

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE STRATEGIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – BEST PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is gathering greater attention past the last years. The implementation of the aims of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, proposed by the European and world organizations requires from all entities implementation of solutions needed for adapting to new requirements and challenges. A contemporary educational institution should be a center for shaping innovative behavior and awareness. Universities are facing new challenges, both in the field of university management, education of future employees and leaders as well as application research in the field of solutions for sustainable development.

OBJECTIVE

- Assessing activities and solutions of the best universities in Europe (based on the Shanghai list 2021) in the field of sustainable development, at the level of communication of the strategies;
- Displaying of selected case studies as the best practice of dealing with sustainability in higher education activities.

METHODOLOGY

The authors conduct the research among the top 33 European Universities, ranked in the top100 best universities – according to the Shanghai Ranking.

In order to reach the aim of the research the official websites in English of the universities were analysed, which led to collect the data regarding availability of the strategy of the development dedicated to the whole university. Than the role of the sustainability in the strategy was analysed in particular areas: its time perspective, mission, vision, core values, key areas, key words and assumptions as well as how much do the strategy go into the details.

RESULTS

Majority of the researched universities publish their strategies of development, or at least main assumption regarding their mission, vision or development areas (85%).

The time perspective

- Half of the strategies of development adopted in 2020 last till 2030.
- The prolongation of the strategies is a distinct confirmation of the long-term perspective and long-term development plans, which more and more often correlate with the postulates of sustainable development.
- What is very interesting in one out of three cases there is the reference to the time – mainly future: tomorrow, better place of tomorrow, world of tomorrow, looking toward the future.

The geographical scope

- The reference to the scale of the impact: local, regional, national and global.
- In one out of three cases there is the reference to the space – locally, globally, world, better world

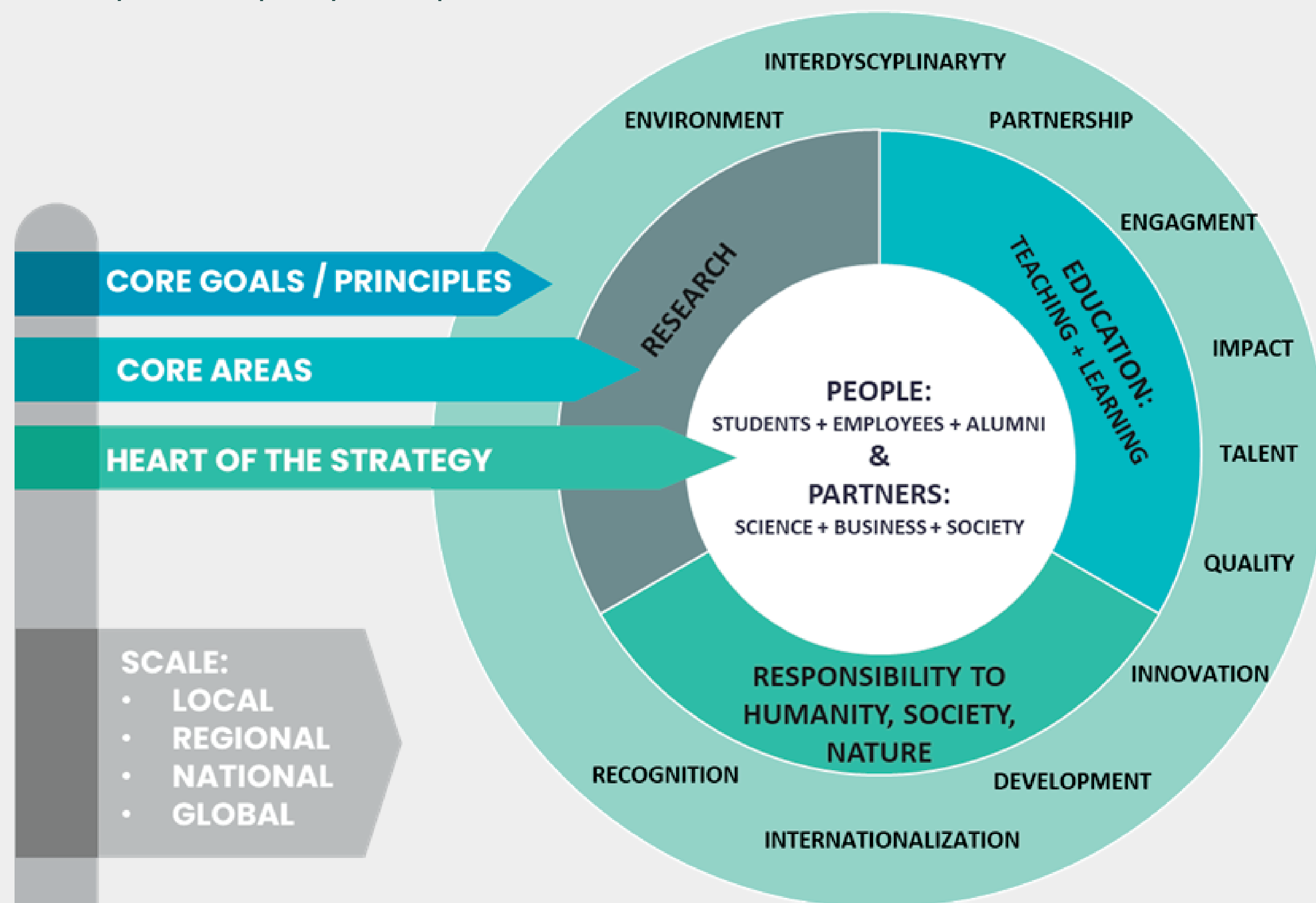
Mission / Vision

- Many statements relate to the future and responsibility: "make the world better place", "contribution to the world / research / social development", "working toward better world", "for a smart, green and social world of tomorrow".
- The key words recur in the vision are as follows: relationships, transformation, university as the catalyst for change, responsibility, inspire, freedom, independent, tradition, quality, relevance, critical dialogue and thinking, opportunities, equality of opportunity, the interdisciplinarity, sense of community.

The areas covered by the strategic plan

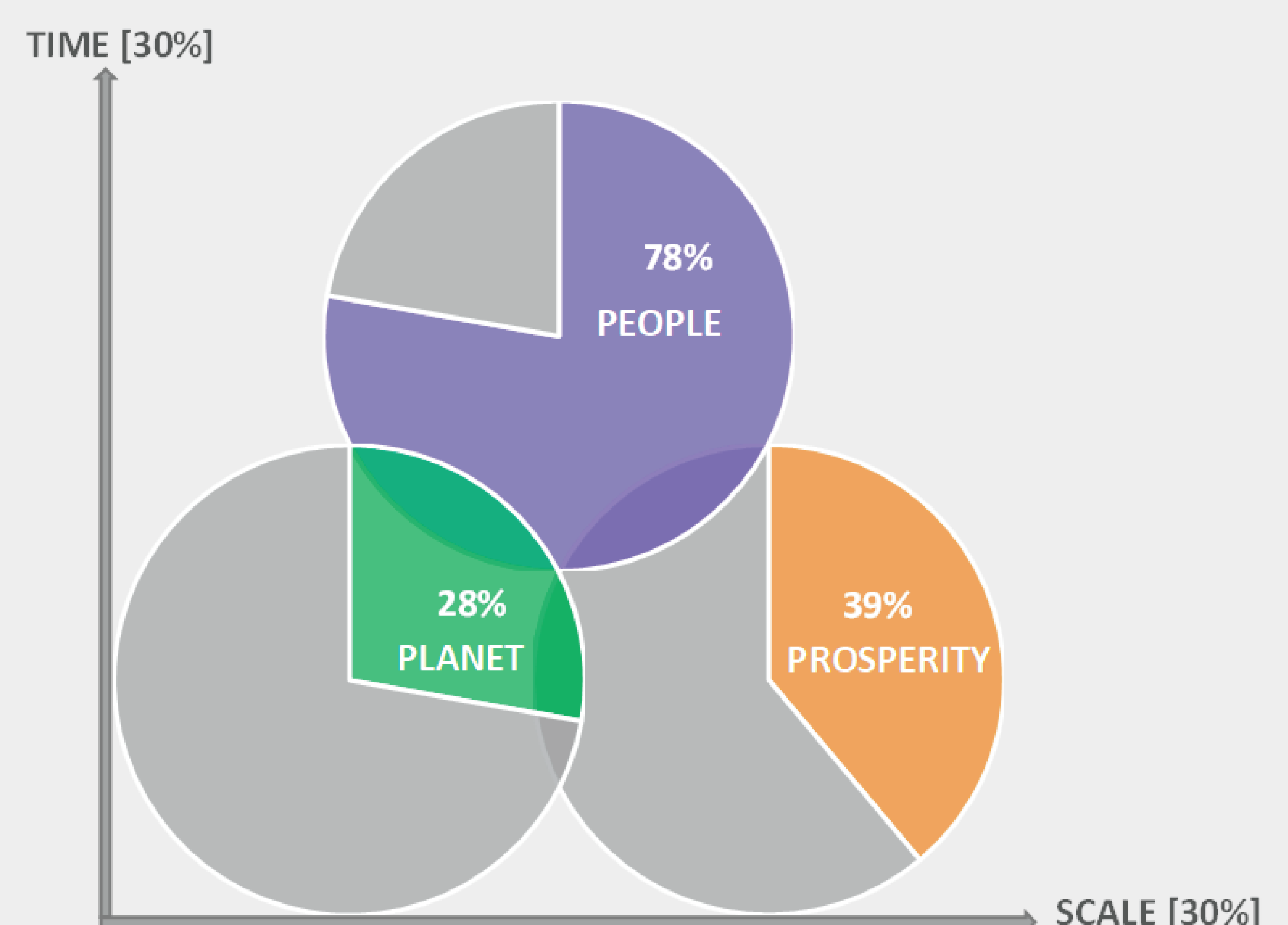
One out of three strategies have the reference to the areas [also defined as the "profile areas", "focus areas"] of the university activity. In majority of cases both research and education = teaching & learning (very often closer ties to research and practice) are emphasis. In majority of the strategies the sustainable development is also the core area of action. In some cases, in most cases all three sustainability goals are emphasis: social, human and natural, which corresponds with the holistic understanding of the role and challenges of the nowadays higher education system.

The set of the strategic plan dedicated to the higher education institutions, which covers the diversity and complexity of the plan.



SOURCE: AUTHORS' OWN RESEARCH

Reference to the sustainable development fundamentals in the mission statements of the leading European universities.



SOURCE: AUTHORS' OWN RESEARCH

CONCLUSION

Universities develop their strategies around three missions: education, research and service to society, what imply the need to formulate and implement a coherent strategy. The strategies of the selected institutions show reference to the latest trends in innovation as well as social responsibility or development, work for the benefit of the local community. Basing on the idea of Human Centre Design in the presented strategies gives a safety buffer concerning focusing on the most important aspects of the institution such as students, teaching staff, researchers, scientists and stakeholders.

RELATED LITERATURE

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