

# OBSERVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN BRAZILIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES

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## Abstract

This research is part of the theme of how Higher Education Institutions should collaborate with the implementation and dissemination of the 2030 Agenda. In the context proposed by the United Nations that universities are important for achieving the SDGs, this paper analyzed some studies that address this theme both in an international scenario and in the Brazilian case. In addition, the research included an exploratory survey, and questions were sent to the 69 Brazilian Federal Universities, seeking to verify how these institutions have been in dialogue with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Based on the results of these forms answered by 53 Brazilian universities, an overview was elaborated that allows us to reflect on the role played by universities in four aspects: i) institutional and strategic alignment of the university towards the 2030 Agenda; ii) participation and promotion of events in these institutions that directly discuss the SDGs; iii) associated research projects and extension to the 2030 Agenda; e iv) recognition of Projects related to the SDGs that have received awards. These analyses consisted of a first effort to survey and share the situation of Brazilian universities with regard to knowledge about the existence of the 2030 Agenda, being a research that contributes to foster dialogue and improve experiences that should be a north to modify this reality.

**Keywords:** Brazilian Federal Universities; 2030 Agenda; Implementation of SDGs.

## 1 Introduction

Universities play a key role in society, as they are responsible for disseminating knowledge and educating citizens. In the context of sustainable development, these institutions have strategic action, as they can address the theme both in the dimension of teaching, research, extension and the management of universities themselves. In this sense, universities can be seen as institutions that promote critical thinking, without it is not possible to achieve, in fact, advocates sustainable development.

Given this reality and taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, we are interested to know how universities collaborate with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The fundamental question to be answered is to investigate the role played by these institutions in the implementation and dissemination of the SDGs and what they have been developing to comply with the 2030 Agenda guidelines.

This theme has already been the subject of studies and research that seek to bring together good practices of researching projects and academic innovation that align with the

SDGs, studies developed in several countries and that emphasize the role of higher education institutions in the implementation of the SDGs. As an example of these studies, we can mention the developed by Menezes and Minillo (2016); Rezende et al (2018); Strüber (2018); Marchori (2018); Granda (2019); Gazzoni et al. (2018); Griebeler (2019); Aleixo, Azeiteiro and Leal (2018); and Schneider, Gimenez, Molin, Breda and Carra (2020). They are based on the idea that the SDGs need to be incorporated into universities, describing both results related to the alignment of the SDGs in research and extension projects, as well as information related to the adherence of the 2030 Agenda.

In the context of documents that also address this theme and seeking to promote this guideline, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific with the collaboration of Australian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) launched in 2017 a guide called "Getting Started with the SDGs in Universities", seeking to bring together a set of guidelines on how higher education institutions can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. This document systematizes four (4) pillars of action, emphasizing research, education, management and government and, finally, social leadership.

Based on this theoretical framework, this research had as general goal to examine how the Brazilian Federal Universities have adhered to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, analyzing some experiences that promote and give guidelines for the SDGs to leave the paper and be incorporated into practice. It is believed that, through studies such as this, it is possible to advance the discussion, since an exploratory approach is adopted to measure the degree of knowledge of these institutions about the SDGs, besides being possible to collect good practices that can become template models for implementation in other organizations.

Therefore, the present study considered as the object of research the 69 Brazilian Federal Universities, which had questions sent through the Access of Law Information (LAI) which aimed, above all, to understand whether these universities know and disseminate the SDGs. A survey was formulated to initiate dialogue with the institutions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to this empirical approach, a documental analysis of regulations and the portals of these institutions was performed, seeking to investigate what they have disclosed about the SDGs.

It is also important to highlight that this study did not seek to investigate the sustainability practices that these institutions may have adopted, although the importance of this theme is recognized. Thus, the focus of the analysis was on whether the Brazilian Federal Universities understand the existence of the 2030 Agenda and have promoted the alignment of their actions with the precepts contained herein in the SDGs. This caveat is important, considering that several institutions act in a transversal way to the principles of the 2030 Agenda, being agents who, indirectly, already implement the SDGs, but who often do not know or have not been associated to the guidelines of this agenda.

To show the results of this research, this work is systematized in five (5) sections, including this introduction that proposed to present general notions of the theme, the universe of study and the objectives of the research. In the second section, we discuss aspects related to the protagonist of Higher Education Institutions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, referencing the works and documents that emphasize the theme both in the context of other countries and in Brazil. Section three deals with the methodological procedures that were used for data collection and analysis, describing the period and means of execution of the research. Section four presents the results of the study, systematizing in subsection the analyses related to the questions that were answered by the universities participating in the research. From them, it was possible to obtain a diagnosis of the situation of Brazilian Federal Universities in some aspects of adherence and dissemination of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Finally, the fifth and last section of the paper presents the conclusions, relating the data collected with the references addressed, thus allowing to generate a contribution about the importance of universities, affiliated to and disseminate the 2030 Agenda, besides highlighting the good practices that have already been adopted.

## 2 SDG and Universities: discussing the role of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The issue of sustainability is not a recent issue, it has been discussed since 1970 in several sectors. In the academic environment, this theme gains more notoriety from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, when the concept of sustainable development is also disseminated in educational institutions.

The concept of sustainability in this period was closely associated to the environmental dimensions and began to be propagated in the most diverse sectors, and can be understood from the Brundtland Commission as a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs (CNMAD, 1988).

Barbieri and Cajazeira (2012, 67), summarize this period, highlighting that a movement began in which universities should become sustainable, not only from an environmental perspective, but rather "to achieve their goals while meeting the following criteria: social equity, ecological caution and economic efficiency".

Taking into account this paradigm of development, educational institutions began to be pressured to treat the issue with more commitment, and should be a place of knowledge production, but also be a model with regard to sustainable management. Machado *et al.* (2013) reflects on this, highlighting that universities are both part of the problem of sustainability as part of the solution. Seeing the university as part of the problem implies understanding that these institutions can be considered small urban centers, and therefore should manage several projects that imply better use of resources, as well as in reducing the impacts of these activities.

Lara (2012) presents another perspective, emphasizing that universities have a transformative role and, therefore, should adopt measures to disseminate sustainable awareness among teachers, students and the entire academic community. In this thought, educational institutions have the responsibility for preparing new and future generations, being able to act in four main aspects, knowing: education; research and innovation; internal government; and external leadership (SDSN 2017).

More recently, in 2015, the role of universities in promoting this theme gained new prominence, when the UN launched the 2030 Agenda entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". With a set of 17 goals (Figure 1) and 169 targets that seek to overcome challenges related to the environmental, social, economic and institutional dimensions of sustainable development, this agenda was adopted by 193 Member States of the United Nations.

Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals



Source: UN, 2015.

The agenda guidelines address that several actors are protagonists of this process, highlighting the role played by governments, companies, academia and civil society in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For universities, their role has been

the subject of several discussions, and an international guide was even launched in 2017 that brings together guidelines for the implementation of the SDGs in universities and higher education centers. According to this document:

Universities, due to their work of generation, dissemination of knowledge and their preeminent situation within society, are being encouraged to play a fundamental role in achieving the SDGs. It is likely that none of the SDGs can be met without the involvement of this sector (SDSN 2017, 3).

Also in this document, it is addressed that universities have the possibility to actively participate in the implementation of the SDGs, considering that they act, above all, in four dimensions: i) education and training; (ii) research; iii) institutional management; and iv) social impact. In teaching and training, these institutions provide knowledge and skills so that students and teachers understand the importance of the SDGs and their application in everyday life, both in the academic environment and outside of it. In the investigative dimension, the academic sector works in the development of solutions and research that contribute to the reach of the SDGs and can be seen as places where researchers discover answers to overcome the challenges that are also addressed in the 2030 Agenda. In institutional management, it is essential that universities incorporate the SDGs into their internal policies, adopting practices that are aligned with the guidelines promoted by the UN and are seen as model in this aspect. Finally, and relative to the social impact they have, these institutions must articulate with governments, companies and society in general, stimulating dialogue and acting as a disseminator and promoter of the SDGs.

Seen as important participants in the promotion and reach of the SDGs, several researches are being produced around the world seeking to emphasize the role played by higher education institutions in this process. In a more critical dimension on this theme, Gazzoni et al. (2018) considers that the role of universities needs to be transformed, so that to incorporate the SDGs it is not enough to follow a script, but rather to change the way teaching is carried out, also thinking about how content is learned. The author's study shows that universities are unambitious and need to take a central place in the promotion of the SDGs, questioning whether universities are ready to have a real impact on achieving the sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Studies by Strüber (2018); Marchori (2018); Chofré and Paredes (2018) and Granda (2019) analyzed this reality considering experiences of Spanish universities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to these authors, Spain created in 2017 the group of higher education for 2030 Agenda, with an action plan drawn up in 2018, gathering information on how the SDGs can be implemented. Since then, conferences and reports have been discussing the progress of the theme in these institutions, evaluating the performance with regard to the involvement of the SDGs in the formation, research and management of these institutions. In the words of Struber (2018):

In order to actively participate in the change to the SDGs, universities will do well to align their governance structures and operational policies with the SDGs and identify and address any key gaps in the university's response to the SDGs (Strüber 2018, 19).

Exploring this theme a little more, Marchori (2018) presents that universities have become a model of learning and practice for sustainable development, having a moral obligation for the collaboration and implementation of the SDGs, considering a dual perspective that involves both the behavior of the entity itself and the impacts of its activity on society. The author is critical in his thinking and considers that there is an urgent need to accelerate actions at the university level. To drive this transformation, a set of contributions from Spanish universities to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are considered systematized in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Contributions to the implementation of the SDGs in universities**

1	The transversal incorporation of the principles, values and goals of sustainable development in the mission, policies and activities of Spanish universities.
2	A determined commitment to the inclusion of skills related to sustainable and inclusive development, necessary for the construction of a global citizenship, in the training of the entire student, faculty and research and management and service personnel.
3	The generation and transfer of knowledge committed to sustainable development, including here also the knowledge needed to articulate and follow the 2030 Agenda itself.
4	The capitalization of the unique spaces offered by university communities for the implementation of innovative projects to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda on a controlled scale.
5	Strengthening the university's bond with other participants in society, from public administrations to social community, companies and other groups based on their experience in creating and consolidating alliances at various levels, from international networks of research and cooperation to the vision and inclusion of minority groups.
6	The articulation of a public and open debate on sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda and its own governance in the national and international context.
7	Commitment on the part of universities to report on their impacts in terms of teaching, research and transfer, aligning them to each of the SDGs.

**Source:** Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Towards a Spanish Sustainable Development Strategy.

Considering these and other guiding principles, the movement of universities in favor of the SDGs has been leveraged in several countries, and several studies are produced that focus on understanding how higher education institutions collaborate with the 2030 Agenda. In this context, these studies have not only been interested in analyzing the sustainability experiences of the institutions, but, above all, they seek to verify whether the actions of these universities converge and align themselves with the SDGs, in a perspective that they know that they are dealing directly with this agenda.

Regarding the implementation of these initiatives in Spain, results pointed out by Chofré and Paredes (2018) indicate that 67% of the 76 Spanish universities reported having adopted or working on a specific strategy in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Granda (2019) highlighted that these institutions have been promoting the SDGs in course completion work and dissertations.

In the context Portuguese, the work of Aleixo, Azeiteiro and Leal (2018) also describes a set of experiences, highlighting an analysis of how the SDGs have been integrated into Portuguese public higher education institutions. According to the research of these authors and considering the alignment of the SDGs to undergraduate and master's degrees, it was found that less than 10% of these courses directly address at least one SDG, and that most of the courses that address the theme are in the areas of social sciences and humanities and natural sciences and the environment.

In a broader view and considering universities in several countries, the report produced in 2019 by the Global Alliance has highlighted progress towards the SDGs in universities. Composed of 110 institutions distributed in 19 countries, the research analyzed 51 reports, bringing important data on the performance of higher education institutions with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the study, 70% of the respondent institutions reported that, to some degree, they mapped their activities in relation to the SDGs and 71% of the institutions stated that the SDGs are a strategic priority. Regarding the alignment of the SDGs with research projects, only 33% of the institutions reported that there is a process that requires a link in this activity, so that in the research register it is described to which SDGs the research will contribute. Reflecting on the challenges that still present, the report points out some strategies that must be adopted by the signatory institutions to continue with the implementation of the SDGs, highlighting the need to involve students through teaching and learning, incorporate the SDGs at a strategic level and expand activities for training and awareness of the SDGs in institutions.

Based on this reference, we start to describe the Brazilian context of implementation of the SDGs in the university context. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that Brazil had

been articulating a set of initiatives that sought to strengthen this theme in universities, and was even constituted in 2017 the "SDG Universities Network" that aimed to promote the insertion of sustainable development goals in the activities of teaching, research, extension and management of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions. Despite this initial advance, the information points to a disarticulation of this initiative, and it is not possible to measure an impact of its performance, considering that it is disabled and has not been complying with the proposed objectives.

Another action that can be highlighted as important in the dissemination of the SDGs in Brazilian universities is the National Award for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2018 by the Secretariat of Government of the Presidency of the Republic (SEGOV/PR) and which sought to gather a set of experiences related to the implementation of the SDGs in Brazil. Composed of four award categories, this award allocated a category to evaluate the practices of educational, research and extension institutions that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the first edition held in 2018, it is noteworthy that a total of 10 initiatives were considered finalists, five of which were submitted by federal universities.

In the context presented here, it is considered that the initiatives presented by Brazilian universities have, then, an isolated character, stimulated by actions specific to the institutions that themselves adopt and implement the SDGs. In this sense, in the Brazilian scenario, there are no concrete actions proposed by governments or other participants that aim to stimulate the SDGs in universities, as can be seen with Spanish universities, for example, which have established networks and elaborated guiding guides.

The experiences described in Brazil are presented in the form of a case study and, about this reference, some studies were consulted that focused on presenting experiences of some Brazilian educational institutions regarding the dialogue with the 2030 Agenda.

In this sense, the research by Rezende et al. (2018) addresses this process at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), identifying that this institution has been aligning its practices with the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda. The work of Menezes and Minilo (2016) emphasize the importance of universities joining the SDGs, addressing the experience of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) in an extension project that measured the participation of the civil society in the SDGs. Schneider et al. (2020) developed a study with the University of Caxias do Sul (UCS), evaluating the academic's responsibility reflecting that with regard to the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in projects, curricula and teacher training, there is still much to be done.

Barbosa et al. (2019) discussed the SDGs within the Scope of the Regional University of Blumenau (FURB), highlighting that this institution has developed an extension course in education focused on the SDGs, aligning the curriculum matrix with the guidelines proposed by the UN. Griebeler (2019) also studies the theme, focusing on establishing, through a comparative study, a set of indicators to evaluate the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education Institutions.

Despite the value of these initiatives that describe specific experiences of universities in the implementation of the SDGs, Brazil still lacks studies and research that emphasize the current situation of the Brazilian scenario, questioning whether universities recognize their role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this context, this study is justified, which sought, in an exploratory way, to investigate whether the Brazilian Federal Universities understand the existence of the 2030 Agenda and have promoted the alignment of their actions with the guidelines contained herein in the SDGs.

### **3 Methodology**

With regard to the methodological procedures used to carry out the research, as well as related to its categorization, it is noteworthy that the study is classified as to its purposes as exploratory because, as Gil (2008) points out, this type of research provides greater familiarity with a problem with a view to making it more explicit, allowing the improvement of ideas or the discovery of intuitions. In addition, the study has a more flexible character, considering different aspects of the fact studied and being guided by the researcher's perspective. From this

approach and considering the notes of Marconi and Lakatos (2010), it was possible to establish relationships between several variables researched, providing new views on a given reality.

A bibliographic survey of the theme was carried out, because even if it is a little explored theme, it is necessary to consult what has been addressed on the subject until then in order to obtain familiarization with everything that was written on the subject (Marconi and Lakatos 2010). A survey was conducted with the 69 Federal Universities in Brazil through questions requested through the Law on Access to Information (LAI), which sought to identify how these institutions have aligned with the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda. Based on the cases analyzed in each responding institution, frameworks were systematized that stimulate the understanding of a given reality experienced by these educational institutions, thus using the quantitative approach to measure relationships between variables and diagnose aspects regarding adherence and dissemination of sustainable development goals, quantifying and grouping universities in certain situations.

As for the means, the research can be classified as a survey that allowed the systematization of a multiple case study, allowing the detailed investigation of a set of objects, expanding knowledge about this subject (Gil, 2008). From this design, a form was sent to the universe of the 69 Brazilian Federal Universities, distributed in the 26 Federative States and the Federal District and located in the 5 regions of Brazil, and 63 institutions had questions sent through the Law of Access to Information (LAI) and 6 institutions, because they did not register with LAI, had the questions sent via e-mail. Considering that the instrument adopted to request the information was an institutional channel, there was no concern in delimiting the type of the respondent subject or his competence in the subject, since with this channel, it is assumed that the answer provided is on behalf of the institution.

Also about the questions asked to these institutions, it is emphasized that it was a form composed of five questions that dealt with the knowledge and alignment of actions of universities the Agenda 2030, having been considered the period from May 8, 2020 to July 23, 2020 for answers. On the date of data closure and consolidation, a number of 53 universities had provided answers, which corresponds to 77% of the entire universe surveyed, giving reliability to the results. Table 2 presents the issues that have been addressed.

**Table 2:** Questions sent to Brazilian Federal Universities

1.	This institution has incorporated the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into some institutional document? If so, explain in which documents this topic was addressed.
2.	Did this institution participate in or promote any event that addressed the theme of the SDGs? Describe.
3.	Do the research and extension projects of this institution have direct alignment with the SDGs (for each registered project, the associated SDG is known)? Describe.
4.	Is there an initiative of this institution aimed at disseminating the SDGs to the academic community (servers, teachers and students)? Describe.
5.	Has the institution have ever had a project associated to the SDG that was awarded? Describe.

**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

It is important to highlight, however, that of the five questions formulated, question 4 was not considered in the analyses, as it was found that several institutions had repeated the answer already given in question 2, so that differences could not be drawn to justify maintaining the two analyses. Although it understands that the issues have different purposes, the analysis pointed out that universities still lack clarity on the subject, considering any initiative as an event. Moreover, it is also important to emphasize that not all questions were adequately answered by the institutions, so that in some analyses the category "no information" was created to refer to the institution that did not answer or that it was not possible to analyze the question.

The following section discusses the results of this research, analyzing the response of universities to each question presented above, and thus producing a diagnosis that discusses the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazilian Federal Universities.

## 4 Results and Discussion

Considering the universe of 53 institutions that provided information on the situation of adherence to the SDGs in universities, we then examine in detail what has been done in the Brazilian Federal Universities for the incorporation and implementation of the SDGs. It is also worth mentioning that, because this is an exploratory study, the requests sent had a general character, providing first inputs for further deepening that may combine more assertive methods to provide a diagnosis with indicators and comparison parameters.

In this context, the next subsections deal with the reality of universities that are objects in this research in the face of five aspects:

1. Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into institutional documents;
2. Participation and promotion of events related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
3. Alignment of research and extension projects to the SDGs;
4. Existence of a project associated to the SDGs with received of awards.

As already discussed, these dimensions consist of a first dialogue with the theme in universities and can provide subsidies for further research on the subject and consider this initial level as a starting point.

### 4.1 Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into institutional documents

Institutional documents are records that gather the university's guidelines, configuring themselves as important instruments that describe the institution's mission, vision and strategic direction. Being able to be elaborated both in the strategic dimension, as in the tactics and in the operational, the university as a whole and its various departments have the responsibility to prepare such management documents, communicating their actions to the academic community and civil society.

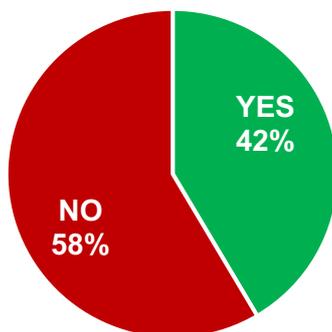
The Institutional Development Plan (PDI) is one of these documents, expressing at a strategic level the identity and work philosophy of the university, its organizational structure and main alliance. This document also brings together objectives, goals and priority actions for the development of the university and can be seen as a planning document for 5 years that has mandatory preparation by Brazilian institutions, according to ordinance nº. 21 of December 21, 2017 the Ministry of Education (MEC).

Another important document prepared by universities is the Management Plan, consisting of a tactical level planning that, in the light of the PDI, brings together priority programs and lines, operationalizing commitments made by the current administration of the university. These documents correlate with other regulations, such as plans and policies that can deal with specific topics about the functioning of the institution itself, namely: accessibility plan, solid waste management plan, environmental policy, communication policy, etc.

Considering that these instruments reflect the strategic direction of the institution and guide the execution of its activities, it is considered indispensable that they are aligned with the parameters established in the 2030 Agenda. That is, in order for a university to be considered a disseminator of the Sustainable Development Goals it must take this opportunity to link its actions to the 2030 Agenda and base its activities to structure a management aligned with sustainable development (SDSN 2017). Thus, it is considered as an important pillar that the 2030 Agenda is the basis of the mission, policies and activities of universities and there should be a link between these instruments and the SDGs.

Based on this premise, the following question was sent to the universities that are the objects of this research: **"this institution incorporated the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in some institutional document (PDI, Management Plan, etc.)? If so, explain in which documents this topic was addressed."** The answers to this question were summarized in Graph 1, considering the 53 institutions respondent.

**Graphic 1:** Situation of universities regarding the existence of documents associated to the 2030 Agenda



**Source:** own elaboration, 2020.

Considering the answers provided by the universities, it is verified that a total of 22 universities (42%) reported having inserted the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in any of their institutional documents the PDI itself, Management Plan, Sustainable Logistics Plan or other regulations. However, there is also an expressive number of 31 universities (58%) that do not yet have institutional documents with direct link to the SDGs.

In this context, although it is possible to identify positive experiences in some institutions that have been aligning their planning and activities with the principles disseminated in the 2030 Agenda, it is considered that the theme still needs to move forward. Table 3 presents, therefore, three main groupings that could be elaborated from the answers provided by the institutions, namely: i) universities that have institutional documents aligned with Agenda 2030; ii) universities in which the 2030 Agenda is treated in a transversal way in their institutional documents, but do not have direct linkage; and iii) universities that, to date, have no link of their actions to Agenda 2030. In addition, in addition to presenting the name of the institution that is in each category, a synthesis of what has been done and what has been reported is described.

**Table 3:** Situation of Brazilian Federal Universities in view of the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda in institutional documents

SITUATION	UNIVERSITY	SUMMARY OF THE ANSWER
Universities that have institutional documents aligned with the 2030 Agenda	UNB; UFGD; UFMT; UFMS; UFR; UFPB; UFCG; UFC; UFRN; UFT; UNIFAL-MG; UFV; UFES; UFTM; UTFPR; UFSC; UFSM; UNIPAMPA; UFCSPA.	This category grouped 19 universities that demonstrated positive experiences of linking the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into institutional documents. It is worth noting, in this sense, that universities already have the PDI, Management Plan and other documents that cite the SDGs as an important pillar (UFMT, UFMS, UFR, UFPB, UFCG, UFC, UFRN, UNIFAL-MG, UFV, UFTM, UTFPR, UFSC, UNIPAMPA e UFCSPA). In addition, some institutions have also created working groups that have been working on the internalization of the 2030 Agenda in universities (UNB, UFT and UFSM) and in the development of strategic programs, such as the UNB2030 program, the Extensionist Practice in (UFGD). It is also noteworthy, experiences of universities that have produced reports on the performance of the SDGs (UFES).
Universities where the 2030 Agenda is treated in a transversal way in their institutional documents, but	UFG; UFBA; UFCA; UFOB; UNIVASF; UFRSA; UNIR; UFAM; UFOP; UFSCar;	This category grouped 14 universities that deal indirectly with the 2030 Agenda in their institutional documents. In this sense, it is considered the universities that responded directly that they do not have documents that deal with the SDGs, but that bring together their principles in various actions. It is also considered, the universities that responded that they have documents related to agenda 2030, but that in the analysis it

do not have direct linkage	UFABC; UFVJM; UFF; UFFS.	was evidenced that there is no direct treatment of the SDGs in these documents, but rather a dilution of them in the actions of the university. There were situations, for example, in which the university reported having handled the 2030 Agenda in documents that were created with a date prior to the launch year itself, and it is unlikely that these documents considered agenda 2030 as the guiding principle. What occurred in these cases is that the university itself had already been advancing on the theme of sustainability, but there has not yet been a compatibility of this theme with the SDGs.
Universities that, to date, do not have links of their actions to the 2030 Agenda	UFRB; UNILAB; UFMA; UFRR; UNIFAP; UNIFESSPA; UFLA; FUNRei; UNIRIO; UNILA; UFPR.	This category grouped 11 universities that reported that they do not yet deal with the 2030 Agenda in their institutional documents. As an example, you can see the following answers: "We have no action on the topic addressed"; "(...) has no information on the subject, nor does it promote events, research projects, extension or disseminate this issue"; "we do not have formalized actions on the incorporation of the SDG Objectives in the University"; "We should answer no to all questions (...)"; "Up to the time of this consultation, there are no institutional documents incorporating the 2030 Agenda.

**Source:** own elaboration, 2020.

The table presented reinforces the situation of Brazilian Federal Universities, demonstrating that while some institutions stand out with successful experiences of linking their documents to the 2030 Agenda, others have not yet clearly established the relationship between their guidelines and the SDGs, so that they present a transversal treatment of the theme, often confusing themselves with sustainability in general. There are also a significant number of institutions that have not taken the first step towards the implementation and alignment of the SDGs in their guiding documents.

#### 4.2 Participation and promotion of events related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

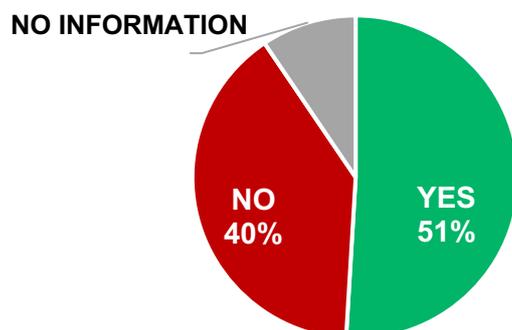
It is considered that universities should also act intensely in the promotion and participation of events that discuss the theme of the 2030 Agenda. It is believed that through these initiatives it is possible to sensitize a greater number of participants for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, besides being possible to share research results that address the theme.

In this sense, when a university holds an event with the specific theme of the 2030 Agenda, the institution's commitment to disseminate knowledge related to the university context and the SDGs is evidenced. In addition, events and training stimulate the strengthening of these concepts in the academic sphere.

It should be emphasized, however, that universities are major event planners and that indirectly most of them dialogue with any of the SDGs. Although this is valid, it is important to emphasize that institutions should act in the promotion of events that directly discuss the SDGs, that is, to link the initiative with the theme of the 2030 Agenda.

Considering this perspective and seeking to know which Brazilian Federal Universities have participated and promoted events directly related to the theme of the 2030 Agenda, the institutions were asked the following questions: **"did this institution participate or promote any event that dealt with the theme of the SDGs?"**. From the answers provided by the 53 universities that participated in the research, graph 2 was elaborated, which groups the answers.

**Graphic 2:** The universities situation of regarding the promotion or participation of events that deal directly with the 2030 Agenda



**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

Initially, it can be observed that a number of 27 universities (51%) reported that they have held events that deal directly with the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs. On the other hand, it is also observed that 21 universities (40%) were classified in the group of institutions that have not yet held events for direct discussion of the theme. It is important to highlight that in this grouping were also included 11 universities that despite informing that they held events on the SDGs, in practice, there was no direct link with the theme, being a generalist event and that did not specifically address the Agenda 2030 or any of the SDGs. It is understood that these events, although they discuss some aspect of the SDGs, cannot be understood as events of dissemination of the 2030 Agenda, because the guidelines proposed by the UN are to be cited. Graph 2 finally shows 5 universities (9%) provided no specific information for this issue.

Regarding the positive experiences that can be shared, it is verified that several universities have been participating and promoting events that are held from the level of management of the university, through events held in the academic community, to those that dialogue about the SDG with representatives of the government, private sector and society in general.

As examples of events that can be mentioned, we highlight the participation of universities in the events of the 1st edition of the SDG Brazil Award, as well as knowledge fairs and competitions on the SDGs and participation in events held in partnerships with other institutions and aimed at the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. It is also noteworthy universities that reported having carried out training of their teams to align the 2030 Agenda and its environmental and sustainability policies, as well as events promoted by extension projects that discuss the subject. Another initiative consists in the participation of institutions in international events that address the theme, such as the IX Encuentro de Redes de Educación Superior y Consejos de Rectores de América Latina y el Caribe, promoted by the National Institute of UNESCO and the New Flow held in the city of Niter in 2019 and which aimed to disseminate the 17 SDGs and promote presentations, workshops, exhibitions, collection of donations and consumption of sustainable products. Another highlight is institutions that participate in rankings that evaluate the implementation of the SDGs.

#### **4.3 Alignment of research and extension projects to the SDGs**

Universities are agents that, in addition to acting in teaching, promote research and extension activities, and these actions are important for the development of the academic community and for the sharing of work results.

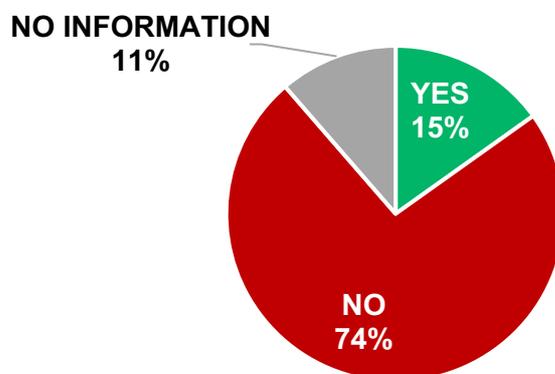
The research consists thus, an action that focuses on the development of studies and investigations, being a regular activity oriented to knowledge. Generally, universities have funding for the execution of their research projects that take place in the modality of scientific initiation.

The extension is another modality that establishes a relationship between the university and society, allowing students and teachers to intervene in reality with the execution of events and activities that dialogue with the community. It is a form of application of theoretical knowledge that also allows students to have a practical experience of some dimension studied in the university environment.

Considering the above the Sustainable Development Goals, it is verified that many of the research and extension projects allow themes of the 2030 Agenda to be addressed, with an indirect relationship between these projects and the sustainable development guidelines proposed by the UN. However, it is important to highlight the need for universities to recognize the importance of linking their research and extension projects directly to the SDGs, because from this initiative it will be possible to measure quantitatively the impacts of these projects on the achievement of each SDG.

It was needed that Brazilian Federal Universities were questioned which of them perform the direct link of their research and extension projects to the SDGs, and the answers of the 53 institutions in graph 3 were systematized.

**Graphic 3:** The universities results of regarding the direct association of research or extension projects to the SDGs



**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

From the analysis of the data, it is verified that a very low number of universities have a direct link of their projects to the SDGs. Only 8 institutions (15%) reported that it is possible to analyze how their research and extension projects are associated to the SDGs, because, at the time of registration of the action, there was a mandatory to inform how the project relates to the 2030 Agenda.

In another perspective, 39 universities (74%) reported that there is still no direct link between the projects and the SDGs, so that many of them can even align and contribute to some objective, but there is no explicit mention of this convergence in the registration of the project. In this grouping, it is important to highlight that a number of 12 universities (23%) reported that they already see the need for the system of registration of research and extension projects to provide a specific field to link the project to the SDGs, and this functionality is already being developed in several institutions.

However, it was not possible to analyze information on the question in 6 universities (11%) information on the alignment situation between their projects and the SDGs. Table 4 presents the universities situation.

**Table 4:** Situation of Brazilian Federal Universities in relation to the linkage of research and extension projects to the SDGs

SITUATION	NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES	PERCENTAGE	UNIVERSITIES NAME
Universities that have links of research and extension projects to the SDGs	8	15%	UFGD; UFMS; UFPB; UFRN; UFABC; UFTM; UTFPR; e UFSM.
Universities that are developing the functionality of linking research and extension projects to the SDGs	12	23%	UNB; UFMT; UFCG; UFOB; UFOPA; UFT; UFJF; UFV; UFRRJ; UFCSPA; UFSC; e FURG.
Universities that do not have links of research and extension projects to the SDGs	27	51%	UFG; UFBA; UFRB; UNILAB; UFCA; UFC; UFMA; UNIVASF; UFRPE; UNIR; UFRR; UFAC; UNIFESSPA; UNIFAL-MG; UFLA; UFOP; UFSCar; FUNRei; UNIFESP; UFES; UNIRIO; UFVJM; UFF; UNILA; UNIPAMPA; UFPR; e UFRGS.
Universities that did not provide information on the subject	6	11%	UFR; UFERSA; UNIFAP; UFAM; UFMG; e UFFS
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100%</b>	-

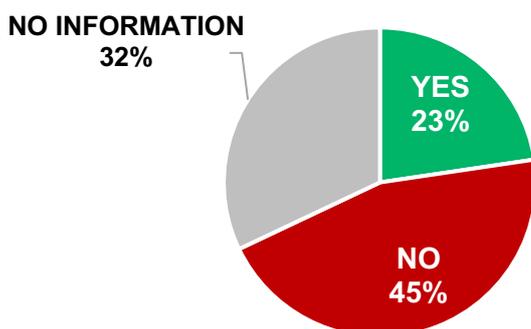
**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

From the framework it is notorious that most of the Brazilian Federal Universities that participated in the study have already recognized the importance that their research and extension projects not only dialogue with the SDGs, but also present a direct relationship, allowing to evaluate how the institution has collaborated with the advancement of the theme.

#### 4.4 Existence of a project associated to the SDGs with received of awards

In the last question proposed, we seek to evaluate which Brazilian Federal Universities had already received awards for projects associated to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It was found that, through this questioning, it would be possible to present experiences of the institutions already recognized as important for the achievement of the SDGs. However, the analysis of the answers showed that many universities still lack mechanisms to evaluate the received of these awards, which often occur directly to the researcher, without the institution having a formalization of these highlights. Although there have been several cases such as these, it was possible to systematize graph 4 that groups universities according to their situation.

**Graphic 4:** The universities results of regarding the existence of award-winning projects associated to the SDGs



**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

The data show that, of the 53 institutions that participated in the research, 36 provided information on the existence or not of award-winning projects. Of this number, 12 universities (23%) reported that some project of their institution that is associated to agenda 2030 received some award. A number of 24 universities (45%) stated that they have not yet had awarded projects. Already 17 institutions (32%) they were unable to provide accurate information on the issue, justifying that the university did not have mechanisms to provide such an answer. Table 5 highlights universities that have projects that relate to the SDGs and have been awarded.

**Table 5:** Brazilian Federal Universities with projects associated to the award-winning SDGs

UNIVERSITY		AWARDS
1	UFG	The SUSTAINABLE UFG Program received on June 5, 2019 the Commendation of Environmental Merit Leolídio Di Ramos Caiado, offered by the Municipality of Goiânia.
2	UFMT	The Sustainable Girls program took the Academy category award from the 6th Fecomercio Sustainability Award. As a transformative scientific education proposal, about 40 undergraduate and high school students are challenged to interact with important issues directly associated to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3	UFMG	The Water Consumption Reduction Project was considered one of the 20 best sustainability practices by the Ministry of the Environment and the UN, being awarded in the Public Call "Good Practices A3P".
4	UFRN	Two UFRN practices were finalists in the 1st edition of the ODS Brazil Award in the Teaching, Research and Extension category, with the projects "Nutrir Community Garden" and "Integrated Environmental Management at UFRN: effluents and waste".
5	UNIVASF	The Green School Program received on January 19, 2016 the Reference Award for Innovation and Creativity in Basic Education in Brazil, from the Ministry of Education (MEC).
6	UFERSA	The Federal Rural University of the Semi-Árido was one of the winners of the 1st Edition of the ODS Brazil Award, delivered on December 13, 2018 with the research project "Technology of brackish water desalination", having won the first place in the category Teaching, Research and Extension.
7	UFJF	The Laboratory of Research in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape (DOMVS), coordinated by Professor Fernando Lima, received in 2018 honorable mention in Capes Award for developing a system of algorithms that helps to evaluate and optimize the performance of urban spaces, which is committed to the SDG 11.
8	UTFPR	Since 2018, at least 7 of UTFPR campus have received the ODS certificated (years 2018 and 2019) with their extension projects and in 2019 the UTFPR Santa Helena campus won the ODS SESI Honorable Mention Award for Higher Education.

9	UFSC	The Project for the Recovery and Environmental Education of the forest of the Center of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (CFH/UFSC) received, on August 23, 2018, the sustainability award Environmental Agenda in Public Administration (A3P). The project ranked third in the category "Sustainable Use/Management of Natural Resources". CCA extension project also won an award from the Ministry of the Environment, having been recognized for work in combating food waste, from the Good Practices in Combating Food Loss and Waste notice 2018.
10	UFSM	In 2019 the Observatory of Human Rights (ODH) associated to the Coordination of Regional Development and Citizenship (CODERC) of the Pro-Rector of Extension (PRE / UFSM) received the Commendation of the City Council of The City of Santa Maria/RS.
11	FURG	The project "Innovation, teaching, experimentation, inclusion and active learning as tools for the qualification of basic education scientific literacy" was awarded by MEC.
12	UFRGS	Four startup proposals were awarded in the UFRGS Entrepreneurship Marathon 2018, which had as slogan "Impacte your world" that considered in the notice the service to the SDGs.

**Source:** self-elaboration, 2020.

## 5 Final Considerations

The development of this study allowed an analysis of how Brazilian Federal Universities have been in dialogue with the 2030 Agenda. Guided by recent work developed on the subject and by the document prepared by the SDSN that addresses procedures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in universities, this research had an exploratory character and gathered information from 53 universities participating in the study.

Seeking to diagnose the Brazilian scenario, it is verified that although these universities already dialogue on sustainable development, the premise advocated here is that the actions of universities are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, because only then will it be possible to measure the performance of institutions with regard to the SDGs. In this sense, it reiterates the need to develop strategies that are more articulated and coordinated and that stimulate the role of educational institutions in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Brazil.

As the theme has been advancing, especially in Spain, which has developed a committee to guide actions, Brazil still has slower results, and the ODS Universities Network was even disjointed, which aimed to promote, in a networked manner, the insertion of the SDGs in the activities of teaching, research, extension and management of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions.

This context points to the importance of providing guidance for the incorporation of the SDGs in universities, which are called protagonists due to their work of generating and disseminating knowledge and its preeminent situation within society. In these spaces, critical thinking is promoted, citizens are formed, and innovative solutions are developed that allow the reach of the SDGs.

Taking this reality into account, the first strategy is to make universities aware of the 2030 Agenda and incorporate the guidelines into their strategic planning, reaffirming commitments in institutional documents. On this subject, data from the Brazilian Federal Universities indicate that only 22 universities (42%) addressed the 2030 Agenda in one of their planning documents, with a large number of institutions (58%) that, although they may address issues related to the SDGs, do not mention the Agenda 2030 or the SDGs in their strategic documents. This reality needs to be transformed, because the guidelines proposed by the UN must be part of the daily life of educational institutions, stimulating the creation of an institutional culture that includes educating to build a fairer, more economically viable and environmentally sustainable society.

Regarding the participation and promotion of events on the 2030 Agenda, it was found that universities have been holding seminars and meetings to discuss the theme. Although, in general, it can be said that most of the events promoted by these institutions deal in a transversal way with the SDGs, the importance of direct linking these actions and the SDG is

reiterated, reaffirming the university's commitment to disseminate the goals and enhance discussions that contribute to their implementation. In this sense, it was found that 27 universities (51%) have already held an event to promote the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs in the university environment, pointing out that these institutions are not alien to the theme and have been promoting actions for socialization and exchange of experiences.

In another aspect and dealing with research and extension projects, it was questioned whether there was a direct link between each initiative and the SDGs it relates to. The intention of this is to make the projects that universities implement dialogue directly with the SDGs, being possible to group the initiatives and evaluate their effects. Despite this advantage, reality points to a number of only 8 universities (15%) that have this system, and there are the vast majority of institutions that do not know how their projects contribute to the SDGs. This data translates into a huge challenge, because the strengthening of the 2030 Agenda permeates the need for the academic community to contribute to initiatives that allow achieving the goals of the SDGs. While the actions were being carried out without articulation, it is lost in effort and potential to achieve results.

Finally, dealing with the practices of Brazilian Federal Universities that are aligned with the SDGs and that have received awards, we highlight the challenge of institutions in mapping these awards, reinforcing that the system of support and recognition of projects dealing with the SDGs in universities still needs to be strengthened. Nevertheless, it was found that a number of 12 universities (23%) projects aligned with the 2030 Agenda guidelines that have been awarded.

All these data indicate that there is still a trajectory to be traced, especially because the Brazilian Federal Universities act on their own, without effective coordination of actions. Some institutions have not yet been able to reconcile their actions with the 2030 Agenda, contributing to the number of people who do not know and do not implement the SDGs.

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