



THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Giorgio Marinoni, 24 March 2022

Introduction

- In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic caught the world and higher education by surprise -> need to understand its impact on higher education
- In March – April 2020 IAU conducted a short survey to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on higher education around the world ([Report available on the IAU website](#))
- One year later, IAU conducted a second broader survey aiming at mapping:
 - The impact of COVID-19 on HE one year into the pandemic
 - Institutional responses to the pandemic

Partners

- Association of Indian Universities (AIU)
- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)
- **European University Association (EUA)**
- Hungarian Rectors' Conference (HRC)
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)
- United Nations University, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

General information on the survey

- Online institutional survey (only one reply per HEI)
- Data collected between 15 February and 1 June 2021
- Replies from 496 HEIs in 112 countries and territories
- Enough replies for a statistical relevant analysis at global and regional level in four regions of the world: Africa, the Americas, Asia & Pacific and Europe
- The Americas region is underrepresented mainly due to few responses from North America
- 92% of replies from the Americas are coming from Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Governance

2. Teaching and Learning

3. Research

4. Community/Societal Engagement

Internationalization

Main results

- HEIs around the world demonstrated resilience
- Uneven impact of the pandemic on higher education:
 - between different regions of the world
 - between different HEIs in the same region of the world
- Not only negative effects:
 - the pandemic stimulated innovation and accelerated transformations, especially in teaching and learning
- Transition to distance or blended learning most relevant change that can be sustained beyond the pandemic:
 - it is not the solution to all challenges
 - its introduction also brings new challenges

Main results

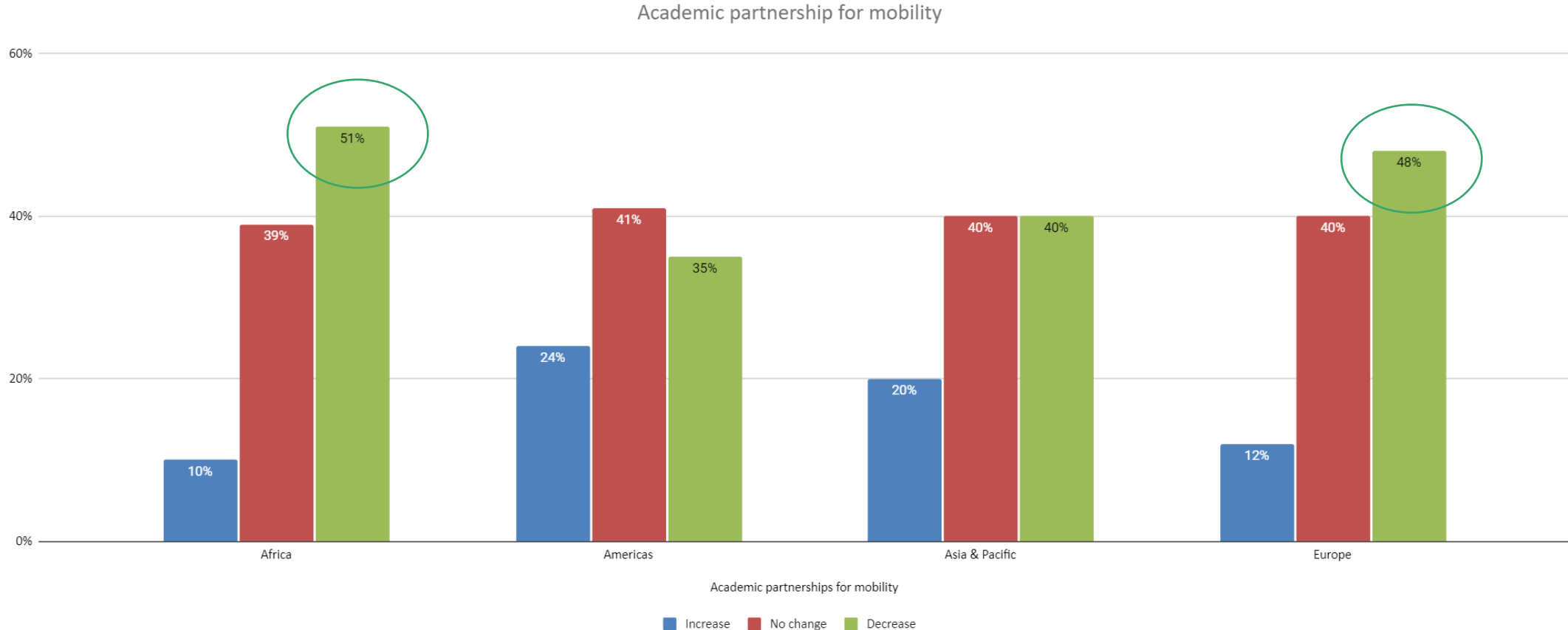
- Impact on research is less pronounced but:
 - still important
 - uneven among HEIs in different regions and in the same region
- Uneven impact on community/societal engagement:
 - among regions (Africa decrease vs. Americas increase) and among HEIs in the same region
- The pandemic has not ended:
 - the situation is still changing rapidly
 - some consequences might be more long-term and cannot be fully evaluated now (e.g. changes in strategies and curricula)

Impact on international cooperation

- Decrease in expenditures for international cooperation and activities in all regions
- Is it temporary or structural?
 - Research activities have been delayed. Main reason: travel restrictions make impossible attending conferences and do field work
 - Research funding from foreign governments and international organizations has diminished at some HEIs, especially in Africa

Academic partnerships for student mobility

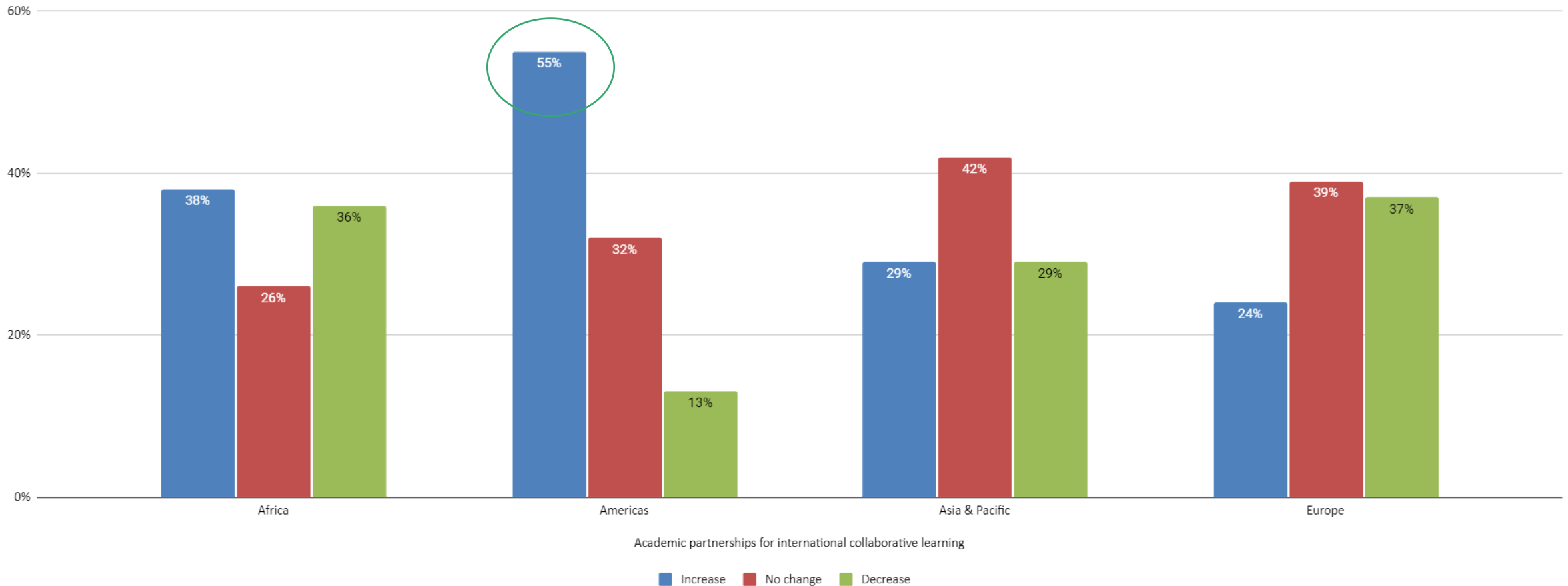
- Uneven situation but decrease especially in Africa and Europe



Academic partnerships for international collaborative learning

- Increase in the Americas, uneven impact in all other regions

Academic partnerships for international collaborative learning



Change of internationalization strategy

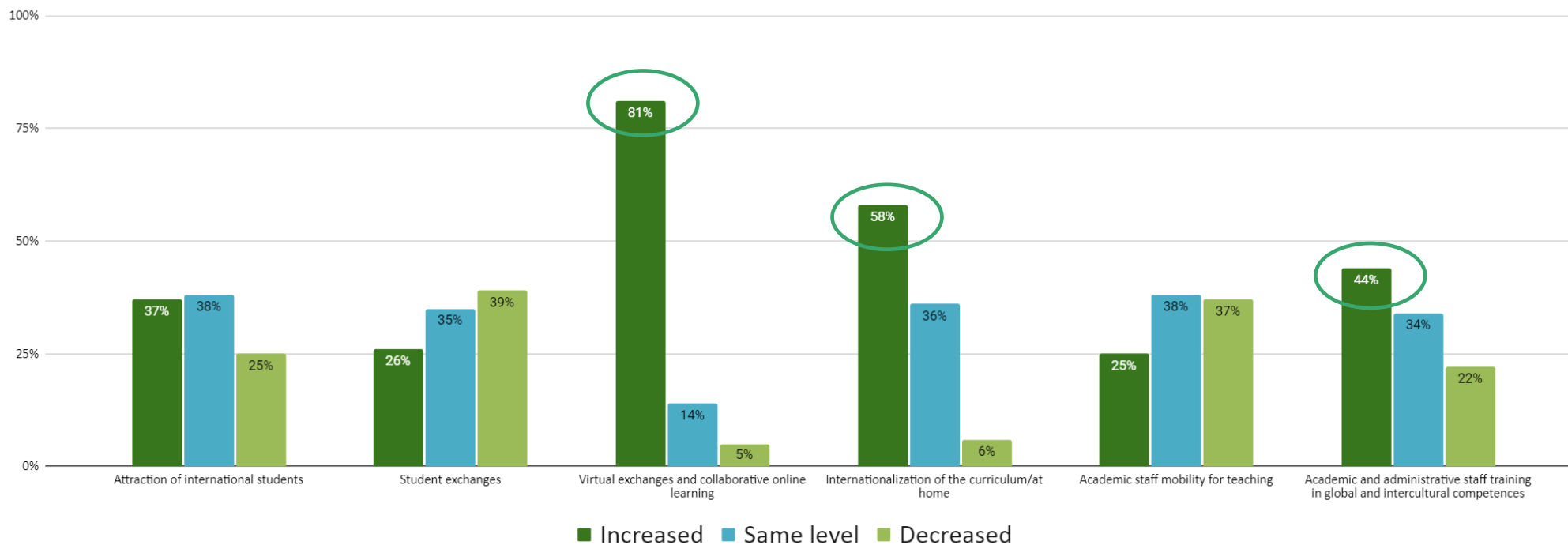
- At the majority of HEIs the pandemic has not caused a change of the internationalization strategy yet (31% changed but 43% are thinking about it)
- Half of HEIs in the Americas have already revised their internationalization strategies
- The lowest percentage of HEIs having already revised their strategies is in Africa but the higher not having done it at all is in Europe



Importance of internationalization activities

- Increased importance of virtual exchanges and collaborative online learning (81% of HEIs) and also internationalization of the curriculum/at home (58%)
- Increased importance of academic and administrative staff training in global and intercultural competences
- Student and teachers mobility: high level of inequality with three different groups of HEIs clearly identifiable

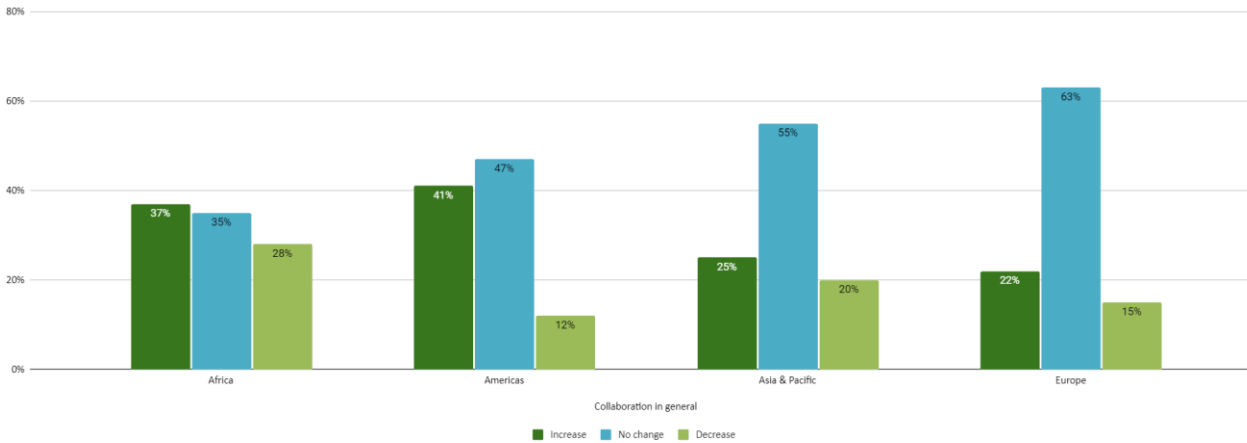
In the revised internationalization strategy, how do you assess the priority for the following areas compared to before the pandemic?



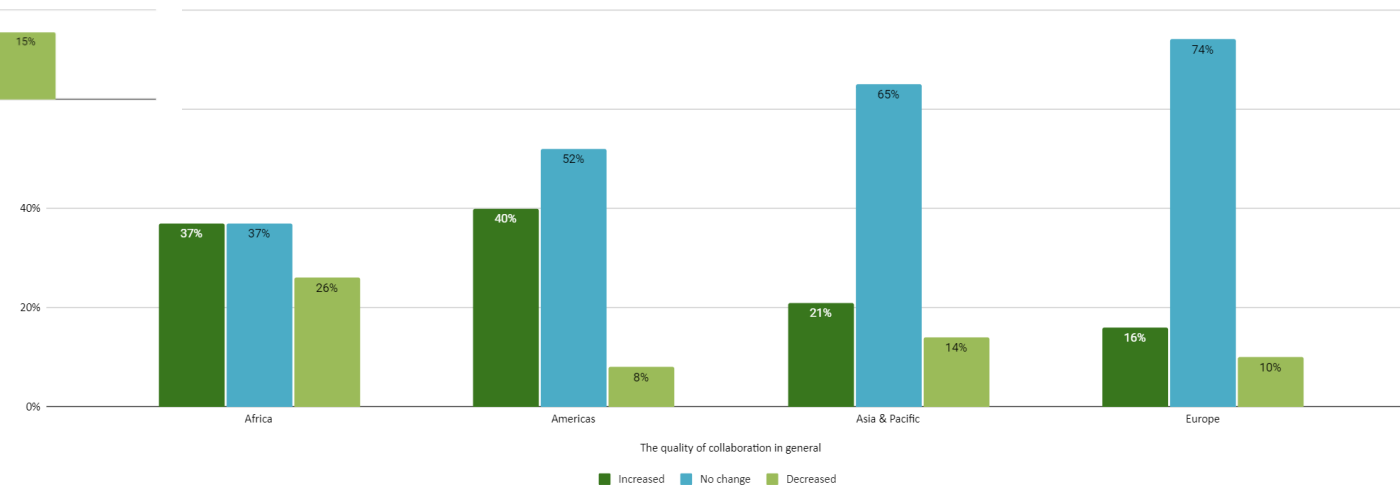
Research collaboration

- Research collaboration has not changed at the majority of HEIs that replied to the survey
- In Africa there is higher level of inequality with three groups of HEIs of almost the same size identifiable
- The highest percentage of HEIs reporting an increase in the amount and quality of collaboration is in the Americas

Collaboration in general



Quality of collaboration in general



Beyond the pandemic

- COVID-19 is not the only factor affecting international cooperation:
 - changing geopolitics
 - digital transformation of higher education
 - sustainable development agenda

Changed geopolitics

- Changed geopolitics and new tensions between countries affect especially internationalization of research
- Risks:
 - Less collaboration at global level
 - Challenges to institutional autonomy and academic freedom
 - Fragmentation and isolation of research
 - Multiplication of efforts and waste of resources
 - Increased inequality

Digital transformation

- Digitalization of higher education offers new means and opens up new opportunities for internationalization
- Opportunities and risks:
 - Increased collaboration at global level
 - Increased access to international opportunities
 - Overestimation of digitalization capacity -> not everything can be virtual
 - Digital divide -> increased inequality
 - Need for training and capacity building

Sustainable development

- Sustainable development is an imperative in today's world:
 - Global challenges can be solved only through global solutions
 - Internationalization is a powerful tool to achieve sustainable development
 - Need for a holistic understanding of sustainable development and internationalization
 - Risk of reductionist approach (mobility vs. environmental protection)

Three conclusions

1. The pandemic has shown that global challenges can only be solved globally
2. The contribution of the higher education community to society is needed more than ever, but the lesson has (still) to be learned
3. More collaboration between HEIs globally is absolutely necessary to create a better and more sustainable future



THANK YOU!

Download the report here:

https://iau-aiu.net/The-Second-IAU-Global-Survey-Report-on-the-Impact-of-COVID-19?var_mode=calcul

