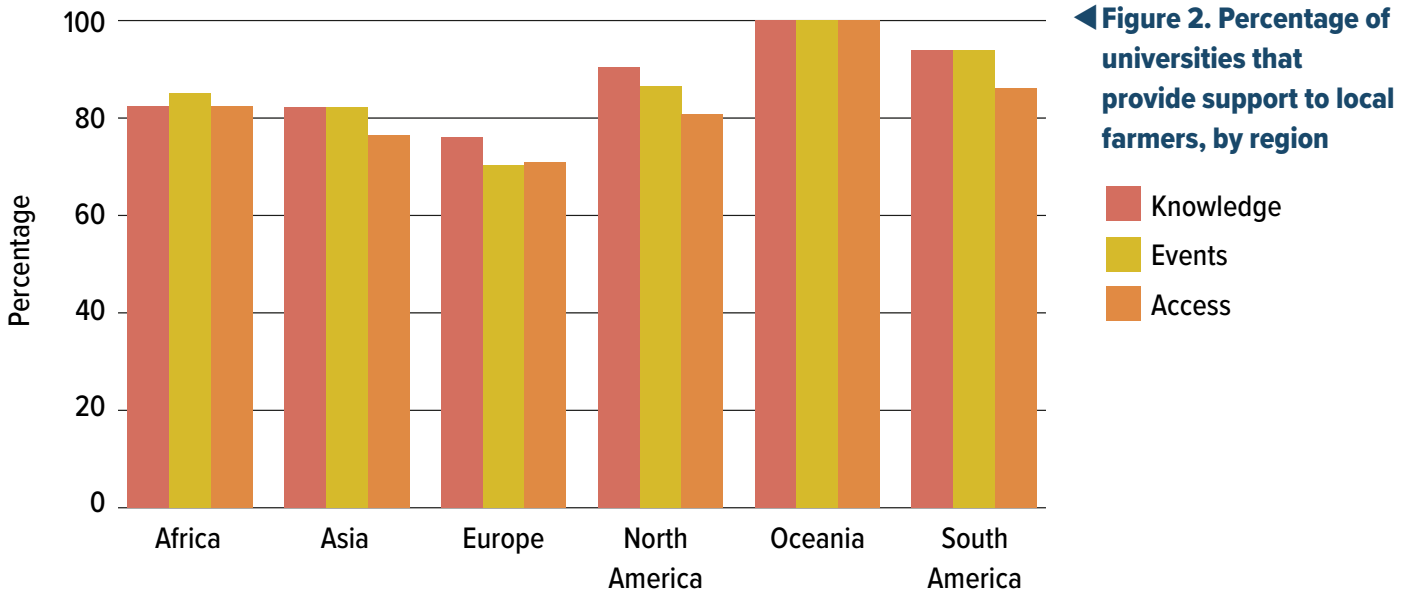
At the regional level, the involvement of European universities is noticeably lower than in other regions: only 76 per cent provided access to food security knowledge, 70 per cent hosted events for local farmers and food producers and 71 gave access to facilities.

In Asia, the average percentages are only a few percentage points higher than in Europe, but there is wide variation in the region. Japanese institutions have comparatively lower levels of cooperation with farmers while other





countries such as Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia have much closer links (100 per cent of participating Thai, Malaysian and South Korean institutions provide access to food security knowledge compared with 80 per cent in Japan).



### Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria

### Case study

In June 2021 Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike launched an outreach programme to empower local farmers. Spanning two days and with the theme of “ensuring farmers’ productivity in an era of climate change”, it brought together farmers from two villages, Ezzamgbo and Ohatekwe, to equip them with more modern skills to improve their farm yield. It involved faculty lecturers and researchers answering questions from the farmers and villagers, and

presentations from fourth-year agriculture students. For example, one student talked to the farmers about pest control, plant disease and climate-friendly practices for production, and went on to visually demonstrate the process and preparation needed for cultivation. Another speaker was Dr Michael Olaolu, head of the university’s department of agriculture. The purpose of the workshop was to promote the relationship between the university and its host

community through distributing its research into settings where it has a tangible impact, and to expose students to the practical realities of agriculture as they become professionals. One of the university’s core mandates is community service – something that the outreach programme, which also included a cultural dance and drama demonstration to further highlight the students’ message around farming – aimed to fulfil.



## **SDG 3 (GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING) AND SDG 6 (CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION)**

Here we assess together two SDG rankings that give an indication of the geographical scope of university partnerships.

*THE's* SDG 3 ranking measures universities' research on the key conditions and diseases that have a disproportionate impact on health outcomes across the world, their support for healthcare professions, and the health of students and staff (it is not a general measure of a university's medical teaching and research).

Our SDG 6 ranking focuses on universities' research related to water, their water usage and their commitment to ensuring good water management in the wider community.

### **3.3.1 – Current collaborations with health institutions:**

This measures whether universities have current collaborations with local, national or global health institutions to improve health and well-being outcomes.

### **6.5.5 – Cooperation on water security:**

This measures whether universities cooperate with local, regional, national or global governments on water security.

### **◀ Indicators definition**

As part of the SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) ranking, we assess universities' collaborations with health institutions. Those collaborations can have different geographical scopes: local, national or global.

We define local as within the same town or city as one of the universities' campuses; national as working with a nationwide institution or organisation such as a governmental department or national NGO or business; and global as working with institutions or organisations that operate globally or have global influence, such as the European Union, the United Nations or the World Health Organisation.

This geographical detail is also something we collect as part of the SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) indicator about cooperation on water security. Here institutions can also be involved in regional cooperation.

In both indicators, we see that the wider the scope, the fewer universities participate in initiatives – ie, universities are much more likely to be working



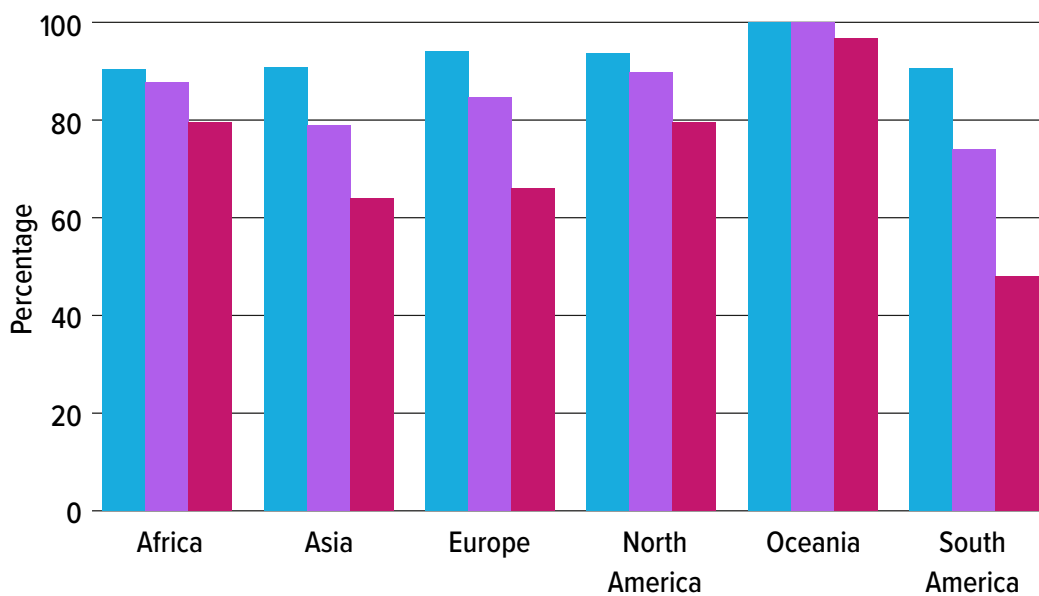
with organisations in their local area than organisations with national or global influence.

Across the 1,101 universities that provided data for SDG 1 and the 635 that provided data for SDG 6, there is a clear decrease in the percentage that answered “yes” as the geographical scope broadened: from 92 per cent for local health collaborations to 66 per cent for global; and from 73 per cent for local water security cooperation to 43 per cent for global.

Indicator	Local	Regional	National	Global
Collaborations with health institutions	92%	n/a	82%	66%
Cooperation on water security	73%	67%	62%	43%

◀ **Percentage of universities participating in collaborations at different geographical scopes**

The above numbers show that there is more national and global collaboration on health than water security. This difference could be due partly to the nature of the organisations cooperated with (there are more global health institutions than water-focused ones), but also to the topic of those collaborations: health is inherently a global issue, while water security might be more localised.



◀ **Figure 3. SDG 3: Percentage of universities that collaborate with health institutions, by scope of collaboration**

■ Local  
 ■ National  
 ■ Global

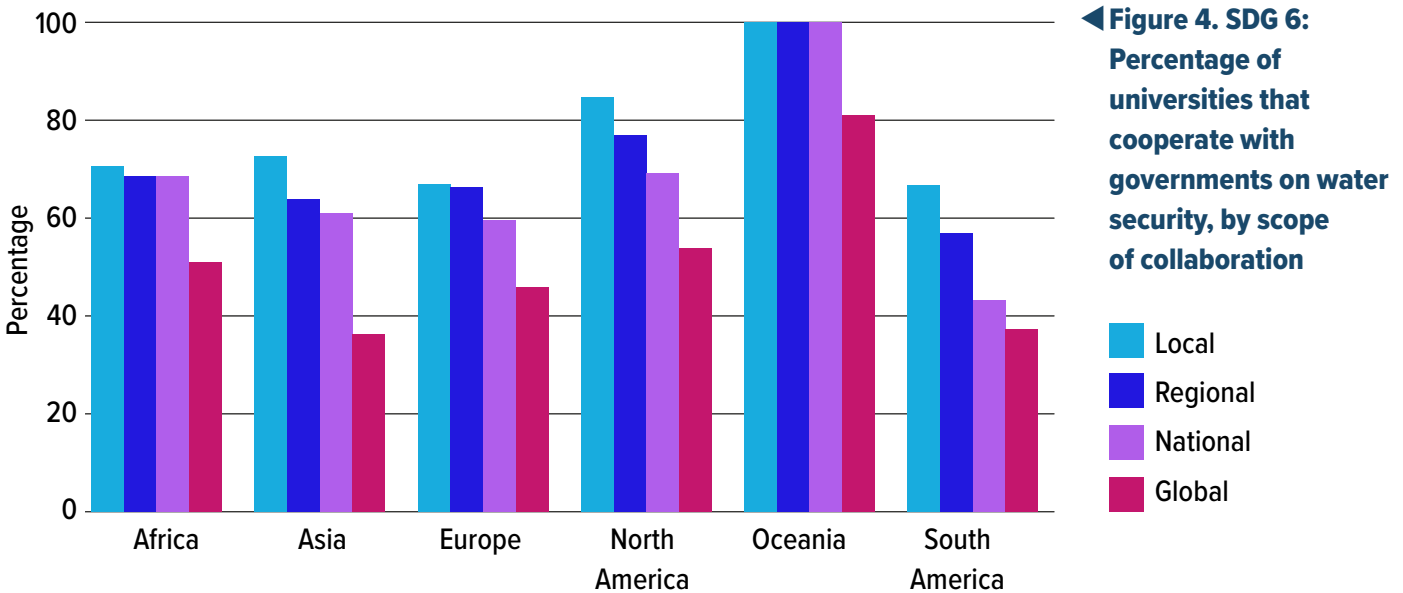
This decrease is seen in all regions, but the sharpness of the decrease varies. Universities in Oceania (of which 30 are represented in the data) are involved in almost as many collaborations with global health institutions (97 per cent) as with local and national ones (100 per cent).

South American institutions, on the other hand (of which 96 are represented in the data), are very involved in local collaborations (91 per cent) but are much less likely to work with global institutions (48 per cent): this



43 percentage point difference is by far the greatest across all six regions.

The SDG 6 indicator asks universities about their cooperation with various governments; here we are also including a fourth scope, “regional”. The difference between the most local scope to the least is still high (30 percentage points overall), but here it is Asia that shows the greatest difference in scope: 73 per cent of the 317 Asian institutions cooperate with local governments on water security, versus only 36 per cent with governing bodies.



◀ **Figure 4. SDG 6: Percentage of universities that cooperate with governments on water security, by scope of collaboration**

- Local
- Regional
- National
- Global

### Central Queensland University, Australia

Central Queensland University joined forces with Health and Wellbeing Queensland, in working on improving Queensland residents’ health and reducing inequalities, to run a health challenge called the 10,000 Steps Programme.

Central Queensland University has been funded by the Queensland government to deliver the 10,000 Steps Programme for nearly 20 years. In May 2020, it launched the Billion Steps Challenge, a programme designed to

encourage people in the state to get more active during and beyond the Covid pandemic with an overall goal of collectively reaching a billion steps in exactly a month.

Promoting a team spirit, the university encouraged participants to track their steps, find new methods of activity and set daily goals.

In total, 5,874 Queenslanders from 319 postcodes logged their steps during this period, allowing the state to reach its target.

The mission won high-

profile support, politically from Queensland’s premier, minister for health and minister for sport and recreation, and from sporting greats such as former Australian cricket captain Jodie Fields.

The university’s 10,000 Steps team collaborated with Health and Wellbeing Queensland and Queensland Sport and Recreation to deliver the Billion Steps Challenge via promotion, ambassador engagement and additional resources and support to encourage physical activity.

### Case study



**View from a vice-chancellor: Judith Petts, vice-chancellor at Plymouth University, and former commissioner on the higher education and further education climate commission, representing Universities UK**

Plymouth University has a broad array of partnerships with various types of organisations. Its vice-chancellor Judith Petts says that “research in sustainability areas, particularly areas of climate, environment and marine, is almost always dependent on partnership working because they’re very complex, global challenges.”

It’s often thought that the partnering stage happens towards the end of the process, when the research is translated into business, equipment or new ways of working, Petts says, but actually the process often works better when partners are involved at the earlier stage when the problem is being identified and scoped out.

When partners are engaged in the initial research it can sometimes be on a low level such as via funding one PhD student or one project. An example of this at Plymouth is its connection to Princess Yachts, a company that makes high-end yachts.

The company is based entirely in Plymouth and frequently hires engineering graduates from the university. The partnership was developed when it had a problem that needed solving. With several

manufacturing sites across Plymouth, it was moving products across sites. “They realised that they generate huge amounts of potential waste in doing this, because they’re wrapping everything in cardboard and wood and crates, and it’s moving around from one manufacturing site to another.” To solve the problem the company funded a PhD student to run a project looking at the cost-benefit analysis and waste minimisation with the aim of making the system more sustainable.

It’s about building a relationship, Petts says, not just asking a business to put some money into a project. “One of the critical elements in that stage is the development of trust and confidence in the way that you work together,” she says.

“Some of our best partnerships started with just a small project that the company wanted a student to help with, or perhaps a PhD studentship to have a look at a little more complex problem. And then you lead to much larger and more long-term partnership working, where strategically you’re bidding together for funding and opportunities, etc.”

Other types of partnerships at Plymouth involve working

with much smaller organisations. As a coastal university, one of Plymouth’s specialist areas is offshore wind. In that space there are several very small companies operating in new technology areas. “They will tend to work very closely, but almost on a one-to-one basis as opposed to having a corporate strategic partnership,” she says.

Forming partnerships with small organisations can be tricky, Petts says, as they often lack the resources to navigate working with a university. “That’s when it becomes the university’s role to be out there and offering services, almost on the basis of trying to find those very small companies.”

One way they make contact with small organisations at Plymouth is a project called Low Carbon Devon which lets companies bid for some staff or student time to tackle a sustainable development problem.

The work isn’t over once the university has struck up a partnership, however. “You have to have a mechanism in-house for maintaining a system of engagement with those companies over long time periods because of course they won’t have a question every year that they want answering.”

To assist with this, 10 years ago the university set up a network which now has about 10,000 companies in it. They engage with around 1,000 of them each year.

To build in partnership working throughout the university involves including it in the strategic plan, Petts says, and considering it in every aspect of university life, including hiring. “You need academics who are interested in an outcome.”

When it comes to partnership working, “the most successful academics are the ones who do multiple things. They give advice to government committees, they sometimes sit on government committees, they are involved in company engagement, they’re involved in thinking about the next element of the research project. And they’re always thinking strategically about what else needs to be done.”



5

## SDG 7 (AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY): VARIOUS PARTNERSHIPS

THE's SDG 7 ranking measures universities' research related to energy, their energy use and policies, and their commitment to promoting energy efficiency in the wider community.

### 7.4.3 – Energy-efficiency services for industry:

This asks whether a university provides direct services to local industry aimed at improving energy efficiency and clean energy, such as energy-efficiency assessments, workshops and research into renewable energy options.

### 7.4.4 – Policy development for clean energy technology:

This measures whether universities inform and support governments in clean energy and energy-efficient technology policy development.

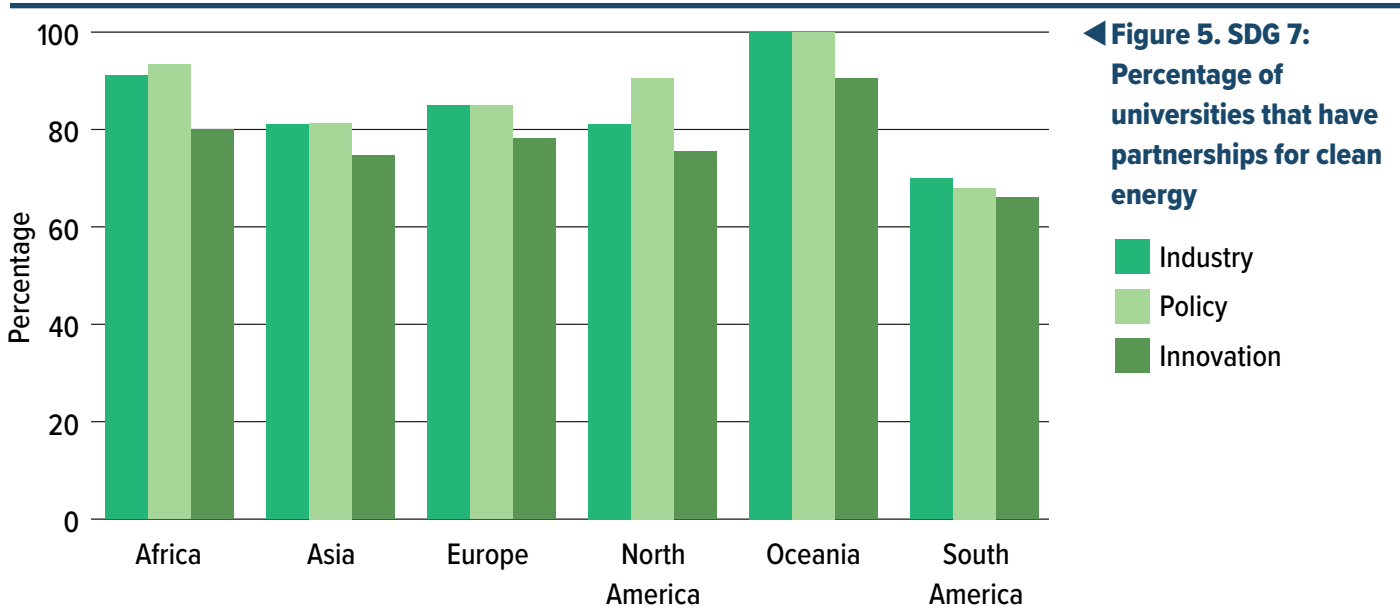
### 7.4.5 – Assistance to low-carbon innovation:

This measures whether universities provide assistance for start-up businesses or social enterprises that foster and support a low-carbon economy or technology.

### ◀ Indicator definitions

In the SDG 7 ranking, we consider three possible partners: **industry**, **government** and **start-ups**. In all cases we ask universities about their involvement in partnerships that aim to increase clean energy, whether that be through helping partners assess their energy efficiency or draft policies that target this specific area of sustainability.

Of the 706 universities that participated in our SDG 7 ranking, 83 per cent provide energy-efficiency services to industry and almost the same proportion (84 per cent ) work with government to inform relevant policy, while 76 per cent assist innovative start-ups.



At the regional level, North America is the exception in seeing a much greater number of universities participate in policy dialogue (91 per cent) than both industry services (81 per cent) and assistance to low-carbon innovation (76 per cent). This pattern is stronger in the US than in Canada.

In most countries, institutions are more likely to be involved in policy development with governments and to assist industry with energy efficiency than to be involved in energy innovation projects. The exception is France, where 79 per cent contribute to policy development, 86 per cent work with industry, and 93 per cent work on low carbon innovation (based on 14 participating universities).

Indonesia shows similar numbers to the US: out of its 21 participating universities, 95 per cent are involved in policy advice, but only 81 per cent, and 76 per cent in industry, support and innovation assistance.



## View from a partner: City of Los Angeles

The City of Los Angeles' Mayor's Office regularly partners with universities on work towards sustainable development.

In 2017, Mayor Eric Garcetti launched a city-wide effort to advance the SDGs in the city, measuring local progress and building new partnerships for action. Since 2018, over 160 undergraduate and graduate students have been engaged as interns, researchers and cohort participants, to help advance the SDGs in the city of LA. In partnership with city departments and the Office of the Mayor, students have completed more than 22 research projects advancing one or more specific SDG targets.

For example, in spring 2021, two teams of students from local colleges worked with the Office of the Mayor to research and propose a list of indicators to measure

gender equity progress at the local level.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, a group of five students worked with the mayor's chief sustainability officer to better understand the fossil fuel sector in LA and recommend pathways for a transition to a sustainable and climate-resilient economy. Through qualitative and quantitative research and stakeholder interviews, the students found that the fossil fuel chain employs about 31,000 workers in Los Angeles County, with a median salary between \$95,000 and \$105,000 per year. Understanding career pathways of workers in the sector will be vital in developing a strategy for LA's clean energy future.

Speaking at the 2022 *THE*

Innovation and Impact Summit, held at KTH Stockholm, Dawn Comer, director of technology inclusion at the LA mayor's office, said that these partnerships also enabled the public sector to bring in new skills and expertise.

"Sometimes we [the city government] can't upskill and reskill fast enough," she explained. "Working with the students allows us to bring in that breath of fresh air, a new way of looking at something, of doing something. It helps to build capacity for some of the projects we may not have the ability to staff right away. "The way we approach it is that we timebox it. We make sure

that we have a project that can be started and completed with a semester timescale."

Erin Bromaghim, director of Olympic and Paralympic development in the mayor's office said: "Our ability to achieve the SDGs hinges on how we grow partnerships that build capacity, shared goals and trust. Colleges and universities, rooted in the communities they serve, are natural partners for cities like Los Angeles – and working with the city offers students an opportunity for practical impact and experience."





## Oklahoma State University, US

Oklahoma State University (OSA) runs a Rural Energy Assessment Centre (REAC) which assists agricultural producers and rural small businesses to decrease energy use through conservation and energy-efficiency improvements.

It also promotes renewable energy development in Oklahoma.

The REAC carries out

audits that include assessments of all energy-consuming equipment and production and can save businesses up to 15 per cent of their annual energy costs.

The REAC team also offers recommendations and guidance on the latest advanced solutions available on the market to effectively manage energy consumption and

productivity. The audit can support the organisations to apply for US Department of Agriculture Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants and guaranteed loans which can range from \$1,500 to \$250,000.

Usually such audits would cost a business \$5,000 but the centre is able to offer this for free, thanks to funding from the US Department of Agriculture.

## Case study

## IMT Atlantique, France

The incubator scheme at IMT Atlantique, France, supports a wide variety of technological projects. Based at the university's campuses in Brest, Nantes and Rennes, the scheme works alongside various partners.

Since 1998, IMT Atlantique's incubator scheme has supported 240 projects

or start-ups, currently hosting 45. It has space at each of the university's three campuses. Business and entrepreneurial start-up staff, students, researchers and other company employees are just some of those who can use its meeting places.

Anyone, including local technology project leaders,

scientific staff, students and graduates, can apply to take part in the scheme, with the successful candidates ultimately chosen by a jury. These participants can then access coaching, training, loans and personalised support, such as regular meetings at various stages of their projects.

## Case study



# 6

## SDG 17 (PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS)

THE's SDG 17 ranking is focused specifically on how universities form links beyond their own institutions to further the Sustainable Development Goals.

**17.2.1 – Relationships with regional NGOs and government for SDG policy:** This measures whether universities have direct involvement in, or input into, national government or regional non-government organisations' SDG policy development. This may include identifying problems and challenges, developing policies and strategies, modelling likely futures with and without interventions, monitoring and reporting on interventions, and enabling adaptive management.

**17.2.2 – Cross-sectoral dialogue about SDGs:** This measures whether universities initiate and participate in cross-sectoral dialogue about the SDGs, such as conferences involving government or NGOs.

**17.2.3 – International collaboration for SDG data gathering:** This measures whether universities participate in international collaboration on gathering or measuring data for the SDGs.

**17.2.4 – Collaboration for SDG best practice:** This measures whether universities are participating in international collaboration and research that reviews comparative approaches and develops international best practice on tackling the SDGs.

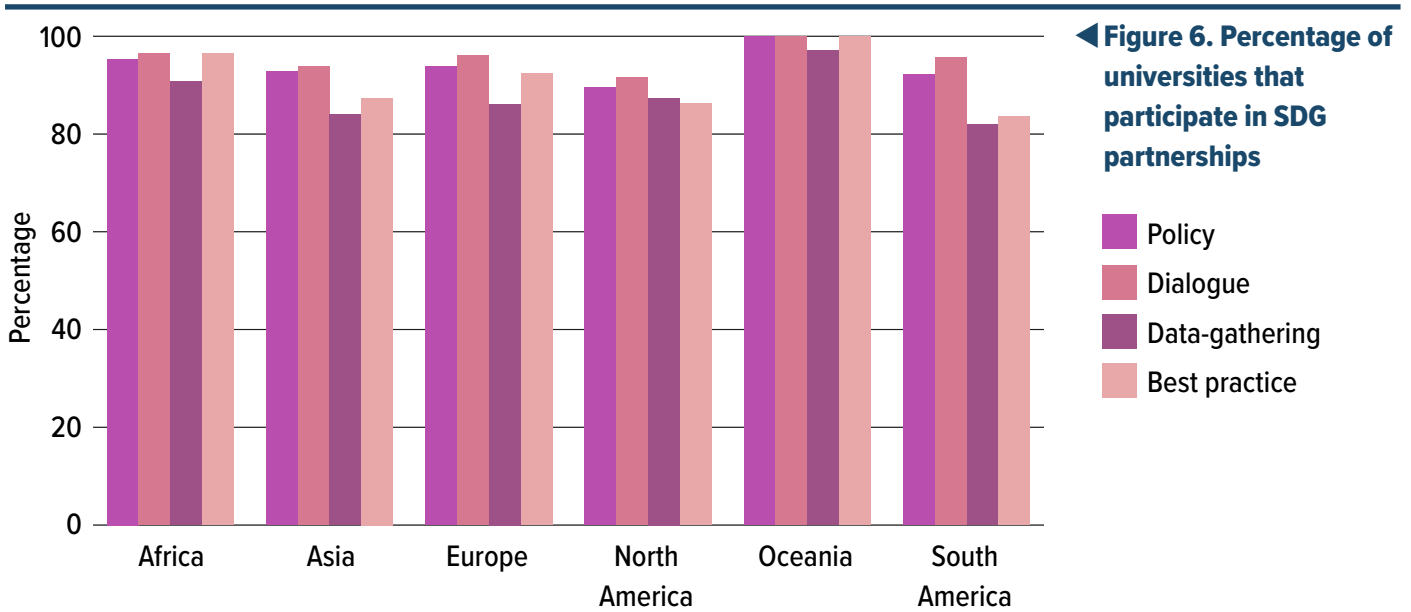
**17.2.5 – Collaboration with NGOs for SDGs:** This measures whether universities collaborate with NGOs to tackle the SDGs through activities such as student volunteering programmes, research programmes and development of educational resources.

### ◀ Indicators definition

Under SDG 17, some of the indicators are more concerned with academic research, and others relate to report publication. Here we are analysing only those indicators that explicitly measure universities' efforts in engaging with other sectors and/or their involvement in international data collection.

All four indicators show a high level of take-up: from 85 per cent (international data gathering) to 95 per cent (cross-sectoral dialogue).

The regional difference is less marked than in previous indicators and SDGs: in all regions, the percentage of universities answering "yes" to those indicators was above 80 per cent.



◀ **Figure 6. Percentage of universities that participate in SDG partnerships**

Working with regional NGOs and government for SDG policy (17.2.1) had a very high response rate, with 100 per cent “yes” response in 18 of the 38 countries in which 10 or more universities are ranked. The country doing the least work in this area is Japan, with only 71 per cent of universities carrying out this work, followed by the United States (86 per cent), Poland (87 per cent) and Brazil (88 per cent).

When it comes to participation in cross-sectoral dialogue about the SDGs, more than half (22 of 38) of countries had a 100 per cent yes rate from universities, although, again, Japan had the lowest rate at 79 per cent.

Fewer countries had a 100 per cent yes rate for data gathering for the SDGs (17.2.3). This may reflect the fact that data collection infrastructure differs by country and university involvement may be less vital in countries with other systems set up.

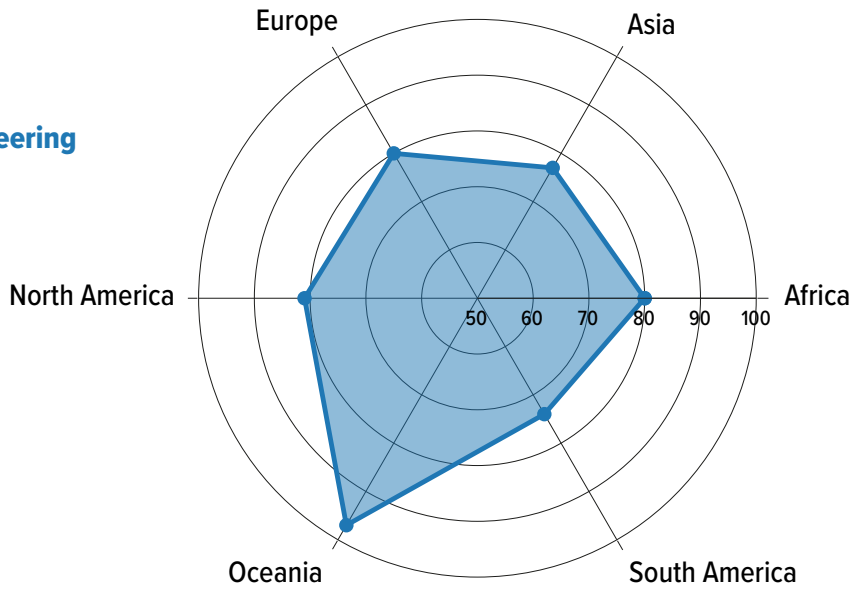
Canada, Malaysia, South Korea, Philippines, Jordan, China, Ireland and France all had 100 per cent yes responses.

The country with the lowest rate was Ukraine at 66 per cent, followed by Japan (71 per cent) and Brazil (73 per cent).

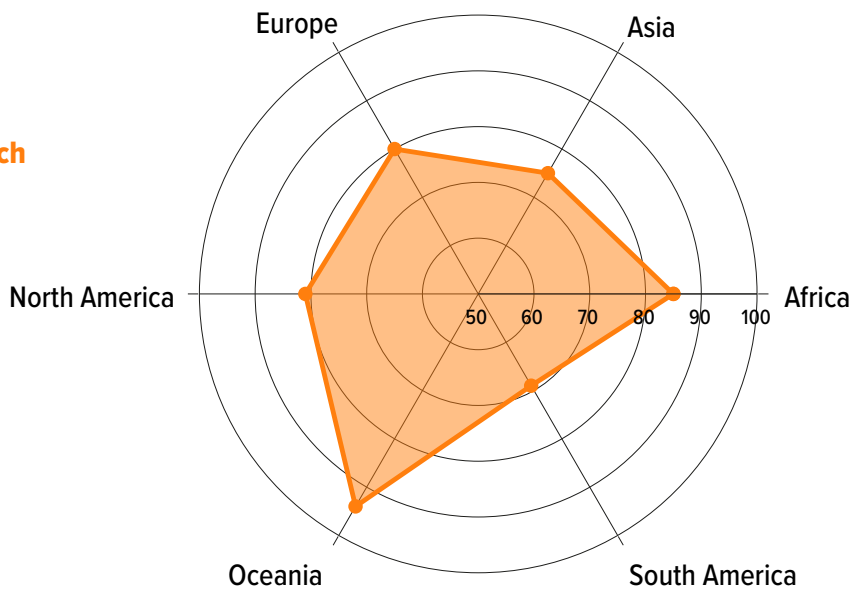


◀ **Figure 7. Percentage of universities per type of collaboration**

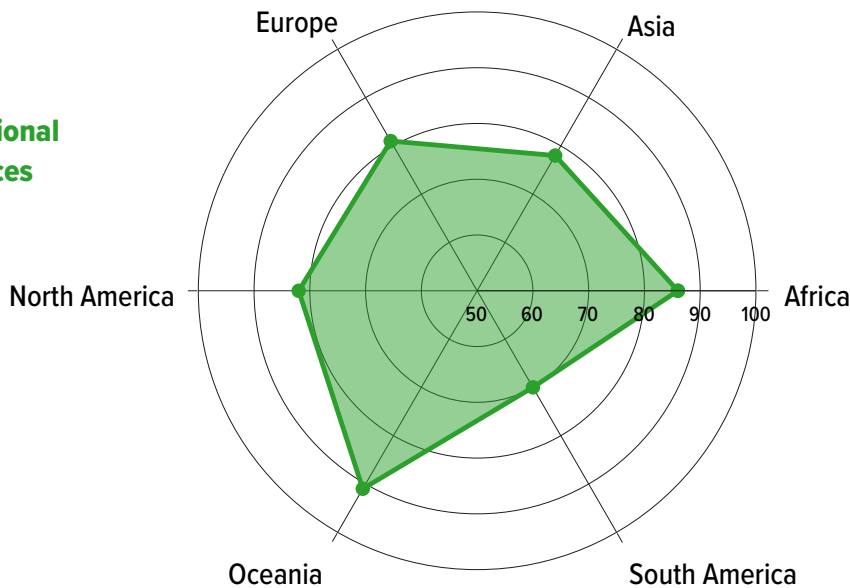
**Volunteering**



**Research**



**Educational resources**





As can be seen in the previous chart, while Oceania performs well on all three types of collaboration its educational resources are slightly lagging behind the other two types; South America performs better on volunteering than it does on research and educational resources, and Africa does less volunteering than research or educational resources.

### Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

In Romania, the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (UBB)'s Research Centre for Sustainable Development (CCDD) partnered with the government to improve awareness of sustainable development within the country's public authorities and local communities. The project started in 2020 and is due to end in 2030.

University researchers had already built a database tracking regions of Romania against 90 sustainable development indicators. Building on this,

they worked with the Department for Sustainable Development within the Romanian government to develop a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index.

The purpose of the index is to evaluate the municipalities, cities and counties of Romania against the objectives of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania 2030. The index creates colourful maps so that users can visualise the level of progress for each region. It also

monitors progress and formulates interventions.

The university's lead on the project, Professor Jozsef Benedek, explained the novel aspects of the partnership: "We mix the classical data sources and SDG measurement techniques with non-conventional or progressive data sources and measurement techniques, represented by big data, data from satellite images, respectively remote sensing and geographic information systems."

### Case study



## University of Chile, Chile

## Case study

The University of Chile collaborated with the Chilean Society of Soil Science (SChCS), the Geological Society of Chile, the College of Geologists and the NGO Sustainable Soil to propose legislation on a General Land Law.

Chile is one of the few members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that does not have legislation on its soil. As a result, soil in Chile does not have a legal regulation that protects it as an essential natural resource for the sustenance of humanity and food security, preventing its erosion and contamination, and conserving the biodiversity it houses.

In 2019, the SChCS

resumed various initiatives aimed at bringing this legislation to Chile. That June, the coalition of organisations hosted a seminar on soil law at the headquarters of the National Congress in Santiago, which was attended by 350 people.

To persuade the Chilean Parliament, University of Chile academics developed scientific technical tables providing information on land use and climate change, territorial planning, soil and pollution and degradation, erosion and desertification.

Professor Yasna Tapia, director of the university's department of engineering and soils and vice-president of the SChCS, coordinated these. She

said: "There is an urgent need to have a General Land Law because the resource is being degraded in a race against time due to the advance of climate change that is generating serious effects on the planet."

She previously explained that a motivation for the group's work was soil being the "life and protector of water". Professor Tapia said: "For life it is the main support because it has all the necessary elements for the production of food and the maintenance of biodiversity. And it also acts as a water reserve, because it is capable of containing it and filtering it from contaminants."

## Conclusion

As can be seen from *THE's* extensive dataset, hundreds of universities across the world are reaching out beyond the higher education sector to form partnerships with other types of organisations.

The extent and nature of those partnerships differ by issue and geography but in every region they are being formed and are making valuable contributions to fight for a more sustainable planet.

As the University of Plymouth's Petts said, research into sustainability "is almost always dependent on partnership working because they're very complex, global challenges". She believes that almost every university working in those areas will be doing so in partnership with organisations beyond the sector: "We're heading in the right direction."



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**DataPoints**

***THE* has rich datasets on university sustainability from the Impact Rankings.**

Contact [data@timeshighereducation.com](mailto:data@timeshighereducation.com) if you would like to enquire about accessing these data.

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