



# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION



**Compostela Group of Universities**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 marked the beginning of a new era. In the previous decade, various public and private research programmes helped to refine global competitiveness, identify new areas of growth and improve the quality of higher education. However, no one was able to predict the great global crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the earthquake it triggered at all levels, including in the field of education.

The complete lack of knowledge and the ease of transmission of the COVID-19 contributed to the exponential growth of a pandemic that affected all areas of development. In this context, several countries were forced to declare a state of emergency and their universities to interrupt, adapt or paralyse the academic calendar. From that moment on, their entire university community focused its efforts on adapting the educational model to the new circumstances and on designing strategies adapted to the new reality, intending to maintain its mission to serve society and guarantee educational excellence.

To collaborate in this analysis of the effects of the pandemic on the university system, the Compostela Group of Universities<sup>1</sup> (CGU) called the members of its international network to participate in the survey *The Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education*. The purpose of this initiative was to collect data on the real situation of its partner universities and to identify indicators that would help them to face the new social and educational reality positively.

In the pages of this publication, we present the main data and conclusions drawn from the responses to this survey. Besides, to close it we include a summary of the interventions of the speakers at the VII Compostela Dialogues in Higher Education, a discussion forum organised by the University of Minho (Portugal) within the framework of the XXVI General Assembly of the CGU.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gcompostela.org](http://www.gcompostela.org)

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey *The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education*<sup>2</sup> was addressed to the entire university community. Thus, the questionnaire was sent to the governing bodies and delegates of the Compostela Group of Universities (CGU) in each higher education institution that is a member of the network.

The form included 55 questions, of which 26 were open, 10 closed and 19 mixed. Of these, 22 incorporated the multiple-choice option and seven single answer questions, such as the evaluation questions on processes and experiences.

The questions were grouped into four thematic blocks focusing on the areas of economics, teaching and research, and management & administration, as well as on the lessons learned in recent months.

In each thematic block, the questions sought to explore the general and sectoral measures adopted by the institutions in their field of competence to support the university community. Participants were asked to evaluate these measures, to detail the positive aspects that could be drawn from the experience and to express their opinion about the consequences of the pandemic for the future. The survey also addressed issues related to internationalisation, mobility, the virtual environment (e-learning and teleworking) and students in vulnerable situations.

When completing the questionnaire, participants could choose to respond by identifying their home university or to do so anonymously. Thus, respecting the right to privacy of personal data by the laws on the subject in the country of origin of the survey, Spain (Organic Law 15/1999, of 13 December, on the Protection of Personal Data, Organic Law 3/2018, of 5 December, on the Protection of Personal Data and the guarantee of digital rights).

The survey was disseminated in the second quarter of 2020 among the 64 universities affiliated at that time to the Compostela Group of Universities, located on three continents: Europe, America and Asia. The response rate was 48.44%.

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<sup>2</sup> Survey available as an annex to this report or on the link <https://airtable.com/shr7BXsXMx3XIL9e5>

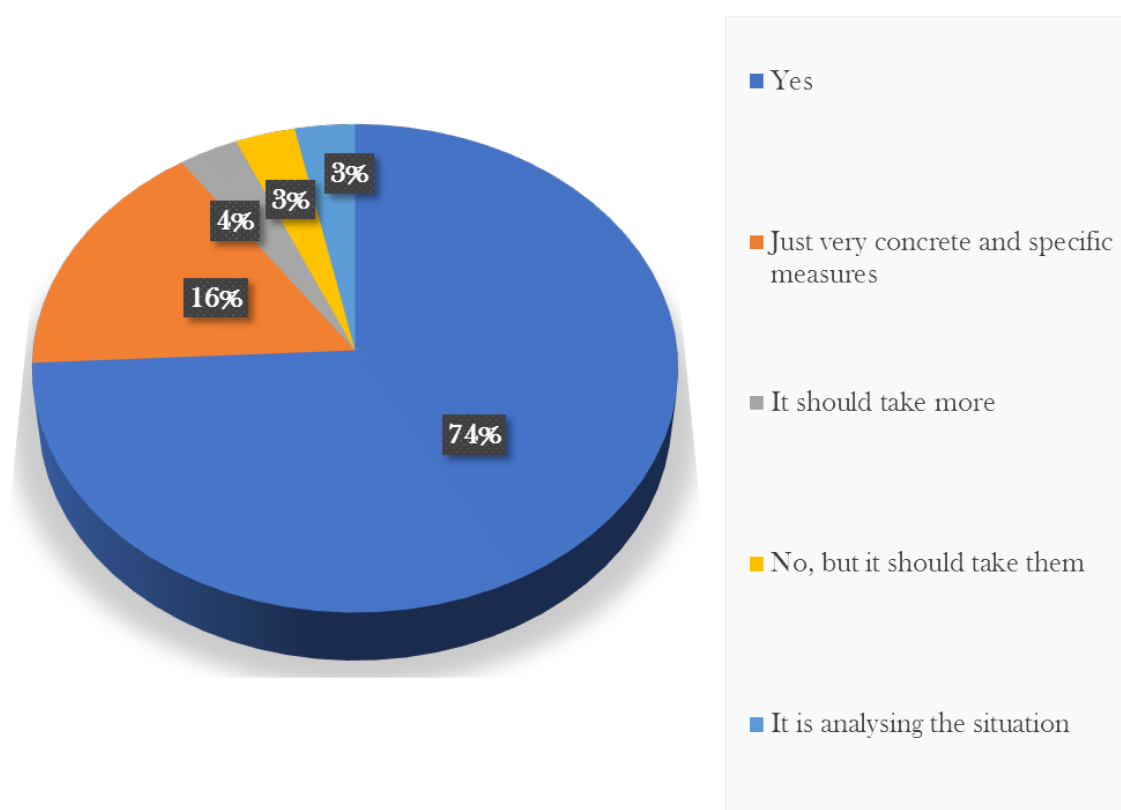


### 3. REPORT ON *THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION*

#### 3.1 MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE ECONOMIC AREA

The first block of the questionnaire focused on discovering the main measures implemented by higher education institutions in the economic area to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic on their university communities. After analysing the results, we concluded that a large majority of them adopted provisions in this area, as reported by 74% of the respondents. Thus, only 3% explained that their university was still analysing the situation and another 3% indicated that no initiative had been taken, considering it should be done.

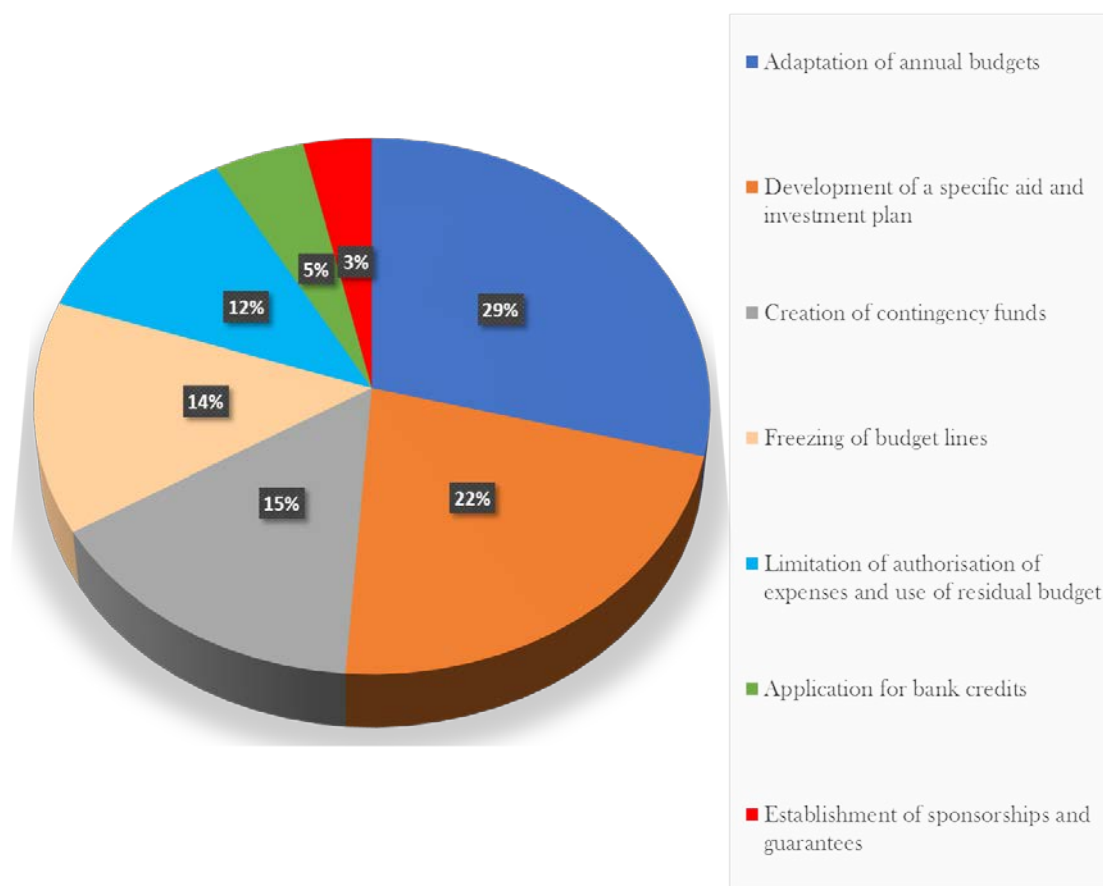
ADOPTION OF ECONOMIC MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC



The generic measures implemented by their universities were mainly the adaptation of their annual budgets (29%) and the design of specific aid and investment plans (22%). Only 5% applied for bank loans and 3% implemented sponsorship or guarantee programmes.

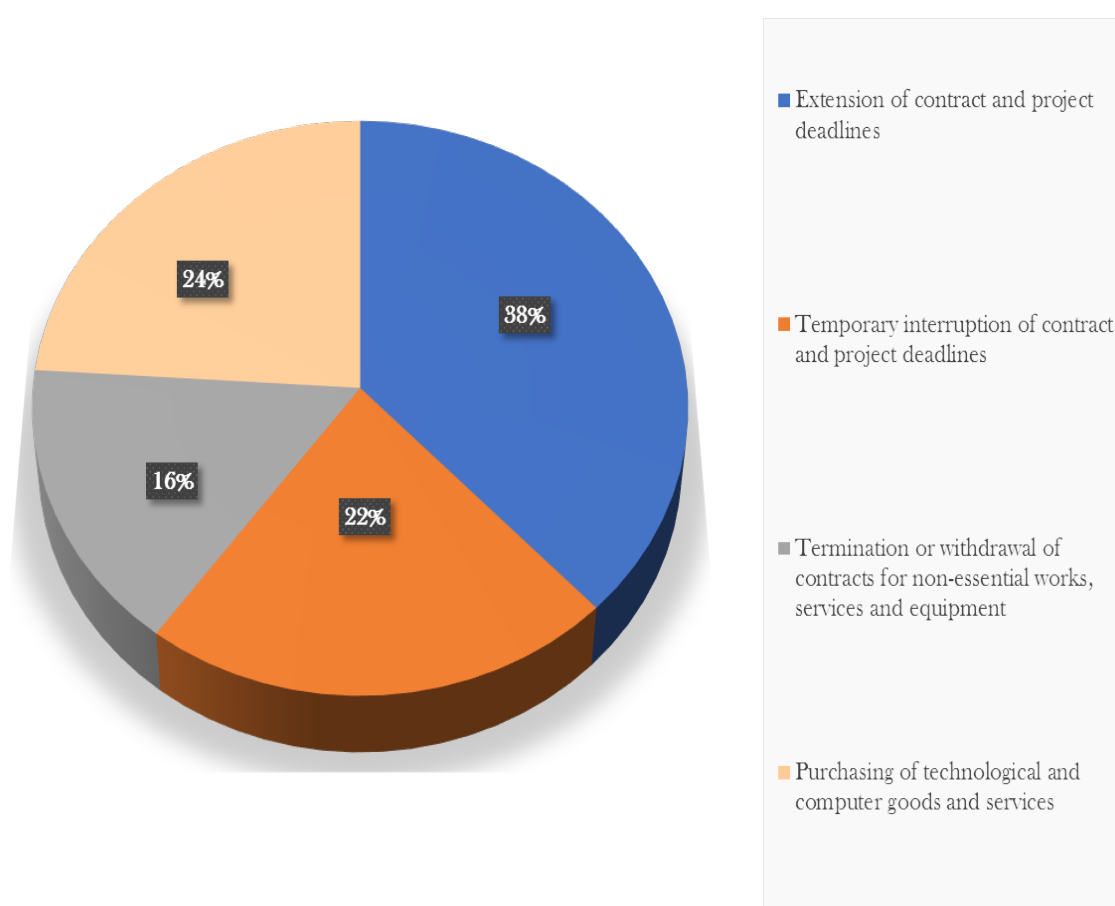
Although this question allowed more than one option to be selected, 5% of the participants indicated that their universities applied only one measure. Among those who chose multiple options, a high percentage (58%) said that their universities took the two main measures mentioned above: budget readjustment and creation of specific plans.

#### GENERIC ECONOMIC MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY THE UNIVERSITIES TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC



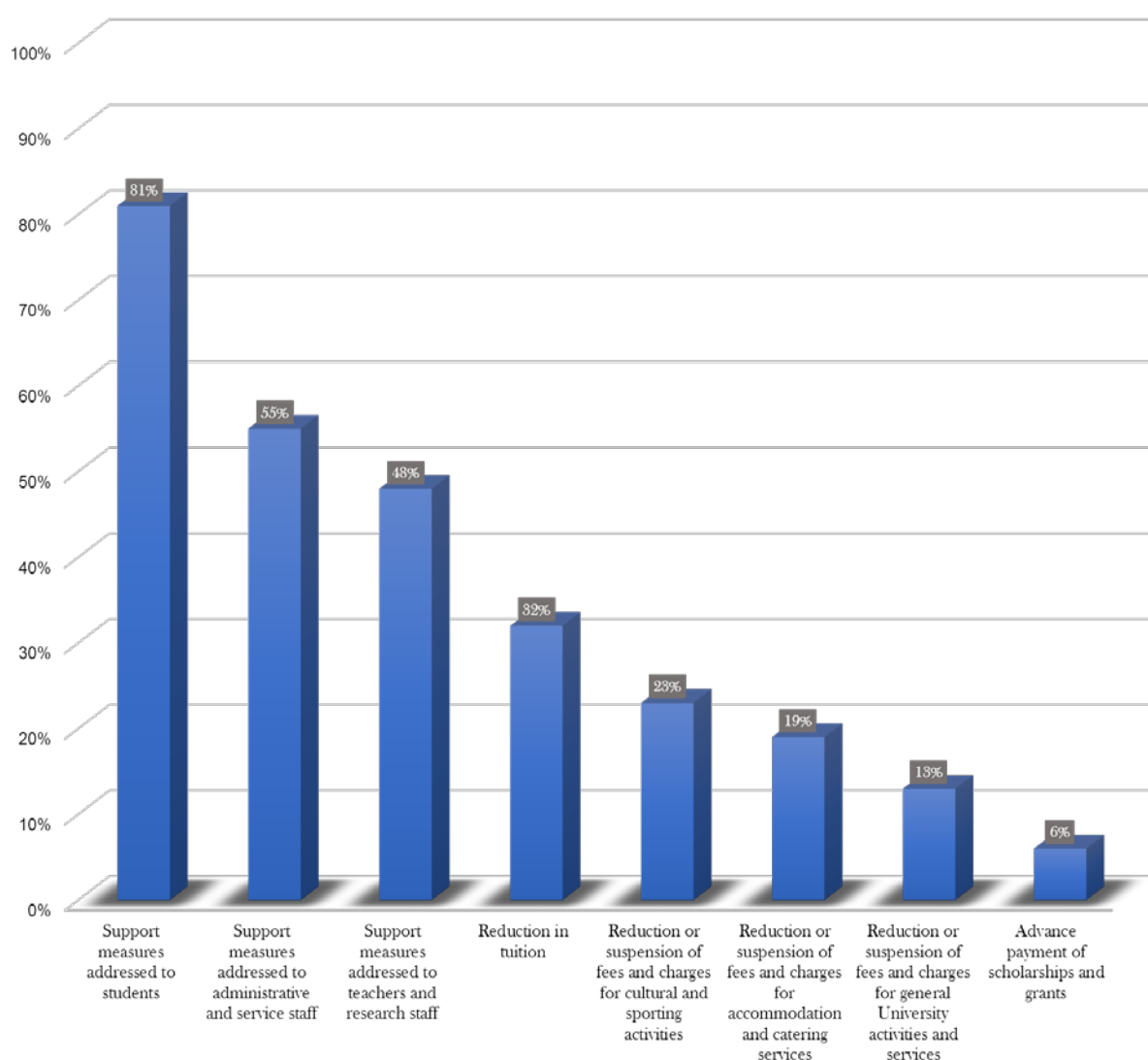
In the area of contractual activity, response rates were quite similar. However, the measures aimed at extending and suspending the execution periods of contracts and projects stood out at 60%, as opposed to the measures aimed at cancelling or withdrawing from contracts for non-essential works, services and equipment or the acquisition of technological and IT goods and services, with a total of 40%.

### ECONOMIC MEASURES RELATED TO CONTRACTUAL ACTIVITY



The recipients of this financial support were primarily students (81%), teachers & researchers (55%) and administration & service staff (48%). These support measures were mainly aimed at reducing the cost of tuition fees (32%), as well as reducing fees for cultural & sports activities (23%), accommodation and catering services (19%) and general university fees or charges (13%). Only a small percentage of respondents (6%) said that their home university paid in advance for established scholarships and grants.

**TARGET GROUPS AND SPECIFIC ECONOMIC MEASURES ADOPTED**

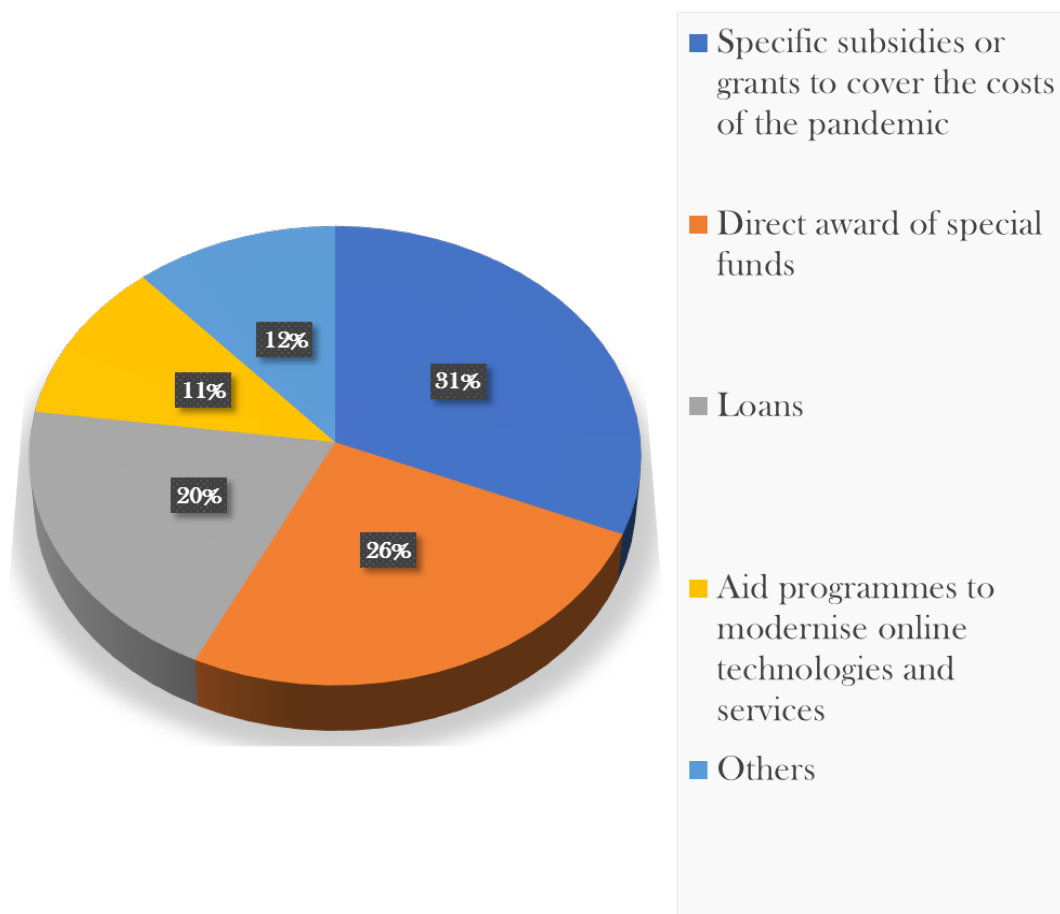


During this difficult period, local, regional and state authorities allocated funds to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on higher education. Our questionnaire included questions that focused on deciphering the nature of this funding available to universities.

According to respondents, these funds were mainly used to cover specific costs related to the pandemic (31%), special direct grant funds (26%) and loans (20%). Besides, a smaller percentage of them (11%) said they had support actions for technological modernisation.

Those who did not opt for any of the previous options pointed out that their university did not have economic support from the public authorities but, in any case, their salaries from the state had not been frozen or this support was channelled through grants and discounts.

#### AID PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC AUTHORITIES



To round off this first thematic block focused on the economic area, we asked respondents to highlight those economic measures that they felt were most useful. In general terms, their responses referred to actions aimed at vulnerable groups and others ranging from sponsorship, state subsidies, deferral of payments, percentage cost reductions and technological support to the creation of specific funds and subsidies to cover costs arising from the effects of the pandemic. In the Americas, some participants even noted that their universities are conducting detailed studies of the family situation of their students to grant them discounts tailored to their needs.



#### EUROPE:

- Computer loan service for vulnerable students.
- Programme to encourage work placements in rural areas.
- Deferral of payments.
- Sponsorships for the call for emergency aid projects.
- State grants for the preservation of employment.



#### AMERICA:

- Analysis of each family situation and discounts tailored to each case.
- Good financial management throughout institutional life.



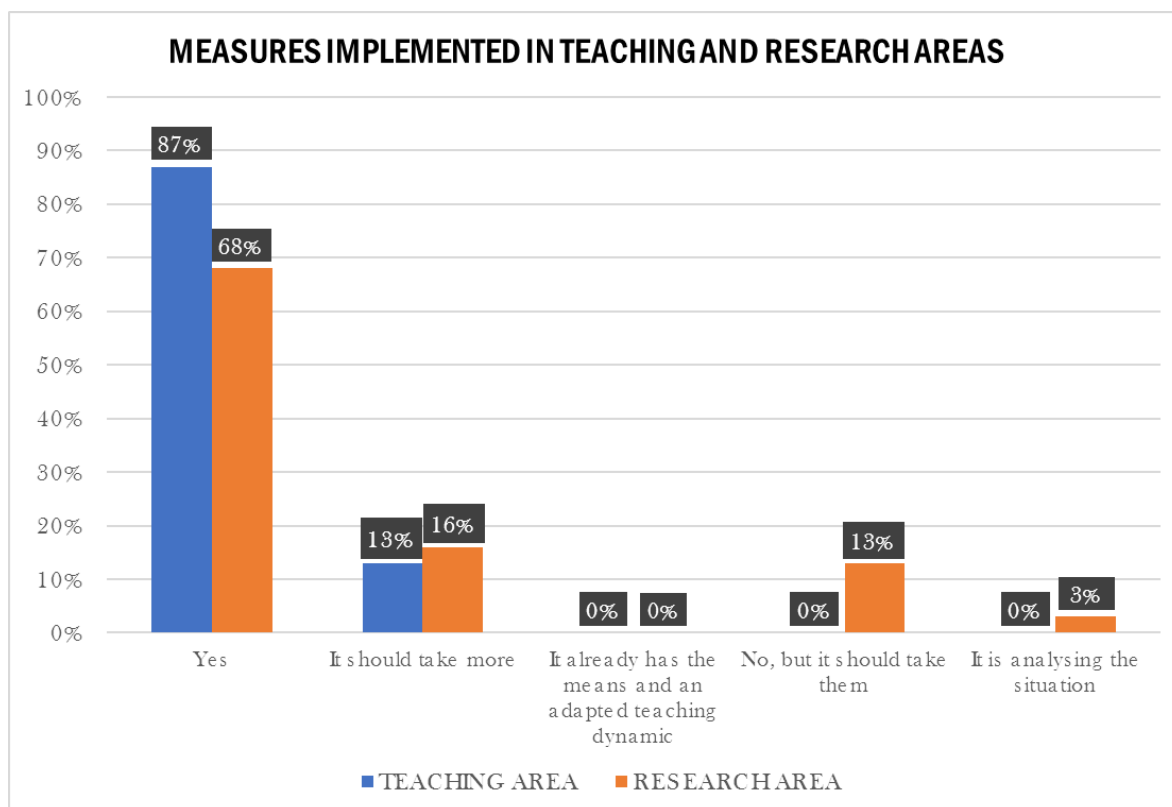
#### ANONYMOUSLY:

- Reduction of 9% of the half-yearly cost.
- SIM card vouchers and computer equipment supplies.
- Special funds and specific subsidies to cover costs related to the pandemic.

### 3.2 MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH AREA

The second block of the questionnaire was aimed at finding out about the provisions implemented by universities to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in the areas of teaching and research.

We found that the home universities of the respondents developed initiatives in both the teaching area (87%) and the research area (68%). Moreover, only 13% and 16% of them felt that their universities should have taken more actions in these two areas.

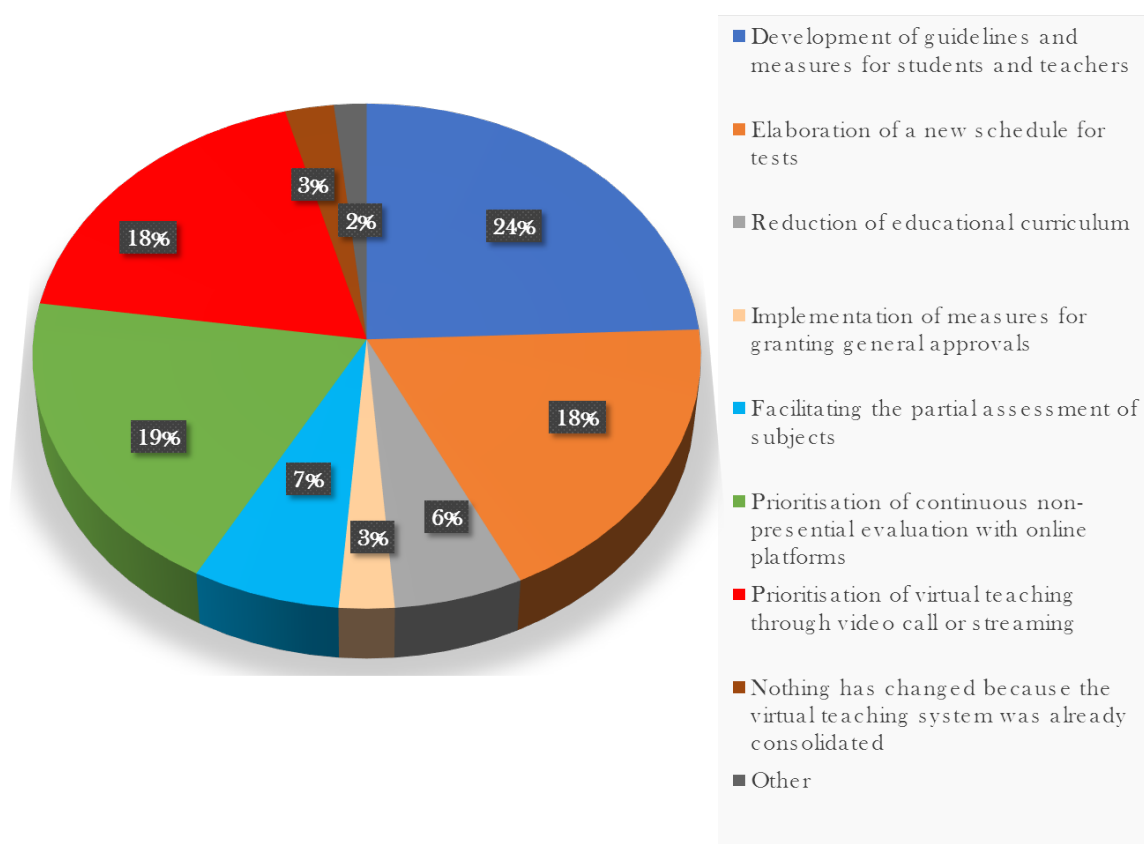


A small group of higher education institutions (3%) were already teaching online, so they did not have to quickly adapt their model to remote teaching. However, the majority of respondents felt that their universities were forced to implement measures and changes to adapt to this new reality shaped by the pandemic.

Amongst these actions, the most important was the development of guidelines and measures aimed at teaching staff and students (24%), followed by the prioritisation of the continuous assessment system not based on attendance through educational platforms (19%) as well as virtual teaching through video call systems or the internet and the preparation of a new examination calendar (18%). In contrast, only 7% of universities provided their students with facilities for partial assessment of courses, 6% reduced their academic curriculum and 3% implemented the general pass mark.

A minority of respondents (2%) said that their university had taken other specific general measures: The adaptation of the agenda and educational models, as well as the evaluation of the teaching guide and the implementation of a specific learning management system (Blackboard).

#### GENERAL MEASURES ADOPTED IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH AREAS



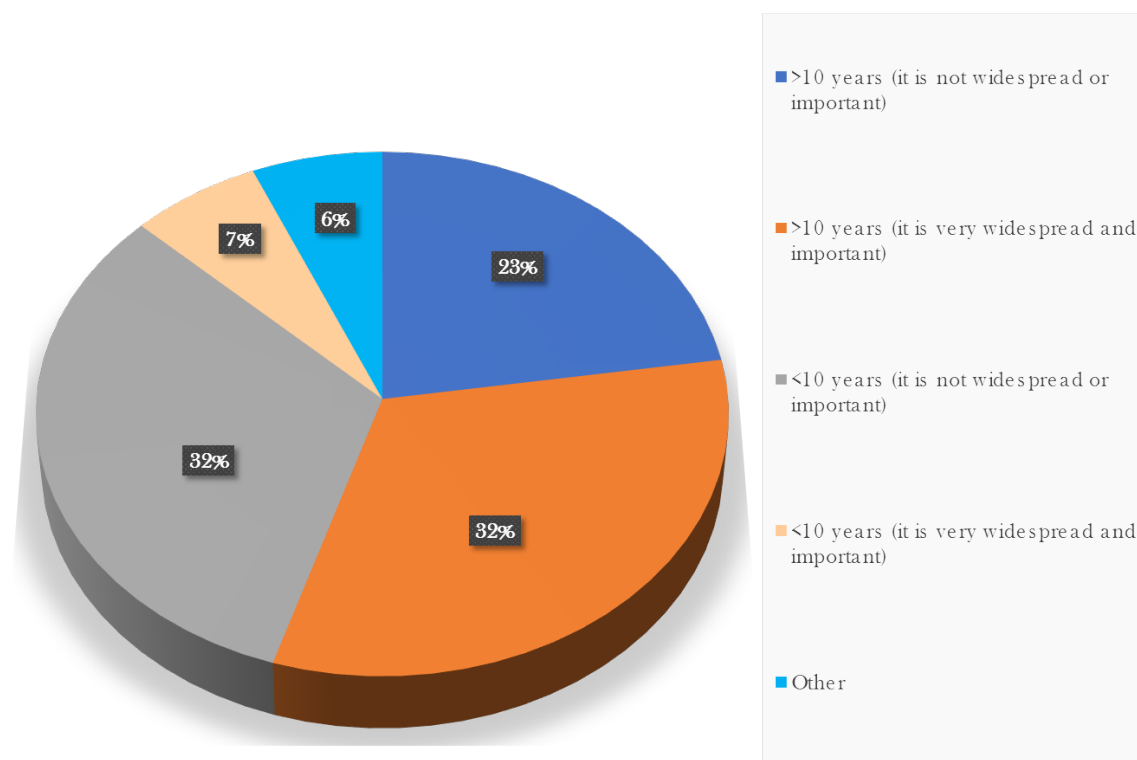


Through the survey, we have also investigated the experience of universities and their community in dealing with virtual teaching.

Those who are inexperienced in new technologies claims that the technical opportunities of standard online teaching are quite limited and that the adaptability of older teachers is low. This is why their institution does not encourage virtual teaching either now or before the pandemic.

However, among the universities that were providing virtual teaching before the pandemic, the number of institutions with more than 10 years of experience is much higher (55% compared to 39% with less than 10 years of experience). However, in terms of esteem and frequency of use, the virtual modality is not widespread or considered important, and the percentages are reversed here (39% compared to 55% who do appreciate it and use it frequently). Only 6% say that face-to-face teaching prevails at their university, but that they have been alternating it with virtual teaching for the last three years in some degree courses.

#### UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE IN ONLINE TEACHING

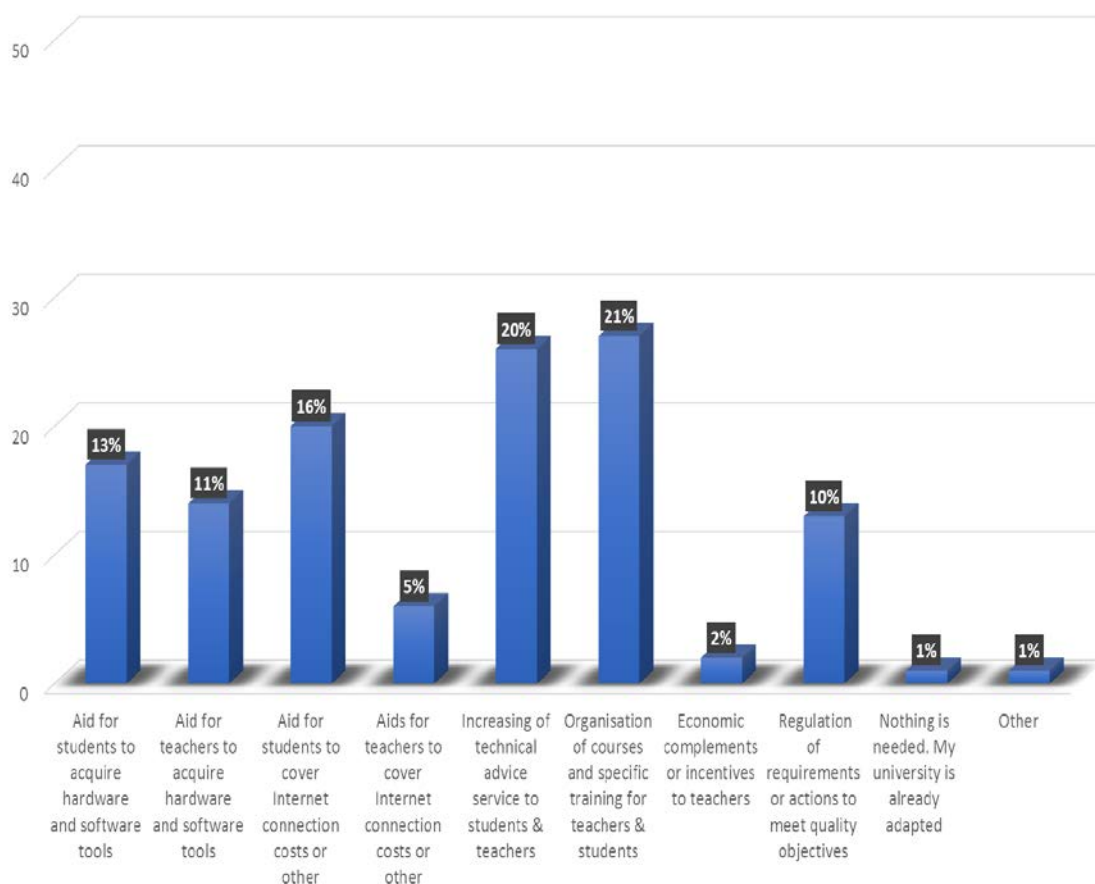


This is obvious as most of our teachers were forced to make a rapid transition from a face-to-face to a virtual teaching model with little experience in the use of new technologies. To solve the difficulties, the star measure adopted by our universities was the implementation of specific training courses aimed at teachers and students (21%), as well as the increase in technical support services for this sector (20%).

Furthermore, in order to guarantee access to virtual teaching for these groups, 45% of the institutions set up aids to cover the costs of Internet connection and the purchase of computer equipment and components for students and teachers.

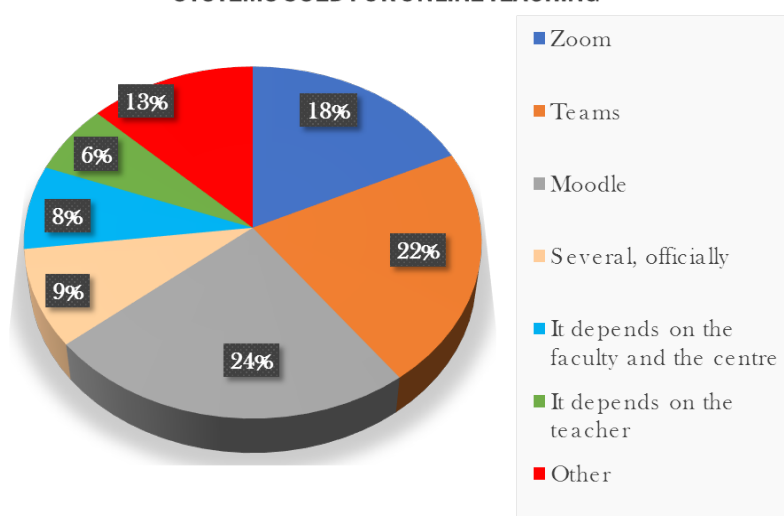
Only 10% of respondents said that their home universities had developed specific regulations to ensure the quality of teaching, and even had financial incentives for teachers (2%) while 1% reiterated that they should not implement any measures in this regard, as their institutions had already consolidated the virtual teaching model.

#### MEASURES TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF ONLINE TEACHING



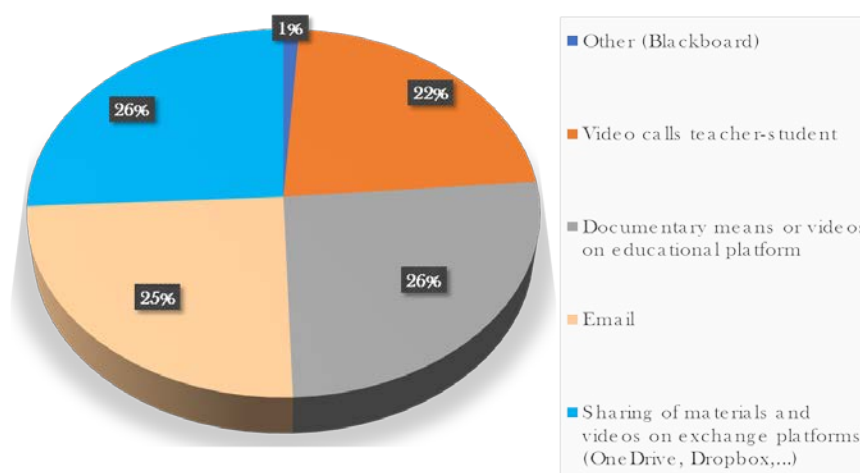
Among the most widely used systems for virtual teaching, Moodle (24%) and Teams (22%) stand out. They are closely followed by Zoom (18%) and other systems (13%), such as Blackboard, BlueJeans, BigBlueButton, Google Meet, and even tools of the university's authorship. The use of one or other technological means often depends on the internal regulations of the university for these purposes (9%), the autonomy of the faculty and the centre (8%), or the autonomy of the teacher (6%).

**SYSTEMS USED FOR ONLINE TEACHING**



Concerning the systems used for the exchange of teaching material, documentation and information for virtual teaching, the university community gives equal preference (26%) to documentary or video platforms or others for sharing audiovisual material such as OneDrive, Dropbox or similar, while email (25%) and video calls (22%) continue to be more widely used.

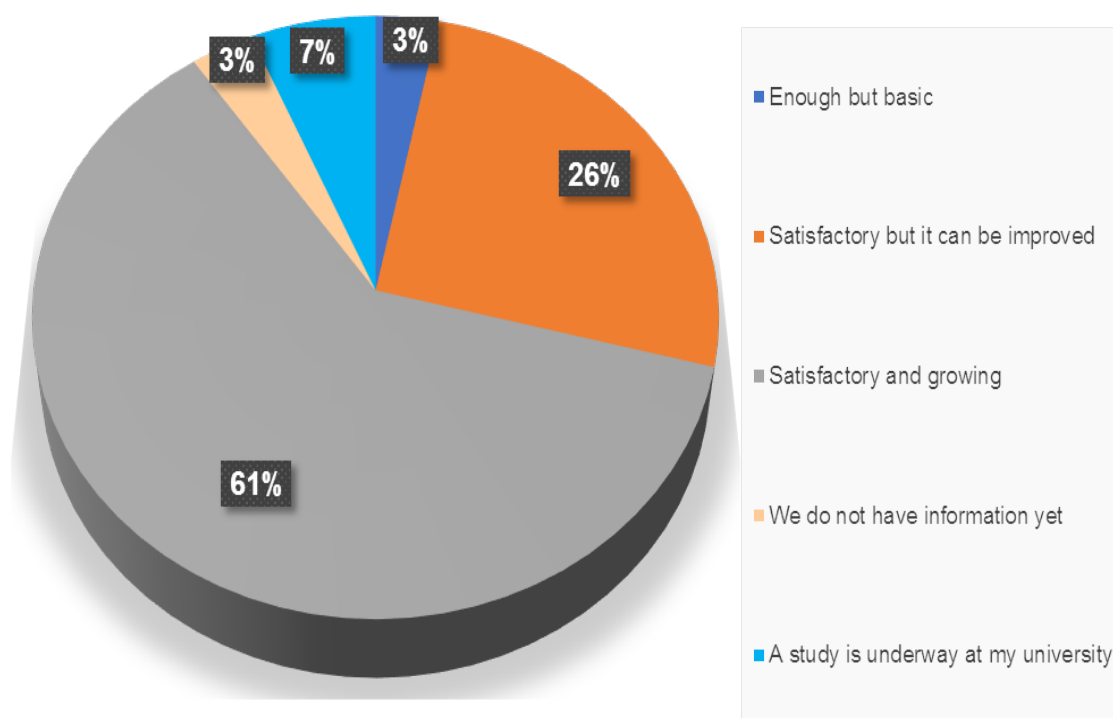
**MEANS USED FOR THE EXCHANGE OF ONLINE TEACHING INFORMATION**



The evaluation made of the frequency of use of online teaching and research tools following the declaration of the state of emergency shows a high degree of satisfaction (61%), even claiming that their use is increasing. A lower percentage (26%) shows that the frequency of use is satisfactory but could be improved for the time being.

On the other hand, 3% of surveyed state that the frequency of use is sufficient but still basic, while the rest of the universities either do not have data yet to carry out a consistent evaluation or report that they are carrying out a specific study in this regard.

### FREQUENCY OF USE OF ONLINE TOOLS AFTER THE DECLARATION OF THE PANDEMIC

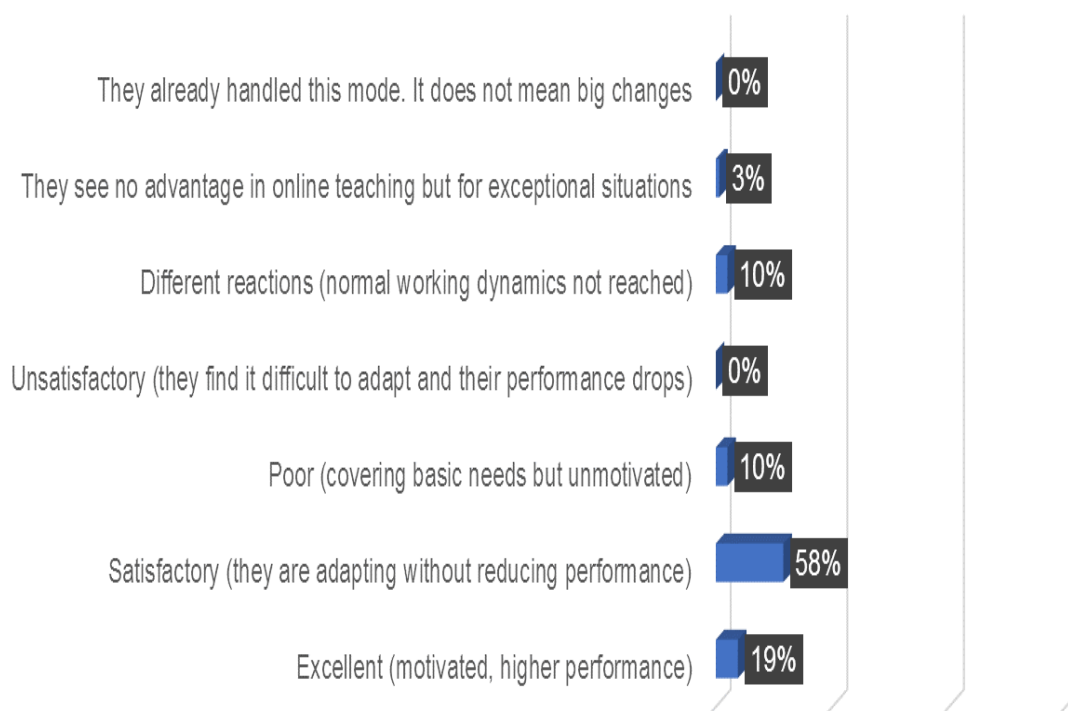


In any case, 77% of the universities consider that the attitude of their teaching staff in this stage of transition from face-to-face to virtual teaching is satisfactory and that the adaptation is not affecting their performance (58%), or even that it is excellent with a higher degree of performance (19%).

Only 20% show a certain degree of concern when they claim that the attitude is in some cases regular (10%) because they are unmotivated and only cover basic needs, or that the stage of uncertainty caused varied reactions (10%) affecting the normal dynamics of work.

A residual percentage (3%) does not see advantages to virtual teaching over face-to-face teaching except for exceptional cases.

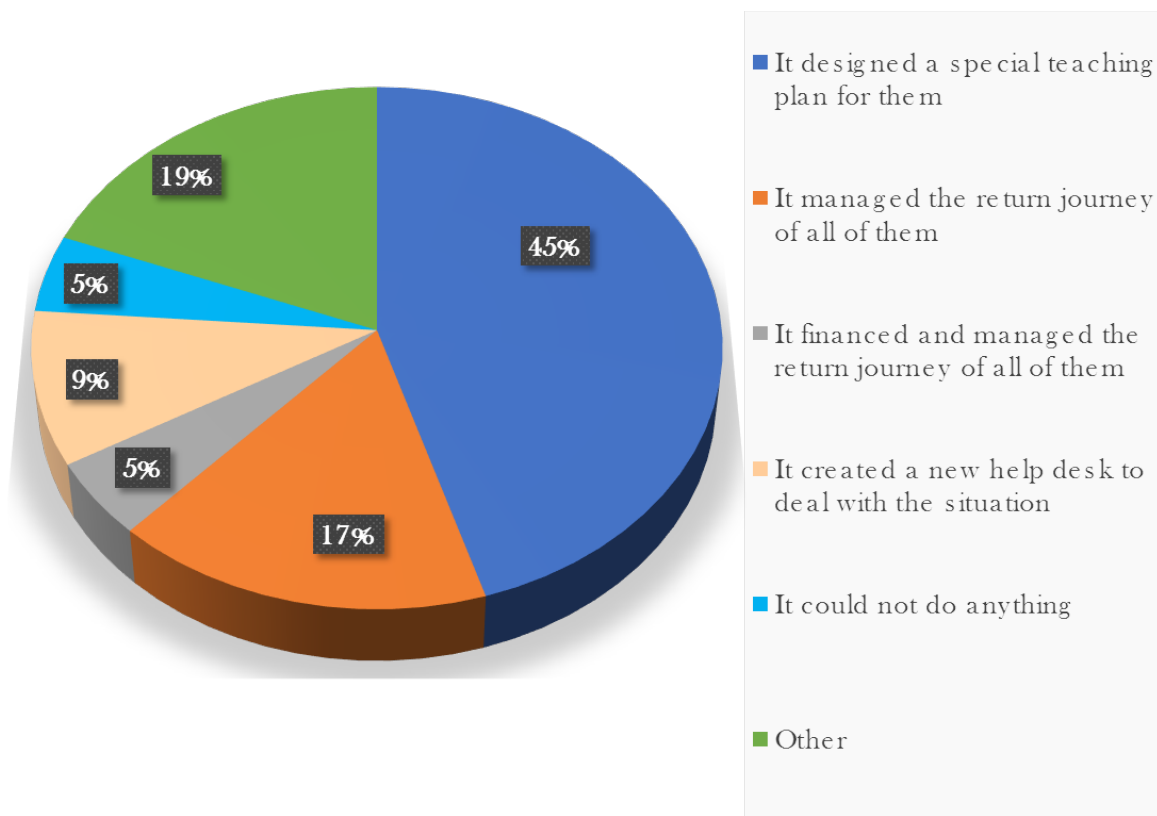
## TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TO THE CHANGE FROM FACE-TO-FACE TO ONLINE TEACHING



As the pandemic emerged, universities had to devise strategies to assist their students, but also those international students hosted on their premises through exchange programmes. According to respondents, the main measures were the development of a special teaching plan (45%) and the funding and management of their return travel to their home country (22%).

Some respondents (5%) indicated that their university was unable to support students in any way. However, 9% stressed that their university had decided to create a specific office to redress the situation and 19% explained that various actions had been implemented related to virtual assistance and monitoring of those affected, both for their exchange students abroad and for foreigners hosted at their university.

#### MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITY FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS



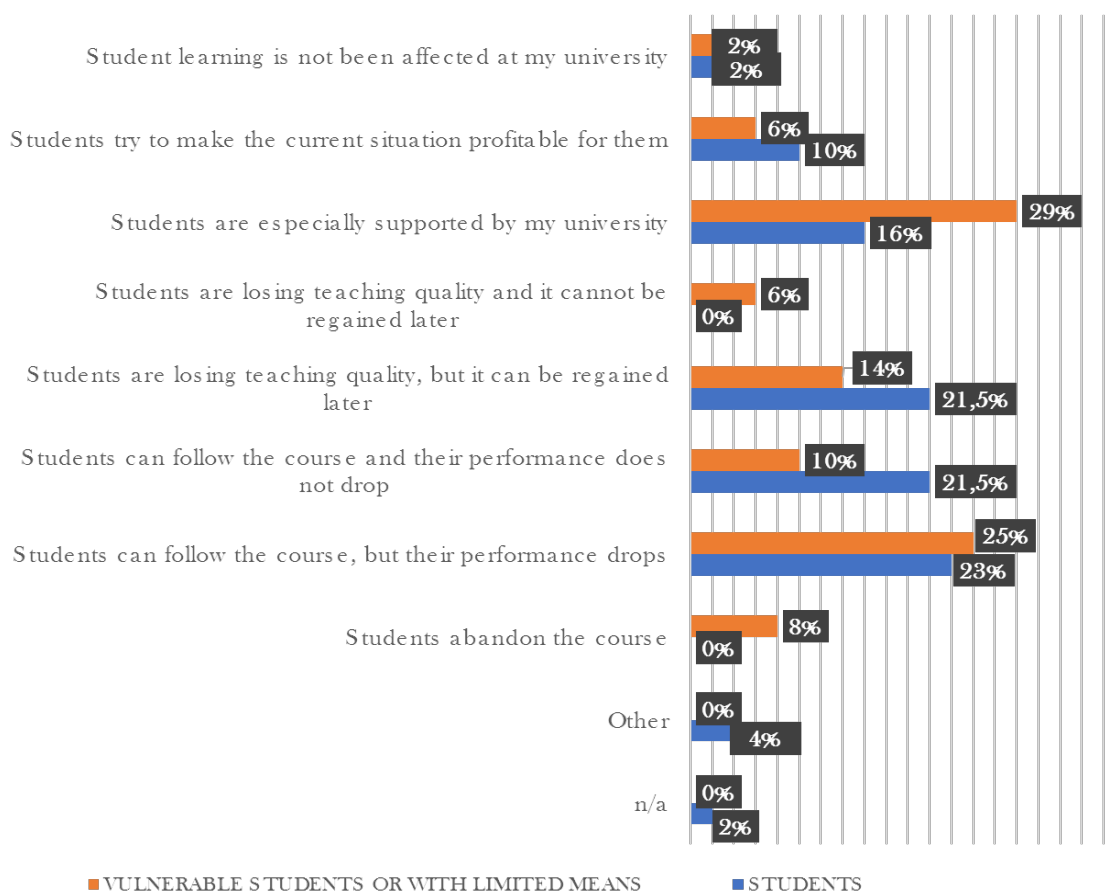
Concerning the effects of the pandemic on student learning, only 2% of respondents noted that the situation did not have an impact on their students, and another 2% said that they did not know or could not give an answer to this question yet. According to their responses, the coronavirus outbreak affected student learning to some extent in most universities.

In the case of vulnerable students, although 29% of universities have taken specific measures to support them, 8% of these students were forced to abandon their studies. Also, only 25% of vulnerable students (compared to 23% of non-vulnerable students) were able to continue their studies but their learning ability was diminished.

Overall, respondents have the perception that the pandemic will leave a deep mark on this group, with 6% believing that teaching quality for vulnerable students is declining with no possibility of recovery in learning. Only 14% felt that there is potential to reverse the situation at a later stage.

On the other hand, they are more optimistic about the chances of recovery for students who are not in this situation, with over 21% of respondents saying that recovery is possible.

#### EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON STUDENT LEARNING

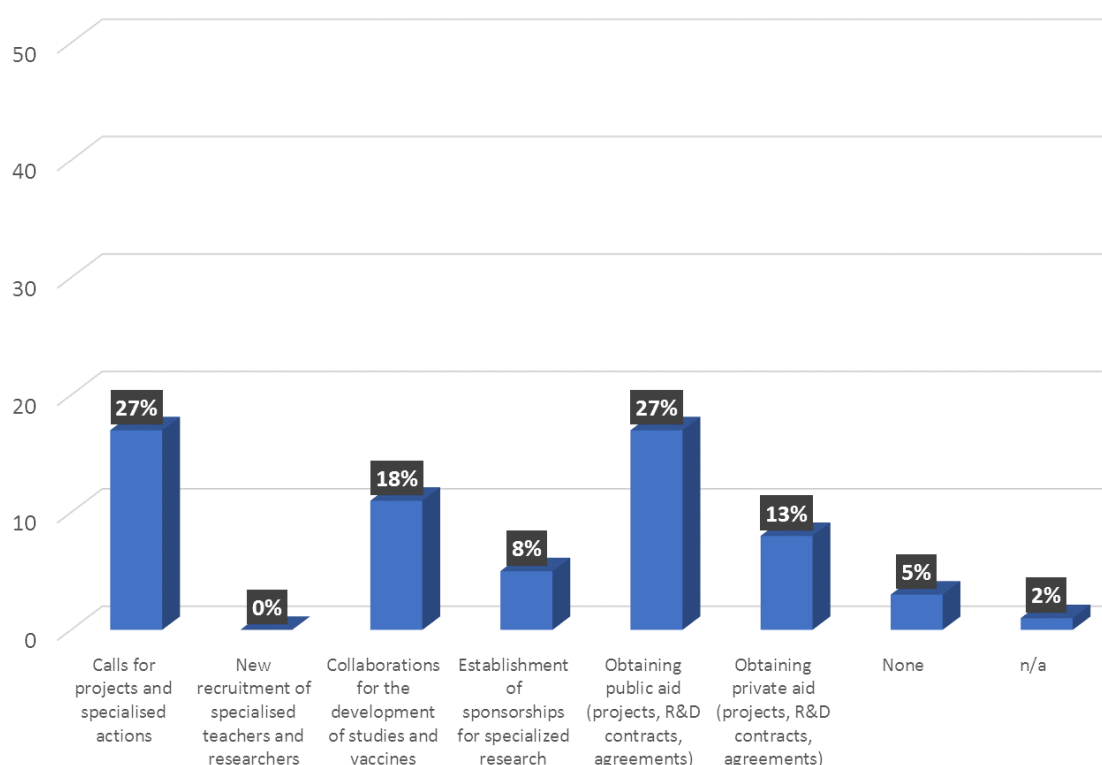


In the management of the current pandemic, research has taken on special relevance. That is the reason why in our survey we were interested in finding out about the actions carried out by higher education institutions to promote research related to the coronavirus. In this regard, 40% of those surveyed revealed that their university had obtained public and private funding for this purpose, 27% and 13% respectively came from these sources, 27% of these institutions launched specific calls for activities and projects focused on the virus, and 18% cooperated in the development of studies and vaccines.

However, this increase in funding has not translated into an increase in the recruitment of specialised research staff, as none of the people who participated in the survey selected this option in the questionnaire.

It should be noted that only 5% of respondents indicated that their university did not carry out any specific action in the area of research.

#### MEASURES ADOPTED TO FACILITATE SPECIALIZED RESEARCH



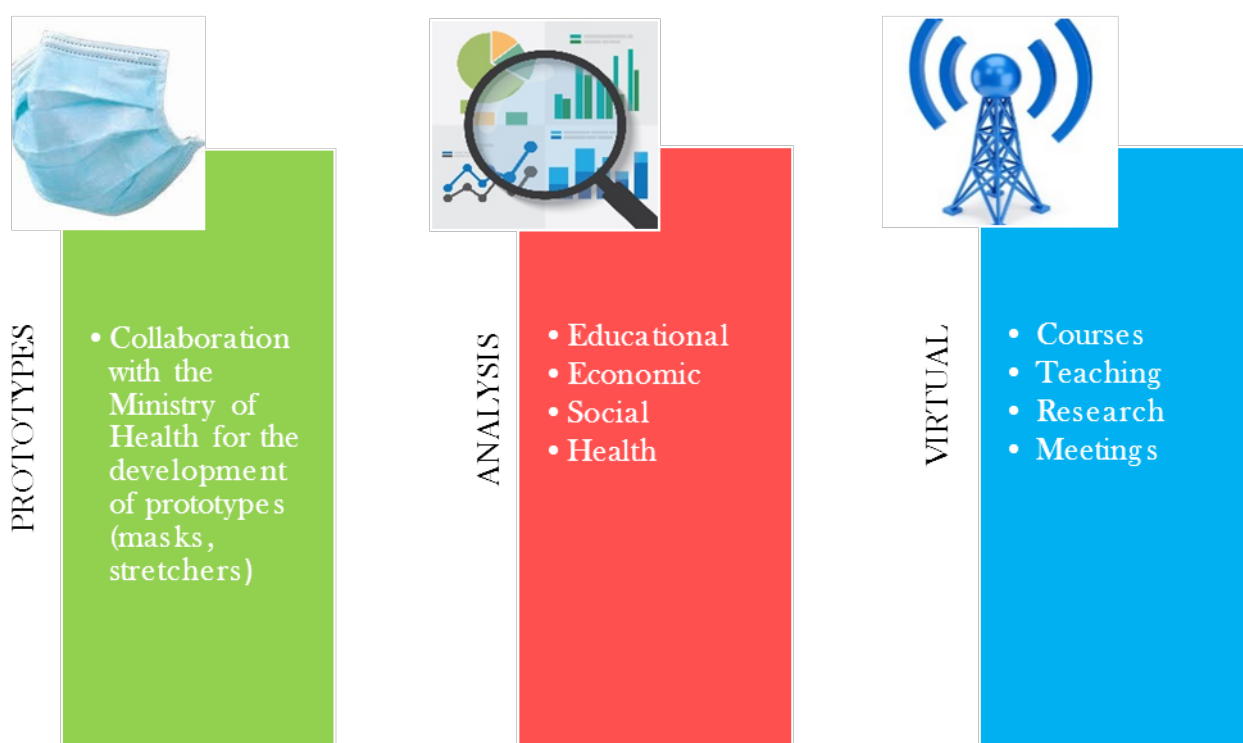


To close this thematic block, we asked the participants in the survey to detail those measures implemented by their university in the areas of teaching and research that in their opinion provided the greatest value.

In this regard, it is noted that respondents appreciate the actions undertaken in the area of research in the fields of education, economy, society and health, as well as the opportunities for collaboration with public authorities that have arisen because of the pandemic, such as for the development of prototypes of masks and stretchers with innovative designs.

In the area of teaching, they consider the transfer from the physical to the virtual sphere to be positive, with the university offering more courses and online training, as well as more online meetings in the area of research work.

### OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND RESEARCH MEASURES

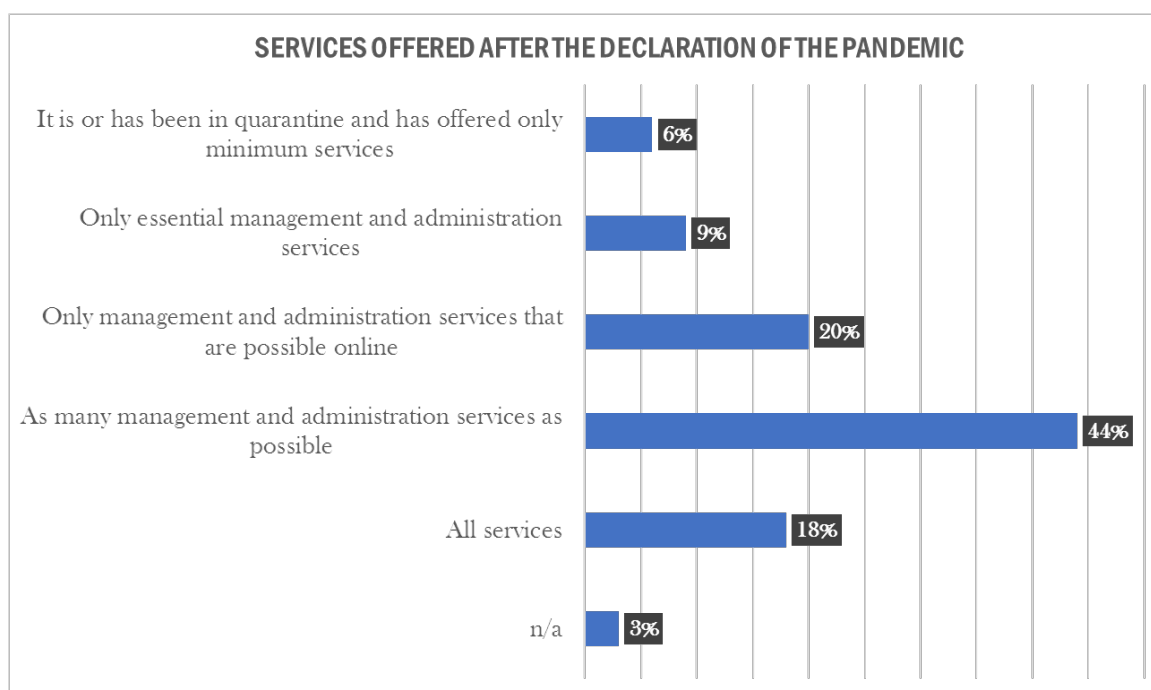


### 3.3 MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION AREA

The third block of questions in the survey focused on obtaining information on the efforts made to alleviate the impact of the pandemic by the area of management of higher education institutions.

Firstly, we set out to find out what services universities maintained following the declaration of the global pandemic by the World Health Organisation in March 2020. We found that 62% of respondents indicated that their home universities continued to provide management and administration services to a greater or lesser extent. Of these, 18% managed to maintain all their services, while 44% applied to retain as many of them as circumstances permitted.

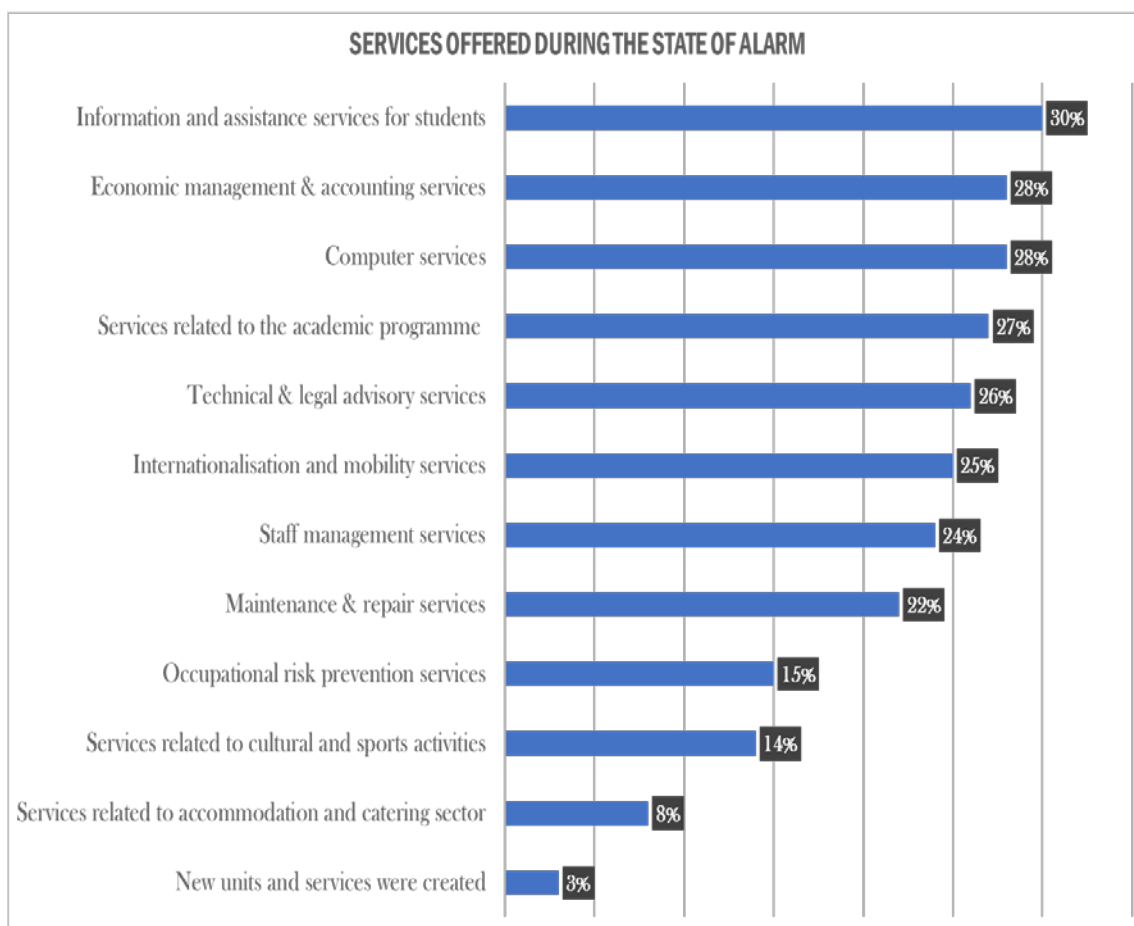
Likewise, 20% of them directed their efforts only to those services provided online and only 9% declared to have guaranteed the minimum services during home confinement, as dictated by the authorities of various countries.



During the first months of the pandemic, a large number of universities were forced to close the doors of their institutions in compliance with the socio-health measures decreed by the authorities of their respective countries. In our survey, we then wanted to know what services those higher education institutions had to cope with the temporary closure.

Taking into account the answers, the main services during the quarantine were, in this order, information and assistance to students (30%), economic management and accounting (28%), computer assistance (28%), academic (27%), legal (26%), internationalisation (25%), human resources (24%), maintenance (22%), cultural and sports activities (14%) and accommodation and catering (8%).

On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight that the risk prevention service only continued to develop its work in 15% of the universities in this situation and that only 3% created specific units to deal with it.

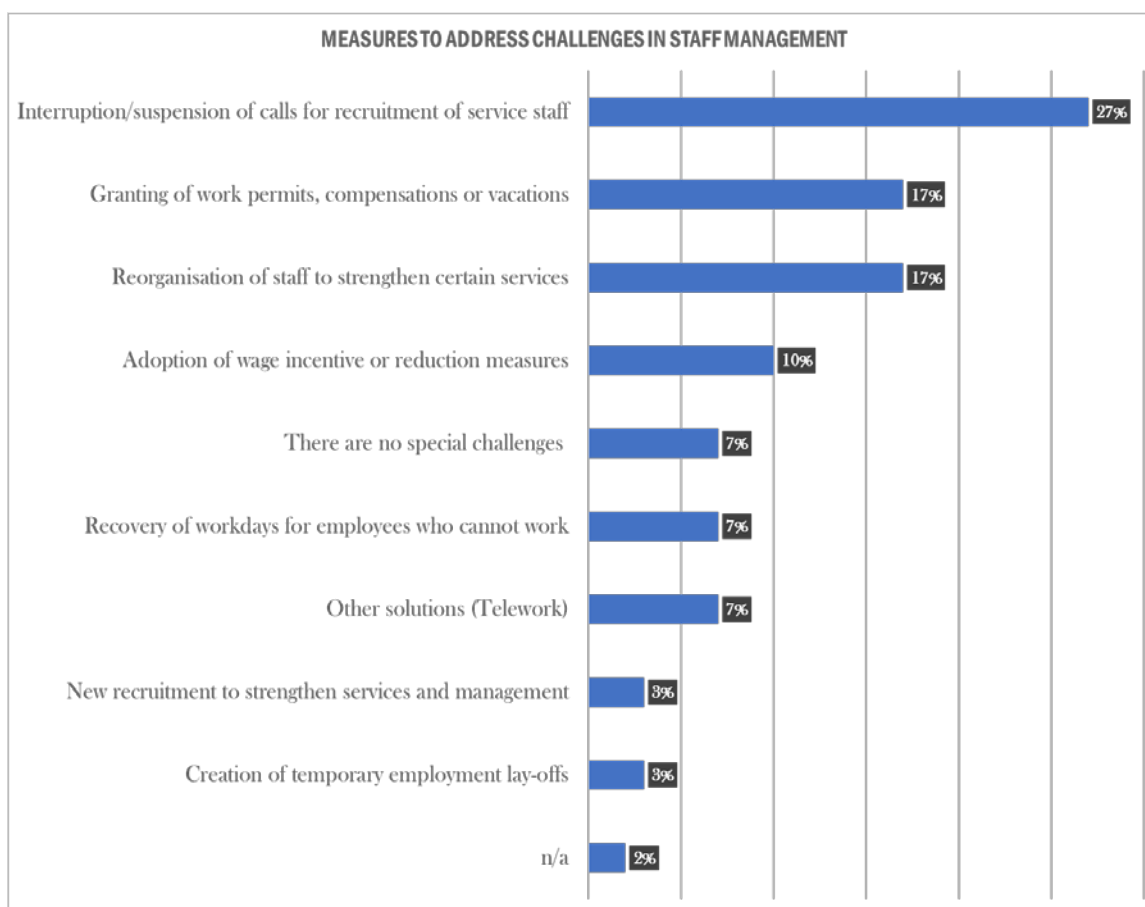


Home self-isolate also posed a challenge to the human resource management services of universities, which had to take measures to meet the needs of workers and institutions in a short period.

According to the respondents, the main actions taken were the reorganisation of staff to strengthen certain services (17%) and the granting of leaves, compensations or holidays (17%). Only 10% of the universities took decisions to regulate the salaries of their workers, increasing or reducing them.

As in many other areas, the quarantine forced a temporary pause in various processes within the management area, mainly in recruitment calls (27%) and, as a result, respondents perceive a lower volume of recruitment of new workers (3%).

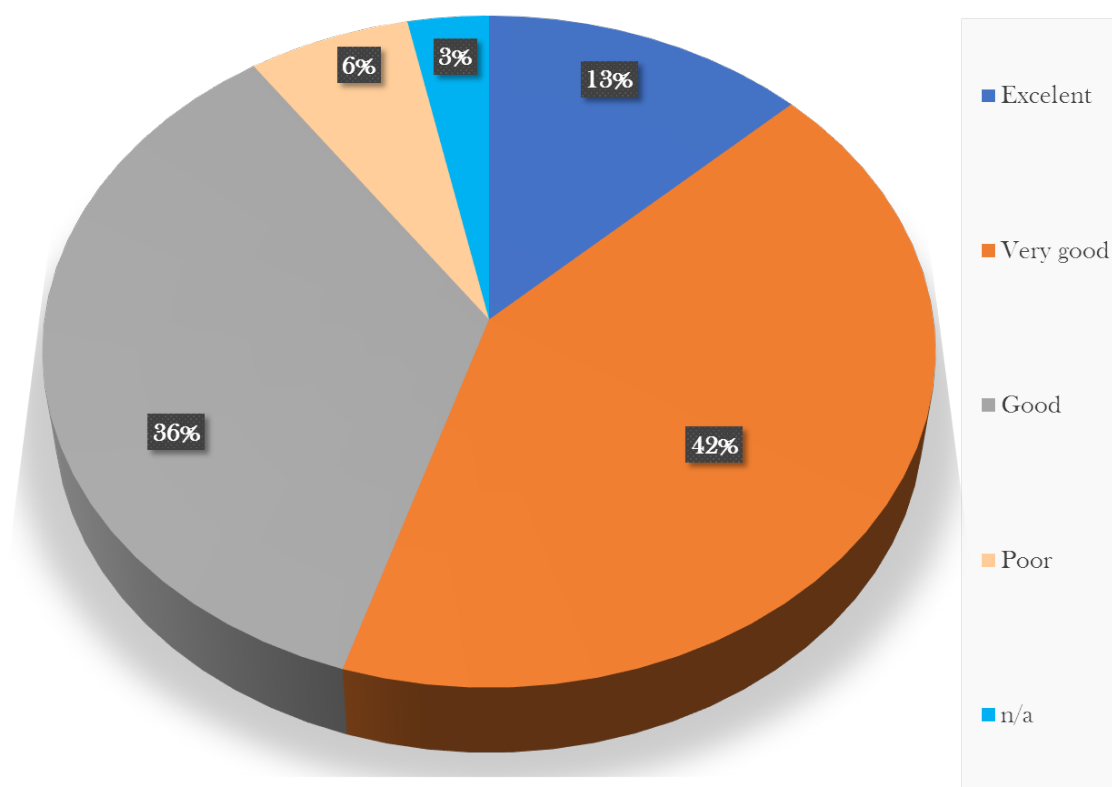
Likewise, it is necessary to comment that while in the area of teaching an important effort was made to transfer the activity to the virtual sphere, in the area of human resource management it seems that this change has not taken place so acutely (only 7%).



Within this thematic block, we wanted the community of our universities to carry out an exercise in constructive self-criticism and to indicate how they value the effectiveness of the management and administration services provided virtually by their institution during the state of alarm.

In this respect, the balance is clear: 91% of those surveyed consider that they have provided these services in an excellent manner (13%), very good (42%) or good (36%), while only 9% think that the services offered were poor (6%) or fail to give a response (3%).

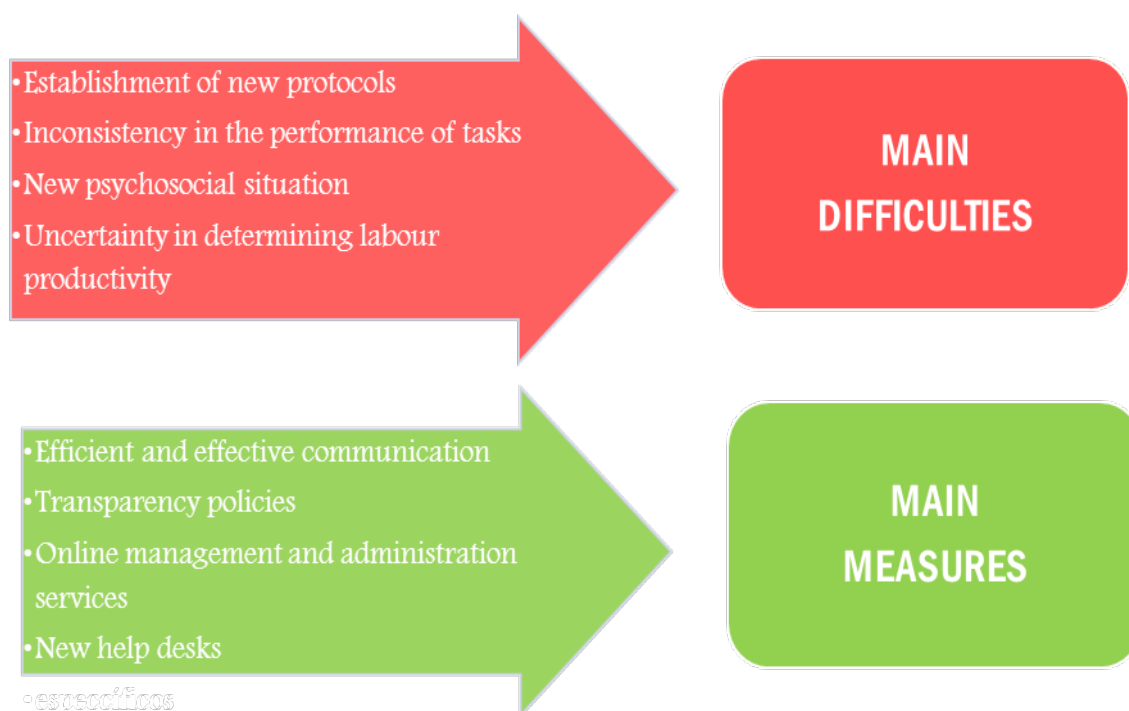
**EFFICIENCY OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH TELEWORK**



To end this thematic block, we wanted to know once again what measures participants felt were most useful in relation to the area of university management.

In this sense, one respondent highlighted that fluid communication allowed his institution to maintain an efficient transparency policy, which was highly valued by the members of his community, while another respondent valued the fact that the administrative services maintained their activity telematically, even creating new assistance and support units and responding to queries as quickly as possible.

Similarly, we set out to find out about the difficulties faced by human resources services. Among others, respondents mentioned the management of uncertainty and inconsistency in labour productivity, as well as the urgent need to establish new and rapid protocols of action, generating a complex psychosocial situation.

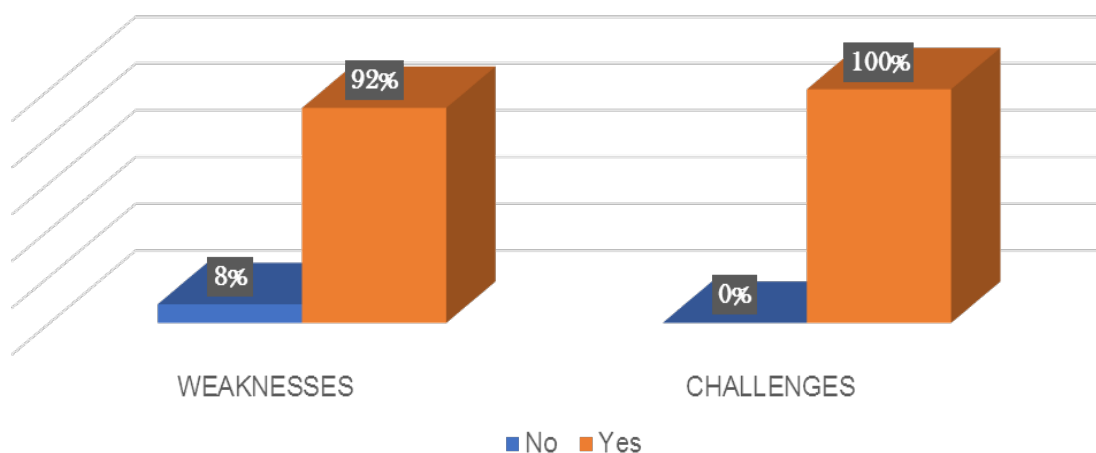


### 3.4 LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC

At the CGU, we are confident that we can draw lessons from this difficult period that we have had to face as a global community, which is why we have dedicated the last block of our questionnaire to sharing what we have learned.

All respondents agree on the dual role of this pandemic in the field of higher education. On the one hand, it has served clearly to reveal its weaknesses and, on the other hand, it has posed multiple challenges.

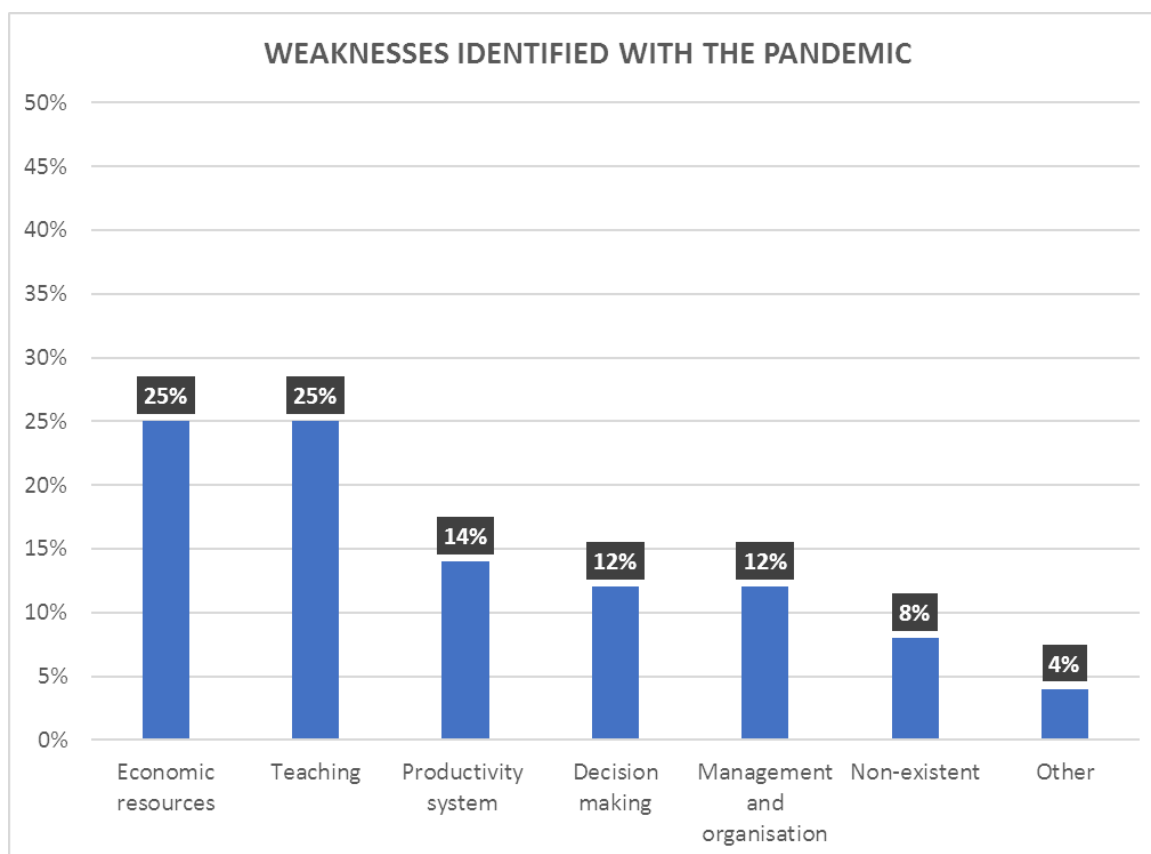
#### IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION



Going into detail on the weaknesses that universities should overcome in the future, the respondents give equal weight (25%) to difficulties in economic management and the university teaching system, and explain that some disciplines experienced challenges in moving from face-to-face to virtual teaching, especially with regard to implementing the student work experience curriculum.

Two other aspects (12%, each) that disturb the overcoming of the crisis are, on the one hand, the lack of confidence in the ability of the governing bodies to resolve problems and, on the other hand, the lack of coordination observed in the management and administration of the university units and departments.

In an almost parallel way (14%), the adaptation of the productive system to the teleworking modality is seen as another handicap to be overcome imminently. Some surveyed (4%) explained that they had experienced teleworking for the first time during their state of alarm and that it was too early to draw any accurate conclusions about its productivity but in the short term the results will allow them to evaluate it more precisely.

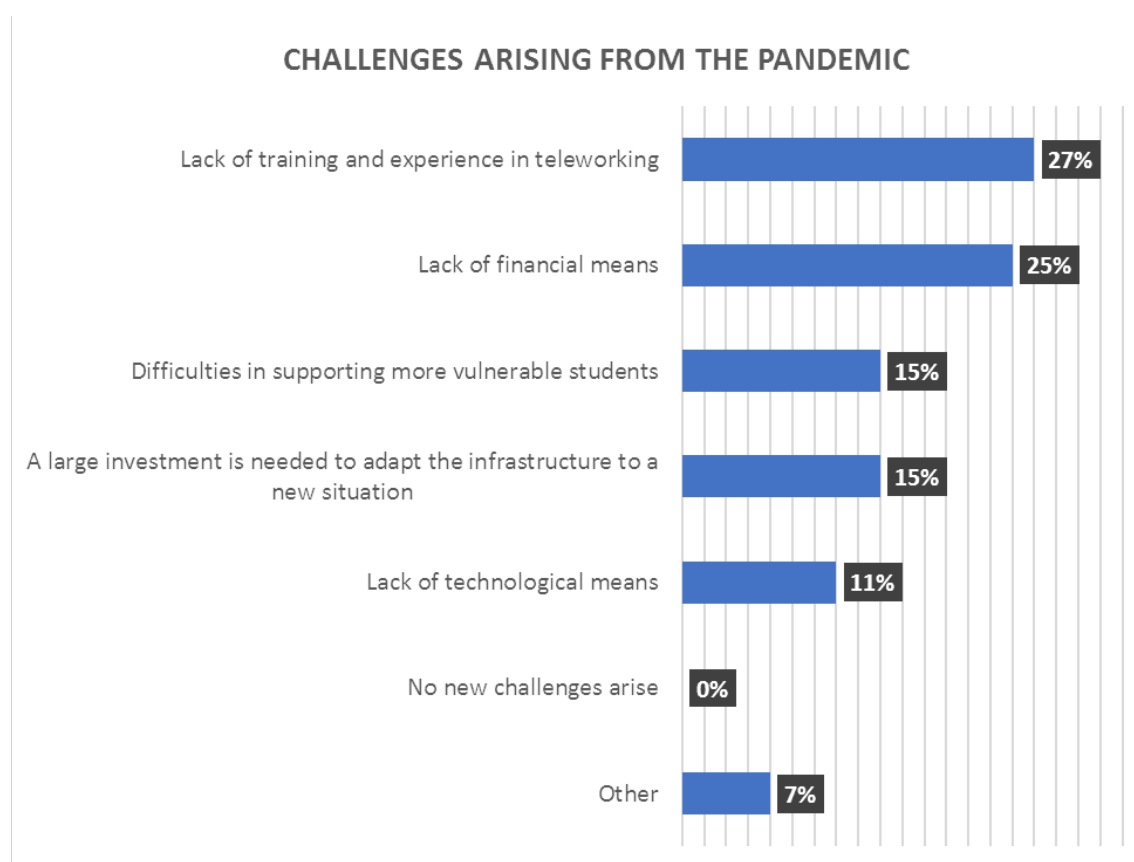




We also wanted to find out what are the main challenges facing universities in the wake of the pandemic. In his opinion, in the area of management, university processes must be redesigned to adapt to current educational and institutional needs (15%), and new protocols and strategic plans will therefore have to be drawn up. At the same time, they must strengthen their budgets, given that this will be the key to managing the crisis (25%).

In the area of human resources, they are asking for more support for teachers and service staff (27%), while in the area of teaching, they are demanding more training and technological tools available to the university community (11%). So much so that, in some cases (7%), this being the first experience for them, their universities are carrying out studies and only after the evaluation they will be able to take actions to strengthen this modality of work to make teaching compatible in the classroom and outside it, since they have detected a drop in students who do not want or can carry out their studies online (15%).

They explain that the situation presented is complex and with a lot of uncertainty, with challenges that are also intricate on various levels: Internationalisation, the price of tuition fees and the sufficiency of the public budget or economic problems in families.

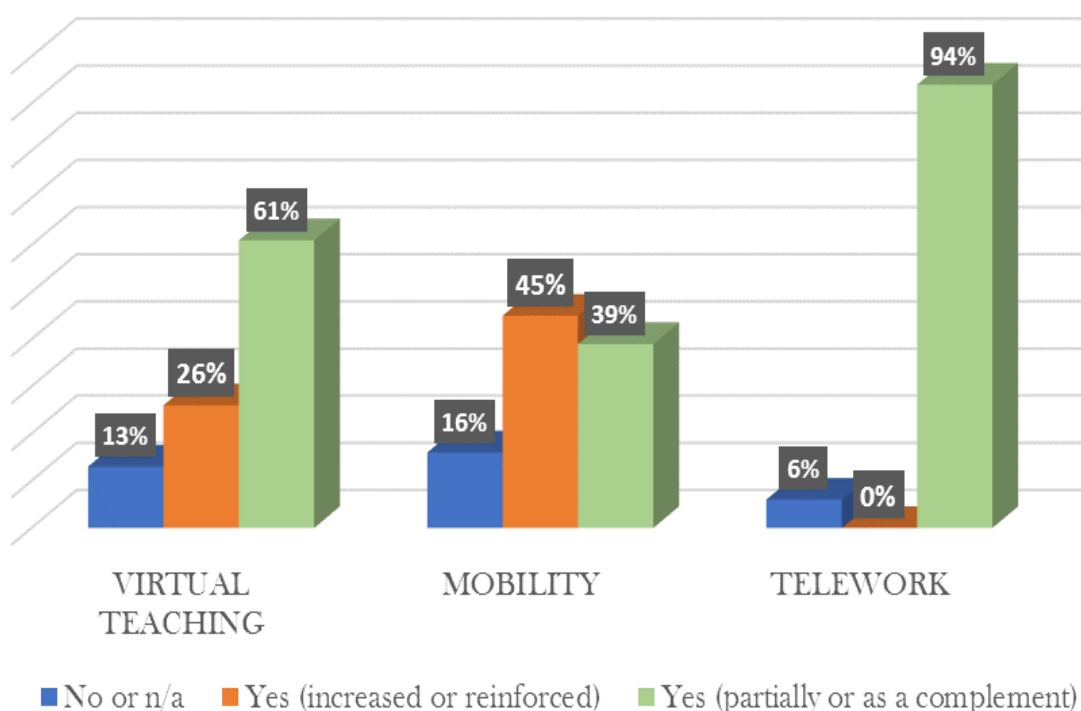


Subsequently, we asked them about trends in higher education. The vast majority predict that virtual work using new information and communication technologies (ICTs) will become commonplace and that this modality will coexist in their universities with office work (94%). They also expect some coexistence of virtual and face-to-face teaching (61%) and mobility (39%).

A minority of those surveyed (between 6% and 16%) rule out the possibility that these new distance formats will be maintained over time and suggest that this will depend on the future social and health situation, although they say it is still too early to determine the trend.

In the following pages, we will set out the details of these variants.

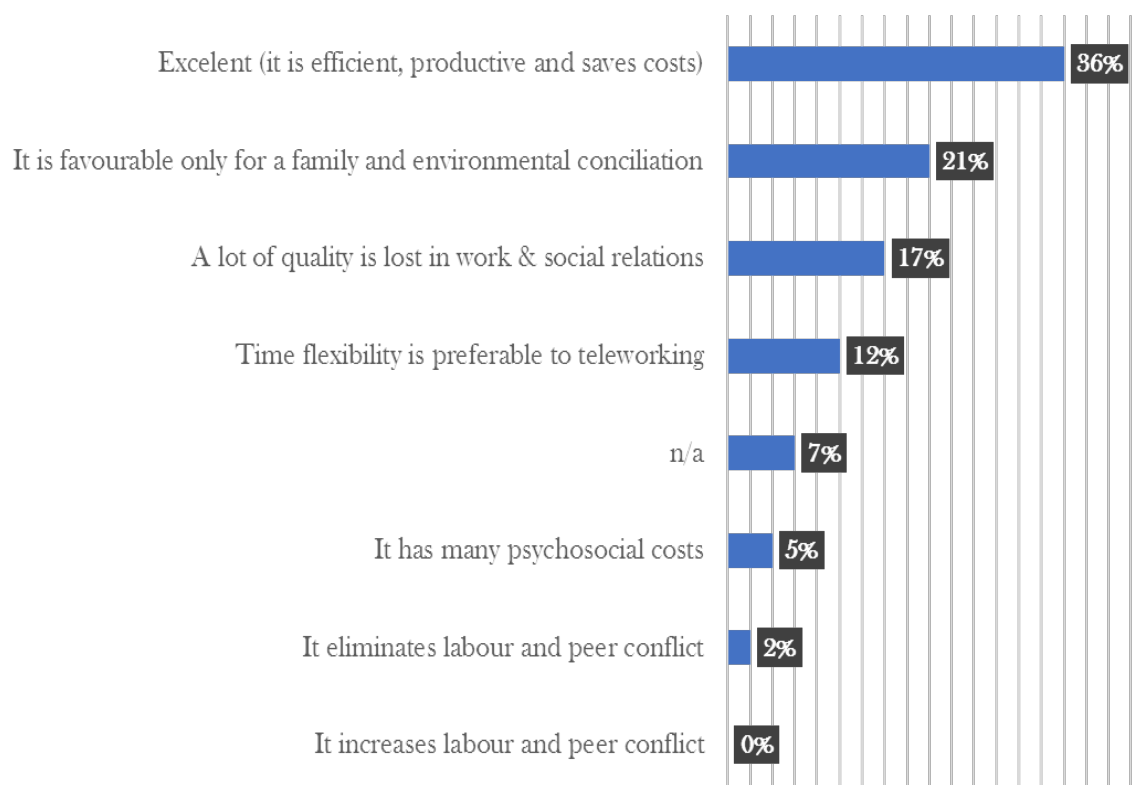
## TREND IN THE FUTURE



Since they point to teleworking as a clear trend in the future, we wanted to find out what their experience has been during the quarantine. 36% of those surveyed consider it to have been excellent, arguing that they find it to be a formula that allows them to reduce costs effectively and productively. They also highlighted that it favours family reconciliation and contributes to the preservation of the environment (21%), and that it reduces labour conflicts (2%).

In the negative balance of their experience, they highlight aspects such as the decrease in the quality of work and socialisation (17%) or its high psychosocial cost (5%). Thus, some advocate greater time flexibility instead of teleworking (12%).

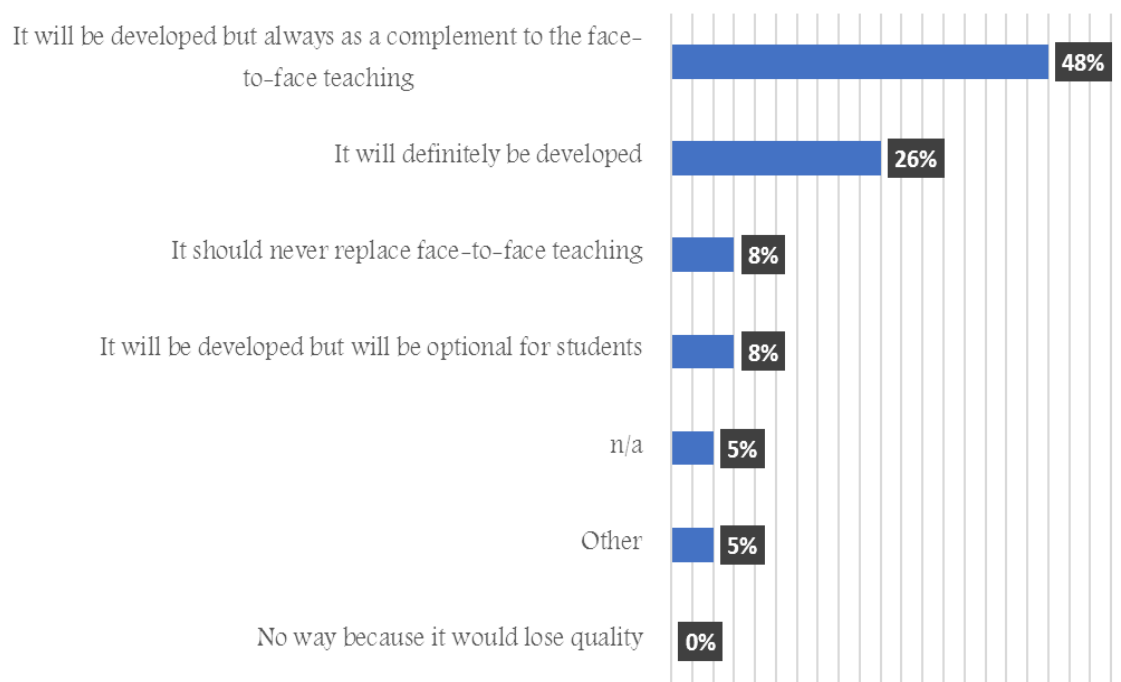
### ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TELEWORKING



With regard to the implementation of virtual versus face-to-face teaching, the assessment given by those surveyed to virtual teaching is highly positive, as we pointed out in previous graphs. Although among those who believe in the future coexistence of both modalities (61%), the percentage of those who think that it will always be offered as a complement to face-to-face teaching is higher (48%) than those who think that it will be offered as a model to be chosen by the student himself (8%). This is important, considering that not all students have the same personal opportunities and are restricted in their choice. Furthermore, some respondents expressed other alternatives (5%) but reiterated in their comments that both modalities should be offered by universities (they do not specify here whether this should be optional or not for the student).

On the other hand, the percentage of respondents who defend that online teaching should never replace face-to-face teaching or who prefer to refrain from answering, for the time being, remains the same (13%).

### ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIRTUAL TEACHING

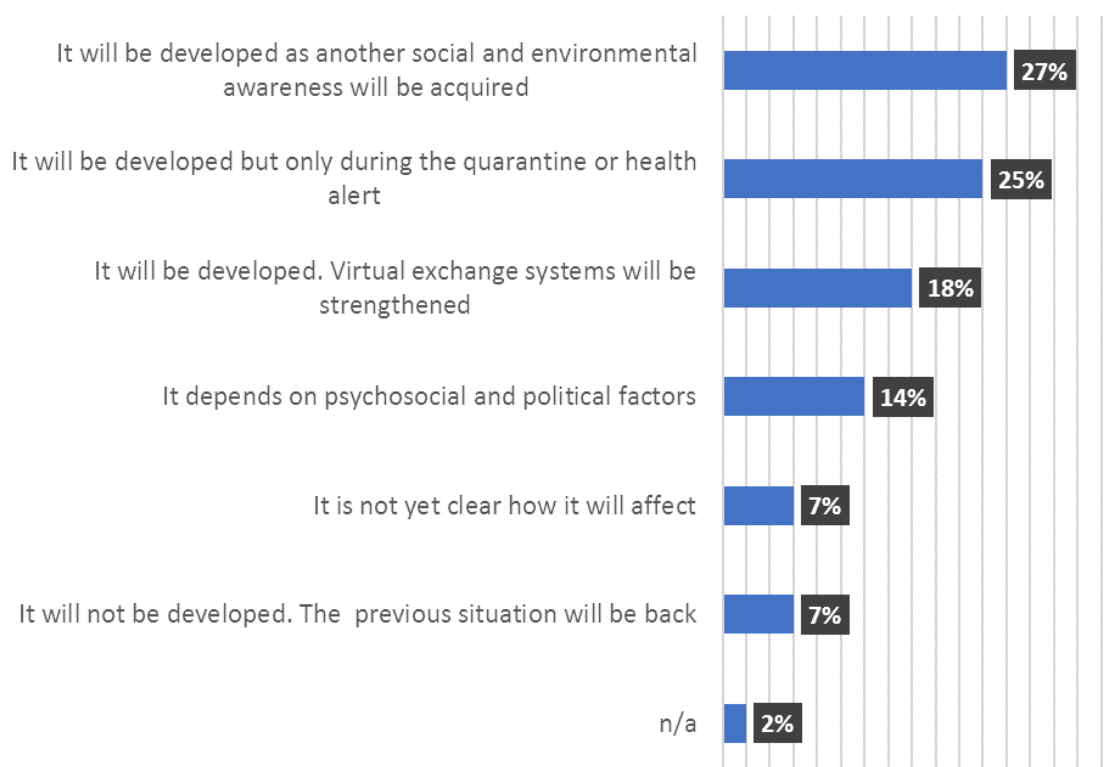


The following is an analysis of the details of the assessment of the implementation of mobility in the imminent future.

As in the former graph, among those who believe that face-to-face mobility will coexist with virtual mobility (39%), it is necessary to differentiate between those who think that development will depend largely on psychosocial factors and cross-border political regulations emerging in the medium-long term from the present crisis (14%), and those who maintain that the coexistence will only predominate during periods of quarantine or socio-health alert (25%).

On the other hand, the results show the belief is that virtual mobility will be reinforced (18%) and that it will acquire another social and environmental awareness (27%).

#### ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIRTUAL MOBILITY



Finally, we asked the participants to voluntarily highlight some keywords or concepts that, in their opinion, should be taken into account by their universities when facing the so-called "new reality". Most of them did not wish to collaborate, but those who did agree that it is imperative to define new university educational processes that are more versatile and adaptable to change. The situation experienced with the current crisis is timely to make an analysis and begin to redesign these systems, as well as to reform those university areas that have proved to be more problematic. Amongst these is the teaching and learning community itself, since neither teachers, researchers nor students themselves have emerged unscathed from the sudden and forced transition to the virtual sphere, whether due to personal factors or those of their educational institution.

For all this, it is determined that a stronger and more stable financial system is needed in higher education, more aid, support and collaboration, as well as a more contemporary, agile and effective leadership mentality, capable of generating above all the necessary confidence to strengthen the university system in the face of this and potential future crises.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS OF THE VII COMPOSTELA DIALOGUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This report on *The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education* could be summarised in an idea-force that has much to do with the incorporation of ‘teletechnologies’ in all areas of university life. As Prof. Dr Víctor Arce, Vice-Rector for Students and Internationalisation at the University of Santiago de Compostela, has pointed out, *"the incorporation of online teaching as a permanent complement to on-site learning will shape the future of higher education"*.

Nevertheless, as a complement to the survey, the Compostela Group of Universities and the University of Minho (Portugal) wanted to invite three international experts to participate in a panel to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on universities. The session was held online on 22 September 2020 and was hosted by the University of Minho in the framework of the XXVI General Assembly of the Compostela Group of Universities.

Below, we summarise some of the ideas, perceptions and reflections shared by the keynote speaker and the experts participating in the debate.

### 4.1 PROF. DR PAULO CRUZ, PRO-RECTOR FOR QUALITY OF LIFE AND INFRASTRUCTURES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINHO

The keynote speech of the Pro-rector for Quality of Life and Infrastructures<sup>3</sup> of the University of Minho focused on providing the audience reference work for the safe and effective transition to on-campus education, prioritising the health of the university community.

Some works were introduced by the Pro-rector during his presentation. Thus, *Higher education: reopening buildings and campuses*<sup>4</sup> by the Department for Education of the United Kingdom, *Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era*<sup>5</sup> by the American College Health Association, or the *Operational Toolkit for Businesses Considering Reopening or Expanding Operations in COVID-19*<sup>6</sup> by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health

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<sup>3</sup> Paulo Cruz, professor of Construction and Technology at the School of Architecture of the University of Minho since 2008, teaches and researches in the field of Structures and Architecture. He has been President of the Design Institute of Guimarães (Portugal) since 2015, and Vice-president of the Landscape Laboratory since 2017. He was a member of the Executive Board of the *Fundação Cidade de Guimarães* (Guimarães City Foundation) between 2011 and 2013, an institution dedicated to the conception, promotion, execution, planning and development of the cultural programme of the European Capital of Culture - Guimarães 2012.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA\\_Considerations\\_for\\_Reopening\\_IHEs\\_in\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_Era\\_May2020.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA_Considerations_for_Reopening_IHEs_in_the_COVID-19_Era_May2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/publications/operational-toolkit-for-businesses-considering-reopening-or-expanding-operations-in-covid-19>

Security, as well as the website OpenSmartEdu<sup>7</sup>, which was a collaborative project designed by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, Tuscan Strategy Consulting and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to guide colleges and universities in planning operating strategies linked to COVID-19.

*“The current crisis has emphasised the need for universities to model and establish strategic planning and risk-mitigation measures to make possible the reopening of their facilities or to expand their operations”*

During his presentation, Paulo Cruz looked back on how the coronavirus pandemic will shape the future of universities.

*“All around the world, higher education institutions are facing unprecedented challenges related to COVID-19. There is no doubt that the resulting academic, financial, ethical and operational questions are complex and risky. COVID-19 may represent an inflexion point fundamentally altering how we work, socialise and learn.”*

#### **4.2 PROF. DR HANS DE WIT, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION AT BOSTON COLLEGE**



The Director<sup>8</sup> of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College (Massachusetts, USA) considered that three main trends could be identified in the publications and reports produced in recent months: Going back to the pre-pandemic old ways, opting for a radical change, and accepting the challenges that it poses as an opportunity to emerge from the crisis. One of these challenges is the transformation towards online education. In his opinion, *“online can be an important instrument to enhance the quality but cannot replace that living community that universities are and have to be. Campus life is an essential part of higher education, of teaching and learning”*.

Concerning the internationalisation area, Hans de Wit thinks that in the near future Asia will be a dominant player in terms of international student mobility, challenging the dominance of Anglophone universities. Besides, he pointed out that concerns on health safety, personal financial problems and budget cuts for universities will affect on international mobility. For that

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.opensmartedu.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Hans de Wit is a professor and expert in internationalisation and international affairs in the field of higher education. He is also a senior member of the International Association of Universities (IAU), Chair of the Board of Directors of the World Education Services in New York/Toronto and a founding member and past President of the European Association for International Education (EAIE). He is actively involved in evaluation and consultant in international education for organisations such as the European Commission, UNESCO, the World Bank and the European Parliament, among others.



reason, universities have to find strategies for internationalising the curriculum, through “alternatives like collaborative online international learning”.

*“The pandemic is an opportunity to transform some of the things that we already needed to transform. To make education much more equal.”*

He also believes that in the internationalisation area, higher education institutions efforts were centred in mobility, while the pandemic has highlighted the need for international collaboration research. “Scholars, governments and institutions have to work together”, he said.

Regarding the trends on conferences and professional development activities, Hans de Wit estimated that these meetings “will move from on-site to online”, as during the pandemic it was proved that a larger audience could be reached with a lower economic investment. “I will not say that interpersonal connections live are not important but they should not maybe be that extreme as we have done before”, he noted.

*“I think will be a very positive lesson and opportunity created by COVID-19, that we can do much more online than we have done before without completely changing to the online.”*

#### **4.3 DR FERNANDO LEÓN-GARCÍA, PRESIDENT-ELECT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS AND RECTOR OF CETYS UNIVERSITY**

The Rector<sup>9</sup> of CETYS University approached his presentation from a governance and leadership perspective as a President-elect of the International Association of University Presidents. In accordance with his experience, he disclosed “there is no better way for institutions to prepare to move from the transitional stage to the transformational stage than to reflect”. When reflecting, Fernando León said that it is necessary to keep three fundamental aspects in mind: Maintaining academic quality, looking at the long-term financial stability of organisations, and working on strategic scenarios.



<sup>9</sup> Fernando León-García has been the Rector of CETYS University since 2010, leading the institution to regional accreditation and various programmes in the United States of America (WASC, ACBSP, ABET), as well as to one of the highest student mobility rates in Mexico. He is also President-elect of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) and serves on boards and advisory groups related to international higher education, accreditation, governance and institutional development, such as WASC, the Council of Presidents of AGB, the Commission on Internationalisation/Global Engagement of ACE, HACU, CASE, Universia-Mexico, CONAHEC, and the Mexican Federation of Private University Enterprises (FIMPES). He holds a PhD in Educational Administration and Policy Analysis and is an expert in Education for International Development.

Throughout his speech, he also detailed the results of the survey conducted among Presidents, Chancellors, Vice-chancellors, Rectors, and Vice-presidents from around the world on the repercussion of the pandemic in their institutions. There were over 700 responses from close to 90 countries.

Based on the results of the survey, the respondents anticipate that institutional revenues will decrease as well as student enrolment, fundraising and projects with business and industry will suffer. By contrast, leaders suggest that investment will be increased in areas such as financial support for students, technology, programmes for the enhancement of employability and entrepreneurship.

With respect to internationalisation, respondents emphasize partnerships, e-mobility, internationalisation at home and regional mobility as future trends. As for the educational model, the responses have shown that “*face-to-face education will not cease to exist*” but it will evolve into a combination of both in campus and e-learning.

To conclude, Fernando León made a “*call for institutions to innovate*” and “*discuss alternative models to serve*” their constituents better.

*“It has been a wake-up call for many in terms of being able to serve some of the constituents better, with non-face-to-face approaches. There is also the opportunity to begin to address certain markets that before were not being appropriately addressed.”*

## **5. ANNEX – SURVEY ON *THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION***



# The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

This survey is addressed to the governing bodies and delegates of the GCU Universities.

Its purpose is to collect data to prepare a report that will be used as a source of information for the debates of the academic sessions of the XXVI General Assembly (21-22 September 2020).

If you wish, you can respond anonymously.

## ECONOMIC ASPECTS:

1. Does your University take economic measures to alleviate the effects of the pandemic?

- ☐ Yes, it does
- ☐ Yes, but it should take more
- ☐ Yes, but only just very concrete and specific measures
- ☐ No, it does not
- ☐ No, but it should take them
- ☐ It is analysing the situation

2. If your University does not take financial measures, specify the reasons and go to question 10

3. What general economic measures is your University taking to mitigate the effects of the pandemic?

- ☐ Adaptation of annual budgets
- ☐ Elaboration of a specific aid and investment plan
- ☐ Creation of a contingency fund
- ☐ Freezing of budget lines
- ☐ Limitation of authorization of expenses and use of residual budget
- ☐ Application for bank credits
- ☐ Establishment of sponsorships and guarantees

3 bis. And, in relation to contractual activity?

- ☐ Extension of contract and project deadlines
- ☐ Temporary interruption of contracts and projects deadlines
- ☐ Termination or withdrawal of non-essential services & equipment
- ☐ Purchasing of technological and computer goods and services
- ☐ Others

4. If you have answered "others" in the previous question or want to specify, do it here

5. What support economic measures does your University take?

- ☐ Support measures addressed to students
- ☐ Support measures addressed to teachers & researchers
- ☐ Support measures addressed to administrative & service staff
- ☐ Advance payment of scholarships and grants
- ☐ Reduction in tuition
- ☐ Reduction/suspension of fees for general University activities & services
- ☐ Reduction/suspension of fees for cultural & sporting activities
- ☐ Reduction/suspension of fees for accommodation & catering services
- ☐ Others

6. If you have answered "others" in the previous question or want to specify, do it here

7. What kind of state/regional/local aid, if any, is available to your University to alleviate the consequences of this crisis situation?

- ☐ Special funds of direct award
- ☐ Specific subsidies/grants to cover costs of the pandemic
- ☐ Loans
- ☐ Support to modernize online technologies and services
- ☐ Others

8. If you have answered "others" in the previous question or want to specify, do it here

9. Can you give details of any economic measure or specific aid of a general or sectoral nature which stands out or is more useful than others?

9 bis. Do you think that this situation will have consequences for the economy of your University in the future?

- ☐ It will create an important debt that will affect means & infrastructures
- ☐ It will create an important debt that will affect students
- ☐ It will create an important debt that will affect human resources
- ☐ It will create debt in all sectors but will be mitigated in the medium-term
- ☐ It will not have much effect

ASPECTS RELATED TO TEACHING AND RESEARCH:

10. Does your University take teaching measures to alleviate the effects of the pandemic on the academic course?

- ☐ Yes, it does
- ☐ Yes, but I should take more
- ☐ No, because it already has the means & an adapted teaching dinamic
- ☐ No, but I should take them
- ☐ It is analysing the situation

11. Is your University taking research measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic?

- ☐ Yes, it does
- ☐ Yes, but it should take more
- ☐ No, it does not
- ☐ No, but it should take them
- ☐ It is analysing the situation

11 bis. What measures does your University take with regard to exchange students?

- ☐ It financed and managed the return journey of all students
- ☐ It managed the return journey of all students
- ☐ It prepared a special teaching plan for them
- ☐ It created a new office to deal with this situation
- ☐ It could not do anything
- ☐ Others

12. In case your University does not take any teaching and research measures and you want to specify, do it here and then go to question 16

13. What educational measures is your University taking to mitigate the effects of the pandemic?

- ☐ Development of guidelines & measures for students & teachers
- ☐ Elaboration of a new schedule for tests
- ☐ Reduction of educational curriculum
- ☐ Implementation of measures for granting general approvals
- ☐ It facilitates the partial assessment of subjects
- ☐ It prioritises continuous non-presential evaluation with online platforms
- ☐ It prioritises virtual teaching via video call or streaming
- ☐ Nothing has changed. It already has consolidated virtual teaching
- ☐ Nothing has changed but the on-site classes. It doesn't has online teaching
- ☐ Others

14. If you have answer 'others' in the previous question or want to specify, do it here

15. If your University does not teach online, now or before the pandemic, explain the reasons here and then go to question 25. If it does offer online teaching, continue with question 16

16. In relation to online teaching, my University enjoys an experience of...

- ☐ >10 years (it is not widespread or important)
- ☐ >10 years (it is very widespread and important)
- ☐ <10 years (it is not widespread or important)
- ☐ <10 years (it is very widespread and important)
- ☐ Others

17. If you have answered 'others' in the previous question or want to specify, do it here

18. What measures does your University take to guarantee quality online teaching?

- ☐ Aids for students to acquire hardware and software tools
- ☐ Aids for teachers to acquire hardware and software tools
- ☐ Aids for students to cover Internet connection costs or other
- ☐ Aids for teachers to cover Internet connection costs or other
- ☐ Increasing of technical advice service to students & teachers
- ☐ Organization of courses and specific training for teachers & students
- ☐ Economic complements or incentives to teachers
- ☐ Regulation of requirements or actions to meet quality objectives
- ☐ It does not need anything. It is already adapted to online teaching
- ☐ Others

19. If you have answered 'others' in the previous question or want to specify, do it here



20. What systems does your University use as a virtual teaching?

- ☐ Zoom
- ☐ Teams
- ☐ Moodle
- ☐ It uses several officially
- ☐ It depends on each faculty or centre
- ☐ It depends on the teacher
- ☐ Others

21. If you want to extend the previous answer, do it here

22. What means are most frequently used to exchange information in online teaching?

- ☐ Video calls between teacher and students
- ☐ Documentation or videos uploaded to the teaching platform
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Sharing of materials and videos on exchange platforms
- ☐ Others

23. If you want to extend the previous answer, do it here

24. How do you evaluate the frequency of use of those online tools by teachers and students after the declaration of the pandemic?

- ☐ Unsatisfactory and poor
- ☐ Enough but basic
- ☐ Satisfactory but it should be improved
- ☐ Satisfactory and growing
- ☐ We do not have information on that

☐ We are conducting a study on these aspects at my University

25. How do you think the pandemic is affecting the learning of students?

- ☐ They can follow the course, but their performance drops
- ☐ They can follow the course and their performance does not drop
- ☐ They are losing teaching quality, but it can be regained later
- ☐ They are losing teaching quality and it cannot be regained later
- ☐ The student tries to make the current situation profitable for him
- ☐ They abandon the course
- ☐ They are especially supported by my University
- ☐ That situation does not exist at my University
- ☐ Others

26. If you have indicated 'others' in the previous question and want to specify, do it here

27. How do you think the pandemic is affecting the learning of students of students with limited means or in more vulnerable situations?of students with limited means or in more vulnerable situations?

- ☐ They can follow the course, but their performance drops
- ☐ They can follow the course and their performance does not drop
- ☐ They are losing teaching quality, but it can be regained later
- ☐ They are losing teaching quality and it cannot be regained later
- ☐ The student tries to make the current situation profitable for him
- ☐ They abandon the course
- ☐ They are especially supported by my University
- ☐ That situation does not exist at my University
- ☐ Others

27 bis. If you have indicated 'others' in the previous question and want to specify, do it here

28. How would you rate the attitude of the teachers to the change from on-site to online teaching?

- ☐ Excelent (they are motivated and improve their performance)
- ☐ Satisfactory (they have adapted without lowering their performance)
- ☐ Poor (their teaching needs are met but they are unmotivated)
- ☐ Unsatisfactory (they find it difficult to adapt and their performance drops)
- ☐ It causes different reactions. Normal working dynamics are not achieved
- ☐ In general, they do not see advantages except for special cases
- ☐ In general, they already handled this mode. It doesn't mean big changes

29. What steps is your University taking to facilitate specialized research to mitigate the pandemic?

- ☐ New calls for specialized activities and projects
- ☐ New hiring of specialized teachers and researchers
- ☐ Collaborations for the development of studies & vaccines
- ☐ Establishment of sponsorships for specialized research
- ☐ Obtaining public aid (projects, R&D contracts, agreements)
- ☐ Obtaining private aid (projects, R&D contracts, agreements)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Others

30. If you have indicated 'others' in the previous question and want to specify, do it here

31. Could you detail any specific teaching or research measures that stand out or are more useful than others?

ASPECTS RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION:

32. How does your University solve the challenges of staff management that arise because of the quarantine and health alert situation?

- ☐ Interruption/suspension of calls for recruitment of service staff

- ☐ Creation of temporary employment lay-offs
- ☐ Reorganization of staff to strengthen certain services
- ☐ New recruitment to strengthen services and management
- ☐ Granting of work permits, compensations or vacations
- ☐ Adoption of wage incentive or reduction measures
- ☐ Recovery of workdays for employees who cannot work
- ☐ There are no special challenges arising from this situation
- ☐ Other solutions

33. If you have indicated 'other solutions' in the previous question and want to specify, do it here

34. What services does your University offer during the pandemic?

- ☐ All services
- ☐ As many management & administration services as possible
- ☐ Only management & administration services that are possible online
- ☐ Only minimum management & maintenance services
- ☐ It is or has been in quarantine and has offered only minimum services
- ☐ Others

35. What services does your University provide during the quarantine and health alert period?

- ☐ Technical and legal advisory services
- ☐ Computer services
- ☐ Information and assistance services for students
- ☐ Economic management and accounting services
- ☐ Maintenance and repair services
- ☐ Staff management services
- ☐ Services related to the academic programme and management
- ☐ Internationalization and mobility services
- ☐ Occupational risk prevention services
- ☐ Services related to cultural and sports activities
- ☐ Services related to accommodation and catering sector
- ☐ New units and services were created
- ☐ Others

36. How do you assess the effectiveness of the telework services offered by your University during quarantine and health alert period?
- ☐ Bad
  - ☐ Poor
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Very good
  - ☐ Excelent

37. What, if any, are the most important difficulties or problems in relation to staff?

38. Could you detail any specific administration and management measures that stand out or are more useful than others?

LESSONS LEARNED:

39. In managing a crisis, what weaknesses should you University overcome for the future?
- ☐ Weaknesses in decision making
  - ☐ Weaknesses in management and organisation
  - ☐ Weaknesses in economic resources
  - ☐ Weaknesses related to teaching
  - ☐ Weaknesses related to productivity system (telework)
  - ☐ There are no apparent weaknesses
  - ☐ Others

40. If you want to extend the previous answer, do it here

41. What new challenges arise at your University as a result of this pandemic?

- ☐ Lack of financial means
- ☐ Lack of technological means
- ☐ Lack of training and experience in teleworking
- ☐ Need for large investments to adapt the infrastructure to a new situation
- ☐ Difficulties in supporting more vulnerable students
- ☐ No new challenges arise at my University
- ☐ Others

42. If you want to extend the previous answer, do it here

43. Do you think that the virtual teaching modality will be further developed in Higher Education?

- ☐ Yes, definitely
- ☐ Yes, but always as a complement to the on-site teaching
- ☐ Yes, to be chosen by the students in any University
- ☐ Online teaching should never replace on-site teaching
- ☐ No way because it would lose quality
- ☐ Others

44. If you want to extend the previous answer, do it here

45. Do you think the pandemic will affect the future mobility of your University community?

- ☐ Yes, but only during the quarantine & health alert period
- ☐ Yes, as another social & environmental awareness will be acquired
- ☐ Yes, because virtual exchange systems will be strengthened
- ☐ No, the previous situation will be back
- ☐ It depends on psychosocial and political factors
- ☐ It is still not clear how it will affect

45 bis. Do you think the pandemic will encourage teleworking in management and administration activities in the future?

- ☐ Yes, it will be implemented when the activity lets do so
- ☐ Yes, it will increase, but always as a complement to face-to-face work
- ☐ Yes, as a work mode to be chosen by the worker
- ☐ Telework, even when possible, should never replace face-to-face work
- ☐ No way because it would lose quality
- ☐ Others

46. If you indicated "others" in the previous question and want to specify, do it here

47. Could you indicate what you think of the widespread implementation of teleworking at the University?

- ☐ It is excelent. It will increase the efficiency, productivity & cost savings
- ☐ It is favourable only for a family and environmental conciliation
- ☐ Time flexibility would be better than teleworking
- ☐ A lot of quality will be lost in work & social relations
- ☐ It would be eliminate labour and peer conflict
- ☐ it would increase labour and peer conflict
- ☐ It has many psychosocial costs

48. What do you think are the key issues facing your University in this situation?

49. If you would like to share any idea or reflection that you feel is important and is not covered in this survey, please do so here

50. If you want to share a document, upload it here

 Drop files here

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

(This section of the survey is optional. If you and your University wish to remain anonymous, please do not answer the questions below)

51. Name and surname

52. Position

53. Departament

54. Home University

55. Email

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