5. Fostering Human and Social Development

Key objective: 18. Education, capacity-building and job creation to address climate change

Solution: Education for New Generations

Host initiative: Higher Education Climate Network of Networks and the Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges

Scope: [Addressed scope, such as specific technologies and geographic/sectoral focus, if any.]

- Geographic: Global
- Sectoral:Universities
- Other aspects:Enabling

Plan to Accelerate [Education for New Generations]

Strengthening Higher Education for Accelerated Climate Action

Axis: Fostering Human and Social Development

Levers assessment: *(each lever is described in the guidance document)*

- **Risk-informed decision-making:** Medium maturity
  - *Rationale: Research is a core component of the Higher Education Sector. Evidence-based decision-making results in development and deployment of appropriate sector-led solutions.*
- **Technology shifts:** []
  - *Rationale: []*
- **Knowledge & Capacity building:** Low maturity
  - *Rationale: Knowledge and expertise on climate action and pathways to impact are patchy across all sectors - with significant gaps in some areas, and duplication of efforts elsewhere. Sharing resources and supporting learning will scale best practice and help maximise the Higher Education sector's contribution.*
- **Inclusive decision-making governance & design:** Medium maturity
  - *Rationale: The Higher Education sector is hugely diverse, spanning geography, strengths and disciplines. There is a significant opportunity for the sector to engage learners of all generations in climate action as well as work collaboratively with their local communities and decision-makers from other sectors.*
- **Standards & Taxonomies:** []
  - *Rationale: []]*
- **Supply:** [] h
  - *Rationale: []*
- **Demand:** []
  - *Rationale: []*
- **Public/private finance:** Low maturity

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- *Rationale: Education is facing a massive funding crisis globally. In addition to its considerable impact on economic development and quality of life, quality education is a critical enabler of climate action. Seven percent of global economic output is being used to support government subsidies for fossil fuels versus four percent of global economic output invested in education (IMF, 2023).*

- **Partnerships and collaboration:**
  - *Rationale: Increased connectivity and coordination across university climate action groups and programmes is needed to ensure institutions collaborate and mobilise around regional strengths, needs, and opportunities; helping address the most pressing challenges in achieving the Paris Goals.*
- **Policy & regulatory:** []
  - *Rationale: []*
- **Public opinion:** []
  - *Rationale: []*

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Universities and colleges are uniquely positioned as enablers for climate action, shaping the next generation of leaders, driving emissions reduction on and beyond campus, and influencing national and global climate action through research, engagement, and partnerships. For example, a 2024 survey sent to more than 1200 signatories of Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges found that 91% are actively engaging in advancing climate policy at local, regional or national levels. However, strengthened support for sectoral interventions and connectivity around climate action is required to realise the full potential for impact across and the higher education sector and among state and non-state actor partners. This can be achieved by:

- Supporting institutions to navigate and intervene in a complex and evolving policy and action landscape.
- Enhancing sector wide connectivity by joining up existing initiatives and identifying where additional or strengthened networks are required. This will help institutions collaborate and mobilise around regional strengths, needs, and opportunities.
- Sharing resources and case studies to minimise duplication, and advance replication, and accelerate the scaling of best practices.
- Promoting engagement and opportunities to learn by doing and co-create with other climate action partners.

We are organising our actions according to three objectives: Increase sector-wide leadership, Scale HE communities of action, and Strengthening HE for Accelerated Climate Action.

Expected impact of this plan on the 2030 targets (if any): Medium

- Over the next three years, this PAS will contribute to a stronger contribution by the global higher education sector to climate action needs. In particular, coalition activities will lead to the following impacts:
    - A larger coalition of higher education climate Network of Network participants, with a targeted increase of 35% (from 26 groups) over the next five years.

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- Targeted engagement with 100 superconnectors - these are individuals within the sector who sit at the centre of formal and informal sector networks and play a pivotal role in mobilising action, sharing ideas and encouraging sector-wide collaboration.
- Sharing of new resources and case studies, as well as tracking of progress in university and college contributions to regional, national and international climate policy action (through 5th P work)
- Advanced higher education supports to SDG #4 (Quality Education) for diverse learners at higher education, lifelong and professional levels.
- Targeted HE interventions and contributions to GST and 2030 Climate Solutions identified enabling activities: strengthening climate literacy, enhancing capacity-building through formal and informal routes, enhanced public awareness and research supported innovation to support climate solutions deployment (also SDG #13 Climate Action and SDG #17 Partnerships for the Goals)
- Advanced contributions to the renewal of Article 12 (Action for Climate Empowerment) of the Paris Agreement, particularly around education and international cooperation

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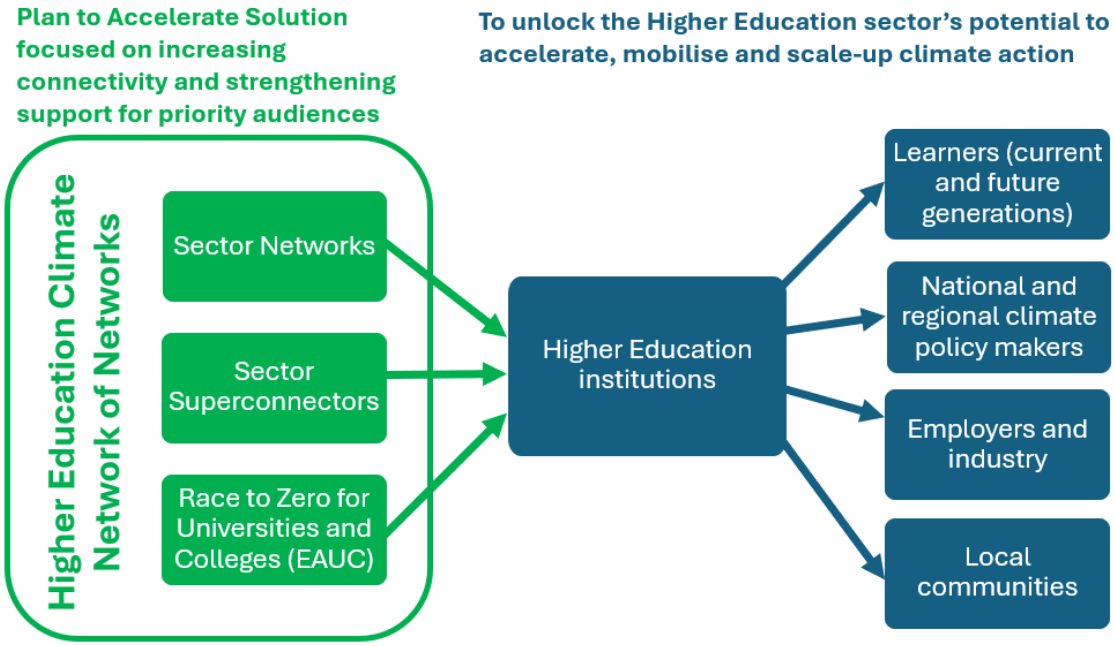
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Engagement approach and priority audiences



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Priority Audiences	**Current reach (2025)**	**Engagement KPI (end of 2027)**
Higher Education Sector Networks	At the beginning of 2025, The Higher Education Climate Action Network of Networks (NoN) community included 26 networks. This equates to an estimated indirect reach of ~2750 distinct Higher Education Institutions, who in turn represent ~33.4 million students globally.	Increase to 35 networks by the end of 2027 (35%). Our networks are also growing in size, ultimately leading to an estimated growth in institutional reach to approximately 3000.
Superconnectors - individuals within the sector who sit at the centre of formal and informal sector networks and hold a disproportionate influence in mobilising action, sharing ideas and encouraging collaboration.	70 superconnectors	Increase to 100 superconnectors (+40%)
Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges Community (convened by EAUC)	~1200 Higher Education institutions leading in net zero implementation, representing 11.6 million students.	~120 (10%) Higher Education signatories engaged and supported to increase their climate leadership in alignment with the 5th P of the campaign.

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Output	Action Scope	Action	Type of action	Implementation Lever	Responsible	Time horizon	Stakeholder engagement[1]	Committed Stakeholders
6 x coordinated meetings (estimated total reach of 100 superconnectors) designed to align sector wide engagement with signals from Presidency and the HLCs.	HE led climate action	Coordinated sector multilaterals aligned with Action Agenda objectives	Existin…	Partnershi…	NoN	Nove…	Technical i…	
3 x high level roundtables (estimated reach of 120 VIPs) to determine HE priorities for	Cross-sector collaboration	HE leadership convening with NSA partners to support sector wide action	New a…	Partnershi…	NoN	Nove…	Multi-stak…	

[1] Such as national governments, companies, investors, cities and local governments, technical institutions, MDBs, regulators & public agencies, utilities & system operators, youth & indigenous peoples groups, multi-stakeholders platform (non-exhaustive)

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cross-sectoral collaboration								
Cross-sector campaign to support commitment to funding education as climate action (key message - funding for education is funding for a new generation of climate leaders)	Education advocacy	Advocacy for education funding	New a…	Public/priv…	Partner Initiatives ACE Community	Nove…	Multi-stak…	
Appoint Network/alliance champions for priority thematic areas: i. Action research & climate action knowledge mobilization	Capacity building	Identify network champions & innovations in key areas of the action agenda:	New a…	Knowledg…	NoN	Nove…	Technical i…	

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ii. Urban and community partnerships iii. SME support								
Track 5th P commitments through **annual Race to Zero survey.** Publish **1 x summary briefing / resource** and **2 x case studies** showcasing different routes to engage with climate policy.(Total estimated reach - 1000 HE professionals).	Case studies and commitments	Track 5th P achievements and highlight best practice	Existin…	Knowledg…	RtZ U&C	June …	Technical i…	
3 x national or regional networks strengthened or	Regional/National university led	Support and develop national networks	Existin…	Partnershi…	NoN	Nove…	Technical i…	

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established (To an estimated total addition of 20+ HEIs). Curated resources and guidance to support development	climate action							
International online community of academics and university professionals through WhatsApp and LinkedIn (estimated reach 300 members)	Sector-wide connectivity	Build online spaces for engagement	Existin…	Partnershi…	NoN RtZ U&C Partner Initiatives	Nove…	Technical i…	
8 x virtual meetings aimed at sharing resources and best practice (estimated reach 160+ attendees)	Sector-wide community of action	Develop and share resources	[]	Knowledg…	RtZ U&C Partner Initiatives	June …	Technical i…	

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25 x network-led events (estimated reach 1000+ people) showcasing and sharing targeted examples and guidance for climate action in different sectors, domains and regions	regional and cross-network learning	planning and promoting events and resources	Existin…	Public opin…	Partner Networks	Nove…	Technical i…	
Advanced GHG emissions reductions targets and technical guidance across scopes 1,2 and 3. New technical guidance on leadership transition, sustainability	Network supported institutional milestones & advances		New a…	Policy & re…	Partner networks	Nove…	Technical i…	

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competencies and university contributions to climate adaptation, among others. (Total estimated reach of 400 HEIs)								
Coordinated engagement on **future of ACE** with key international partners	Sector contribution to Article 6 of UNFCCC and Article 12 of Paris	Work with international partners to enhance HE contribution to education as enabling feature of climate policy and the action agenda	New a…	Partnershi…	NoN and Partner Initiatives	June …	Multi-stak…	