

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ON THE SDGs

Germany



Respondent Profile

Some details on the respondent:

- A representative from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) completed the ARC9 survey. The respondent is involved in the priority setting, drafting, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation stages of the policy cycle. Together with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), DAAD represents Germany in the ASEM Education Process.

Understanding the National Context

Who do you expect to be most responsible in pushing forward the implementation of the SDGs in higher education in your country? Is there a department/agency in-charge of such efforts and what are the priorities?

- Respondent noted that the German “Grundgesetz” stipulates that Germany is a federal state. This means that both the federal government (“Bund”) and the sixteen states (“Länder”) have their own legislative domains and act as state entities. “School” and mostly also “Higher Education” are within the jurisdiction of the federal states (“Länder”). Whereas the federal government can set regulations regarding university admissions and degrees and the funding of scientific research, regulations regarding the implementation of the SDGs in higher education would fall within the jurisdiction of the “Länder”.
- In Germany the Government’s primary role in the implementation of the SDGs in higher education is establishing a common vision and strategy. By order of importance given by the respondent:
 1. Establish a common vision and strategy
 2. Enforce regulations (e.g. accreditation requirements, audits, non-binding policy statements)
 3. Provide funding opportunities
 4. Provide reputational incentives (e.g. national ranking, labels, awards)
 5. Build capacity (special units advising, tools for self-assessment, optional institutional reviews, guidelines)

Are there policy documents for higher education’s response to the SDGs? What are some obstacles faced by HEIs in contributing to the SDGs?

- In general, the federal states (Länder) regulate and largely fund (public) higher education institutions. By state law, these institutions enjoy high levels of autonomy due to the constitutional right of academic freedom (Art. 5 Abs. 3 GG). Therefore, institutionalized relations (legal, financial, political) between politics and HEI mainly exist on the state level and questions 13-15 regarding federal policy tools supporting sustainability at HEI cannot be answered individually.
- However, the federal government strongly encourages the sustainable development of society on the basis of scholarship and research, and teaching and learning by higher education institutions (as addressed in e.g., the overarching sustainability strategy of the federal government and within the Bologna process). The German Rector’s Conference as voice of HEI has also published recommendations and self-commitment (HRK Empfehlung “Für eine Kultur der Nachhaltigkeit”) for a culture of sustainability at HEIs.
- The sustainability strategy of the federal government can be accessed [here](#), while information on the German Rectors Conference is accessible [here](#).

Policy Tools

What policy tools are used to encourage HEIs to address the SDGs in your country? What specific higher education area do they target?

- The respondent provided access links to two references as examples of specific policy tools being used to encourage higher education institutions to contribute to the SDGs:
 - [Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development in the HE System](#) (in German); and
 - [German Rectors Conference](#)

Sources

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