Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences



Internationalisation workshop

- BFH International Staff Week · 27 October 2026 · Global Engagement Office (GEO)

What is the Global Engagement Office GEO and what we do

- From International Relations Office to Global Engagement Office GEO

- Portfolio
  - Geostrategic analysis
  - Geographical focus countries
  - International higher education policies
  - European University Alliance
  - Knowledge Security
  - Communication
  - Mobility funding programmes
  - Global competences & Swiss Global Competence Lab

Distribution of tasks: GEO and the 8 BFH Schools



Global Engagement Office offers expertise on

- strategic alliances and priority countries
- global competence
- mobility and cooperation



International Offices

- advise students and staff on mobility formats, destinations and grants
- build departmental partnerships



Students and staff get information and motivation on

- mobility formats, offers, destinations and grants
- global competence building

Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences

Global competence building at BFH

Brigitte Kürsteiner, Head of Global Engagement Office

Global Competence

- BFH is a founding member of the Swiss Global Competence Lab
  - Capacity Building and Services
  - Applied Research and Innovation
  - Communication, Dissemination and Networking

Capacity Building and Services

- Swiss Global Training Days
  - Internationalisation of the Curriculum
  - Intercultural competence training for HEI staff
  - Multilingualism in teaching

Applied Research and Innovation

- Development of the Certificate of Global Competence
- Trends in internationalising Higher Education
- Development of challenge-based education (CBE) modules in the international teaching context

Communication, dissemination, networking

- Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education Symposium 2026
- European Universities Initiative: Symposium in Brussels October 2026

Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences

Global engagement communication at BFH

Hanna Estadieu, Global Engagement Office

▸ BFH International Staff Week · 27 October 2026 · Global Engagement Office (GEO)

GEO goals for communication

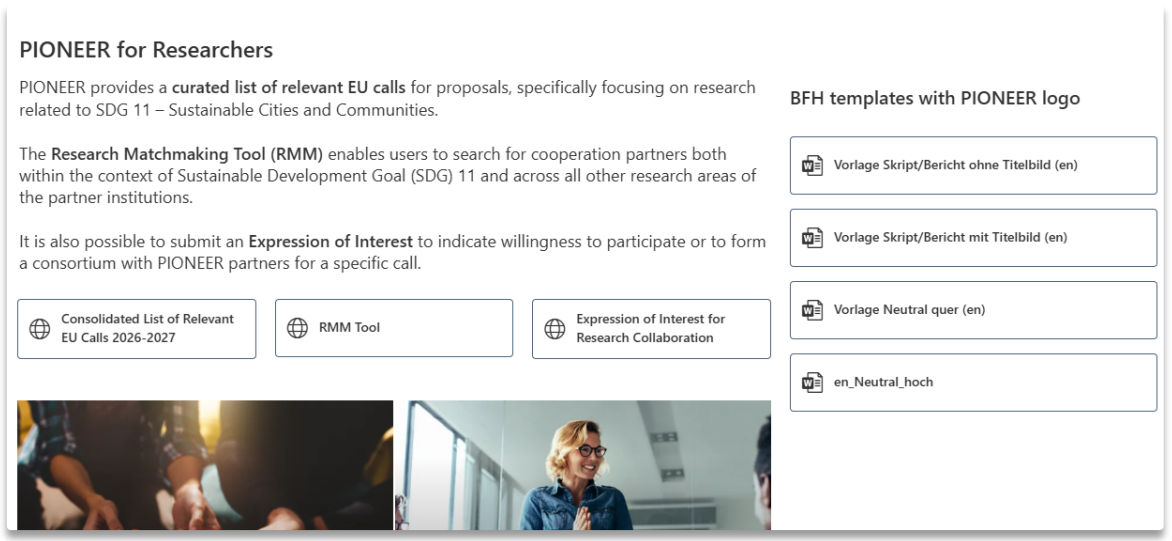
Internally

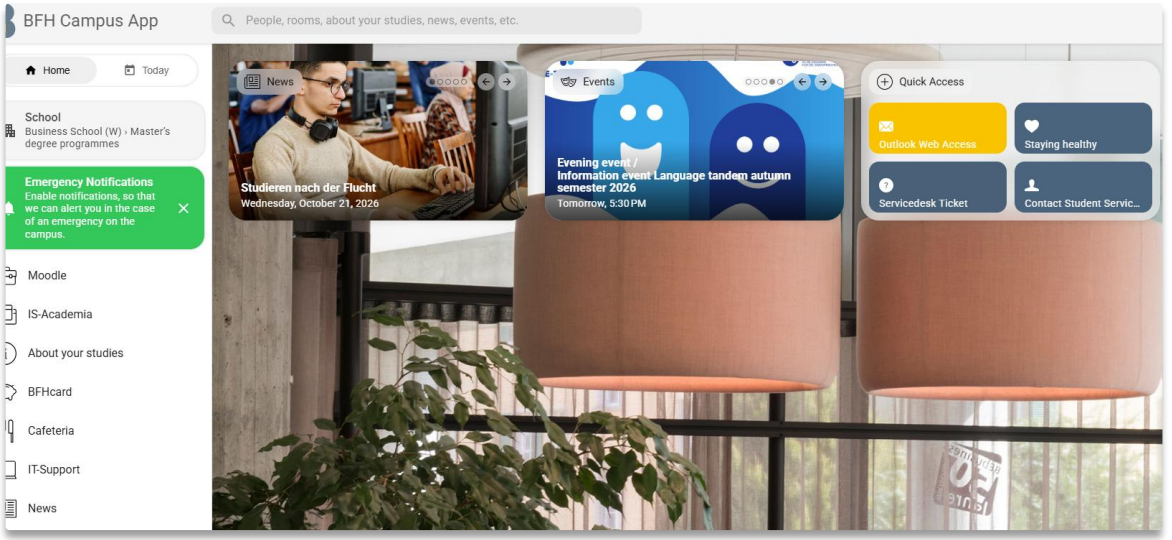
- Students and staff are aware of BFH's European and global networks and partnerships.
- Mobility and global competence development opportunities are known.
- GEO is utilised as a central information hub and knowledge resource.
- The contact persons are known across all organisational units.
- Advisory and support services are actively used.

Externally

- BFH is recognized as a regionally anchored and globally engaged university with a well-balanced international network.
- BFH is an attractive mobility destination.
- BFH enjoys an excellent reputation in the field of global engagement.
- BFH is a preferred partner for collaborative projects as well as study and teaching exchanges.

Communication channels for internationalisation





To reach the staff:

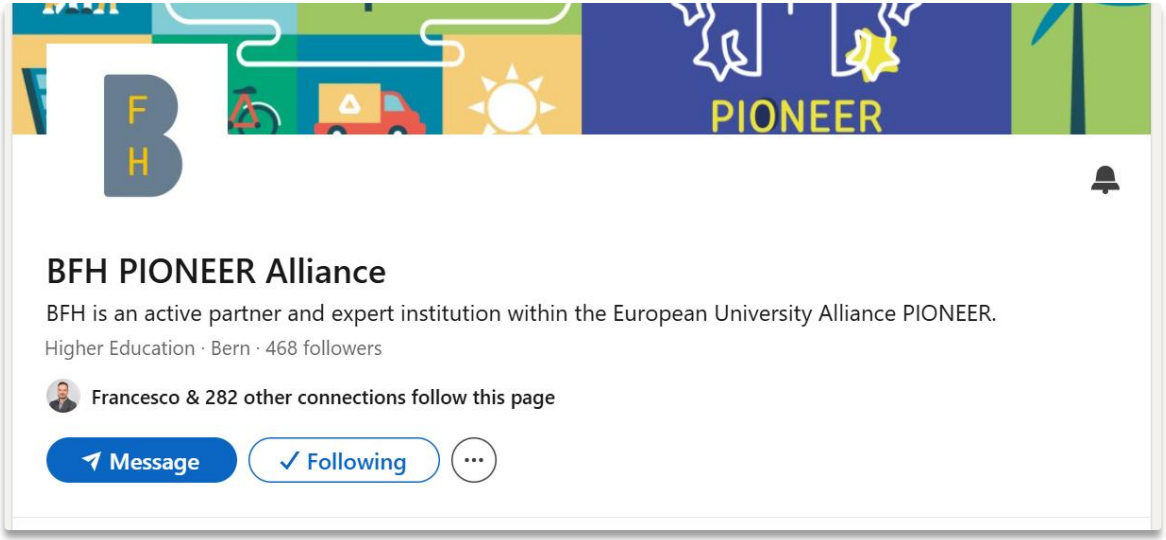
- intranet “myBFH” with content pages, news, events
- MS Teams “Global Engagement” for colleagues working in internationalisation
- departmental channels, advice and support
- future staff, partner institutions: website

To reach the students:

- BFH Campus App
- departmental channels, advice and support
- social media (PIONEER Student Ambassador)
- student association VSBFH
- future students: website

Additional communication channels for PIONEER





PIONEER Festival

- a yearly event at all PIONEER institutions; takes a different form at each institution
- Raising awareness of PIONEER at BFH
- Information on PIONEER opportunities

LinkedIn account BFH PIONEER Alliance

- Information on PIONEER activities to the BFH community
- Information on BFH activities and news to the PIONEER community interested in BFH's viewpoint

Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences

In an increasingly geopolitically complex world, how can universities build meaningful international partnerships?

Francesco Bee, Global Engagement Office

What you told us

Pre-survey · 11 participants

11 / 11

want to engage in international networking

9 / 11

expect support in organising mobility

But how do universities decide where, with whom and why to cooperate?

The new geopolitics of higher education

- **The end of open internationalisation:** From the 1990s to the mid-2010s, mobility and cooperation grew almost unchecked. Today, nationalism, security concerns, migration restrictions and more state intervention shape the field.
- **Not retreat, but reconfiguration:** Universities do not internationalise less, but differently – more selectively, through new alliances and strategic partnerships, with more security screening ("selective internationalisation").
- **Geopolitics in everyday practice:** It becomes visible in concrete decisions on partnerships, curricula, research collaboration and recruitment.
- **Universities have agency:** They are not passive recipients of external pressures, but active mediators – e.g. through "knowledge diplomacy" when relations between states are strained.
- **Conclusion:** The question is no longer whether universities should internationalise, but how they should do so in a world that is increasingly fragmented, where there is a tension between openness and security.

Moyo, S. & Birds, R. (2026). Navigating the new geopolitics of higher education: institutional practices, policy and global engagement. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management. doi.10.1080/1360080X.2026.2740382

The BFH approach: Global engagement

1

Purpose

Create value for BFH and our regional ecosystem.

→ **Impact**

2

Focus

Europe remains central. Beyond Europe, BFH focuses on Canada and India.

→ **Example 1: India**

3

Responsibility

Build partnerships that are sustainable, responsible and aware of risks.

→ **Example 2: Knowledge security**

India: Why a strategic focus country?



1

A growing global partner

India's scientific and economic importance is increasing.

2

Shared thematic interests

Sustainable development, digital transformation and a caring society.

3

Opportunities for BFH

New partnerships in education, research and innovation.

Source: Marginson, S. (2026). The transformative impact of geopolitics in higher education. JHEPM. Data: NSB 2024 (papers 2022).

From strategy to action: BFH and India

NOW **NEXT**

1

Start small

Ongoing

COIL projects, webinars and seed funding for initial cooperation.

2

Connect our schools

Ongoing

Coordinate activities and share knowledge across BFH departments.

3

Build a common ecosystem

Planned

Joint exploratory visit to India and connections with regional innovation partners.

4

Support long-term cooperation

In development

Matching fund and coordinated support for strategic projects.

Knowledge security: Cooperate responsibly

Knowledge security protects higher education and research against …

Unwanted transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology

Foreign interference in higher education and research

Dependencies that endanger security and competitiveness

… and **addresses** ethical concerns in international cooperation.

Three simple questions

1. **Do we know our partner?**
2. **Are we sharing sensitive knowledge?**
3. **How can we cooperate responsibly?**

As open as possible, as closed as necessary.

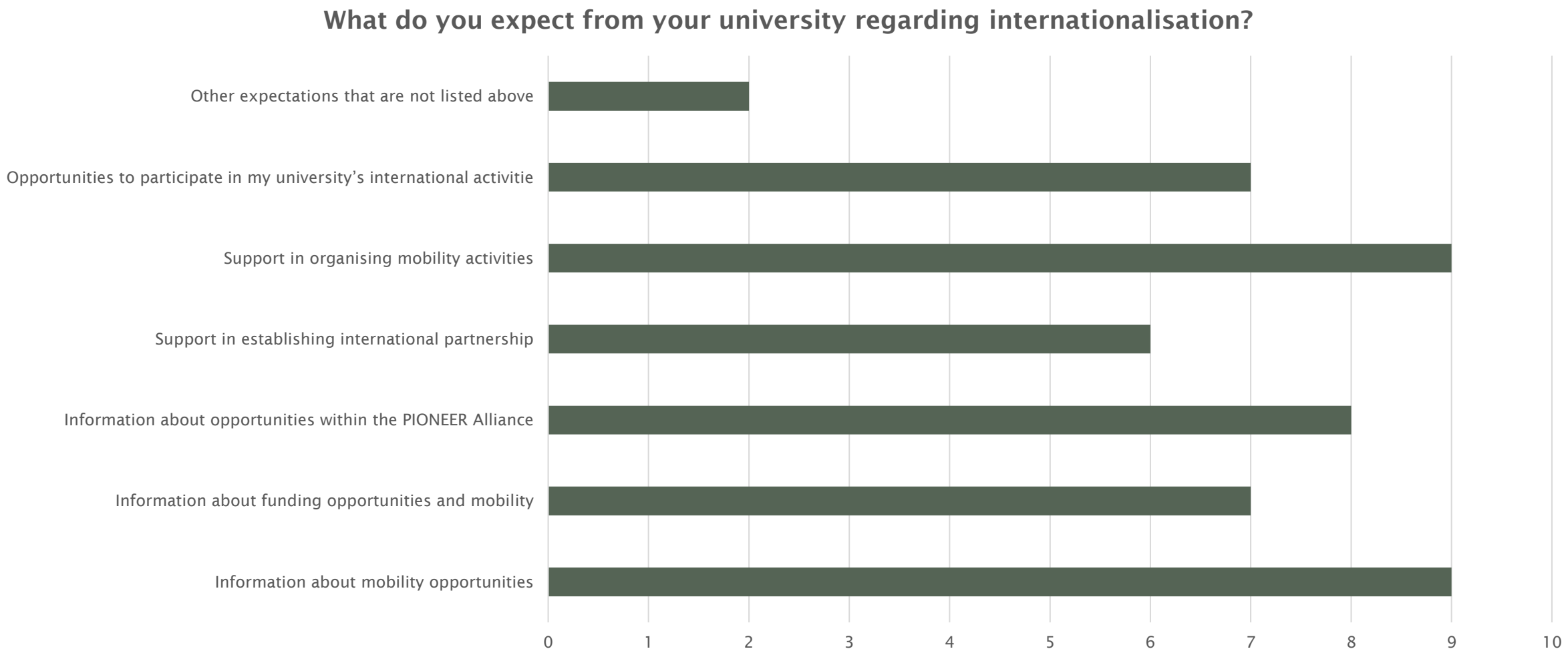
Definition: swissuniversities, Knowledge Security in Switzerland, Nov. 2025. Principle: Council of the EU, Recommendation on enhancing research security, 2024.

Berner Fachhochschule
Haute école spécialisée bernoise
Bern University of Applied Sciences

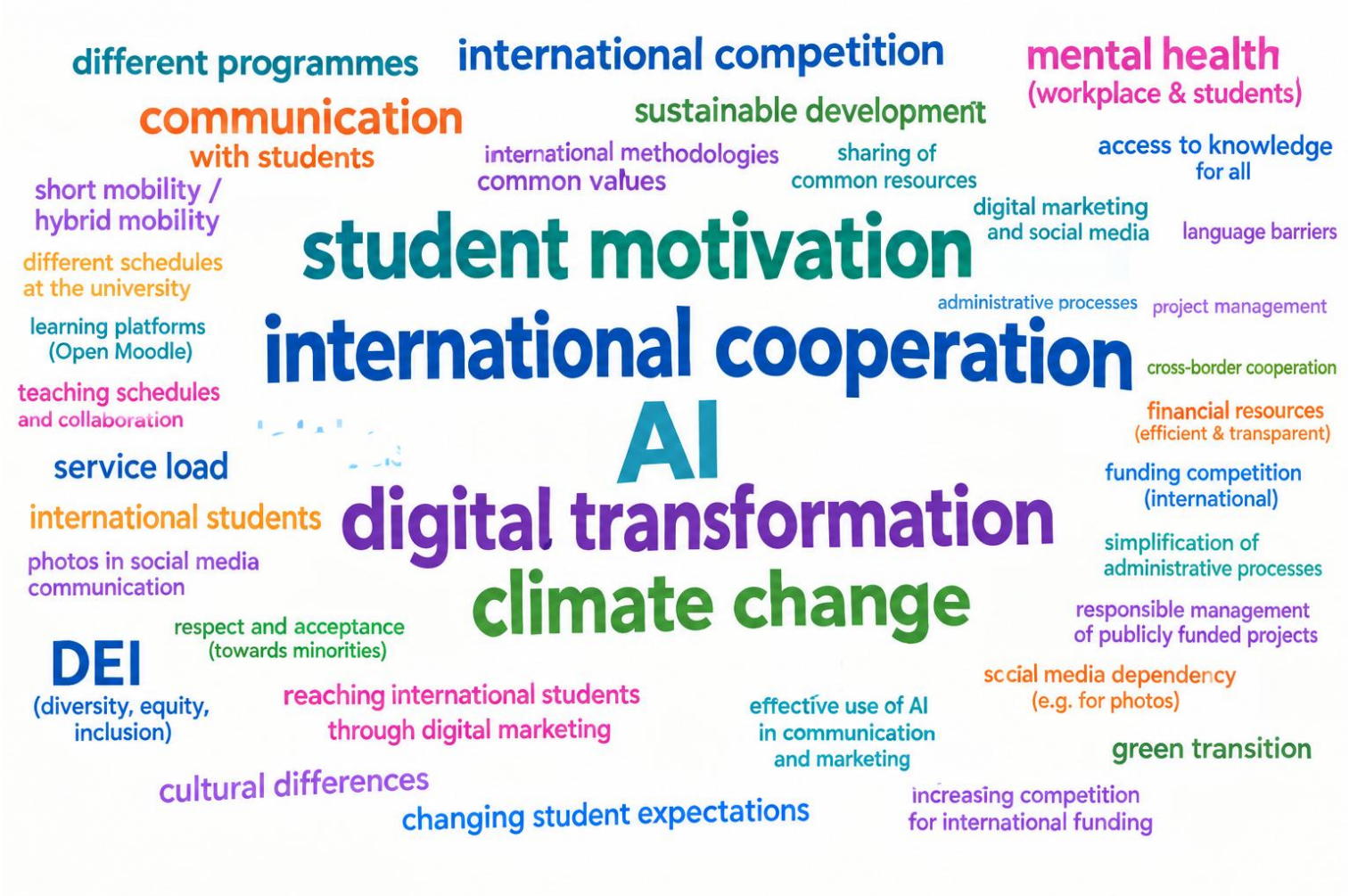
Pre-workshop survey results

Brigitte Kürsteiner, Head of Global Engagement Office

Survey – your answers about your university's internationalisation



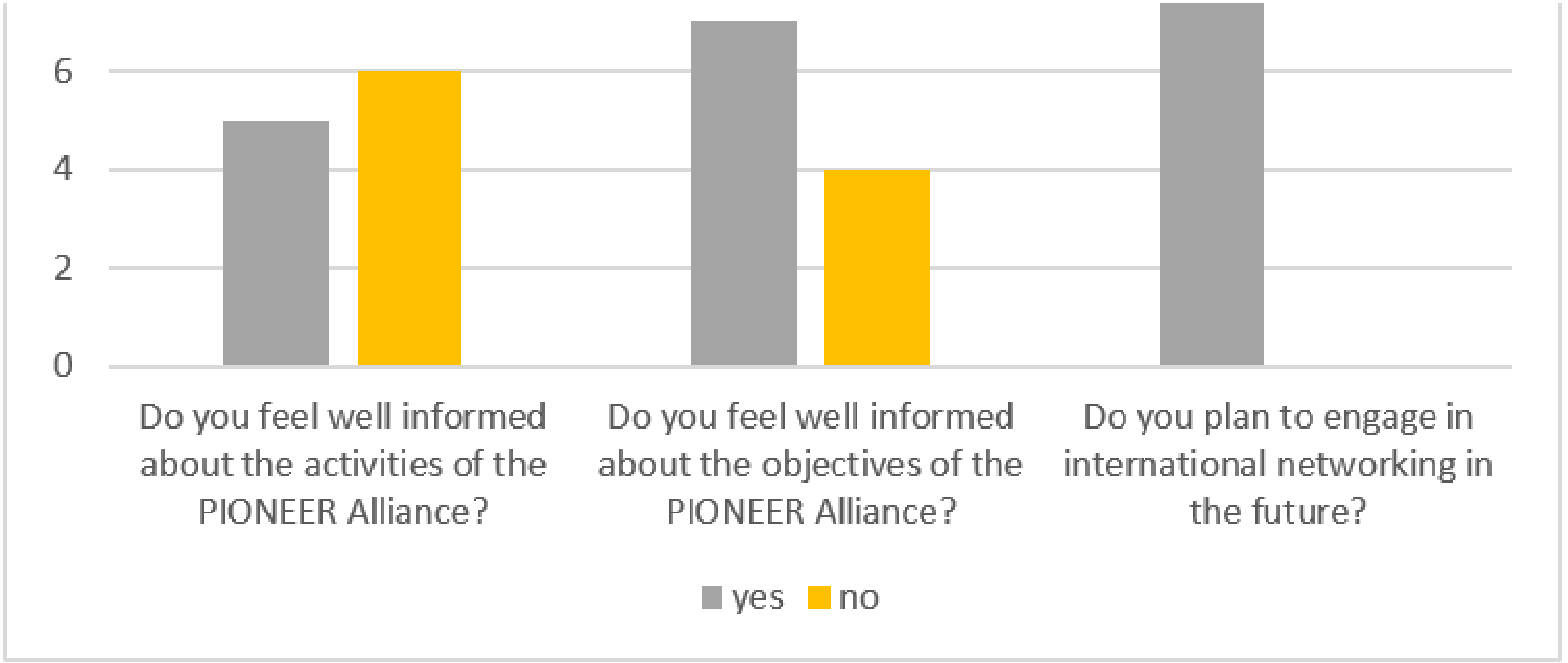
Survey - your answers about global challenges



Survey – your answers about global competence



Survey – your answers



World café format, three groups

- Task: discuss the given topic in a group and write down your ideas. After 15 minutes, move to the next station.

- Guiding questions:
  - Global competence: Which global competences are relevant for your workplace and how can we use them?
  - What type of communication (channels, messages) would motivate you and your colleagues to participate in PIONEER activities?
  - How can we actively shape international cooperation in a changing world? Where and with whom should our universities cooperate – and why?