



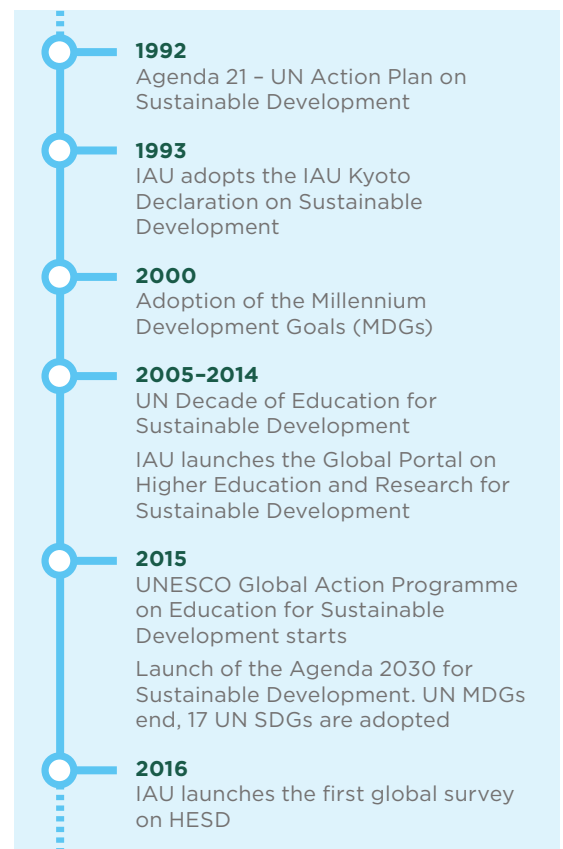
INITIATIVES FOR A GLOBAL AGENDA

In response to the growing need to address global sustainability, the International Association of Universities (IAU) has taken on two initiatives aimed at ensuring higher education institutions play a prominent role in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. Can IAU's resources help your institution achieve its sustainability goals?

In 2015, the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP ESD) was founded, bringing together partner networks from around the world including from higher education to contribute to the UN agenda: *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and the 17 SDGs.¹ GAP ESD aims to reach the objectives of Agenda 2030 by building upon the synergies developed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals – goals which were not reached – through two objectives: Reorienting education and learning so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to a sustainable future; and strengthening education and learning in all agendas, programmes and activities that promote sustainable development.

IAU ACTION PLANS

In line with this, the International Association of Universities (IAU) adopted its own initiatives, always aligning with UN and UNESCO visions. IAU has embarked on a strategic plan in which “*Higher education and research for sustainable development*” features as one of the four key thematic priority areas of work, underlining once more that universities and other higher education institutions can help achieve the goals set and report on it. They can facilitate the kind of mindset change required to adopt and adapt the 2030 Agenda, through teaching, research and campus initiatives in particular.



RETHINKING EDUCATION

Higher education for sustainable development (HESD) is moving away from being an ‘add-on’ alongside campus initiatives or environmental, consumer and climate education; instead it is becoming

valued as an approach offering an opportunity to fundamentally rethink education.

Government officials in charge of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda have been tasked to create ownership of the SDGs throughout their countries, seek coordination at government level, reach out to all entities that can help achieve the goals set, and report on it. They should acknowledge higher education involvement and commitment to achieving the SDGs and provide adequate support. It took internationalisation 20 years to become a mainstream concern; the SDGs as well build on more than 20 years of campaigning and work and are only now becoming mainstream. The two agendas have much in common and should continue to work together to make a meaningful contribution to society. Together we can reach the kind of *Future We Want*.²

Highlighted here are two IAU initiatives aimed at mapping what universities' roles are and could be: the **IAU Global HESD Portal** and the **Global Survey on HESD**.

IAU GLOBAL HESD PORTAL

The Global HESD Portal is a tool developed by the IAU in tandem with the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Its aim is to showcase what is being done by higher education institutions (HEIs) to achieve sustainable development, to serve as a platform of best practice examples to be used and adapted, and to connect leaders, academics, students and other practitioners to scale up action.

THE IAU GLOBAL SURVEY ON HESD³

In 2016, IAU developed a global survey on higher education and research for sustainable development to better understand what higher education institutions know about the global agendas and the SDGs.⁴ Institutions were asked what they perceive their contribution to *be* and what their future contributions *could be*; and to what extent the higher education community is ready to adopt and adapt sustainable development principles throughout the institution.

Higher education institutions from all continents took part in the survey,

120 in all. A vast majority of responses came from IAU members (97%), and almost 18% of IAU members took part.

A common theme with responses was the fact that a whole-institution approach is key to embedding sustainable development in all institutional activities. The report shows that the concept is not unfamiliar to HEIs. In the survey, 45% declare that their HEI adopted such an approach. Sustainability initiatives and plans are mainly being developed in faculties or departments, sustainability centres or within student organisations. Developing a whole-institution approach would require all stakeholders to work in closer cooperation internally.

Furthermore, the results highlight that 70% of the HEIs see the importance of collaborating with other institutions on sustainable development issues and are involved with others. They are also involved in several HESD networks. Other key results from the survey included respondents' familiarity with different sustainability initiatives, what sustainable development means for their institution, and whether or not they had adopted a sustainable development strategy at their institution.

— HILLIGJE VAN'T LAND

1. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

2. Also the title of the Final Report of Rio + 20 Conference.

3. IAU Global Survey on higher education and sustainable development, <http://iau-hesd.net/en/news/3709-higher-education-paving-way-sustainable-development-global-perspective.html>

4. Survey was undertaken by IAU as part of the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD.

www.iau-hesd.net

IAU Global HESD Portal

- 380** University profiles
- 125** organisations working on HESD
- 300+** actions from 80 countries
- All actions** searchable by SDG

