

# Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions: HOCH<sup>N</sup> develop – network – report

## HOCH<sup>N</sup> Working Package RESEARCH

### Research questions

Through targeted research, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can generate insights into global development towards sustainability. They thus play a decisive role in the transformation towards a sustainable society. Our overarching research questions are: How do we define sustainability in the context of Higher Education? How can sustainability-oriented research be fostered and implemented at German HEIs?

### Research objectives

- Development of a deep understanding of sustainability in the context of Higher Education, while reflecting on the purpose of HEIs and distinguishing between related issues (e.g. Climate Change, Bioeconomy)
- Identification of fields of action and criteria for sustainability research at HEIs
- Identification and structuring of sustainability-oriented research activities at HEIs in Germany

### Research design

Mapping Study

Good Practices Study

Conceptual Study

**Starting point:** joint and complementary research objectives

Standardized survey among researchers of all German HEIs, online survey

Case study of six HEIs, identified via theoretical sampling, guided interviews

Scientifically based draft of a common definition of sustainability in the context of German HEIs. Close collaboration with sustainability experts of German HEIs

- Continuous exchange of knowledge and experience as well as interdisciplinary **knowledge integration and co-production** across the three studies, with other working packages and beyond
- **Synthesis** via complementary contributions to both, the HOCH<sup>N</sup>-guide and the final report for BMBF as well as via joint scientific publications

LEUPHANA UNIVERSITY LUENEBURG

LMU MUNICH

## Current state of research and intermediate results

### Conceptualising sustainability

- ✓ Analysis of sustainability definitions of German HEIs
- ✓ First draft of sustainability definition presented and discussed
- ✓ Reflection on the coherences of and distinctions between sustainability and related issues, such as resilience, bioeconomy etc.
- ✓ Normative reflection on the purpose of Higher Education

### Collaboration and exchange with other working packages and beyond

- ✓ Two feedback loops for the conceptualization of sustainability across all HOCH<sup>N</sup> working packages
- ✓ Collaboration in preparing the interviews with working package GOVERNANCE as well as knowledge exchange regarding research design with working package ESD & working package OPERATIONS
- ✓ PRAFO-session focussing on analysis and integration of LeNa into HOCH<sup>N</sup>

### Empirical data collection (Phase I)

- ✓ Literature survey and study of previous research with a special focus on results of the research project LeNa (Leitfaden Nachhaltigkeitsmanagement in außeruniversitären Forschungseinrichtungen, BMBF)
- ✓ Analysis of the LeNa guidelines ('Reflexionsrahmen'). How can the LeNa results be adapted to suit and benefit the specific context of research at HEIs?
- ✓ Literature driven collection of practices, facilitating and aggregating aspects regarding the initiation, implementation and upgrading of sustainability research at HEIs
- ✓ Theoretical sampling of first three HEIs for Good Practice Study
- ✓ Identification of potential interview partners at 5 different levels of HEI governance incl. (1) University directorate, (2) sustainability management, (3) research and teaching on post-doc level and beyond, (4) research and teaching on pre-PhD and PhD-level, (5) non-academic practice involved in research (transdisciplinarity)

## Next steps & upcoming events

- Qualitative interviews in the Good Practice Study
- Pretest of structured questionnaire for Mapping Study
- Discussion of draft definition with sustainability experts of working packages
- Identification of criteria for research in sustainability and conceptual clarification of the tension between sustainability and other normative strategies

## Contact

Head: Prof. Dr. Markus Vogt  
 Researchers: Lara Lütke-Spatz, Christoph Weber  
 Fon: + 49 (0) 89 / 2180-2475  
 info@nachhaltighochschule.de | ch.weber@lmu.de



Head: Prof. Dr. Daniel J. Lang  
 Researchers: Judith Kahle, Stephanie V. Jahn  
 Fon: + 49 (0) 4131 / 677-1581  
 judith.kahle@leuphana.de | stephanie.jahn@leuphana.de



### INVITATION TO UPCOMING PRAFO-SESSION:

November 23rd – 24th 2017 @ Leuphana University Lüneburg

Together with the working package GOVERNANCE – we will present intermediate research results on current sustainability-related practices in research and governance and create a space to jointly discuss the requirements for the implementation of sustainability research at German Higher Education Institutions.

For further information or registration please contact: [judith.kahle@leuphana.de](mailto:judith.kahle@leuphana.de).

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung

